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EVALS DGs INSIGHT #12:

Nigeria's Experience of Country-Led Evaluation of SDGs 3 & 4

INTRODUCTION

Evaluating SDGs holistically and applying "policy coherence" are challenging tasks for countries who have pledged to implement the 2030 Agenda SDGs, following the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Development Assistance Committee (DAC) criteria, combined with universal principles like equity, gender equality and the principle of "Leave No One Behind."¹ Nigeria's achievements characterized as "below expectations"² from previous Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) monitoring and implementation, highlighted that it is time for the country to go beyond just integrating sustainable development concepts and principles into national policies by 2030. The weak capacity of local governments and lack of coordination among State institutions, civil society and the private sector could not achieve the desired results at the state level. Previous MDGs Review Reports were limited by the lack of sound evidence from evaluations that could provide explanations of progress or stagnations. Therefore, in December 2019, the Government of Nigeria (GoN), through the Office of the Senior Special Assistant to the President on the Sustainable Development Goals (OSSAP-SDGs) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), commissioned two independent evaluations of SDG3 & SDG4 in assessing the effectiveness and impact of: i) the SDG3-1, *Healthy Lives in Nigeria within the National Strategic Health Development Plan (NSHDP I and II)*³ (2016–2019) and ii) SDG4-1 within the

Education for Change Strategic Plan 2016–2019 and the *Universal Basic Education Act of 2004*. The two independent evaluations focused on assessing the Health and Education Sector's primary Strategic Plan's contribution towards achieving health and education-related SDG targets, directed to reducing maternal deaths and under-five mortality rates and the first target of SDG 4, namely "by 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes". Learning from Nationwide Policies and Strategies effects and analyzing comparative evidence of enabler factors of success of selected performing States and failure of low performing States toward SDGs targets, to serve as evidence-based policy advocacy instrument to increase public investment and reshape strategies in assisting the GoN for better prioritization and implementation of the forthcoming National Development Plan 2021–2025, NSHDP III (2023–2027) and Education Strategic Plan (2023–2027) were among other objectives of the two independent evaluations.

This Evaluation Insight shares Nigeria's independent evaluation of SDGs experience related to health and education, focusing on learning, accountability, and strengthening the evidence support for accelerating Nigeria's Decade of Actions 2021–2030.⁴ In addition, this short publication aims to present the best practices

¹ Sustainable Development Report 2020. Available at SDG Knowledge Hub. <https://sdg.iisd.org/news/sdg-index-measures-all-countries-progress-since-2015/>

² Integration of the SDGs into National Development Planning. A Second Voluntary National Review. Nigeria (June 2020)

³ <https://www.health.gov.ng/doc/NSHDP%20II%20Final.pdf>

⁴ On 7 June 2021, (OSSAP-SDGs) launched the Nigeria Sustainable Development Goals Implementation Plan 2020–2030, with support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

and challenges of (1) strategic prioritization of SDGs for policy analysis, (2) creating joint partnerships of civil society, the private sector and development partners with the Government to influence policies/strategies by creating institutional mechanisms in ensuring value for money while being accountable towards the citizens. It is intellectually worth to recognize the active role played by the key front-line actors of SDGs 3&4 evaluations done in Nigeria, from OSSAP-SDGs (Dr. Bala Yusuf Yunufa), the Ministry of Budget and National Planning (Dr. Zakari Lawal), UNICEF (Dr. Robert Ndamobissi) and the evaluation supplier, the consortia Alegre Associates based in USA (Mr. Juan Carlos Alegre).

The issue:

EVALUATION CONTEXT AND PURPOSE

Nigeria designed and developed vital policy, institutional, and regulatory mechanisms for an enabling environment for government institutions, decision-makers, and other stakeholders to collaboratively co-create a roadmap for tracking progress of national SDG implementation. The Nigerian Government's efforts in this regard are evident in the mapping of the data for the SDG targets and indicators and the resulting product called the "*Country Transition Strategy from MDG's to SDG's in 2015*", the *Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Indicators Baseline Report 2016*, and the *Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) on SDGs⁵ of July 2017 and June 2020*. These reports and documents showcase the country's efforts in sustainable development and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

The two independent evaluations commissioned by GoN and UNICEF provide an in-depth assessment of Nigeria's health condition, focusing on young children and mothers in the country and the target states by analyzing key health indicators and causes. The education sector assessment presents strong evidence of quantitative and qualitative measurements of progress against SDG4-1, emphasizing access to and

quality of primary education, which was a significant shift from the previous MDGs initiative.⁶

EVALUATION APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

This *policy evaluation* that used 15 evaluation questions⁷ focused mainly on the assessment of two National Strategic Plans⁸ based on the OECD-DAC evaluation criteria of Relevance, Coherence, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Impact and Sustainability reinforced with SDGs Principles of Leave No One Behind, Equity, Universality & Gender Equality. The impact of COVID-19, the school closures and the effects of the inaccessibility of health facilities by women and children have been taken into account throughout the evaluation.

The evaluation methodology relied mainly on nationwide policies and strategies analysis and secondary data analysis, quantitative primary data collection in case study states using a quasi-experimental design related to Health Facilities Assessments, and Learning Outcomes Assessments to measure students' literacy and numeracy level, complemented with primary qualitative information obtained from Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). The "Multi-Variate Statistical Regression Analysis of Determinants of SDG3-1 (U5MR & MMR) was performed using Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS) Raw Data Set. Regarding SDG4-1, Causal Analysis was generated from datasets of the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) and official EMIS reports from the Federal Ministry of Education (FMOE), and peer-reviewed journal articles. In the health sector, the majority of information has been collected by different organizations in Nigeria in the last ten years, including international development partners like USAID, WHO, UNICEF, WB and the Federal Ministry of Health, and the National Bureau of Statistics.

The geographical delineation of the evaluation targeted six States in both the health and education sector, grouping and comparing them on the "low",

⁵ Economic Recovery and Growth Plan 2017-2020. Ministry of Budget and National Planning, Federal Republic of Nigeria. Integration of the SDGs into National Development Planning. A Second Voluntary National Review. Nigeria (June 2020)

⁶ Independent Evaluation of the Effectiveness and Impact of the Sustainable Development Goal 4 Education in Nigeria. Report: Secondary Data Analysis. UNICEF, March 2021.

⁷ Interview notes with Dr. Robert Ndamobissi, Evaluation Manager at UNICEF. April, 2021.

⁸ SDG-3 *Healthy Lives in Nigeria (2016 – 2019) Strategy*, and SDG-4, the *Education for Change Strategic Plan 2016-2019*

"high", and "transitioning" continuum, based on their performance on different indicators. Maternal deaths and under-five mortality rate – and their potential associations with socio-economic variables – formed the basis of selecting Kebbi, Gombe, Nasarawa, Ebonyi, Ogun and Bayelsa states for health-related data collection purposes.⁹ In the education sector, the six States were chosen relevant to their primary education completion rates according to the 2016-2017 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS).¹⁰ Additional criteria considered and deemed necessary and essential were the availability of learning outcome data in the six States. Therefore, Kwara, Kaduna, Katsina, Enugu, Kano, and Zamfara states served as references for data collection on pupils learning outcomes in education.

EVALUATION USE AND KEY LESSONS

The Government of Nigeria will use the evaluation results to prioritize the allocation of resources, funds and designing strategies for addressing the immediate needs of the population and the society as a whole. Furthermore, the evaluation data backed by solid evidence represents a timely and valuable information source – considering the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic – to *advocate* for effective and efficient resource allocation, strengthening cooperation with the private sector and the civil society and the overall *accountability* towards the population.

Development partners, UN/UNICEF will use the strong evidence gathered through these evaluations to responsibly *match* existing funds and resources, *boost* existing technical capacities.

Helping align national policies with the 2030 Agenda by designing and generating roadmaps and mapping existing data and indicators are the first SDG implementation steps that the Government has complemented through strengthening its institutional framework by realigning the National Statistical System (NSS), designing financial frameworks and systems, and the integrated SDGs (iSDG).

⁹ Independent Evaluation of the Effectiveness and Impact of the Sustainable Development Goal 3: Healthy Lives in Nigeria. Secondary Data Analysis. UNICEF, November 2020.

¹⁰ Independent Evaluation of the Effectiveness and Impact of the Sustainable Development Goal 4 Education in Nigeria. Report: Secondary Data Analysis. UNICEF, March 2021.

This independent evaluation commissioned by the Nigerian Government and supported by UNICEF moves beyond the traditional reliance on statistical information gathered from the aggregated national data. It showed the political will of the Government to design and apply a participatory process in which different stakeholders of the Nigerian society could contribute to providing inputs and feedback from the state and local level. Through developing local ownership, the evaluation of SDG 3 and SDG 4 have highlighted the critical and indispensable nature of missing data, inaccessible data, and unavailable data which makes it hard for implementation and monitoring of the SDGs on the one hand.¹¹ On the other hand, it is now evident that data information systems do not solve underlying structural problems of the country.¹² Management Information Systems, if not accessible to the public, do not encourage participation. As a result, the access of the evaluation community remains restricted, and civil society and communities' voices remain unheard.¹³

CONCLUSION

Achieving quality education and good health and wellbeing are critical areas of work based on human rights, gender equality, equity, and universality principles, that have been formulated in the two policy documents under evaluation as critical and interlinked areas that need urgent action. Despite these efforts, moderate improvement has been achieved under SDG3 and SDG 4, ensuring quality and inclusive education and reducing maternal death and under-five mortality rate. There are system-wide deficiencies in the education and health sectors, temporarily showing unreachable decent healthcare for most of the population and the increasing number of "out-of-school" children. In addition, achieving gender equality, LNOB suffers because of the practice of deeply rooted cultural norms and practices and out of pockets costs.

Final Reports of the two SDG 3 & 4 Evaluations in Nigeria have been endorsed in September 2021 during

¹¹ Interview notes with Dr. Bala Yussuf, Senior technical Advisor at OSSAP-SDGs; April, 2021.

¹² Integration of the SDGs into National Development Planning. A Second Voluntary National Review. Nigeria (June 2020)

¹³ Interview notes with Dr. Uzodinma Adirije, Nigerian Association of Evaluators; August, 2021.

national validation workshop and quality copy editing for publication is in process for official launch in February 2022. Insightful policy recommendations are defined about strengthening primary health care and local governance of health systems, reducing inequities/inequalities in health and basic education

across population groups, increase health and education financing. Coordination among partners, more role of private sector and civil society, scientific community, evaluators association and local communities will support the Government in achieving SDG targets.

Did you know?

EVALSDGs is a global network formed to add value and learning to SDGs, made up of people with a shared interest in evaluation and sustainable development. EVALSDGs Guidance Group (GG) is an EVALSDGs sub-group focusing on strengthening capacity development for evaluation and the SDGs. The EVALSDGs 'Insights' are short, light and easy to digest notes presenting ideas and new information, and stimulate thinking to strengthen evaluation capacity.

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