

## **Level of Awareness of the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals in Delta State, Nigeria**

**Eloho Patience Oziwele & Michael E. Ilaya**  
Department of Mass Communication  
Faculty of the Social Sciences  
Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria  
roziwele@gmail.com; eoziwelep@delsu.edu.ng  
ilayajune12@gmail.com

### **Abstract**

This study was carried out to determine the level of awareness of the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Delta State, Nigeria. The diffusion of innovation theory was adopted for the study. The researcher adopted a quantitative research method where a survey was done using questionnaire as instrument of data collection. Using the multi-stage sampling technique, three towns from the Senatorial districts of Delta State (Delta South, Delta Central and Delta North) were purposively selected. The three select towns include Ozoro in Isoko North (Delta South), Ughelli in Ughelli North (Delta Central) and Obiaruku in Ukwuani (Delta North). A sample size of 302 was drawn from the population of 583,280. The findings showed that the extent of awareness of the SDGs among the respondents was high. The findings also showed that radio, television, social media and newspapers were the major sources of awareness. However, respondents' awareness spread of the 17 goals was not proportionate as the awareness of each goal was not encouraging enough. Thus, the researchers recommended increased spread of awareness of the SDGs so as to record proportionate level of awareness.

**Keywords:** Sources of awareness, Knowledge, Sustainable Development Goals

### **Introduction**

Development as a concept is broad and therefore does not subject itself to a single definition. It indeed covers a wide range of human endeavours. In its simplest term, it means growing or advancing; development is a process of change in attitude, social structure and general acceleration of economic growth through reduction of poverty and inequality (Asemah, 2011; Asemah & Asogwa, 2012; Asemah, 2013). The declaration of development goals such as the United Nation's (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is usually faced with the challenge of acceptability or rejection by the people for whom they are targeted. In recognition of this challenge, governments or change agents ensure they first spread awareness of the set goal(s) through the available communication channels accessible by the target audience. The aim is to elicit the desired responses in form of acceptance, participation and change in attitude/behaviour. Awareness/knowledge message format include news reports, advertisements, editorials, radio jingles, billboards, social media posts and discussion programmes, among others while effectiveness is in form of acceptance/participation in the programmes.

In September 2015, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were declared by the United Nations and signed by 193 world leaders in New York at the expiration of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). While the MDGs had eight goals, 21 targets the SDGs have 17 goals, 169 targets, thus making them wider in scope. The SDGs, tagged 'Agenda 2030' were adopted to consolidate and complete the development progress driven by the MDGs (Malaolu & Ogbuabor, 2017). The MDGs were designed to eradicate or reduce rate of poverty and hunger while the SDGs, as its successor framework, are targeted at ending all forms of poverty, fight inequalities and tackle climate change while ensuring that no one is left behind in the space of 15 years (Orizu, 2021). Additionally, the SDGs address the following needs of humans all over the world- education, health, social protection, prosperity, climate and job opportunities. The SDGs have been described as development plans for the people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership (Omisore, Babarinde, Bakare & Asekun-Olarinmoye, 2017; Orizu, 2021). Thus, Asemah & Nwammuo (2017) observed that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are aimed at bringing about development in every sector of the society in the world.

In Nigeria, the transition strategy from MDGs to SDGs has been divided into three phases. According to Orizu (2021), the first phase was basically concerned with the building on existing MDGs foundation advocacy, sensitisation and partnership for the first five years. This implies that a link exists between the MDGs and SDGs, hence this phase. Information spread is, therefore, a means of drawing peoples' attention to the goals through the available and accessible communication channels. This concurs with the belief of Wogu (2006) that development cannot and does not occur in any information vacuum and for development to be achieved, information should be allowed to flow; otherwise all development efforts become useless.

Meanwhile, it has been evaluated that Nigeria failed in achieving the MDGs as expected (Obinna & Taylor-Robinson, 2016). Commenting on this, Omisore *et al* (2017) observed that the slow start of the MDGs (in 2005) and initial low level of awareness are some of the causative factors. It, therefore, calls for government and public concern to expedite efforts in more rigorous awareness and knowledge spread of the SDGs if they are to be achieved since they have same lifespan with the MDGs. However, not much has been done to determine the level of awareness, sources of information and effectiveness of the information on SDGs in Delta State. Using the quantitative research methodology, this study is, therefore, an attempt to fill this gap.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were designed to guide the study:

1. What is the level of awareness of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) among Deltans?
2. Through which sources do Deltans get information about the Sustainable Development Goals?
3. What is the level of effectiveness of the information on the Sustainable Development Goals?

### **Conceptual and Literature Review**

The SDGs are the world's deliberate and determined attempt at ending poverty, providing protection for all that makes the planet habitable, peaceful and prosperous. According to Morton, Pencheon & Squires (2017 p. 81), "the goals address the empirical and scientific evidence that the world radically needs more sustainable approach; they provide a well consulted framework that is sufficiently scientific robust, politically acceptable and publicly intuitive." They further described the SDGs as wider in scope, more collective in action, more detailed in content and cover the three dimensions of sustainable development which include economic growth, social inclusion and environmental protection. The SDGs are globally accepted development agenda and it is expected that everyone everywhere in the world would be aware, knowledgeable and willing to contribute to its achievement (Omisore *et al* 2017). Communication is, therefore, inevitable at this time because people are known to rely on it to receive and share useful information that can help them take decisions on new ideas. Shoki & Ufuophu-Biri (2008) opined that there is virtually nothing that one does that does not involve communication; thus, implying that communication is needed to get people to accept the SDGs.

Nigeria as a country had in time past carried out development programmes that recorded poor performance as a result of lack of adequate spread and knowledge. Notably among such programmes are Operation Feed the Nation (OFN), Accelerated Rural Development (ARD) and Family Support Programme (FSP), among others. Akpoveta (2006) reported that these programmes did not succeed because the government failed to adequately use the mass media. The level of awareness has been described as the backbone of achievement as it is what empowers the public to hold the government for any failure or success (Omisore *et al* 2017). Ogbodo & Okoro (2016) confirmed an encouraging level of awareness and knowledge of the MDGs while Omisore *et al* (2017) reported low level of knowledge on SDGs and fair awareness in a university community in Southern Nigeria. Awareness is an all important tool in any development programme; hence the declaration of the SDGs as successor framework of the MDGs requires increased awareness and knowledge spread because they are more and has wider scope. Awareness, knowledge spread and effective use of the information are the needed ingredients at this time to achieve these important goals.

In Delta State, there are government and privately-owned media houses which are expected to be sources of information on the SDGs. They include the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), Asaba and Sapele, Delta Rainbow Television and Radio (Warri), Delta Broadcasting Service (Radio and Television) Asaba, Quest FM, JFM radio, *The Pointer* newspaper and some community-based newspapers like *Isoko Voice*, *Urhobo Voice*, among others. They have always been used by government and change agents to carry out campaigns or reach out to Deltans when issues that need public participation such as elections, environmental sanitation, drug abuse, pipeline vandalism, among others arise. The issue of language barrier is settled as most of the broadcasting houses in the State have different programmes for the major tribes in the State.

The mass media can inspire ideas and feelings, stimulate discussion and exchange of ideas and assist in forming or creating public awareness (Assay & Adigu, 2008). There are channels for mass and interpersonal; those of the mass media include the radio, television, newspapers, while the interpersonal include the opinion leaders, village square and age grade meetings. They are used to send messages to many people who are scattered in different places, with different background economically, educationally, politically, socially and otherwise. They are perceived to be powerful when it comes to spreading information, changing behaviour of people towards a particular thing or issue. On the other hand, it is also believed that as people get exposed to media messages, there is the possibility of change in their awareness and knowledge of the goal which could lead to the positive response towards them. All media activities are geared towards the provision of messages which could inform, educate, entertain or cause one change or the other among their receivers. These are also referred to as the functions of the media and have been grouped as information, education, entertainment and cultural transmission and they are considered to be beneficial to individuals and society at large. The media have power to exert or persuade people to accept the goals and this could help government and the nation at large. The communicative functions of the mass media are what make them unique and influential on their receivers.

The persuasive nature of the media has to do with the ability to influence people's attitude, behaviour, awareness level and opinion towards a particular thing or issue. Akabogu (2004) observed that the media are able to persuade their audience through the particular use of words, phrase, standpoints and slants, all with the intent of creating impact, meaning, and people can respond positively to their messages. Nwabueze & Nwabueze (2008) noted that communication is the central of development and so encouraged change agents never to neglect it. Similarly, Wogu (2006) remarked that development cannot and does not occur in any information vacuum and any development objective not transmitted to the targets is worthless. This implies that for development to take place in any society there must be the flow of information either from the change agent to the target people or from the targets to the change agents. Therefore, the place of communication in achieving development of any kind cannot be neglected. It is, therefore, important that all change agents who hope to achieve any set goals must communicate the needed information to the targets. It is in doing this that people will show interest in the developmental processes. However, the targets must have access to the media or sources of the information which could help them know about the goals. This is because the media are very potent tools in the hands of awareness creators (Ugande, 2008). This view was also aptly concurred by Okunna (2002 p.298) when she said that "they are excellent for the fast and efficient dissemination of information and for creating awareness." Meanwhile, Paola, (2007) noted that access to development information must be provided for the targets. She also opined that information should be communicated using the available communication media that the targets have access to.

Ugande (2008) remarked that the radio is the most popular and useful in mobilisation since it capitalises on Africa's great oral tradition, people tend to rely on its messages. Also, people can easily access the radio as it is very cheap to maintain.

Mohammed (2010) adds that radio as a medium has been used to spread messages pertaining to new policies on socio-economic and political developmental issues. This suggests that as people listen to radio, they are likely to have more awareness and knowledge of whatever issue they are presented with. Omisore *et al* (2017) also confirmed the radio as a major source of SDGs awareness. Nwabueze & Nwabueze (2008) stressed that development messages must be communicated to the targets using the right communication channels. They noted that the messages should not only get the targets enlightened, but get them involved in the developmental process. A look at the foregoing points out one fact, that people should be allowed to have access to information. The access should be made available by using the media to disseminate messages to the people. Furthermore, the media have been known to help spread awareness and knowledge of things or goals that are perceived as new. It has also been observed that the media, most especially mass media, are very powerful when it comes to the spread of knowledge about a new thing, while the interpersonal media are more powerful when it comes to attitude formation. Studies have shown that when the mass media are used to diffuse information on issues or goals, there are observed changes in awareness and knowledge.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is anchored on the diffusion of innovation theory which is concerned with the processes through which an innovation spread to the target audience. Daramola (2003), as cited in Anaeto, Onabajo & Osifeso (2008) state that the theory is one that seeks to disseminate information about new discoveries to the masses of a social set-up. Here, the SDGs are seen as a new innovation. Ifeduba (2009) sees diffusion as the process of spread of a new idea. On the other hand, an innovation is the idea that is perceived as new to an individual or an audience. The SDGs messages of awareness are spread through the available communication channels. Anaeto *et al* (2008) noted that the main thrust of the theory is how new ideas and discoveries spread to members of a social system. Greg (2003) stressed that the mass media most powerful effects on diffusion is that it spreads knowledge of innovations to a large audience rapidly. The diffusion process is determined by three major events; according to Uduosuro (2010), they are when the individual learns about the innovation, adoption of the innovation and social network to encourage others to adopt the innovation. This points to the fact that the information must be allowed to spread among the people. Meanwhile, Wright & Bennetts (2006) reasoned that an innovation will not be adopted if nobody is aware of it; this implies that, all change agents must ensure that they spread the relevant information of the new ideas, product or goal to the people. The relevance of this theory is that the awareness stage is very important in any diffusion process. As the media present their programmes to their audience, they help to spread awareness /knowledge of the SDGs. Commenting on the knowledge stage, Sahin (2006) noted that this is the stage when individuals learn about the innovation by asking “what,” “how” and “why.” The awareness-knowledge is what motivates the individual to learn more about the innovation for eventual adoption. Uduosuro (2010) noted that the electronic media and other sources of information could be used to help individuals know about an innovation.

### Methodology

The researchers adopted a quantitative research method where a survey was done using questionnaire as instrument of data collection. The population of the study comprises residents of three towns in Delta State, Nigeria. They are Ozoro in Delta South with a population of 143,559, Ughelli in Delta Central with a population of 320,686 and Obiaruku in Delta North with a population of 119,034. Thus, the total population is 583,280. The sample size for the study is 302; this was arrived at using sample size online calculator (Relief Applications) at a confidence level of 90% and 0.05 precision. Data collected were analysed using tables of frequency and simple percentages to present the data for better understanding or interpretation. The researchers used purposive and simple random sampling techniques. Purposive sampling was used to select the three towns while simple random sampling technique was used to select the respondents.

### Data Presentation and Analysis

Participation rate was 95.1% (288 respondents); thus, 14 (4.9%) for one reason or the other refused to participate. Analysis was thus based on 288.

**Table 1: Extent of Awareness of Sustainable Development Goals among Residents of Select Towns in Delta State**

Options	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Very high	89	30.9
High	137	47.6
Can't tell	17	5.9
Low	35	12.2
Very low	10	3.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>288</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 1 shows that the respondents' level of awareness of SDGs is high. This is based on the fact that majority of the respondents answered to that effect.

**Table 2: Sources of Awareness of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**

Options	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Television	74	25.7
Radio	90	31.1
Newspaper	25	8.7
Magazine	10	3.5
Social media	47	16.3
Indigenous communication	5	1.7
Opinion leaders	15	5.2
Others	5	1.7
None	17	5.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>288</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 2 reveals that the radio, television, social media and newspaper were the main sources of awareness of the SDGs. This is based on the data presented.

**Table 3: Responses on the SDGs mostly aware of**

<b>Options</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>	<b>%</b>
SDG 1: No Poverty	35	12.2
SDG 2:Zero Hunger	35	12.2
SDG 3:Good health/wellbeing	25	8.7
SDG 4:Quality Education	32	11.1
SDG 5: Gender Equality	20	6.9
SDG 6:Clean Water and Sanitation	17	5.9
SDG 7:Affordable and Clean Energy	5	1.7
SDG 8:Decent Work and Economic Growth	5	1.7
SDG 9:Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure	2	0.7
SDG 10:Reduced Inequality	20	6.9
SDG 11:Sustainable Cities and Communities	2	0.7
SDG12:Responsible Consumption and Production	8	2.8
SDG13:Climate Action	10	3.5
SDG 14:Life Below Water	5	1.7
SDG 15:Life on Land	15	5.2
SDG 16:Peace, Justice Strong Institution	25	8.7
SDG 17:Partnership to achieve the Goals	10	3.5
None	17	5.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>288</b>	<b>100</b>

The information in table 3 reveals that respondents were mostly aware of goals 1(No poverty), 2(Zero Hunger), 4(Quality Education), 3(Good health/wellbeing) and 16(Peace, Justice Strong Institution). This is based on the data presented.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The findings showed that the extent of awareness of the SDGs is quite high; this is encouraging because the level of awareness has been described as the backbone of achievement. It is what empowers the public to hold the government for any failure or success (Omisore *et al* 2017). Again, it shows that there is a spread which aligns with Ifeduba’s (2009) definition of diffusion as the process of spread of a new idea. There is the expectation that everyone, everywhere in the world would be aware, knowledgeable and willing to contribute to its achievement (Omisore *et al* 2017). On the other hand, Nwabueze & Nwabueze (2008) remarked that development messages must be communicated to the targets. The finding is in line with the view of Wogu (2006) that development cannot and does not occur in any information vacuum and any development objective not transmitted to the targets is worthless. Thus, it establishes the relevance of the awareness stage of the diffusion theory that as the media present their programmes to

their audience, they help to spread awareness. However, this finding does not align with that of Omisore *et al* (2017) who reported fair level of awareness of SDGs in a university community in Southern Nigeria.

More so, the findings showed that radio, television, social media and newspaper were the main sources of awareness of the SDGs. This corroborates the observation of Uduosuro (2010) that the electronic media and other sources of information could be used to help individuals know about an innovation. It also aligns with the remark by Assay & Adigu (2008) that the media can inspire ideas and feelings, stimulate discussion and exchange of ideas and assist in forming or creating public awareness. The finding also confirms that there is continuity in the 2005 UNDP partnership with the media in Nigeria and the first phase of the SDGs was basically concerned with the building on existing MDGs foundation advocacy, sensitisation and partnership for the first five years (Obe, Ayo & Segun, 2008; Orizu, 2021). This finding also portrays the media as potent tools in the hands of awareness creators (Ugande, 2008). It has been observed that the media, most especially mass media, are very powerful when it comes to the spread of knowledge about a new thing. Another finding revealed that respondents were aware of all the 17 SDGs. This further confirms that the awareness of the goals has been created. However, the data indicated that only a fraction of the goals are known by the respondents. This confirms the study of Omisore *et al* (2017) who reported low level of knowledge on SDGs in a university community in Southern Nigeria. This finding also establishes the fact that awareness of all the goals is not proportionate. The awareness of all the 17 goals should spread as it is what motivates the individual to learn more about the innovation for eventual adoption. This means that for innovators, the awareness stage is the most important as without it, the adoption may be difficult.

### **Conclusion and Recommendation**

The research was to determine the level of awareness of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Delta State, Nigeria. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that the extent of awareness of the SDGs is high. It is based on this that the researchers recommended increased awareness of the SDGs so as to record proportionate level of awareness of all the 17 goals.

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