

# SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS IMPLEMENTATION AT THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN NIGERIA: A CROSS-EXAMINATION OF ADMINISTRATIVE INSTRUMENTALITY

*IMPLEMENTAÇÃO DOS OBJETIVOS DE DESENVOLVIMENTO  
SUSTENTÁVEL NO GOVERNO LOCAL NA NIGÉRIA: UM  
EXAME CRUZADO DA INSTRUMENTALIDADE  
ADMINISTRATIVA*

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Received: 20 July 2025

Aceito: 24 Sept 2025

Publicado: 25 Oct 2025

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knowledge about SDGs agenda and they were instrumental to its implementation. The paper recommends a bottom up strategy that will start with localising SDG from the third tier level of governance and implementing same therefrom using trained administrators as key role players.

**Keywords:** Development. local administrators. local government. Sustainable Development Goals.

## **Resumo**

Os Objetivos de Desenvolvimento Sustentável (ODS) são uma continuação dos Objetivos de Desenvolvimento do Milênio, após o término do período de vigência destes em 2015. Este artigo argumenta que os administradores em nível local são fundamentais para a implementação bem-sucedida da agenda. Existem evidências substanciais que sugerem que, apesar das afirmações em contrário por parte de autoridades estaduais, o ritmo de alcance das metas dos ODS, após quase uma década de seu lançamento, permanece extremamente baixo. Este estudo, portanto, avaliou o envolvimento dos administradores locais no marco de implementação dos ODS. O estudo adota um delineamento explicativo e utilizou métodos qualitativos de coleta e análise de dados. O artigo constatou, contrariando especulações, que os administradores locais possuíam conhecimento aprofundado sobre a agenda dos ODS e foram instrumentais em sua implementação. O artigo recomenda uma estratégia ascendente (bottom-up), que comece pela localização dos ODS no terceiro nível de governo e pela implementação a partir desse ponto, utilizando administradores capacitados como principais agentes.

**Palavras-chave:** Desenvolvimento. administradores locais. governo local. Objetivos de Desenvolvimento Sustentável.

## 1. Introduction

The local government represents the third tier of governance, positioning it closest to the grassroots and local communities. It still refers to one of the **sub-state level** governance. Sub-state refers to levels of government or administration **below the national or central government**, usually within decentralized political system. Sub-state administrators typically refer to officials or bodies that manage or govern at a level below the state or national level (Maciej, 2021). In practical terms, sub-state covers, **local government, or municipal** tiers — depending on how a country is structured.

Conceptually, local government refers to an organization with a resident population occupying a clearly defined geographical area, operating through an officially recognized administrative structure. It functions as an autonomous legal entity with the authority to deliver specific public services and the capacity to generate part of its own revenue. Several scholars view local government as a fundamentally political institution, one that not only fosters civic participation but also manages the provision of essential services for community welfare. Within its jurisdiction, local government provides citizens with opportunities to express opinions on local matters and elect representatives responsible for handling these affairs on their behalf.

In recent years, sustainable development has become a critical focus in Nigeria due to the country's ongoing struggles with poverty, environmental degradation, and infrastructural deficits. These challenges mirror those of many developing nations. There is a growing consensus that local government is a key player in the pursuit of sustainable development goals (SDGs) in Nigeria.

This research seeks to examine the contribution of local government administrators to the realization of the SDGs in Nigeria, with particular emphasis on the Lagos West Senatorial District. The study explores the various SDGs set by the United Nations and evaluates the strategic roles that local government administrators can play in achieving these objectives within the Nigerian context. Additionally, the research investigates the challenges that hinder local government administrators in fulfilling their mandates related to sustainable development. Recent studies have underscored the need for increased attention to the roles of local government in achieving the SDGs in Nigeria (Emeka & Mgbemena, 2021). According to Emeka and Mgbemena (2021), local government administrators possess significant potential to drive sustainable development, given their closeness to the communities they serve.

Globally, the realization of the SDGs is a pressing concern for governments at

all levels, including local authorities. Local government administrators are particularly important due to their ability to implement policies and initiatives that directly affect communities (Balaguer-Coll et al., 2022; Narbón-Perpiñá et al., 2020). However, it is essential to critically assess the extent of their contributions, especially in the face of persistent challenges such as inadequate funding, corruption, and transparency issues (Nickson, 2018). This study therefore focuses on Oshodi-Isolo Local Government Area in Lagos State, analyzing the contributions and limitations of local government administrators in SDG implementation. The local government secretariat is expected to play a pivotal role in translating the global SDGs into actionable local policies, plans, and projects. As frontline service providers, local governments are responsible for delivering basic infrastructure and services, making them indispensable to the success of the SDGs at the grassroots level. They are tasked with adapting national and global development frameworks into local contexts that reflect the needs of their specific communities.

According to the UN SDGs policy framework, sub-national governments, including local councils, are vital to advancing and operationalizing global development agreements. In federal states like Nigeria, the relevance of local governments is explicitly mentioned in Paragraph 42 of the Rio+20 Outcome Document titled "*The Future We Want*" (UNDP, 2012). Local governments are therefore expected to contribute to goals such as poverty alleviation, quality education, clean water and sanitation, sustainable urbanization, and climate action. Their roles include resource mobilization, community engagement, progress monitoring, and reporting on local SDG implementation.

Despite over a decade of SDG implementation, the expected impacts at the grassroots level in Nigeria remain largely unfulfilled. This underscores the importance of examining how effectively local government administrators are performing their roles in SDG realization. This study aims to analyze the strategic roles of local government administrators in the implementation of SDGs at the grassroots level. It seeks to identify the key strategies and initiatives adopted by administrators and community stakeholders to promote SDG awareness and engagement. Additionally, the research investigates the measures taken to enhance local administrators' contributions toward the sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, particularly within the context of Local Government Areas of Lagos State. The study is guided by the following research questions:

- i. What are the significant roles of local government administrators in promoting social and economic development across local government councils in Lagos State?

- ii. What challenges do local government administrators encounter in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) within Lagos State local government councils?
- iii. How do local government policies impact the realization of the SDGs in Lagos State local government councils using the local government administrative framework?

To address these research questions, the study employs suitable methodological approaches designed to generate contextually relevant and empirically grounded findings.

## 2. Literature review

In this section, the researcher explores and analyses existing concepts, theories, and scholarly works related to the study. This helps to build a solid theoretical foundation and understanding of key concepts that are relevant to the research questions.

Several studies have focused on local government administrators' contributions to the achievement of sustainable development goals (SDGs) in Nigeria. In particular, scholars have examined the role of local government administrators in implementing policies that support sustainable development. In a study by Ogechukwu and Amechi (2019), the authors assessed the role of local government administrators in the implementation of sustainable development programs in Nigeria. The study, which was conducted in Anambra State, Nigeria, involved 350 respondents comprising of local government staff, civil society organizations, and community leaders. The study revealed that local government administrators played a crucial role in ensuring the implementation of sustainable development programs in their localities. The administrators were found to have facilitated the development of partnerships between the government and other stakeholders, provided technical expertise to support the development of sustainable development programs, and engaged in community-based development projects. The findings of this study suggest that a strong and proactive local government administration is essential to realizing sustainable development.

In another study by Silva, Sánchez-Hernández & Carvalho (2023). The authors examined the relationship between local government administrators' capacity and the implementation of sustainable development policies in Nigeria. This study involved a cross-sectional survey of 300 local government administrators from six local

governments in Lagos State, Nigeria. The authors found that the level of capacity building of local government administrators was positively related to the likelihood of implementing sustainable development policies. The study concluded that improving the capacity of local government administrators would enhance their ability to implement sustainable development policies and programs.

Moreover, a study by Agbodike, Igbokwe-Ibeto and Nkah (2014) investigated the challenges of sustainable development in Nigeria and explored the role of local government administrators in addressing these challenges. The review found that limited financial resources, corruption, lack of autonomy and weak institutional capacity are major obstacles confronting local councils in driving sustainable development (Enejo, 2025; Akindele & Olaopa, 2002; Eboreime & Ibietan, 2013; Ibietan & Ndukwe, 2014; Makinde, 2018).

For effective implementation of SDG, government need to localize targets fund it therefrom. In Nigeria, less than 20% of public spending in Nigeria is allocated to local governments (Daniel, Oluremi, Zekeri & Ombugu (2016)). Their revenues from federal and state transfers are also grossly inadequate to provide quality services and infrastructure especially in rural areas (Makinde, 2018). Pervasive corruption further reduces resources available for development projects as local officials misappropriate public funds through contract inflation, bribery and fraud (Ibietan & Ndukwe, 2014).

Nigeria's local governments lack real autonomy since State governments excessively interfere in their functions by controlling finances and personnel (Akindele & Olaopa, 2002). Weak institutions and absence of checks and balances foster corruption, reduce transparency and undermine efficient service delivery (Eboreime & Ibietan, 2013). Local administrations also suffer from dearth of skilled technocrats, inadequate office infrastructure, lack of service delivery standards and limited community engagement capabilities (Ibietan & Ndukwe, 2015). These systemic constraints seriously hamper local governments from playing their expected role as engines of sustainable development.

The review emphasizes five key strategies needed to enhance local government effectiveness for sustainable development Oshodi-Iso local government in Nigeria:

1. Increase fiscal decentralization and boost local government funding - Raising expenditure of national budget on local governments from 19% to at least 25% can provide resources needed for impactful SDG interventions (Makinde, 2018).

2. Strengthen local institutional capacities - Building capacities of local administrators on transparency, service delivery, community engagement, data management and technology use are vital (Eboreime & Ibietan, 2013).

3. Expand local autonomy and decision-making - Reducing state interference by ensuring local control over finances, personnel and development planning is critical (Akindele & Olaopa, 2002).

4. Curb corruption through accountability - Actions like performance management, audits, civic oversight and e-governance can increase transparency and reduce corruption (Ibietan & Ndukwe, 2015).

5. Enhance community participation - Creating structures for active citizen engagement in local planning and feedback will improve governance responsiveness and quality of development initiatives (Fasakin, 2016).

A review of existing empirical studies reveals that much of the scholarly attention has been directed toward examining the contributions of local government administrators to the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Nigeria. These studies, conducted across various regions of the country, have employed diverse methodological approaches, including content analysis, chi-square tests, and correlation analysis. However, despite these efforts, a noticeable gap persists in the literature: limited attention has been given to the administrative mechanisms and institutional dynamics shaping SDG implementation at the local government level in Lagos State. This study seeks to address this lacuna by providing a context-specific analysis of the administrative instrumentality involved in advancing the SDG agenda at the grassroots level, thereby contributing to a more nuanced understanding of localized development governance.

### **3. The sustainable development goals**

The Post-2015 Development Agenda was a process from 2012 to 2015 led by the United Nations to define the future global development framework that would succeed the Millennium Development Goals. The SDGs were developed to succeed the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which ended in 2015. 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 (Cerin, 2006). While 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.

These concerns translated into the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

which were officially launched in September 2000 at the United Nations Millennium Summit in New York. They were derived from the Millennium Declaration, which was adopted by 189 UN member states and set out eight global development goals to be achieved by the year 2015. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were officially launched on 25 September 2015 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, during the UN Sustainable Development Summit, where all 193 UN member states adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) succeeded the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), with a broader agenda aimed at sustainability and inclusiveness. SDGs was seen as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all by 2030 (United Nations, 2015). Here is a list of the 17 SDGs:

- i. **No Poverty:** End poverty in all its forms everywhere.
- ii. **Zero Hunger:** End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture.
- iii. **Good Health and Well-being:** Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.
- iv. **Quality Education:** Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.
- v. **Gender Equality:** Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.
- vi. **Clean Water and Sanitation:** Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.
- vii. **Affordable and Clean Energy:** Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all.
- viii. **Decent Work and Economic Growth:** Promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all.
- ix. **Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure:** Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation.
- x. **Reduced Inequality:** Reduce inequality within and among countries.
- xi. **Sustainable Cities and Communities:** Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable.

- xii. **Responsible Consumption and Production:** Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.
- xiii. **Climate Action:** Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.
- xiv. **Life below Water:** Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development.
- xv. **Life on Land:** Protect, restore, and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and biodiversity loss.
- xvi. **Peace and Justice Strong Institutions:** Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels.
- xvii. **Partnerships to achieve the Goal:** Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.

Each SDG encompasses specific targets and indicators that provide a framework for countries and organizations to work toward sustainable development in various areas. The SDGs emphasize the interconnectedness of social, economic, and environmental aspects of development and call for collaborative efforts from governments, businesses, civil society, and individuals to achieve a more equitable and sustainable world (Zeemering, 2015, 2020).

## **4. Local government administrators and their roles in sdgs implementation framework**

According to the International City/County Management Association (ICMA), local administrators are "professionals who manage the day-to-day operations of local governments, providing leadership and guidance to ensure the effective delivery of public services"(ICMA, 2020). Local government administrators are individuals who work for local councils, managing administrative, financial, and human resources tasks to ensure smooth operations and the delivery of essential services to the community. They are critical actors in the policy and governance architecture of Nigeria. They are responsible for the development of their local areas, and they

are expected to work closely with other stakeholders, including the traditional rulers, community-based organizations, and other government agencies, to actualize development objectives (Igbokwe-Ibeto, 2019; Adesiyan, 2018).

They are referred to as public officials responsible for the day-to-day management and service delivery at the local level, encompassing tasks like maintaining infrastructure, providing essential services, and implementing local policies. Administrators at the local governance level have responsibilities which involve the translation of global goals into local actions, coordinating efforts, and engaging stakeholders to ensure sustainable development. They include various individuals who manage and oversee the day-to-day activities of local governments, organizations, or communities. This include mayors, councilors, supervisors, or commissioners who are elected or appointed to manage local government affairs. Oftentimes, the context of adoption of the concept exclude elected local government council and other elected officials. In Lagos State, therefore, sub-state administrators refer to the officials who manage the five administrative divisions and the 20 Local Government Areas (LGAs) and 37 Local Council Development Areas (LCDAs). Below are the categories of people that are captured in this context:

- i. Council Manager: Council Manager is seen as the Head of Administration, is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the council and ensuring the implementation of policies and decisions made by the elected council members. They act as a link between the executive arm and other local government officials.
- ii. Town or City Managers: Professional administrators responsible for implementing local government policies and managing municipal services.
- iii. County Administrators: Officials who oversee county-level services, such as healthcare, transportation, and law enforcement.
- iv. District Administrators: Individuals who manage specific districts or regions within a local government, such as school districts or water districts.
- v. Community Development Officers: Professionals who work with local communities to develop and implement projects, programs, and services.
- vi. Local Council Secretaries: Administrative officers responsible for supporting local councils, preparing agendas, and recording minutes.
- vii. Village or Ward Leaders: Elected or appointed leaders who oversee local affairs, resolve disputes, and provide basic services in rural or urban areas.

viii. **Traditional Rulers:** In some cultures, traditional rulers, such as chiefs or emirs, play a significant role in local administration, particularly in rural areas.

These individuals play important roles in delivering local services, implementing policies, and engaging with communities to address local needs and concerns at the sub-state level of governance.

Here are some key roles local government administrator plays in the context of SDGs:

- i. **Policy Alignment and Integration:** As Abels (2014) pointed out, local administrators are responsible for aligning local policies, plans, and initiatives. Therefore, local administrators ensure that sustainable goals are integrated into local development plans and ensure that the strategies adopted at the local level are in harmony with the broader global agenda. Moreover, local budget effective alignment is also an important performance area of local government administrators in charge of finance (Purba, 2025)
- ii. **Coordination and Collaboration:** Administrators facilitate collaboration among different local government departments, agencies, NGOs, businesses, and community organizations to jointly work toward achieving specific goal. They create platforms for dialogue and partnership with the ability to coordinate formal horizontal policy in certain aspect of developmental goals like the mitigation of the effect of climate change on the people (Armstrong, 2023; Bhusal 2022).
- iii. **Local Data Collection and Monitoring:** Administrators collect local data to track progress toward the SDGs. This involves setting up monitoring and evaluation systems, gathering relevant indicators, and ensuring that data is accurate and up-to-date.
- iv. **Capacity Building:** Administrators organize training and capacity-building programs for local officials, staff, and community members. These programs help enhance understanding of the SDGs and build the skills needed for effective implementation (Danso & Opoku, 2025). According to Isiaka (2022) and Abah (2023), the trend currently in local government strategy to reduce hunger and poverty is the use of entrepreneurship development to build human capital for self-reliant which is the hallmark of sustainable development.
- v. **Community Engagement and Participation:** Local administrators engage with local communities to raise awareness about the SDGs and encourage active participation in development initiatives (Christensen & McQuestin,

2019). They create opportunities for community members to voice their concerns and contribute to decision-making processes. Michels and De Graaf, (2017) explains that the local government provides the training ground for local populace to engage in democratic governance. Generally local governments help to build support mechanism for any citizen engagement and participatory governance

- vi. **Resource Mobilization:** One critical role of local government in Nigeria and, indeed, globally is to mobilise human, material and financial resource (Abah, 2023). Administrators are responsible for mobilizing resources, including funds, expertise, and technology, to support SDG implementation at the local level (Salvador & Sancho, 2023). This involves seeking partnerships, grants, and investments from various sources.
- vii. **Innovation and Adaptation:** Danso & Opoku (2025) provides a theoretical insights to capacity development role in local government systems, particularly in resource-constrained which leads to adaptation and innovation. In this regard, administrators are to identify innovative approaches that suit the local context and address specific challenges related to the SDGs. They adapt global solutions to local conditions, considering factors like culture, environment, and socio-economic dynamics.
- viii. **Advocacy and Policy Influence:** Local administrators have a role in advocate for policies, regulations, and reforms that align with the SDGs. They engage with higher levels of government to ensure that national policies support local efforts toward sustainable development.
- ix. **Infrastructure and Services:** Administrators oversee the development of local infrastructure and services in ways that contribute to the SDGs. This include projects related to clean water and sanitation, renewable energy, education, healthcare, and more.
- x. **Reporting and Accountability:** Administrators prepare reports on local progress toward the SDGs and contribute to national and global reporting mechanisms. They ensure transparency and accountability in the implementation process.
- xi. **Emergency Response and Resilience:** Administrators' role in disaster preparedness, response, and recovery. They integrate resilience-building measures into local development plans to minimize the impact of disasters on SDG progress (Salvador & Sancho, 2023).

- xii. **Cultural Sensitivity and Inclusivity:** Administrators ensure that SDG initiatives respect local cultures, traditions, and values. They promote inclusivity by considering the needs and rights of marginalized groups in development activities.

In summary, local government administrators act as vital conduits for translating the global SDG agenda into actionable plans at the community level. Through coordination, engagement, innovation, and strategic planning, they contribute to the achievement of sustainable development within their localities. For instance, Adesiyani (2018) posits that the absence of active involvement of local government in the implementation of the MDGs created a serious gap in its implementation. Similarly, Enejo (2025) attributes the challenge that bedeviled Millennium Development Goals (MDG) as a failure to situate the MDGs' implementation within the local governance framework. He therefore recommends increased participation and partnering with local government at the early stage of SDG implementation.

## 5. Theoretical framework: theory of decentralisation

One theory that supports the importance of local administrators as agents of development in academic writing is the theory of "decentralization." Decentralization refers to the transfer of decision-making authority and resources from central government to local levels of administration. This theory suggests that empowering local administrators allows for more efficient and effective governance, as they are better positioned to understand the unique needs and challenges of their communities.

In the context of development, local administrators play a crucial role in implementing policies and programs that address specific development challenges at the grassroots level (Enejo, 2025; Abioro & Adefeso, 2014). They are often more attuned to the social, economic, and cultural dynamics of their communities, and can tailor development interventions to better meet the needs of their constituents. Furthermore, local administrators can also act as facilitators of community participation and engagement in the development process. By involving local stakeholders in decision-making and planning, they can ensure that development initiatives are responsive to the actual needs and priorities of the community. Overall, the theory of decentralization supports the idea that local administrators are essential agents of development, as they possess the knowledge, expertise, and proximity to effectively drive sustainable development outcomes at the local level.

## 6. Materials and Methods

This study adopts an explanatory research design to examine the role of local government administrators in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) within selected local government councils in Lagos State. The research design integrates both secondary data analysis and primary qualitative data collection to enable a nuanced understanding of administrative contributions, challenges, and policy impacts across multiple SDG targets.

Secondary data were sourced from official documents, government policy reports, SDG implementation frameworks, and relevant publications by the United Nations, National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), and other development agencies. These materials provided foundational insights into existing institutional frameworks and policy directions guiding SDGs implementation in Nigeria, with a focus on the local government level.

To complement the document analysis, semi-structured interviews were conducted with six selected local government Council Manager and other identified administrator designated to act where necessary. who can act as ousing a thematic analysis. The ten local government that make-up Lagos West Senatorial Districts are: Agege, Ajeromi-Ifelodun, Alimosho, Amuwo-Odofin, Badagry, Ifako-Ijaiye, Ikeja, Mushin, Ojo and Oshodi-Isolo. The six local government were purposely selected based on convenience non-probability sampling technique which implies that the local government were selected without randomisation or structured selection criteria. The Council Manager is the key administrative head responsible weaving SDG principles into local strategic plans at the local government areas (LGAs) or local council development areas (LCDAs) of Lagos State. Therefore, the study comprised the Local Council Manager in the six local government that participated in the study as follows: Badagry, Ojo, Oshodi-Isolo, Alimosho, Amuwo Odofin and Agege Local Government Areas. A qualitative case study method was employed, using document analysis and key informant interviews to investigate the role of administrators in SDGs implementation at the grassroots level of governance.

For document analysis, each document was examined using a content-context matrix. Based on this the researcher was able to analyze both the textual content and the situational context in each of the relevant document used. Using a thematic extraction guide developed by Braun and Clarke's six-step thematic analysis process. The thematic analysis involves knowing and understanding the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report, providing a flexible yet rigorous framework for identifying and

interpreting patterns in qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Codes and categories were created around key concepts such as administrative capacity, resource planning and application, as well as community or public involvement. This approach ensured that all themes extracted from the documents were directly relevant to the objectives of the research and were consistently across the areas of study.

The collection of primary data facilitated the capture of firsthand insights into administrative practices, institutional dynamics, and the operational contexts shaping SDG implementation at the grassroots level. Structured interview questions were employed to elicit responses from the local government administrators, with a focus on three thematic areas: (1) awareness and involvement in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN-SDGs), (2) implementation framework; the current status and progress of SDG-related initiatives within their jurisdictions, and (3) the key challenges confronting local administrators in translating the goals into actionable outcomes. Data triangulation Data obtained through document analysis and interviews were triangulated to strengthen our data reliability and study outcome. The approach was particularly suitable for addressing the study's research questions, which focus on the roles, challenges, and policy impacts of local government administrators in the context of SDG implementation in Lagos State. On a final note, the study was guided by core academic and research ethical values of informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality.

## **7. Discussion of findings**

This study provides important insights into the role of local government administrators in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly in the context of Lagos West Senatorial District. The findings reaffirm earlier studies, such as Sani and Agyemang (2020), Enejo (2025) as well as Abioro and Adefeso (2014), which emphasize the pivotal role of local administrators in facilitating grassroots development. The results reveal that local government administrators are not only aware of the SDG framework but are also actively engaged in implementing specific agendas, particularly those related to basic service delivery and social development.

Four of the Council Chairmen described their active involvement in advancing SDG-related initiatives such as gender equality (SDG 5), clean water and sanitation (SDG 6), decent work and economic growth (SDG 8), and sustainable cities and communities (SDG 11). For instance, administrators highlighted youth empowerment programs, women-focused education campaigns, and urban planning efforts,

all designed to translate global goals into local outcomes. These areas were widely seen as directly relevant to local development priorities and thus received significant attention and political will.

However, the study also highlights disparities in the level of engagement across different SDG targets. Areas such as climate action (SDG 13) and life below water (SDG 14) received far less attention, largely due to a lack of contextual relevance or awareness in many inland urban councils. Participants frequently noted that some of these goals were perceived as abstract or distant from their immediate community needs. This uneven distribution of effort reflects a gap in policy alignment and localized adaptation of global goals.

Crucially, the study brings attention to several structural and institutional challenges that impede the broader implementation of the SDGs. Consistent with the findings of Adeyemi and Olaoye (2019), participants cited inadequate funding, delays in fund disbursement, poor infrastructure, and limited administrative autonomy as major barriers to effective governance at the local level. Four Council Managers expressed frustration over their inability to independently initiate and sustain development projects due to over-centralization and weak fiscal decentralization (Carrasco, Rahemtulla & Rohdewohld, 2023). These constraints were seen as limiting both innovation and responsiveness.

Capacity constraints were another recurrent theme. Although a substantial number of administrators acknowledged having some awareness of the SDGs, many admitted to lacking adequate technical knowledge to fully implement or monitor progress across multiple targets. This gap reinforces the need for targeted capacity-building interventions, including training on sustainable development principles, data collection, performance measurement, and inclusive governance practices. As Adeyemi (2013) has argued, institutional capacity is closely linked to administrative effectiveness at the local government level.

The study also found a deficit in stakeholder collaboration, especially between local governments and civil society organizations. While some NGOs have established grassroots networks that could enhance the reach of SDG-related programs, local government administrators rarely engage with these entities in a sustained or strategic manner. This disconnect suggests a missed opportunity to leverage non-state actors' strengths in community mobilization, technical assistance, and resource pooling.

Further compounding these challenges is the limited practice of participatory governance. Several administrators acknowledged that while community consultations occasionally occur, they are often superficial or limited to post-implementation

feedback. This undermines the potential for community-driven development and erodes public trust in local institutions. A more inclusive, participatory model—where citizens are engaged in the planning, budgeting, and monitoring of SDG initiatives—would likely enhance the legitimacy and effectiveness of local interventions.

The investigation at densely populated local areas add further depth to our analysis. For instance, in local government councils like Oshodi Isolo administrators consistently face heightened demands for service delivery in certain specific areas relating to SDGs agenda. However, this local government operate under the same institutional limitations as their counterparts in rural or less populous areas. As shown in previous studies (Adeyemi & Olaoye, 2019), urban local governments often struggle with resource allocation, political interference, and weak accountability mechanisms, all of which constrain their developmental impact.

Taken together, the findings of this study reveal a complex landscape of SDG implementation at the local level. While administrators are engaged and committed to selected goals, their efforts are often hindered by systemic constraints. The variation in engagement across SDGs, coupled with institutional challenges, underscores the importance of context-sensitive policy design, greater administrative autonomy, and capacity enhancement to support SDG localization

This study aligns with the argument presented by Enejo (2025), which highlights a fundamental structural gap in Nigeria's approach to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Specifically, the findings point to an over-centralization of SDG programs at the national level, often overlooking the administrative mechanisms of local government councils—the very institutions best positioned to facilitate direct engagement with citizens and deliver basic services at the grassroots.

Local councils are the operational arms of governance that is closest to the people, and their administrative mechanisms—such as local planning units, budgeting offices, development departments, and community liaison frameworks—serve as conduits for translating national policies into locally relevant actions. However, this study found that these mechanisms are frequently underutilized or bypassed in national SDG planning and implementation processes as pointed out by Carrasco, Rahemtulla & Rohdewohld (2023). This undermines efficiency, responsiveness, and contextual alignment, particularly in diverse and populous areas like Lagos State. Enejo (2025) further emphasizes that many of the successes recorded under the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were attributable to the effective functioning of local administrative structures, including community-based health campaigns and

local education initiatives managed by local governments. In contrast, where administrative mechanisms were weak or excluded from national planning—as observed in many Nigerian local councils—progress was either slow or non-existent.

For instance, the absence of participatory budgeting and poor data management at the local level has made it difficult to monitor progress on targets such as SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being) and SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation). This reflects broader systemic issues such as weak intergovernmental coordination, insufficient fiscal decentralization, and a lack of political will to strengthen local governance capacities. Comparative examples further illustrate the potential impact of empowered local administrative mechanisms. In countries like Rwanda and the Philippines, SDG localization was accelerated through strong subnational planning systems, decentralized resource control, and community involvement—factors directly tied to the functionality of local administrative structures (UNDP, 2016). For Nigeria, enhancing the institutional autonomy and technical capacity of local government councils is essential to bridging the implementation gap and ensuring the sustainability of SDG-related programs.

## 8. Conclusion and recommendations

In conclusion, the findings of this study affirm that local government administrators play a pivotal role in the successful implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the grassroots level. Evidence from positive case examples underscores that when local councils are empowered with adequate resources, decision-making authority, and institutional capacity, they can drive meaningful progress across key sectors such as health, education, gender equality, inequality reduction, sustainable communities, and peacebuilding. Achieving Nigeria’s SDG targets will therefore depend on strengthening local governance systems through increased budgetary allocations, capacity development of administrators, enhanced autonomy, institutional transparency, and inclusive community engagement. In alignment with the SDG ethos of “thinking globally and acting locally,” the development of self-reliant, accountable, and well-managed local governments is essential for translating global aspirations into measurable and context-relevant outcomes at the local level.

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations are proposed to enhance the effective and efficient implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the local government level in Nigeria. First, the Nigerian government is encouraged to draw on international best practices by adapting lessons from

countries such as Norway, Sweden, and Finland, where SDG implementation has been integrated successfully within decentralized governance frameworks. While contextual differences exist, Nigeria can customize these models to align with its socio-political and administrative realities.

Second, there is a pressing need for enhanced collaboration between local governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Such partnerships can facilitate the exchange of resources, expertise, and networks, thereby expanding the reach and impact of government-led development initiatives. Leveraging the social capital and grassroots presence of NGOs can also improve program delivery and monitoring.

Third, capacity building for local government administrators is essential for strengthening institutional effectiveness. This involves the provision of continuous training, access to relevant tools, and resources that enhance administrative competencies. As noted by Adeyemi (2013), capacity development significantly improves the performance of local governments in Nigeria. In line with this, administrators should receive targeted training in sustainable development practices, principles of good governance, policy planning, and participatory development methodologies.

Finally, it is recommended that local governments adopt a participatory governance approach in the implementation of the SDGs. This entails engaging community members in the planning, design, and execution of development projects to ensure responsiveness to local needs. A participatory framework enhances transparency, builds public trust, and ensures that interventions are contextually relevant and sustainable.

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