

Media Agenda-Setting, understandability and participation of Benue Residents for the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals

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Abstract: The objectives of some development programmes that are meant to improve the living standards of the people in developing countries have not been achieved because many of the targeted populations failed to understand the importance of such programmes to their lives and so do not participate. This study examined the influence of media agenda-setting in creating awareness, and influencing the adoption of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) among residents of Benue State of Nigeria. The study adopted the media agenda-setting theory, media dependency theory and development media theory as theoretical foundations for the study. The research utilized the survey research design, using a set of questionnaire as the research instrument to generate data from a sample of 384 drawn from residents of Benue State. The data analysis was done using the simple percentage and frequency distribution table and the weighted mean score (WMS). The findings show that although the mass media exerted influence on few of the residents most of the residents were not aware of Goals 7-17 of the SDGs. They also indicated that residents participated as well as keyed into predominantly in Goals 1-5 out of the 17 SDGs. In view of this, it was recommended that for media agenda to trickle down to the target people, there should be a strategic and systematic media strategy that will sensitize and mobilise the masses to participate in the outlined objectives for the attainment of the SDGs in the state. It is also important that messages of the goals should be adapted into local languages in the state to sensitize the rural dwellers.

Keywords: Agenda-Setting, attainment, participation, Media, Sustainable Development Goals

Background to the study

Following expiration of the mandate of the Millennium Development Goals MDGs, 2000-2015, especially the failure of meet the expected development projections in developing nations and poised to bring development to all nations and corners of the world, the 193-member state of the United Nations General Assembly on September 25, 2015 adopted the Sustainable Development Goals SDGs to sustain the search for better life for all mankind. The SDGs has 17 goals and 169 targets. The SDGs often referred to as 2030 Agenda was articulated to overcome the observed short comings of the MDGs which represented the first step by governments to align their policies and programmes with the intention of ending poverty and improving living standards for a better and safer life for all (Wole-Abu 2018). The core objectives of the SDGs are to end extreme poverty, promote the wellbeing of all, protect the environment, address climatic change, encourage good governance as well as ensure peace and security for all by 2030. According to the United Nations Secretary General, Antonio Guterres:

Each target has between 1 and 3 indicators used to measure progress toward reaching the target. The 17 goals include:

No poverty, zero hunger, good health and well-being for people, quality education, gender equality, clean water and sanitation, affordable and clean energy, decent work and economic growth, industry, innovation, and infrastructure, reducing inequalities, sustainable cities and communities, responsible consumption and reproduction, climate action, life below water, life on land, peace, justice and strong institutions and partnership for the goals. (<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org>).

SDGs are interconnected and designed to be more inclusive and sustainable so as to attain international development in all nations of the world.

Following the official adoption and implementation of SDGs in January 2016, a number of countries including Nigeria have taken some course of actions to positively affect the lives of people. Government at the three tiers in Nigeria, international institutions agencies, even Non-Governmental Organisations NGOs and Individuals as stakeholders have initiated steps to influence the attainment of the SDGs. One of the important steps is the provision of enlightenment to enable the citizenry appreciate the purpose and the benefits that will accrue to them from participating in the SDGs and explain what roles they are to play to expedite the attainment of those goals. Central to the enlightenment campaigns was the engagement of a communication strategy that involved the deployment of the mass media and other forms of impersonal media for the dissemination of the SDGs messages. Information is key and catalyst to the adoption of any new idea. This is why it is expected that the mass media would provide information and enlightenment to the public on issues and policies that are beneficial to the people to enable them understand the issues and make informed decisions to participate in any life- changing innovations. Hasan (2013) asserts that the mass media bring out a general diffusion of knowledge about life today, thus influencing many aspects of our social, political and economic patterns. He outlined mould public opinion, set agenda and serve as link between government and the people.

Fundamentally, the media most times condition how people understand and act on issues. Media workers can determine the importance placed upon particular issues by stressing (repeatedly) one aspect of a topical issue or by providing a yard stick with which people uses to analyzed the issues. Ike (2005) explained that the Agenda setting function of the mass media can be achieved in news casting, by the size of the headlines, order of appearance, choice of words and length of coverage. This research will examine the influence of the mass media in creating awareness and mobilizing Benue State residents to both participate and key into SDGs. Communications, especially the deployment of the media have helped in molding and shaping public perception and opinion of the people towards acceptance and participation in innovations. The mass media have continuously played crucial role in educating and raising individuals and societies consciousness about the ideals of the SDGs.

In Benue State, efforts have been made by the governments, agencies, individuals and faith based organisations to use the mass media to galvanise public understanding and participation of the people in delivering the targets of the SDGs and ensure development. Benue State, one of the 36 states in Nigeria, located in North Central region of the country, the inhabitants of the state are predominantly farmers as over 70 percent of the working populations are engaged agricultural practices. The predominant farming occupation of the people has made Benue State the major source of food production in Nigeria; hence the state is popularly known as the food basket of the nation.

Terkula (2016) had referred to the states readiness to embrace the Sustainable Development Goals quoted the state governor, Samuel Ortom as saying that:

Apart from ensuring that the state owns a master plan which implants the SDGs, governor Samuel Ortom on receiving the first grant by the Federal Government gave instructions to ensure that every project executed with such funds adhered to the state 10 year plan thus the 2015 State Track of the MDGs received in 2016 features projects that relates only to revenue security, agricultural – driven industrialization, science based education and health services, investment in critical infrastructure as well as focus on gender, women, youths, sports and people with disabilities.

Our interest in this research was kindled first by the fact that after living in Benue State for some years it was noticed that although the people are hardworking subsistent farmers, they have not fully utilized the opportunities provided by government and international agencies to improve their agricultural practices and raise their standard of living. Again, after a visit in February 2019 to Songhai Farms, an agricultural enterprise operated by a Nigerian, Reverend Father, Godfrey Nzamujoin Port novo, Republic of Benin. The farm and the Beninese workers were trained and motivated to utilize the comparative advantage of agriculture to produce sufficient food to feed its teeming population and a demonstration of how to harness human and material resources to eliminate hunger and poverty through large scale farming. At the moment, the Songhai twenty-two-hectare demonstration farm is the second largest employer of labour in Benin Republic as well as a renowned centre for bio production, economic growth, industry, innovation and clean energy which are parts of the SDGs (www.songhai.org). It is expected that given the fact that Benue State with similar climatic conditions, especially vast arable land and manpower, should be able to utilize the abundant recourses human and material resources to eliminate extreme poverty and improve the people's living standards.

Statement of the Problem

Stakeholders which include: Government at every level, Leaders, Institutions, NGOs and Individuals are expected to influence the attainment of SDGs. More importantly, mass media as purveyors of information and enlightenment necessary for the attainment of any development goal or objective are supposed to be utilized by development facilitators to shed light on the benefits of the SDGs to stimulate acceptance, adoption and participation in the development programmes. Essentially, the media have been utilized in various ways to create awareness about the SDGs as well as educate people on actions taken to realise the 2030 SDGs in Benue State.

For instance, the mass media publicised development – oriented campaigns in the areas of agriculture, health, education and small-scale medium enterprises in form of news, commentaries and documentaries. They also disseminated public service advertisements, advertising messages sponsored by governments and NGO on environmental cleanliness, safe motherhood practices, gender equality and education for all sexes, climate change, among others as encapsulated in the SDGs targets. These were meant to educate and encourage the people to take the desired decisions in line with the new development idea. As Ochonogor (2005) Notes that:

Any attempt at getting people to take part in an innovative program we must provide the people with necessary information to enable them to understand the significance of the program and take decision either to accept or reject the required change. (p. 5).

However, in spite of the deployment of the energies, and resources dissipated in the communications campaigns, especially through the mass media to create public awareness as well as shape people's opinion of the SDGs in Benue State, it is yet to be seen of the commensurate activities of the residents of the state towards meeting the SDGs targets. It is uncertain if the media have through their agenda exerted any influence on the people's participation in the SDGs. This is the thrust of this investigation.

1.3 Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to ascertain the influence of mass media agenda- setting in participation of the residents of Benue State for the attainment of the sustainable development goals. The specific objectives are to:

- i. Examine the awareness level of SDGs among the people of Benue State.
- ii. Find out media channel through which residents of Benue State got information about the SDGs.
- iii. Find out what the people understand from the media messages on the SDGs.
- iv. Ascertain the activities of the residents of Benue State as influenced by the media agenda setting on the SDGs.
- v. Find out the obstacles to the use of mass media for setting agenda to the attainment of SDGs in Benue State.

Theoretical framework

This study was anchored on the agenda-setting and development media theories. The Agenda-setting theory, popularized by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw in 1972 observed the capacity of mass media in influencing the people's opinion based on the currency that the issue gained in the media reports. Omega and Ochonogor (2013) explained that the media determine issues and their importance to the public through the prominent treatment of those issues in their agenda over a period of time, to make the audience believe that the issues are, indeed, important. In other words, the media determine for the people what issues are considered important through the emphasis they place on those issues. Invariably, this theory is relevant to this investigation because it is the portrayal of the sustainable development programs in the media that will make the people to see the initiative as important in their informal discussion milieu.

Development Media theory

The development media theory was propounded by Dennis McQuail (1987). The substance of the theory is that the media should accept and carry out development tasks in line with nationally established policy, economic and development priorities. In their contribution to the discourse on the developmental factors that led to the

emergence of the theory, Omego and Ochonogor (2013) were of the view that the development media theory emerged in the 1980s largely because the four classical theories of the press propounded by Siebert and his co-authors were inapplicable to matters that have to do with the developing countries as they did not cover, the peculiar development needs and problems of developing nations like poverty, religious/ethnic violence, illiteracy, among other. In lending their thought to the topic, Ndimele and Innocent (2006) observed that the proponents of the development media theory of the press suggest that media messages can be deliberately designed to enable members of the audience to acquire the needed skills to transform their society. It is believed that media messages can be packaged in such a manner as to stimulate a systemic socio-economic transformation of the developing nations in line with global prescriptions.

Relating this theory to this study, it can be unequivocally stated that the media is not only very influential in shaping public opinion of SDGs but it can as well trigger positive actions needed for the attainment of SDGs in the State. The development media theory on the other hand advocates that government at every level and the media work in partnership to ensure that the mass media assist in the planned (media as a support to national development programmes like poverty alleviation, population control, literacy drive, employment generation schemes, etc.

Literature Review

Sustainable development has been defined in many ways by individuals, scholars and organizations. According to Human Development Report (2010) cited by Asadu (2012), sustainable development means making development equitable and broad-based; enabling people to be active participants in change and ensuring that current achievements are not attained at the expense of future generations.

According to Klarin(2018), the fundamental objective of the concept which is in tandem with SDGs is to provide basic human needs to all people (home, food, water, clothing, etc), with a tendency to improve living standards, as well to achieve the aspiration of a better life. Klarin further noted that the Brundt land report: Marked the beginning of a new global socio-economic policy in which the concept of sustainable development has become a key element in environmental management and other areas of human activities.

According to Mitchell and Chaman-Ruiz (2007), “Changing behavior is particularly critical in development programmes...people must have a base of knowledge and a positive attitude about a reform and a motivation to change current practice”. Hence, Behaviour Change Communication (BCC) campaign strategy promotes positive behavior that supports development. Behavioural change in this strategy can be achieved through a two-way interactive communication process whereby the development agent or communicator and the people come together to initiate, define, discuss, prioritize and plan together.

A campaign strategy that encourages participation is linked to behaviour change communication, which according to Asadu (2012) stimulates active participation that is synonymous with acceptance. He particularly noted that role-playing in any situation has a lot of influence on people’s beliefs, attitude and behaviour. In active participation campaign, the audience gets enough information about the new behaviour than a passive listener. These participatory efforts encourage information sharing between the development, campaigner and the target audience; hence, supports the principle of two-way communication in behaviour change communication strategy.

Empirical Review

In a study to analyse the role of stakeholder collaboration in sustainable development as well as the effects of government regulations in achieving sustainable development in Nakuru Countyin Kenya, Oribu(2014)surveyed local communities to find out what they considered to be the greatest influence in the achievement of sustainable development. Respondents were asked to rate on a Likert scale what among voluntary business action, collaboration with stakeholders and government regulations that they thought would influence sustainable exploitation of the natural resources. The study found that information sharing in was very crucial in the attainment of business ideas for sustainable development and recommended among others that in order to achieve sustainable development, there is the need for information sharing and collaboration with stakeholders and that Stakeholders should be involved in the development of various business strategic plans in order to understand how various business activities will affect the community.

Also, the by study Young and Mc Comas(2016) undertaken to establish the role of the media in promoting sustainable agriculture in order to enhance sustainable development in Zambia using qualitative feedback from 34 smallholder farmers targeted by community markets for conservation’s radio programming efforts. The result demonstrated the centrality of the radio programmes a long side other forms of communication, such as extension and farmer-to-farmer communication, as well as written and visual communication in the sustenance of a development initiative. The researchers recommend the use of radio in offering a foundation for dialogue and increased social diffusion of sustainable innovations in remote regions of Zambia.

The above studies though related to the current one as they pertain to the achievement of sustainable development, the point of divergence is that while those studies were about agricultural and business development initiated by state and community actors, the current study deals with broader theme that covers health, education and the environment, initiated by the United Nations Organisation for the entire countries of the world.

Methods

The study adopted the survey design gauge the opinion, attitudes, preferences and knowledge levels of a subject. The population of this study was the residents of Benue State, with an estimated population of 5,724,550 as of 2020, given a projected growth rate of 2.7% from the 2006 population census. The sample for the study was 384respondents drawn from the three senatorial districts of the state, using the multi-stage sampling techniques to select two local government areas from each senatorial district in Benue State. From the six selected local government areas, 64 respondents were selected using the wards, streets and households to reach the subjects to give a total of 384 respondents used for the study. The study utilized a set of questionnaire as instrument for data collection. The self and others-administered instrument was structured in simple language to make or ease of understanding and completion. The analysis of data was done using tables of simple percentages and the weighted mean score with 2.50 as the criterion for decision on acceptance or rejection of the responses.

Results and discussion

A total of three hundred and sixty three (363) copies of the questionnaire were retrieved from the 384 administered, giving over 80% return rate. The data indicated that the majority of the respondents were aged between 26 and 45 years. Invariably, it can be deduced that the bulk of the respondents were youths and middle-aged people. Similarly, the data show that he majority of the respondents for this study were married as 220 respondents which represents 57% were married while 164 respondents representing 43% were single. In the same vein, the data depict a high literacy level among the respondents as 193 which is more than half of 363 respondents representing 50%hold a university degree or its equivalent. While others have lower educational qualification with the least being the First School Leaving Certificate, the lowest level of education in Nigeria.

Awareness level of SDGs messages among residents of Benue State

Table 1: Respondents Awareness level of the17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Response (SDGs)	Frequency	Percentages %
Goal 1 Only	51	14
Goals 1-2	38	10
Goals 1-3	35	9
Goals 1-4	56	15
Goals 1-5	87	24
Goals 1-6	28	7
Goals 1-7	10	3
Goals 1-8	5	1
Goals 1-9	7	2
Goals 1-10	7	2
Goals 1-11	7	2
Goals 1-12	7	2
Goals 1-13	0	0

Goals 1-14	0	0
Goals 1-15	0	0
Goals 1-16	0	0
Goals 1-17 (All of the above)	25	7
Total	363	100%

The data in table 1 show that SDG goals one to five were more popular among the respondents as the majority 74% were aware of the goals. However, only 10% of the respondents were aware of goals six and seven while goals 13 to 17 are not known to the respondents. Given this result, the awareness level of residents of Benue State, may be high on a few of the goals, on the whole, one can say that the awareness on the SDGs messages is low.

Media channel from which the Benue people learnt about the SDGs

Table 2: Respondents’ sources of information on the Sustainable Development Goals

Response (Source)	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Radio	114	31
Word of Mouth	71	20
Television	64	18
Newspapers/Magazines	51	14
Internet	36	10
Pamphlets/Billboards/Banners	27	7
Total	363	100

Table 2 shows that although both the personal and impersonal media contributed to the respondent’s awareness about the SDGs, the electronic media comprising radio, television and the Internet were the dominant source of information to the respondents. Expectedly, radio was the most prominent source of information, probably because it’s peculiar nature to obviate certain barriers and cost-effectiveness. The print media represented by the newspapers and magazines also provided SDGs information to a sizeable number of the respondents

Table 3: Understandability of the media message on the SDGs to the respondents

Statement	Responses	Frequency	Points cumulated per response	Weighted Mean Score (WMS)	Decision
Stories and commentaries on the Sustainable Development Goals were very simple and Understandable	Strongly agree	151	604	3.15	Accept
	Agree	138	415		
	Disagree	49	98		
	Strongly disagree	25	25		
	Total	363	1,144		

Table3indicated that majority of the respondents understood the SDGs messages disseminated through the mass media and other sources as enumerated in table 3. The weighted Mean Score gave a 3.15 mean which indicates and acceptance of the statement that the Messages were quite simple and understandable. This positive response affirms that residents of Benue State clearly understood the SDGs messages, especially those pertaining to the goals they were aware and familiar with.

Table 4 Media agenda and respondents' understanding of the SDGs messages

Statement	Responses	Frequency	Points cumulated per response	Weighted Mean Score (WMS)	Decision
Residents understanding of SDGs messages on active engagement in farming and other forms entrepreneurship	Strongly agree	182	728	3.19	Accept
	Agree	105	315		
	Disagree	41	82		
	Strongly disagree	35	35		
	Total	363	1,160		
Statement	Response	Frequency	Points Cumulated per response	Weighted Mean Score (WMS)	Decision
Pursuit of qualitative education is very essential for all round human capacity development and improvement of the society	Strongly agree	144	576	2.96	Accept
	Agree	103	309		
	Disagree	74	148		
	Strongly Disagree	42	42		
	Total	363	1,075		
Statement	Response	Frequency	Points Cumulated per response	Weighted Mean Score (WMS)	Decision
Understanding SDGs messages on maintaining healthy living habits like personal hygiene, clean water and sanitation.	Strongly agree	157	628	3.06	Accept
	Agree	117	351		
	Disagree	45	90		
	Strongly disagree	44	44		
	Total	363	1,113		
Statement	Response	Frequency	Points Cumulated per response	Weighted Mean Score (WMS)	Decision
Residents' understanding of all-inclusive nature of SDGs which demand active participation of individuals and stakeholders to actualize good life for all on or before 2030.	Strongly agree	141	564	2.95	Accept
	Agree	116	348		
	Disagree	53	106		
	Strongly disagree	53	53		
	Total	363	1,071		

Table 4 reveals that majority of Benue State residents affirmed that active engagement in farming and other forms of entrepreneurship will enhance food production which will assist greatly in achieving SDGs target aimed at eliminating poverty and hunger. Their response positive response also show that they understood SDG 'Goal 4' that the pursuit of qualitative, inclusive and equitable education is sine qua non to capacity building for development and improvement of the society. The data also indicate that the respondents affirmed that the maintenance of a healthy living habits involving the observance personal hygiene, the drinking clean water and the keeping of a clean environment and guarantees quality health as articulated in SDGs Goals 3

Influence of media agenda on Benue Residents participation in SDGs programmes

Table 5. Respondents’ response to media agenda on the SDGs

Statement	Response	Frequency	Points Cumulated per response	Weighted Mean Score (WMS)	Decision
Media agenda prompted my engagement in modern farming practice to grow more food	Strongly agree	182	728	325	Accept
	Agree	118	354		
	Disagree	37	74		
	Strongly disagree	26	26		
	Total	363	1,182		
Statement	Response	Frequency	Points Cumulated per response	Weighted Mean Score (WMS)	Decision
I supplement my income through small scale medium enterprises due to a result of media agenda on SDG	Strongly agree	156	624	3.13	Accept
	Agree	133	399		
	Disagree	41	82		
	Strongly disagree	33	33		
	Total	363	1,138		
Statement	Response	Frequency	Points Cumulated per response	Weighted Mean Score (WMS)	Decision
Mass media agenda on SDGs made me keep my environment clean and maintain healthy living standards	Strongly agree	71	284	2.45	Reject
	Agree	98	294		
	Disagree	112	224		
	Strongly disagree	90	90		
	Total	363	892		
Statement	Response	Frequency	Points Cumulated per response	Weighted Mean Score (WMS)	Decision
I Support and encourage girl’s education and gender equality because the mass media reported so on SDGs	Strongly agree	155	620	2.97	Accept
	Agree	95	285		
	Disagree	60	120		
	Strongly disagree	53	53		
	Total	363	1,078		

Table 5 shows that the respondents were agreed that they have being positively influenced by the media to engage in farming to grow more food to attain zero tolerance for hunger as advocated in as indicated by the SDG Goal 2. Similarly, the respondents affirmed that they have being fully convinced by SDGs media agenda to venture into small scale enterprises (SMEs) to supplement their income from other sources such as farming and paid employment. However, the media agenda were not able to convince them to get involved in environmental cleanliness towards the attainment of SDG Goal 6. Finally, the data depict the acceptance of the respondents affirmed that media agenda nudged them to encourage girl-child education in consonance with SDG Goal 5.

Obstacles to media agenda implementing the SDGs in Benue State

Table 6: Hindrances to media agenda setting for SDGs implementation

Statement	Response	Frequency	Points Cumulated per response	Weighted Mean Score (WMS)	Decision
Lack of frequent and well- coordinated mass media messages, radio jingles, press conferences, public service announcement, highly informative articles and features to sensitize people on SDGs.	Strongly agree	143	572	3.03	Accept
	Agree	132	396		
	Disagree	45	90		
	Strongly disagree	43	43		
	Total	363	10		
Statement	Response	Frequency	Points Cumulated per response	Weighted Mean Score (WMS)	Decision
Insecurity and threat to peaceful existence of Benue State residents due to communal clashes, activities of kidnappers, other social vices as well as farmers and herders' clashes.	Strongly agree	183	732	3.26	Accept
	Agree	121	363		
	Disagree	32	64		
	Strongly agree	27	27		
	Total	363	1186		

Table 6 revealed that majority of the respondents as indicated by the acceptance of the statement that the lack infrequent and well-coordinated mass media messages, radio jingles, press conferences, public service announcements, and other information-sharing methods highly informative have constituted major obstacles to the use of mass media to set agenda for the attainment of SDGs in Benue State. The table also shows the respondents' agreement with the statement that security threats occasioned by communal clashes, activities of kidnappers, farmers and herders' clashes, among other social vices as have been obstacles to the use of mass media for the attainment of SDGs in the State.

Discussion of findings

This discussion is done in line with the order of the objectives in the introductory section of this study. On Benue residents awareness of the SDGs, the data clearly indicate that although, the respondents did not know about all the SDGs, there is a high awareness level of some of the goals specifically, the first eight goals that pertains to economic advancement, education and health needs of the people which are very essential to their wellbeing are common knowledge to the respondents..The awareness level could be the result of the communication efforts of the development facilitators who provided information through the personal and impersonal media to the people. This is in consonant with the tenets of the agenda-setting function of the media to which Omega and Ochonogor (2013) said that by giving a particular topic a prominent treatment in their agenda over a period of time, the mass media would have succeeded in making the audience believe that the issue is indeed important. It is important to note that the people can only participate in any innovation if they are provided with adequate information about an issue and if those issues are sustained overtime to ensure that the media agenda transits to the individual agenda of the public. It is only then that understanding is enhanced so that the target audience takes an informed decision whether to participate or not. This also agrees with Ochonogor (2005) submission that one of the ways of attracting people to be part of innovative program me is to ensure that they are provided with necessary information to enable them understand the importance of the program me and make up their minds either to accept or reject the required change.

On the media channel that provided the people with information on the SDGs, the data show that the electronic media which include radio, television and internet were clearly the predominant sources of information for the respondent's awareness about SDGs. It is imperative to state that radio is the most accessible media to most people in Benue State especially those at rural areas who find it easy and cheap to operate. This finding agrees with Wole-Abu (2018) view that individuals, especially those at the grass roots will largely depend on traditional media for information on SDGs because radio has a wider reach and very popular with the rural dwellers.

It must be emphasised however, that the data also acknowledged that role of the interpersonal media of communication in spreading information about innovations. Researchers have emphasised the reinforcement function of interpersonal communication. It has been observed that although the mass media have the power to create awareness about any new idea, but that at the point where decisions are made whether to accept or reject the new idea, the impersonal media are very effective. Invariably the word-of-mouth could be used to canvass support for SDGs awareness among the Benue State population and this agrees with Okoro's (2005) explanation of the concept of communication for development which he says is the use of communication process, technique and media to help people towards consensus, to help people plan actions for change and sustainable development, to help acquire the knowledge and skills they need to improve their condition and that of society and to improve the effectiveness of institutions.

Regarding the understanding of the SDGs messages do residents of Benue State have gained, the data indicate that residents of Benue State understood that the targets of the goals were the elimination of poverty and hunger, laid emphasis on the need for qualitative and equitable education for both sexes as essential for all round human capacity development and improvement of the society. The result also illustrate that Benue State residents also understood of need to maintain and adhere to healthy living habits to enhance good health and well-beings well as environmental friendliness. Finally, they also understood the need to engage in small scale enterprises to augment their income and raise their standard of living. Invariably, the people' understanding of the messages of the SDGs stemmed from their mass-media agenda-setting on the United nations' Sustainable Development Goals. This expressly support the idea espoused by Ike (2005) who noted that, "The agenda setting functions of the mass media can be achieved in news casting and a variety of other media offerings. Invariably, the media create images and in the minds of the people which help them understand realities around them.

Media agenda's influence on Benue people's participation in the SDGs in Program me

The results of the study show that the media agenda influenced Benue residents' participation in a number of the SDGs in Benue State engage in farming to grow more food. Expectedly, media sensitization about the SDGs prompted many of the respondents to engage in farming and engagement in small scale medium enterprises (SMEs) to supplement their income while others took practical steps to keep their environment clean as well as maintain healthy living through personal hygiene. Similarly, the pursuit of quality and equitable education for the male and girl child was paramount in their response to the media agenda. Obviously, the agenda-setting function by the mass media played vital role in influencing, shaping opinions and persuading respondents to take desired actions. This is in accord with Hasan (2013) who asserts that the mass media by paying attention to some issues and overlooking others will affect public opinion; people will tend to know about those things dealt with by the mass media and adopt the order of priority set by the media.

According to the result of this investigation, the obstacles to the use of mass media for agenda setting to bring about the attainment of SDGs in Benue State, the result of the analysis indicate infrequent and uncoordinated nature of the mass media messages. Clearly, the three Government owned Nigeria Television Authority (NTA), Harvest F M Radio and Radio Benue F M and AM have not been well used in partnership with other media outlets in the state to effectively sensitize the people on the benefits of latching on to the promises of the SDGs. Added to this is the high rate of delinquencies exemplified by armed robbery, cultism and intra and inter-state communal clashes have prevented the realisation of some of the objectives of the SDGs, especially on food production as the state is a hot bed of crises between the farmers and nomadic herdsmen with resultant deaths and destruction of properties.

Conclusion

Based on the result of the investigation, the following conclusions are drawn:

That there is a high-level awareness about the Sustainable Development Goals among residents of Benue State, and that even though the residents of the state do are not aware of a number of the targets of the goals, they are adequately aware of the goals that are important o their lives, especially as the population is mainly agrarian and rural.

That radio emerged as the most used medium for information sharing about the SDGs among the residents of the state, even though interpersonal communication played major role as an information source.

The inhabitants of Benue State understood the mass-media messages about the goals to include the elimination of poverty and hunger, need for qualitative and equitable education for both sexes and environmental friendliness for a healthy living.

That the media agenda-setting influenced people's participation for the attainment of SDGs in Benue State in areas such as agriculture, small scale enterprises, maintenance of clean environment and personal hygiene as well as the pursuit of quality and equitable education for both male and female children.

There the absence of a properly coordinated media efforts buoyed by the prevailing condition of social vices have constitute hindrances to the mobilization of popular support for the attainment of SDGs in Benue State.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made.

1. Government and other stakeholders should adopt an effective media strategy to massively mobilize and sensitize residents of Benue on the SDGs This can be done by combining the different media forms to leverage on the strengths to reinforce each other. It is also important that the media messages on the SDGs are adapted into the native languages, for grass roots mobilization, while regular interactions with people in through town hall meetings and the engagement of community and religious leaders will go a long way to galvanise the people to buy into the SDGs.

2. In order to engage the increasing population of unemployed youths in the State, and given the agrarian nature of the state, government should as a matter of priority establish agricultural industries, where large scale farming could be carried out to boost food production, sustain food security, reduce social vices and increase generated revenue for the State.

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