The Realization of the Sustainable Development Goals as a Major Factor in the North-South Divide

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Abstract

Sustainable development goals, a universal framework for sustainable development, though intended to bridge North South Divide are met with challenges in achieving the goals .There are key factors that contribute to sustainable development goals which include but not limited to economic inequalities, historical colonization, technological disparity, infrastructure, global trade policies, governance & institutions among others from a global perspective, the North-South divide often stand in for a relevance in global challenges and difficulties encountered among developing and developed countries. In light of this, the North and South experience a moderate to large disparities in economic, social, and environmental development. However, the realization of Sustainable Development goals (SDGs) plays an important role in bridging the North-South Divide. This study critically examines the role Sustainable Development goals play in closing the development dualism between the developing countries often viewed as the rich countries and the developing countries regarded as the poor or third world countries. It explores how global-level Sustainable Development (SDGs) are implemented at the regional level. The 2030 agenda for Sustainable Development gives equal emphasizes to developed ("Northern") countries and developing ("Southern") Countries. The implementation of (SDGs) therefore will demand coherent collaboration to transform society across all countries. As such, SDG focuses specifically on strengthening,

implementing and executing of the SDGs through North –South, and South-South triangular cooperation and multi-stakeholder partnerships.

Keywords: Sustainable Development, Goals, North-South Divide.

Introduction

To understand to a large extent the history behind the North-South divide, one has to look at the difference in level or treatment that exist in the economic, political, social and cultural way of life of the inhabitants of the North, which is basically made up of countries in Western Europe. These countries include the United States of America, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Japan etc, and those of the Southern pole, comprising of countries of Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia, the Pacific and Africa. (Prof. Kingdom E.Orji 2022)

Global South's countries are often looked at as being deprived of the basic means of survival and they include having lower incomes, higher levels of poverty, a major increase in the worlds population, poor educational background to little or no educational opportunities, mass unemployment, inadequate housing and poor health systems. The imbalance between the Global North and Global South is viewed from the angle of differing levels of economic and political emancipation, firmness of democracy, technological advancement and income inequalities however, countries of the Global North are prone to be wealthier, and capable of exporting technologically advanced manufactured products among other qualities. In comparison, countries of the Global South are inclined to be poorer, and ponderously dependent on agrarian-based economic primary sectors (Wikipedia 2023).

The North match up with the Western world just as the South is parallel to the developing countries often called "Third World Countries" due to its economic, political and democratic struggles. Regardless, the segregation between the Global North and South is no longer seen as a wide margin instead it is confronted by challenges that has progressively become conflicting and today's reality. In economic terms, as of the early 21st century, the North with one quarter of the world population controls four-fifths of the income earned anywhere in the world. 90% of the manufacturing industries are owned by and located in the North.

Inversely, the South with three quarters of the world population has access to one-fifth of the world income (HandWiki Scholarly Community Encyclopedia 2024).

Global North-South Divide

The Cold war of the 20th century gave birth to the divide between the North and South. The devastating effect of the Cold War left many countries struggling to repair their economy, this characterized the social position of the East and West making them seem powerful and stronger however countries that did not entirely recover were labelled 'Third World countries. The East constituted countries such as Soviet Union and China while the United States and their allies represented the West. Following the end of the Cold War and the break-up of the Soviet Union, some Second World countries joined the First World, and others joined the Third World. A new and simpler classification was needed. Use of the terms "North" and "South" became more widespread. Early definitions of the Third World emphasized its exclusion from the East-West conflict of the Cold War as well as the ex-colonial status and poverty of the peoples it comprised (Wikipedia 2024).

Conceptual Clarifications

Development

The concept of development has been discussed by various scholars, development institutions and other policy makers with a different dimension and understanding of the subject matter based on some certain parameter or yard stick about the level of national economic growth, standard of living of the citizens and the level of people's participation in governance process.

Todaro (1981) has a position of the concept of development that in essence must represent the entire spectrum of change by which an entire social system, tuned to the diverse needs and desires of individuals and social groups within that system moves away from a condition of life viewed as unsatisfactory towards a situation which over time is understood principally in terms of economic progress.

According to HandWiki Scholarly Community Encyclopedia 2024, economic Development is a measure of progress in a specific economy. It refers to advancements in technology, a transition from an economy based largely on agriculture to one based on industry and an improvement in living standards.

Other factors that are included in the conceptualization of what a developed country is include life expectancy and the levels of education, poverty and employment in that country.

Sustainable Development

Countries or institutions seeking development that would be sustainable must ensure there are equity, social development, inclusiveness, human-environment harmony, and cooperation. To achieve this, certain principles such as non-discrimination among others must be followed. While these principles cannot be undermined, development can be a stimulating factor (Abraham 2012).

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the centrepiece of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, were adopted by the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit in September 2015 (ICLEI Briefing Sheet, 2015).

Secretary-General of the United Nations António Guterres highlights the urgent need for stronger and more effective international cooperation to maximize progress starting now. Developing countries urgently require more financial resources, solidarity and fiscal space. Also, the need to reform the outdated, dysfunctional and unfair international financial architecture to facilitate far greater investment in the SDGs (The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2024).

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development gives equal emphasis to developed ("Northern") countries and developing ("Southern") countries. Thus, implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) demands coherent collaboration to transform society across all countries. There are ways to sustain development in Northern and Southern countries through SDG partnerships, including access to data and scientific capacities that guide or reveal to what extent the World Bank can get involved to promote sustainable development from governmental, private and third-sector organisations so as to address global inequalities in establishing and implementing SDGs. If, collectively done, they are to facilitate delivery to sustainable development goals (Blicharska, Teutschbein & Smithers 2021).

Sustainable Development Goals as a Major Factor in the North-South Divide

The ICLEI Briefing Sheet, 2015 examines the 17 major Sustainable Development Goals, a global campaign of the UN from 2000-2015 to end poverty in its various dimensions.

The formation of the SDGs are as follows:

1. Reduce poverty as it affects all areas.
2. Introduce sustainable agrarian schemes to control famine and hunger.
3. Educate the world on healthier ways of living
4. Ensure a bias-free and non-discriminatory educational system for all
5. Equitably empower all genders
6. Accessibility to water, sustainable sanitation management for all
7. Provide economical and dependable modern energy for global use
8. Economic growth, diligent and valuable labour should be made available
9. Invest in pliable infrastructure and foster environmentally conscious industrialization
10. Decrease diversity within and among countries
11. Make the planet earth and inhabitation peaceful
12. zero-waste consumption and manufacturing tactics
13. Tackling climate change in line with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)
14. Protect and safeguard the ecosystem
15. Rehabilitate the environment, and upgrade the system to fight against the destruction of ecological community
16. Advance sustainable development by building an all inclusive, liable and responsible society and institutions at large
17. Involving in healthy application and execution of ideas in global partnership that nourish sustainable development

The realization of the SDGs largely depends on its uniform applicability to all countries of the world, its openness to criticism, effectiveness and more importantly its sustainability.

Let us therefore, assess the success of these SDGs in the North-South Divide and what challenges they will pose.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will not be in perspective without mentioning the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). SDGs was built on the expiring MDGs each working hand in hand to reduce poverty in the North-South countries, they reflect a comprehensive perspective on international development and sustaining human life on this planet (ICLEI Briefing Sheet, 2015).

The success of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) hinges on several factors:

1. **Global Scope and Ambition:** While the MDGs focused on developing countries, the SDGs apply universally. They are more comprehensive and ambitious, aiming to address poverty and other global challenges in a more holistic manner.
2. **Empowered Local Governments:** The implementation and monitoring of SDGs will largely occur in urban areas. Decentralized cooperation and local government involvement are crucial for their success.
3. **Building on MDG Progress:** Using the MDGs as a benchmark can help guide progress towards the 17 SDGs, even though it will be a challenging task.
4. **Prioritizing Sustainable Consumption and Production:** Shifting towards sustainable and inclusive economic models is essential. Effective vertical integration among all levels of government can help achieve this goal.

Challenges to Implementing the SDGs:

1. **Setting the Bar Too Low:** There's a risk that the SDG targets will be seen as the maximum achievable, rather than a minimum baseline for global sustainability.
2. **Limited Focus and Integration:** Countries may prioritize goals that align with their existing plans, potentially neglecting other important areas.
3. **Data and Monitoring Difficulties:** Collecting, analysing, and reporting data for the SDGs will be challenging, especially given the increased number of goals and targets.
4. **Financing Gap and North-South Divide:** The estimated $17 trillion cost of implementing the SDGs has created tension between developed and developing countries. Developed countries advocate for domestic funding, while developing countries seek external aid. A balanced approach,

combining private investment and public resources, could be a potential solution. However, without adequate financing, the ambitious scope of the SDGs may be compromised.

The SDGs have significantly expanded on the scale and content of the MDGs. The SDGs are focused on a global development with and-for sustainability, and demonstrate an understanding that the environment is not an add-on or in opposition to sustainable development, but rather the base that underpins all other goals however realization of the Sustainable Development Goals as a major factor in the North-South Divide would have to be structured around the five pillars of the 2030 Agenda: People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace, and Partnership. These five pillars highlight how the SDGs are an intertwined framework instead of a group of independent goals.

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