

## Role of Islam in Sustainable Development: A case Study of Nigeria

دور الإسلام في التنمية المستدامة: نيجيريا نموذجا

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### Abstract:

It is not unarguable that Nigeria is yet to find a clue to its problem of under-development through Sustainable development process of 2015- till date. This study attempts to explains the role Islam will play in Sustainable Development and to help in busting the effort Nigerian Government has made in the recent years for attaining sustainable development in its societies. The study recommend that Nigeria authorities should intergrade the role played by Islam in sustainable development in other to have new blue print in attaining full sustainability in Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Role of Islam, Sustainable development, Sustainability, Nigeria.

ملخص:

إنه لا جدال في أن نيجيريا لحد الآن لم تجد حلا لمشكلتها التخلفية من خلال عملية التنمية المستدامة لعام 2015. فتهدف هذه الدراسة إلى شرح الدور الذي سيلعبه الإسلام في التنمية المستدامة للمساعدة في تحطيم الجهود التي بذلتها الحكومة النيجيرية في السنوات الأخيرة لتحقيق التنمية المستدامة

في مجتمعاتها. وتوصلت بضرورة قيام السلطات النيجيرية بتبادل الدور الذي يلعبه الإسلام في التنمية المستدامة للحصول على تحقيق الاستدامة الكاملة في نيجيريا.  
كلمات مفتاحية: دور الإسلام ، التنمية المستدامة، الاستدامة ، نيجيريا.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In Islam, issues on sustainable development are treated within the framework of the Qur'anic teachings and sunnah of the Prophet (PBUH). Both the Qur'an and sunnah provided a clear framework on how to deal the issue of this universe and its contents and how spiritual and physical wellbeing of humanity played a vital part towards the realization of the worship (Ibadah) of Allah and formation of justice and equality in human society as a whole. There are around 750 verses in the Quran giving us guidance and foundations on matters relating to sciences, particularly focussing on the universe, environment, agriculture and industrial development (Ab Rahman, *et al*, 2018).

Allah say in Holy Qur'an;

There are certainty signs in the earth for people with certainty and in your selves as well, do you not then see?“(Quran: 51: 20 - 21).

Sustainable development is not a new concept in Islam and for Muslims. There are more than 500 verses of the Qur'an providing human with guidance on matters relating to environment and how to deal with it. Prophet Muhammad's life is a clear example that promotes the importance of environment, preservation of human's races maintaining the relationship of nature and society towards achieving sustainable development.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) is a target as well as yardstick for every country to measure and explore its response to and business of making life conducive for her present and future citizens. It is about recreating a safe world for all through equipping of every human being with the tools for a decent and healthy living through mutual effort. Language is needed to communicate the SDGs to all human beings and also to empower them to make meaningful contributions towards achieving those giant goals which will in turn make the world conducive for the present and future generations while protecting the other living and non-living things are all part of creation. Development entails the full realization of the human potential and a maximum use of the nation's resources for the benefit of all (Okwudili, & Opeyemi, 2019).

## **2. The Concept of Sustainable Development**

Hassana, Baharib. Azizc, & Doktoralinad, (2020), Opine that Islamic scholars, concluded that sustainability from an Islamic perspective is a balance in the use of natural resources for the economic, social, and spiritual benefits of the past, present, and future. In short, sustainability is balanced, fair, and continuous in all aspects of human life, including spiritual and physical. There are seven principles of sustainability as proposed by Khan (2001) which is to avoid waste; establishing rules, and evaluating oneself through history; maintaining a balance in the thinking, actions, and the usage of resources; accountability in governance and administration; creating equity and justice in the economy and business; purification of the soul (*Tazkiyyah*); and conversation and development of resources in the service for humans and other beings.



**According to Adejumo:** Sustainable development is defined as “development that meets the needs of the present, without compromising future generations to meet their own needs. The environment should be seen as an asset, a stock of available wealth but if the present generation spends this wealth without investment for the future then the world will run out of resources.

**According to Morton, Pencheon, & Squires (2017):** Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a set of global goals for fair and sustainable health at every level: from planetary biosphere to local community. The aim is to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity, now and in the future. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), otherwise known as the Global Goals, are a set of objectives within a universal agreement to end poverty, protect all that makes the planet habitable, and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity, now and in the future. The Goals were adopted by all member states of United Nations formally in 2015, for the period 2016–30 to address the overwhelming empirical and scientific evidence that the world needs a radically more sustainable approach. The goals provide a well consulted framework that is sufficiently scientifically robust, politically acceptable, and publicly intuitive. The goals provide us with our best chance of ensuring the necessary collaboration and alignment as we implement global approaches to securing a fair, healthy and prosperous future for ourselves, our children and grand- children.

**Tamim & Kamaldeen Posits:** Sustainable development has become a much-used phrase in international circles. Since the first Brundtland Commission’s definition of sustainable

development, a number of scholars and practitioners have articulated and promoted their own alternative definitions; yet a clear, fixed, and immutable meaning remains elusive. This has led some observers to call sustainable development an oxymoron, fundamentally contradictory and irreconcilable. It has become widely used that, in fact, “it is in danger of meaning nothing” because it has been applied to all manner of activities in an effort to give those activities environmental flavour and lining. Thus, in common language, it is mainly used to mean observing the richness of the earth’s biodiversity for future generations.

While attempting to conceptualize the term ‘sustainable development’, the International Institute for Sustainable Development posited that ‘the improvement of economic efficiency, the protection and restoration of the environment and the enhancement of the social well-being of people formed the basic tenets of sustainable development’.

According to the developmental educationists, the term refers to ‘the reduction of hunger and

poverty in environmentally sound ways. It includes the meeting of basic needs, expanding

economic opportunities, protecting and improving the environment and promoting pluralism and democratic participation.

**Mensah (2019)** opines that Sustainable development relates to the principle of meeting human development goals while at the same time sustaining the ability of natural systems to provide the natural resources and ecosystem services upon which the economy and society depend, the concept of sustainable



development has been relevant since time immemorial, it can be argued that the relevance deepens with the dawn of every day because the population keeps increasing but the natural resources available to humankind do not. Conscious of this phenomenon, global concerns have always been expressed for judicious use of the available resources.

### **3. The Status of Sustainable Development in Nigeria**

#### **3.1 Nigeria and the Sustainable Development Goals:**

Some Institutional Frameworks An appraisal of the Millennium Development Goals in Nigeria revealed mixed results across the goals, gender groups and geographical locations. As mentioned, most of the goals are yet to be met, this encouraged Nigeria to embrace the continuity plan via the Sustainable Development Goals. Attaining success in the SDGs is hinged on the expansion and completion of the previous targets of the MDGs. Nigeria's transition to the SDGs was built around several thematic issues such as; the creation of stronger institutional, policy, legal, communications, and financing frameworks as well as standard data, monitoring indicators and evaluation. At the institutional level, the Office of the Senior Special Assistant to the President on SDGs (OssAP-SDGs) was established to partner with the UNDP and a wide range of stakeholders such as: Ministries, Civil Society Organizations, media organizations, the youth, the academia and many other groups in the pursuit of the SDGs in the country (**Ibietan & Okafor, 2019**).

Concentrated efforts have been targeted at facilitating oversight and legislative roles of the parliamentarians concerning the SDGs execution process. More precisely, two committees on SDGs have been created in the Senate and House of

Representatives. In a bid to foster youth engagement with this cause, the OssAP-SDGs established a partnership with the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) to train youths as SDG front liners and advocates in their various communities and individual areas of deployment (Ibietan *et al*, 2019).

To highlight its commitment to Agenda 2030, the Nigerian government has painstakingly adopted an SDGs Needs Assessment Policy Analysis which is expected to provide the nation with the necessary baseline data and statistics to facilitate the prognosis and preparation for successive public investments across sectors and regions, which entails adopting more efficient and effective resource use, with impact assessment (Ibietan *et al*, 2019).

### **3.2 Role of Religions in Developing Sustainability in Nigeria**

The World summit on Sustainable Development(WSSD) concern indicates that religion has an important role in achieving Sustainable Development goals, and thus it was taken into account by the Johannesburg Summit. In this regard, Krapivin and Varotsos (2007, 30) suggested that religion plays a great role in explaining the most basic issues related to Sustainable Development such as:

- (a). How we understand the world in which we live and our place in the world
- (b). How traditional concerns and beliefs of religion can be related to scientific understanding
- c. How the joint reflection of theologians, scientists and other scholars can contribute to the welfare of human community.



Actually, most of these issues pertain to the worldview, so that the role of religion is merely to support the implementation of Sustainable Development. Perhaps religion can contribute more than supporting arguments, however, because it persistently remains in the heart of people. In other words, it is the internal will that can motivate people to accomplish an obligation. Therefore, religion can be used to bend human will to uphold Sustainable Development agendas. In order to achieve this goal, religious scholars should be invited to propose the religious perspective at every important dialogue and meeting in which discussion on Sustainable Development takes place. In fact, the religious perspective has only been taken into account in the Johannesburg Summit, which was almost fifteen years after the Brundtland Report. Actually, the religious perspective has contributed to theories of Environmental Ethics since the 1960s, but it has only been formally invited to do so after three decades (Marsuki, 2009).

The role of religion for sustainable development in Nigeria has been both positive and negative. Positively, religion stands as a reliable institution providing stepping stones to sustainable development. Christian Faith Based Organizations (FBOs) like the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and Muslim Faith Based Organizations (FBOs) like the Nigerian Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs (NSCIA) in many ways contribute to sustainable development of Nigeria. In the face of the weakness of the Nigerian state and the inefficiency of its institutions to provide the human good to its citizens, the Faith Based Organizations (FBOs) supplement and complement government's efforts towards improving the standard of living of Nigerians. These FBOs in Nigeria which number over 46,000 are involved in pro-poor, charitable works which alleviate poverty,



promote progress, and serve as agents of development. According to Omobolaji Olarinmoye, “FBOs in Nigeria provide health and educational services through their hospitals, clinics and maternities, schools and colleges, vocational training centres, seminaries and universities. They own economic institutions, such as bookshops, hotels, banks, insurance, mass media and ICT companies and are prominent owners of real estate in the form of sacred cities and prayer camps which cover thousands of hectares of land (Ogbonnaya, 2012).

Research on religion and development in Nigeria (2009) identifies the main Muslim FBOs to include “the Federation of Muslim Women Association of Nigeria (FOMWAN), the Nasrul-II-Fathi Society of Nigeria (NASFAT), and the National Council of Muslim Youth Organization (NACOMYO). The main Christian FBOs include Christian Rural and Urban Development of Nigeria (CRUDAN), the Justice and Peace Caritas Organization (JDPC), the Urban Ministry, the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), and the People Oriented Development (POD) of ECWA.” FOMWAN with consultative status in the United Nations among other things, aims at the intellectual and economic empowerment of Muslim women, the rehabilitation of children and orphans, the encouragement of young girls to embrace education and proper and adequate health care, etc. This it does in partnership with the Nigerian government through the Universal Basic Education Programme and Nomadic Education Programmes. NASFAT among other programmes aim at tackling poverty and ensuring sustainable income for the society. Thus, it promotes small scale businesses by granting loans to individuals and cooperative societies. CRUDAN partners with the government and other FBOs to promote rural and urban development especially in areas of



“rural development, agriculture, water and sanitation, micro-finance and livelihoods development and training (Ogbonnaya, 2012).

#### **4. Sustainable Development in Islam Models**

The idea of approaching sustainable development from an Islamic perspective is not entirely new. In 2002, the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) developed the Islamic Declaration of Sustainable Development. The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) presented this model to the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002. The Declaration reviewed the major challenges faced by the Islamic world in the field of sustainable development: poverty, illiteracy, foreign debt, degraded economic and social conditions, disequilibrium between population growth and available natural resources, weak technical capabilities, and a paucity of expertise and skills in environmental management. The Declaration also charted a general framework for an Islamic agenda to overcome these obstacles and proposed cooperation among Islamic countries to achieve sustainable development. This framework identified five parameters of an Islamic sustainable development model: (i) to achieve justice, (ii) promote active participation, (iii) establish genuine inter-country partnership through a just system for world trade (to replace the debt system that was leading to resource depletion), (iv) enhancing the international community’s implementation of practices and policies and (v) educating youth on environmental responsibility and the preservation of religious and moral values (Rkiouak, 2016).

A more effective attempt was made by Dr Odeh al Jayyousi in his book, “Islam and Sustainable Development”. This work

highlights the cultural and spiritual gap in the conventional/Western sustainable development model. He uses the Islamic notions of balance, harmony, public interest, wisdom and living lightly on earth to formulate a new model structured around: (i) good governance, (ii) excellence, (iii) social capital (iv) integrity without corruption to fulfil a good life (hayat tayeba) and (v) respect for the earth. He proposes the local community (neighbourhood level) as constituting the core of economic solidarity and social cohesion and the book presents comprehensive Islamic worldview on sustainable development. (Rkiouak, 2016).

The Islamic perspective embraces that everything on the earth was created for humanity and is God's award to people. However, it is an award with conditions and it is unquestionably that carries responsibilities. The earth then is a testing ground of the humankind. The tests are a measure of man's acts of admiration (Khalid, 2002).

On this subject Qur'an says:

“Allah sends down water from the sky and by it brings the dead earth back to life. There is certainly a Sign in that for people who hear. There is instruction for you in cattle. From the contents of their bellies, from between dung and blood, we give pure milk to drink, easy for drinkers to swallow. And from the fruit of the date palm and the grapevine you derive both intoxicants and wholesome provision. There is certainly a Sign in that for people who use their intellect. Your Lord revealed to the bees: Build dwelling in the mountains and the trees, and also in the structures



which men erect. Then eat from every kind of fruit and travel the paths of your Lord, which have been made easy for you to follow. From inside them comes a drink of varying colours, containing healing for mankind. There is certainly a Sign in that for people who reflect” (An-Nahl (16), 65-59:273-274).

Prophet Mohammed (S.A.W) also asked his followers that: “Not to harm women, children and the infirm, not to harm animals, destroy crops or cut down trees”. This Hadith is sort of recognition of the human condition and the value of nature, they never been separated from each other. Based on the above-mentioned bases philosophy of sustainable development from the Islamic perspective, it can now be defined as sustainable development from Islam seeks to establish a balance between the environment, economic and social dimensions. It means the balanced of consumer welfare, economic efficiency, achievement of ecological balance in the framework of evolutionary knowledge-based, and socially interactive model defining the social justice, shura process, charity and zakat are two mechanisms to reduce poverty (Aburounia, & Sexton, 2006).

Islam permits the utilisation of natural resources but the use must not involve unnecessary destruction. In ensuring sustainability, the natural resources that produce life’s essentials have to be protected so that their utilisation may continue in a sustainable way. Therefore, as regards the purposes of Sustainable Development, Islam shares the same intentions to secure human needs and at the same time to conserve the environment. Actually, the whole Islamic system of life including economics

and law is intended to secure both purposes. Muslim scholars strive to suggest an Islamic perspective for Sustainable Development that at least can be applied in countries where Muslim lived.

In this regard, Hamed (2003,) concluded that Muslim scholar's proposals to achieve Sustainable Development in Muslim countries involves two tasks: first, the implementation of an Islamic economic system and, second, the revitalisation of the traditional resources management institutions of Islam such as *Hisbah*, *Waqf*, *Harim* and *Hima* (Marsuki, 2009).

#### **4.1 Contribution of Islamic Institution in Promoting Sustainable Development Lessons to Nigeria.**

Several studies had been carried out in the interest of sustainability in Islam. It is believed that "the institution of waqf can significantly contribute towards that ultimate goal of contemporary Nigeria societies; it will reduce in massive government expenditure which will leads to a reduction in the budget deficit, which will lower the need for government borrowing.

Religious institutions which have a socio-economic characteristic can also be employed in creating synergistic efforts towards achieving the sustainable development goals, especially in a country that consider Muslim as its citizen Nigeria is inclusive. The first sustainable development goal is to have no poverty by 2030.

**4.1.1 The institution of zakat:** displays that Islam is not restricted to the four walls of the mosque, rituals and 'Aqidah alone. It does not limit itself to relationship between man and his Creator, but as well takes care of human relationship. Given that



man is not equally financially blessed, Islam prepares a means through which wealth can be circulated so that the less privileged will enjoy some levels of economic security (Adebayo, 2020).

Looking at the institution of Zakat, we find that the payer of Zakat and the receiver of Zakat belong to two different income classes. The payer of Zakat is non-poor with surplus wealth above Nisab. On the other hand, the receiver of Zakat is usually a poor person with no surplus wealth above Nisab. Thus, the threshold wealth of Nisab makes a distinction between the payer and receiver and helps to achieve targeted income and wealth transfer to the people who are usually the poor people (Shaikh & Ismail, 2017).

Zakat is relevant to virtually all the SDGs goals. **The first goal**, which is poverty eradication, may be achieved from the recipients of zakat. Poverty is considered a society. Giving out to the poor in order to alleviate their poverty is closely attached to observance of salat in many verses of the Qur'an. This underscores the unique position of assisting the less privileged in the society in Islam. In addition, the recipients of zakat are mainly the poor (*alfuqarau*) and the needy (Adebayo, 2020).

**The second goal**, which is ending hunger, achieving food security, improving nutrition, and promoting sustainable agriculture is equally within the scope of zakat. As mentioned earlier, zakatable items are not limited to cash; agricultural products as well as livestock such as sheep, goats, cows and camels are included. The Qur'an 6: 141 informs that zakat is deductible from agricultural products when it reads:

And it is He Who produces gardens trellised an untrellised, and date-palms, and crops of different

shape and taste (their fruits and their seeds) and olives, and pomegranates, similar (in kind) and different (in taste). Eat of their fruit when they ripen, but pay the due thereof (its *Zakat* according to Allah's Orders 1/10<sup>th</sup>) on the day of its harvest, and waste not by extravagance. Verily, He likes not al- musrifun (those who waste by extravagance)

**Q6: 141.**

**Third goal**, which is ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all at all ages, is accommodated in the institution of zakat. This is because zakat ensures healthy living between the rich and the poor. This is because it aids redistribution of wealth in the society so that wealth is not concentrated in the hands of the rich alone. It therefore facilitates sense of goodwill, which is an ingredient of healthy living in the society. It also encourages healthy living between the Muslims and non-Muslims as it is argued that non -Muslims could also be accommodated in the list of those eligible to receive zakat (Adebayo, 2020)

It has to be noted that one of the categories of recipients of zakat is for Allah's cause (*Fi sabilillah*). This is being debated among jurists to have included among others using zakat for all types of struggles in the righteous cause and on provision of social welfare programmes and projects as well as manpower training or education in scientific and technical fields that are of direct benefits to the poor. It is therefore argued that zakat can be used to provide social services like hospitals and schools and even for factories which create employment opportunities for the people. This implies that goals 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11 and 12 goals of the SDGs are captured in zakat (Adebayo, 2020).



**Goals 13, 14 and 15** have to do with taking urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts; conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development; and protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification. These goals could be derived from the lessons derivable from the institution of zakat (Adebayo, 2020).

Closely related to the above are goals 16 and 17, which are out to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels; and as well strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development. Zakat is out to promote peaceful and inclusive societies. Both the poor and the rich are satisfied and are working together harmoniously as the sympathy for the poor are awakened in the hearts of the rich, while the poor also suppresses his ill feeling and bad wishes for the rich through unnecessary and unhealthy envy, since he has his own share from the wealth of the rich (Adebayo, 2020).

**4.2 Waqf institutions:** could enhance socio-economic contributions of Muslims in many ways. The models of Islamic banking and finance have been linked with the institutional and welfarist concept of sustainability that aims at the well-being of society. It seems that Islamic social finance such as waqf and zakat are functional as the instruments for socio-economic development of the masses. Historically, waqf institutions have played an important role in the socio-economic development of Muslim ummah. Good management of charity foundations in Islam, specifically waqf, plays a crucial role in the development



of the ummah, by narrowing the social distance and reducing the income disparity in the economy (Latif, Din, & Mustapha,2018).

It is an Islamic institution which existed since the time of the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W). It brings together both the spiritual and materials elements. Based on its nature, waqf actually acts as the catalyst for economic growth as well as the human development, provided that the institution is systematically and optimally implemented. Socially, waqf enables the birth of responsible and accountable citizens which will eventually promote sustainable development (Latif, Din, & Mustapha,2018).

Formation of waqf institutions all over the Muslim world was indeed the result of kindness and act of religious observance towards God and it resulted in economic sustainability and poverty reduction. poverty is commonly understood to exist when people lack the means to satisfy their basic needs. Practically, poverty reduction refers to a set of economic and humanitarian measures taken by authorities, corporate organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in order to remove people from the yoke of poverty permanently (Yakubu & Aziz, 2019).

## **5. CONCLUSION**

Conclusively, Nigeria is facing some serious problem which crippled the government effort in MDGs and now SDGs, it is, lack of serious policy, and unable to control the problem up-till this present moment. It can be said that decent legislations and efficient management are among the main possible factors for effective plan of achieving sustainable development, especially in countries with Muslim societies Nigeria is inclusive. A concerted effort from many parties are needed such



as religious institution as mention above to reach a solution. Islamic institutions bring together both the spiritual and material elements. Based on their nature, they should be able to act as the catalyst for economic growth as well as the human development. Role of Islam in attaining sustainable development have been proposed by several scholars but as yet to be tested, it possesses quality of life that will help to promote sustainable development in Nigeria.

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