COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AS A CRUCIAL LINK IN ACCELERATING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

William Sagini Oribu (PhD)

School of Business and Economics, Mount Kenya University, P.O. Box 342, 01000, Thika, Kenya

woribu@gmail.com

Abstract

Sustainable Development goals (SDGs) were formulated in 2012 and adopted in 2015 by the United Nations' member states. The 17 SDGs have been described by the United Nations (UN) as a "blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future." It is in this regard that they form the core of the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and they span everything from quality education to sustainable cities. This being the case, it is therefore important that in the course of building communities, the said SDGs are taken in account the use of Public Participation so that the rules of engagement are agreed by all the affected stakeholders. The purpose of this paper is therefore to demonstrate how the process of development can be linked to the implementation of SDGs. This is in view of the fact that for community development initiatives to work successfully, the following 5 processes must be taken into consideration: community governance and policy making; culture; research and learning; democratization processes; and external authorities/collaborations. The study findings are that the community development process (i.e.: governance and policy making; culture; research and learning; democratization processes; and external collaborations) can be aligned with at least 10 of the sustainable development goals. The paper recommends that the implementation of SDGs be done through the established and agreed specific community development priorities and processes in order to accelerate and achieve the objectives within the agreed timelines. In this regard, it is important that the idea of participation be incorporated as a requirement in the SDGs implementation processes.

Keywords: Community Development, Public Participation, Common Interest, and Sustainable Development Goals

INTRODUCTION

Background

There are so many processes that determine how a given community will go about issues that affect them. This is because; New people join, People submit contributions for their well-being, People collaborate with one another in an effort to improve their economic well-being among others. The said processes therefore lead to conflicts which will need to be resolved amicably (Bacon, 2012). In this regard, there is always need for community leaders to; focus on the prices by keeping all intended activities into perspective, build great processes to govern their activities, always assess the needs in order to come up with popularly acceptable projects, always ensure that members buy-in on any intended activities, create collaborative processes in order to exploit available resources for the good of all members, and re-asses the outcomes in order to determine if the said community is sustainable (Bacon, 2012). The above activities can work best when bureaucracy is avoided as much as possible. In so doing, the governance structure should not be so clouded (this is to say, as flat as possible).

Some of the initial challenges noted in the implementation of SDGs include: i) aligning the sustainable development goal with the national planning process; ii) coordination, management and leadership of the sustainable development goal; iii) adequacy of financing and other means of implementation; iv) data related issues and capacity of national statistical agencies; and v) partnership and stakeholder participation in sustainable development goal implementation (Bhattacharya *et al*, 2016).

This article argues that SDGs can easily be achieved when communities are involved directly. In the subsequent sections I have tried to indicate how the seven (7) processes involved in community building/development can be used to achieve the SDGs thus mitigating on the initially noted challenges.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Sustainable Development Goals

There are seventeen (17) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with specific targets and requirements as shown below:

Goal one targets to; i) end extreme poverty for everyone, ii) implement social protection programs for the poor and vulnerable, iii) ensure that everyone has equal rights to economic resources (such as control over land, property, inheritance, natural resources and financial services), iv) help improve vulnerable people's resilience in the face of environmental and climate-related shocks together with disasters, v) improve the political, economic, and social support for poverty-reduction strategies (UNDP, 2021).

Goal number two targets to; i) eradicate hunger by 2030 in order for all people to have access to nutritious and sufficient food all year round through the improvement of agricultural production techniques and building the required infrastructure in rural areas (UNDP, 2021).

Goal number three seeks to ensure that by 2030; i) the global maternal mortality rate is less than 70 per 100,000 live births, ii) the number of under five deaths are as low as 25 per 1,000 births, iii) communicable deceases eradicated, iv) the prevention and treatment of substance abuse is strengthened, v) there is universal access to sexual and reproductive health care services (including the availability of effective, affordable and quality general medical services), and vi) health financing, training and retention of skilled health workforce in developing countries is increased (UNDP, 2021).

Goal number four targets; i) the provision of early childhood, primary and secondary education for all by 2030 (through improvement of technical, vocational and job skills education including university for adults, ii) eliminate gender disparities and ensure equal access for vulnerable populations, iii) ensure all youth and a substantial amount of adults achieve literacy and numeracy, iv) promote global citizenship topics in all subjects (including sustainable development, sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality and peace through education), v) ensure education facilities that are safe are build and upgraded on order to be inclusive, non-violent and effective learning environments, and vi) increase the number of qualified teachers through investment in training and education (UNDP, 2021).

Goal number five targets to; i) end all forms of discrimination against women and girls, ii) eliminate forms of violence and exploitation against women and girls in both public and private spheres, iii) eliminate harmful practices (such as child or forced marriages and female genital mutilation), iv) recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work (through public services, social protection and shared responsibility), v) ensure full and effective participation for women in leadership and decision-making, and vi) ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights (UNDP, 2021).

Goal number six seeks to ensure that; i) everyone has access to safe and affordable drinking water (that is adequate sanitation as well as public education on healthy hygiene habits through monitoring and reduction in contamination of water quality, ii) reducing pollution, iii) eliminating dumping and minimizing release of hazardous chemicals and materials (by increasing recycling

and safe reuse of water), iv) water use is improved by addressing water scarcity, v) there is increased awareness among communities (by involving them in water and sanitation management), and vi) water-related ecosystems are protected and restored including mountains, forests, wetlands, lakes, rivers and aquifers (UNDP, 2021).

Goal number seven seeks to; i) ensure access to affordable (through reliable and modern energy services by use of new infrastructure and better technology), ii) promote energy efficiency by developing technology that wastes less energy, iii) increase the use of renewable energy sources globally compared with other sources of energy, iv) work together to research and develop renewable and clean energy resources, v) expand and upgrade infrastructure in developing countries. This goal is anticipated to ensure supply of modern and sustainable energy services to everyone by 2030 (UNDP, 2021).

Goal number eight targets to; i) generate safe and creative work that motivates people to fulfilling their potential, ii) ensure natural resources are respected and protected in all economic development activities, iii) promote decent work and safe working environments for all workers, iv) take action to give more jobs to unemployed youth through the increase of access to training, and v) ending forced and child labour in all forms (UNDP, 2021).

Goal number nine targets to; i) develop sustainable and resilient infrastructure to support economic development and human well-being, ii) improve access for small business and enterprise to financial services and technical support, iii) reduce environmental impact and promote sustainable development in businesses and industries, iv) invest in research for country-specific solutions and technological improvements for economic development, and v) ensure universal access to the Internet and new technologies particularly in developing countries (UNDP, 2021).

Goal number ten seeks to; i) provide support for people living in poverty to access resources for sustainable economic development, ii) ensure laws and practices represent and reflect people's needs while not discriminating against any group, iii) facilitate and support regular, responsible and safe migration and mobility of people, iv) ensure social programs and laws protect and include disadvantaged and vulnerable populations, and v) ensure people leaving one country to live in another benefit from laws and protection (UNDP, 2021).

Goal number eleven seeks to; i) ensure everyone has access to quality, safe housing and basic services, ii) provide safe, organized transportation that is not harmful to the environment and serves vulnerable populations (including women and children), iii) engage communities in discussions and planning for improvement of their cities, iv) strengthen efforts to protect cultural and natural heritage, v) strengthen resilience to disasters, vi) ensure waste management and air quality is monitored, and vii) prepare communities to properly manage their resources and tackle climate change (UNDP, 2021).

Goal number twelve seeks to; i) reduce the amount of global food waste per person by half (for individuals and businesses), ii) ensure that the soil, air and water are protected (by the upholding of international agreements for handling harmful chemicals), iii) reduce the generation of waste (by reducing, reusing and recycling), iv) ensure large companies' practices are responsible, transparent and environmentally sound, and v) support and develop public information and education to promote sustainable lifestyles (UNDP, 2021).

Goal number thirteen seeks to; i) ensure people (particularly vulnerable populations) are well prepared for hazards related to climate change and natural disasters, ii) address issues of climate change through government action and resource allocation, and iii) improve education, awareness, and capacity of climate change action, impact reduction, and early warning systems (UNDP, 2021).

Goal number fourteen seeks to; i) reduce marine pollution by 2025 by reducing sources of pollution from human activities on land, ii) enact laws that protect our oceans from destructive fishing practices (such as illegal fishing and overfishing), and iii) minimize the impacts of ocean acidification through enhanced scientific cooperation and action at all levels (UNDP, 2021).

Goal number fifteen seeks to; i) protect and conserve ecosystems (such as deserts and rainforests) by respecting international agreements and halting biodiversity loss, ii) reduce deforestation by planting more trees to increase reforestation for the sustainable management of forests for the future, iii) protect and prevent the extinction of endangered species (by controlling hunting and trafficking of protected flora and fauna), and iv) involve Indigenous communities in the conservation of their ecosystems (UNDP, 2021).

Goal number sixteen seeks to; i) reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere, ii) end abuse, exploitation, trafficking, violence and torture against children, iii)

promote equal access to justice for all (through the strengthening of transparent, inclusive, participatory and responsive legal systems at national and international levels), iv) substantially reduce bribery and corruption in all forms (through accountable and transparent institutions), v) provide a legal identity for all (including birth registration) by 2030, and iv) promote and enforce non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development (UNDP, 2021).

Goal number seventeen seeks to help ensure that; i) all countries have met these goals by 2030, ii) all countries present in national plans by deciding which issues are most pressing for their country, iii) each state allocates its own resources to achieve these goals (in addition to developed countries' commitment to support the achievement of these goals) iv) each state enhances multi-stakeholder partnerships (especially within finance, technology, capacity building and trade sectors) while addressing systemic policy issues, v) Each state engages with organizations and individuals who have been working on various topics related to the Global Goals for years, vi) states seek support and collaboration to achieve these goals, and vii) ensure each state improves their data and statistics management to be able to monitor and evaluate their progress and achievement of the Goals (UNDP, 2021).

The above goals are based on People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace and Partnership (5 P'S). They came into effect on 1st January 2016 following a United Nations Summit in September 2015 where 193 governments from around the world agreed to implement the Goals within their own countries in order to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. During this time member countries agreed to mobilize efforts to end all forms of poverty, fight inequalities and tackle climate change, while ensuring that no one is left behind (UNDP, 2021).

Community Development

A community can be defined as a collection of people matching forward as one with a common purpose. In order to make a given community sustainable there is need to divide it into teams with specific responsibilities (Bacon, 2012). Bacon argues that in the process of building communities there are seven (7) processes that must be followed thus: i) Develop specific objectives and goals for the community; ii) Build processes that will help stakeholders to perform their respective tasks, work together, and share success; iii) Provide tools and infrastructure that will enable members to work efficiently; iv) Create interest in community activities in order to attract more people into the community; v) Harness the social media to broadcast information, collaborate and get feedback on the ongoing activities; vi) Identify techniques to track progress on the state of the identified community goals; and vii) Identify mechanisms to manage conflict like divisive personalities.

Community development is ordinarily meant to increase the community's social capital (Oribu, W. S., 2021). By so doing, the community will be able to understand the activities that impact their wellbeing so that they are given priority.

In order to make the rest of the world aware of the activities of a given community there is need to: i) make the community known (broadcasting); ii) keep stakeholders aware of the progress in every activity (feedback); iii) seek collaboration with other development partners, and iv) develop a governance structure that is clearly understood by all the stakeholders (Bacon, 2012).

Broadcasting: This is done by posting good content regularly, particularly in the beginning when the community wants to get development partners but care must be taken to avoid bombarding people with too much or very little content.

Feedback: This can be done through a series of search feeds in the different social media networks to keep an eye on what is happening. Augment social media with news feeds, blogs, and other mediums while being careful not accidentally send out a tweet publicly if it was intended for just one person, or accidentally send an SMS from your phone to Twitter.

Collaboration: There is need to consider how collaborations can be used in the best ways for purpose of community development. This requires that there be effective communication through quickly ramping up campaigns while ensuring that the elevator pitch is quick, effective, and inclusive. All social media networks should be used to extend the reach of the community collaboration while being careful not spam or pressure people into joining you're the community social media campaigns and resources.

Governance: The purpose of this requirement is to ensure that a community is governed in terms of general governance, direction, and (if applicable) specialist governance by building communication channels between the governance body and those whom they govern. At the same time, this requires that a culture in which the members of the community can engage in conversation, debate, and discussion with their governing bodies is fostered. In this regard, the management should seek to inspire, motivate, and lastly enthuse the community based on future opportunities and the honesty and openness of the governance system that has been put in place. A clear, objective, and mature approach to solving conflict and contentious issues and for providing a decision when faced with deadlocks should be provided.

Public Participation and Sustainability of Communities

Public participation requires all the stakeholders to be involved in any activities that are undertaken for the common good. In this regard, community members and other stakeholders must be involved in the implementation of community development activities. This requires that

all interested persons be provided with information on the performance of all community initiatives including the governance structure (Jenkins & Goetz, 1999). It is in view of this that this article summarizes the seven processes in community development into five (5) thus: i) Governance and policy making; ii) Stakeholder culture; iii) Democratized processes; iv) Research and Learning; and v) External authority. It is anticipated that if the five processes are followed sustainability can be realized in a given community.

Working towards a common goal is quite important if the SDGs are going to be delivered efficiently. As Benjamin Franklin once said, "*We must all hang together, or assuredly, we shall all hang separately*" (Franklin B. 2003). With the above in mind we can now link the five processes to the SDGs as indicated below.

i) _Governance & Policy Making_: For the sustainability of a given community, ideas for change must be conceptualized and realized throughout. This requires that governance and policy making must be signed off from the top after the stakeholders have been consulted. It is at this stage that policies that accelerate SDG should be agreed and implementation plans put in place. The community leadership has the oversight, authority, and the responsibility to build internal capacity to deliver meaningful change. It is therefore important that a clear agenda is established to set the standard and centralize the community mission including setting real objectives with fixed timeframes including working towards them.

The process can be aligned with the following SDGs: a) **SDG 1.(i) (End extreme Poverty for every one)** which targets the creation of "sound policy frameworks at the national, regional and international levels to support accelerated investment in poverty eradication actions"; b) **SDG 5.(i) (End all forms of discrimination against women and girls)** which targets the "adoption and strengthening of sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels"; and c) **SDG 8.(iii) (Promote decent work and safe working environments for all workers)** which targets the "protection of labor rights and promotion of safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment".

ii) _Stakeholder Culture_: A sustainable society should convince all stakeholders (i.e. community members, government agencies and development partners) about the significance of their everyday impact. This requires that a culture that is aware of sustainability and considerate of their own impact be created. There is need to motivate and engage community members to embrace and adopt SDGs adoption. In order to address this, the community leadership will need to start with the basics, as transforming a community's attitude to social value of whatever they undertake to do. Focus should be set on implementing changes that won't add to the

community workload. This will include fundamentals such as removing plastic items, putting recycling bins in place or using more environmentally friendly transportation. Further, the community can be inspired to do more by getting competitive. This may involve setting up a leader board and offer prizes as incentives in order to motivate members by appealing to their competitive nature.

The process can be aligned with: a) *SDG 10.(iv) (Ensure social programs and laws protect and include all disadvantaged and vulnerable populations)* which targets the "adoption of policies, especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies, and progressively achieving greater equality."; b) *SDG 12.(iii) (Reduce the generation of waste)* which targets "substantially reducing waste generation through prevention, reduction, recycling and reuse by 2030"; and c) *SDG 15.(i) (Protect and conserve ecosystems)* which targets to "promote the implementation of sustainable management of all types of forests, halting deforestation, restoring degraded forests and substantially increasing afforestation and reforestation globally by 2020".

iii) *Democratization processes*: This requires that the community leadership open conversation on social impact to community members in order to get their feedback. Further, there is need to listen to community requests when developing community initiatives by opening the floor to suggestions, allowing members to make recommendations that are important to them.

The process can be aligned with: a) *SDG 16.(iv) (Provide legal identity for all)* which targets to "develop effective, accountable, and transparent institutions at all levels"; b) *SDG 10.(ii) (Ensure laws and practices represent and reflect people's needs while not discriminating against any group)* which targets to "ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome by eliminating discriminatory laws, politics and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and action in that regard"; and c) *SDG 16.(iv) (Substantially reduce bribery and corruption in all forms through accountable and transparent institutions)* which targets to "ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels".

iv) *Research & Learning*: This requires that the community be proactively supported by providing them with the skills and knowledge to more substantially have a social impact. Invest in carbon literacy programmes, host SDG workshops, and educate members about sustainability by empowering them to become self-motivated sustainability champions. Further the community leadership should take advantage of the various sources of information and technologies to help underpin the implementation of the SDGs. In so doing, foundational knowledge behaviors will begin to change both inside and outside the community. Community members should also be allowed to become sustainability advocates in their own right in order

to naturally disseminate their expertise to their peers. In so doing the community behaviors will be influenced which will result in development ideas, solutions and innovations that are conscious of sustainability practices thus contributing to the SDGs.

The process can be aligned with: a) **SDG 4.(v) (Ensure education facilities that are safe are build and upgraded in order to be inclusive, non-violent and effective environments)** which targets to "ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development … by 2030"; b) **SDG 12.(i) (Reduce the amount of global food waste per person by half for individuals and businesses)** which targets to "ensure that people everywhere have the relevant information and awareness for sustainable development and lifestyles in harmony with nature by 2030"; and c) **SDG 13.(ii) (Address issues of climate change through government action and resource allocation)** which targets to "improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning".

v) _External Authority/Collaboration_: This process requires that the community should celebrate their achievements, share experiences, and communicate how overcame challenges. This can be aligned with **SDG 13. (iii) (Improve education awareness and capacity of climate change action, impact reduction and early warning systems)** which stipulates the need to "improve … awareness-raising" by sharing knowledge in order to inherently contribute to this SDG. Further, this process requires that communities be open to partnering with social enterprises, charities, or other pro-social companies at all stages. In so doing the community is expected to learn from each other, offer solutions and network with like-minded people. In this regard, the community leadership should insist that the partner organizations consider and act on the SDGs too.

The process can be aligned with: a) **SDG 12.(iv) (Ensure large companies' practices are responsible, transparent and environmentally sound)** which targets the "promotion of public procurement practices that are sustainable, in accordance with national policies and priorities"; b) **SDG 17.(iv) (Each state to enhance multi-stakeholder partnerships)** which targets to "enhance the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development …and sharing of knowledge, expertise, technology and fiscal resources, to support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in all countries, in particular developing countries"; and c) **SDG 17.(v) (Each state engages with organizations and individuals who have been working on various topics related to the global goals for years)** which targets to "encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resources strategies of partnerships".

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper has already aligned community building with 10 out of the 17 SDGs. It is therefore clear that by adopting the specific community development processes, member countries will be able to accelerate the implementation of SDGs.

i) *Adoption of the agreed community governance and policy making initiatives*: requires that a clear agenda must be established that sets the standard through the setting of real objectives with fixed timeframes, and ensuring that every effort is put in place to work towards them through: a) the creation of sound policy frameworks at the national, regional and international levels which support the accelerated investment in poverty eradication actions in line with SDG number 1 (No poverty); b) adopting and strengthen sound policies that are enforceable through legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels in line with SDG number 5 (Gender Equality); and c) protecting labor rights and the promotion of safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment in line with SDG number 8 (Decent work and Economic growth).

ii) *Understanding the stakeholder's culture*: This involves: a) the need to adopt the culture of the community in coming up with policies (such as fiscal, wage and social protection) whose effect will be to progressively achieve greater equality. The will help in reducing inequality thus achievement of SDG number 10 (Reducing Inequality); b) substantial reduction of waste generation (through prevention, reduction, recycling and reuse) thus practicing responsible consumption and production in line with SDG number 12 (Responsible consumption and production); and c) promoting the implementation of sustainable management of all types of forests (by halting deforestation, restoring degraded forests and substantially increase afforestation and reforestation) in line with SDG number 15 (Life on Land).

iii) *Research and Learning*: The purpose of this process is to influence their behaviors of community members and is meant to result in business ideas, solutions and innovations that are conscious of sustainability practices through: a) ensuring all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development in line with SDG number 4 (Quality Education); b) ensuring everybody has the relevant information and awareness for sustainable development and lifestyles in harmony with nature in line with SDG number 12 (Sustainable consumption and production); and c) improving education, raising awareness in human and institutional capacity for climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning in line with SDG number 13 (Climate action).

iv) *Democratization Processes*: This requires that the leadership should listen to the requests of the community (public participation) when developing development initiatives. Allow suggestions

and recommendations that are important to the respective stakeholder by: a) developing effective, accountable, and transparent institutions at all levels in order to create harmony and peaceful co-existence in line with SDG number 16 (Peace, Justice and strong institutions); b) ensuring equal opportunity and reduction of inequalities of outcome by eliminating discriminatory laws, politics and practices through legislation of appropriate policies and action plans in line with SDG number 10 (Reduced inequality); and c) ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels in line with SDG number 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions).

v) *External authorities/Collaborations*: This requires that member nations insist that partner organizations consider and act on the SDGs as well which should be the norm in public sector contracts. It requires that one must become more familiar across a wider range of sectors. This process is to be done through: a) promote public procurement practices that are sustainable, in accordance with national policies and priorities in line with SDG number 12 (Responsible consumption and production); b) enhance Global Partnership for Sustainable Development through the sharing of knowledge, expertise, technology and fiscal resources. It also includes the need to support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in all countries, in particular developing countries in line with SDG number 17 (Partnership for growth).

Given the above findings, it can be noted that only seven (7) sustainable development goals have not been clearly associated with the five community development processes and in vie of the understanding that the seventeen goals can be summarized into four main items namely People, Planet, Peace and Partnerships (Oribu, W. S. 2021). There is need for further research and analysis in order to align the remaining seven (7) goals into the community development matrix. These are; i) Clean water and Sanitation, ii) Affordable and Clean energy, iii) Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure, iv) Sustainable cities and communities, v) Life under water, vi) Good health and well-being, and vii) Zero hunger can easily be aligned with the five community development processes.

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