

Volunteering in the Achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Nigeria

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Abstract

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The emerging issues of governance as well as unforeseen circumstances such as COVID-19 pandemic, Ebola and violent crimes have exposed the inadequacies of state bureaucracy to initiate and execute programmes and projects that will bring about national development. This suggests the place of volunteering in national or global development agenda such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Volunteering represents a critical and vibrant system of the society that drives development using the bottom-top approach. This study therefore seeks to advance the understanding of volunteering in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in Nigeria. The paper draws on literature-based analytical historical perspective using secondary data. The findings of the study revealed that volunteering has significantly impacted on SDGs in Nigeria specifically in the aspects of good health, gender equality, economic growth and quality education with the exception of climate action. Challenges of volunteering in Nigeria are also unpacked in the paper together with the establishment and functions of Nigerian National Volunteer Service. The implication of the above is that volunteering is sacrosanct in achieving SDGs in Nigeria. Therefore, the paper recommends that: there is need for volunteering system to be strengthened in Nigeria in order to enable it performs optimally. This requires review of volunteering policy together with the functions of Nigerian National Volunteer Service (NNVS) for better performance; volunteer organization should do better in climate resilience by way of sensitizing the citizens on climate resilience mechanisms rather than proving succor after the occurrence of climate incident; and government in conjunction with volunteer organizations and other relevant stakeholders should decentralize security governance for conducive atmosphere to enable volunteers carry out their duties without fear of being attacked etc.

Keywords: Volunteering, volunteer organizations, Sustainable Development Goals, gender equality, quality education and climate change.

1. Introduction

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which comprises of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to end poverty, zero hunger, provide quality education,

good health, combat inequality and injustice, and address climate related issues by 2030 etc, was adopted by world leaders at the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit held on September 25, 2015. Consequently, governments across countries developed strategies with public service being the implementing tool towards achieving these noble objectives. However, the demanding nature of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has underscored the fact that government alone cannot adequately and satisfactorily put in measures towards the realization of the SDGs. This illuminates the justification for the involvement of volunteers in the efforts to achieve this noble and global course. Selfless service is not a new phenomenon in the history of humanity as individuals, groups and even cooperate bodies have been seen offering services or giving care to individuals and communities for free. This is at best being considered as volunteering in the modern day world. It is contended that volunteering engenders social inclusion and active citizenship which in turn rekindles the spirit of nationhood among the marginalized and poor. Globally, volunteers are the first responders in the time of distress or crisis. They provide critical support through mobilization, financial assistance, medical assistance and awareness creation which in turn localize and deepen the agenda for SDGs. Apparently, the SDGs simply may not be achieved without a wide spectrum of people participating at all times and at all levels. By including more people in local and national planning and action for achieving the 2030 agenda, volunteering and volunteers are already widening the space in which may lead to creating the desired future. Seemingly, it is an essential tool for sustainable development because of its fundamental nature. It enables individuals and communities to take part in their own development.

Citizens develop their resilience, broaden their knowledge, and develop a feeling of civic responsibility by volunteering. Individual and group volunteering strengthens social cohesiveness and trust and produces outcomes that are sustainable for people and for people alone (United Nations Volunteers, 2020). The role of volunteers or volunteer groups during the COVID-19 pandemic across the globe is a recent development that serves as a pointer to the foregoing. This opinion is strengthened by the submission by Nesbit, et al (2018) that volunteering has continued to gain recognition globally partly because of the increasing dynamics and uncertainties in human setting. For instance, during the COVID-19 era, people were able to cope with the pandemic due partly to the activities, services and assistance from volunteers. The definition of volunteering has been expanded to include providing assistance in both public administration and services. Volunteering is no longer viewed only from cultural perspective, but has been adopted either as an

approach or strategy to solve emerging social issues among other reasons. Volunteers offer numerous services ranging from health to poverty alleviation services. Volunteering promotes higher trust among citizens, the development of solidarity and reciprocity values that are necessary for stable communities, and the creation of more integrated communities (Attah & Anam, 2017).

This therefore informed the idea behind this study that seeks to explore volunteering in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in Nigeria. Meanwhile, the paper specifically seeks to find answers to the following research questions:

1. What is the impact of volunteering on healthcare in Nigeria?
2. What is the correlation between volunteering and promotion of gender equality in Nigeria?
3. Does volunteering impact on economic growth in Nigeria?
4. What is the effect of volunteering on the promotion of quality education in Nigeria?
5. What is the relationship between volunteering and climate resilience in Nigeria?

To this end, this paper is organized into four main parts. First, this section of the study centres on methods, while the second part of the paper focuses on literature review; then results and discussions. The final part of the study is concluding remarks which are in consonance with the findings

2. Literature review

2.1 Conceptual Definitions

Volunteering and Sustainable Development Goals

Volunteering is defined as any action that involves spending time, without payment, doing something that seeks to help the environment or someone (individuals and groups) other than, or in addition to, immediate relatives (Smith, 1998 cited in Burgham & Downward, 2005). It is viewed as an inherently selfless and significant activity (Benson & Wise, 2017; Gellweiler et al., 2018; Hoyer et al., 2019; Nichols, 2003). It has been recognized as an important factor in the implementation of development strategies especially the Sustainable Development Goals. The nexus between volunteering and Sustainable Development Goals makes a special and new contribution to literature on development agenda. This draws an attention to the opinion of Stephanie, Kamal, Joy, Nia, Oluwafunmi and Seth, (2021) that volunteering as a concept in social development refers to the act of providing

service out of choice or free will for the benefit of a larger society by an individual, group, or organization without necessarily anticipating a financial gain in full understanding and appreciation of being a volunteer. The government has backed volunteering as a necessary civic duty, a way to fight social exclusion, and a way to encourage self-help for community development, since government cannot do it alone. It is an engagement built on free will, dedication, and solidarity with the goal of advancing human development by assisting in the provision of economic and social services, encouraging inter-personal reciprocity, and promoting societal cohesion. People have the chance to participate in humanitarian endeavours via volunteering. Volunteering takes place at various levels such as citizen, group and organization but all aim at national development.

The complex nature of modern governance has further exposed the significant relationship between volunteering and the Sustainable Development Goals. The manifestation of this is the inability of public bureaucracy to provide the needed services to the people which will engender development. While supporting this submission, Herwartz and Theilen (2021) observe that as globalization advanced, public and private mainstream service sectors began to struggle to satisfy the rising social needs of a more diversified society. Public funding and other resources for long-term service provision become unstable as a nation or a small region moves through various stages of economic cycles and experiences back and forth shifts in its prevailing ideology. Such situation has already resulted in a decline in public institutions such as NGO (Stevenson & Wolfers, 2011; Gibelman & Gelman, 2001). In addition to religious and development organizations, more players have entered the area of volunteerism. Local non-profit organizations (NPOs), communities, and private enterprises have all contributed significantly to funding, organizing, and promoting volunteerism. More so, volunteers' role in service delivery has evolved from that of a complement to the labor force to that of active participants in co-production (Musso, et al., 2019) or even co-governance (Chenge, 2019).

This significant gap in action is what volunteering has come to fill. In Nigeria, communities in the rural, peril-urban and metropolitan areas all benefit greatly from volunteers. They help during natural disasters and humanitarian emergencies by providing assistance in addition to their resources and experience. Volunteering supports gender and social inclusion, active citizenship, lifelong learning, improving employability, community connection and reducing crime. Good volunteering has the ability to transform and makes the volunteers feel good. The

lives of the elderly, pensioners, and individuals with disabilities are improved by volunteering as well. Also, organizations that utilize volunteers gain from their efforts because they frequently rely on volunteer support for their development and growth (Nigerian National Volunteer Service & Office of the Secretary to the Government of the Federation, 2020). Volunteering is crucial to solving a variety of regional and national problems, including gender inequality, food poverty, youth unemployment, socio-cultural disparities, urbanization, and environmental problems such as climate change. By supplying a significant pool of human resources, volunteering makes a significant contribution to regional and national economy. Also, it improves the "quality of life," which may have impact on investment and job growth. Volunteering provides access to native expertise as well as a pool of people, material, and financial resources that can be used by governments to implement better programmatic and policy interventions. In order to directly participate in their own development and have an impact both locally and nationally, citizens and communities need to have access to skills and opportunities to volunteer. Volunteering, in general, is a vital tool for maintaining peace and advancing a country (Nigerian National Volunteer Service & Office of the Secretary to the Government of the Federation, 2020).

Volunteer groups have contributed in various aspects of Sustainable Development Goals such as poverty reduction, quality education, sanitation, gender equality and economic growth among others. For instance, National Youth Service Corps members through community service responsibility carry out activities related to environmental sanitation, attitudinal change, sports and sensitization. As observed by Uzoagu (2019) in Okereke and Oluka (2020), volunteering also plays a significant role in social cohesiveness, personal growth, and serving as a real tool for addressing societal issues. Its capacity to assist the government with the skills, energy, knowledge, and experience it needs to carry out better public programs and achieve its policy goals cannot be overlooked. International, state, and domestic organizations have heavily leaned on the volunteer sector to offer, maintain, and expand an ever-growing range of services to individuals, groups, and local communities in order to fulfil the diverse political, economic, and social goals. These services include community-building initiatives, informal and formal education training programs, health and welfare assistance, social care, chances for physical exercise, technology and infrastructure advancements, capacity building, financial assistance, and political sensitization (Nicholas, Geoffery & Niki, 2021). Without a wide spectrum of people participating at all times, at all levels, it is simply impossible to achieve the SDGs. Volunteering promotes civic

involvement, social inclusion, camaraderie, and a sense of ownership over the outcomes of development. It is significant that volunteering has a knock-on impact. It motivates others and pushes the social changes needed for the SDGs to become ingrained in local communities. Volunteers can increase capacity and offer technical assistance in all theme target areas. Through domestic, South-South, South-North, and North-South exchanges, they provide essential services, assist in talent transfer, promote the sharing of best practices, and provide vital international and local experience. By making their expertise available to public institutions and vulnerable populations, corporate volunteers can play a special role in this area. Volunteers contribute to the goal of leaving no one behind by making an effort to connect with everyone, including the most remote or marginalized members of society (United Nations Volunteers, 2020).

2.2 Challenges of Volunteering in Nigeria

Insecurity: Insecurity is one of the major problems of modern day volunteering in Nigeria. Today, the Nigerian society is bedevilled with so many security challenges such as banditry in the Northwest, Boko-Haram in the Northeast, farmers/herders conflict in the North Central and secessionist agitation in the Southeast among others. Ejiofor (2022) infers that Nigeria has experienced increase in criminal activities such as cattle rustling, kidnapping and looting collectively called armed banditry. Similarly, Ofoma (2022) observes the existence of a set of violent young people tagged “Unknown Gunmen” in the Southeast who are responsible for the security concerns in the region. Virtually, no part of Nigeria is currently safe especially the rural areas where most volunteering activities/services are badly needed. Most vulnerable people in the country are found in the hinterlands but these existential threats hinder the willing volunteers from reaching out to them for service delivery. Some volunteers are foreigners who do not know much about the terrain they are deployed to. So, in an event of security concern, they become agitated, uncomfortable and by extension discouraged in providing these selfless and important services to the individuals or communities.

Prevailing distrust among the Nigeria populace: arguably, the Nigerian society has in recent time been faced with disunity and total lack of trust among the citizens including ethnic and religious groups. This situation has manifested in all aspects of the society resulting to allegiance to ethnic or religious group rather than the country. It has also affected volunteering in the country as so many volunteers have been resisted as well as volunteering services or projects rejected by communities in dire need of those services or projects because of disbelief. Ordinarily,

volunteering is supposed to build trust among the people. As argued by Putnam (2000), the causal arrows between civic involvement and social trust are all intertwined like well-tossed spaghetti, and civic engagement and social trust are mutually reinforcing. Volunteering fosters trust because civic engagement has a good socialization effect. This opinion is at variance with the situation of volunteering vis-a-vis trust in the country. Nigeria volunteering state rather corroborates with the submission of Delhey and Newton (2003) that trust and measures of civic involvement of citizens are typically only tangentially related, and in other nations, trust and civic engagement are not related at all.

Paucity of infrastructure: Certain volunteering services are driven by infrastructural facilities such as power supply, good road network, wireless network and digital tools. These critical infrastructures are lacking in most communities where volunteering services are needed. Chioke et al (2021) in Okoh, Onwe and Ofoma (2022) observed the bad condition of road leading to Ugbo Oghe, Ugbo Ezeji, Ugbo Owa in Enugu East Local Government Area of Enugu State. Also, ICT infrastructure in Nigeria's 36 states and 774 local government areas, which has a very huge population, is only available in urban areas at exorbitant prices that are only affordable to the middle and upper classes of society. As a result, many rural and suburban areas are unable to fully participate in the emerging information economy (Ifijeh, Iwu-James & Adebayo, 2016 in Ofoma, 2021). This inadequate infrastructure has far reaching negative effect on volunteering service delivery to the people especially the rural dwellers. The effort in providing these critical infrastructures to communities by certain volunteers or volunteer organizations is an indication of their lack in the country. This particular challenge of ICT infrastructure for instance has great implications on the operation of volunteer organizations such as Jummai Aduda Organization whose main duty is advocacy, sensitization and awareness creation using social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter and Instagram etc. Reaching out to people especially those in the hinterlands for enlightenment becomes very challenging if not impracticable.

2.3. Nigerian National Volunteer Service as a Government effort towards promoting volunteering

In its desire to promote volunteering in the country and encourage Nigerian citizens to provide volunteer services as supports to government's efforts, the federal government in 2003 established the Nigerian National Volunteer Service. This was also in recognition of the country's pool of human capital, technical competence

and investment potentials that could speedily drive developmental processes especially at the grassroots. The Nigeria National Volunteer Service is a volunteer management organization set up by the federal government to support efforts at national development through motivating, utilizing, managing, and successfully deploying the services and activities of both domestic and international volunteers who are Nigerians. Its mandate includes coordinating the processes of volunteering in the country as a mechanism to address developmental issues such as poverty, divisiveness and parochial interest in tribe, religion and politics against national interest. The functions of the Service are to: develop strategies to encourage volunteering for social progress and nation-building through organizing workshops and sensitization seminars across all six geopolitical zones; establish state-level offices and desk offices in local government areas; enhancing the capacity of NGOs and volunteers to provide information about volunteer management; work with corporate organizations in Nigeria to create corporate social responsibility initiatives that will motivate companies to support volunteers in their volunteer activity; and establishing suitable laws and policies that specify the obligations of volunteers and set guidelines for their selection, management, and support (Nigerian National Volunteer Service, 2023).

Since its inception, The Nigeria National Volunteer Service has been involved in certain activities such as formulation of policy on volunteering and coordination of volunteering activities and operations in the country. For instance, as part of programmes marking the International Day of Volunteers, Jummai Aduda Organization (a volunteer organization) in conjunction with United Nations Volunteers and Nigerian National Volunteer Service visited and donated Long Lasting Insecticide Treated Nets and Pharmaceutical Drugs to Primary Health Care Centre in Igu Community, Bwari Area Council of Federal Capital Territory, in order to reduce the death rate of children and adults in the area on account of malaria. However, a lot needs to be done especially in the areas of galvanizing Nigerians into volunteering services. Also, the contributions and activities of informal volunteers are largely unknown. This category of volunteers builds on principle of self-organization to support developmental efforts put in place. There are a lot of individual volunteers funding education of the needy who are not their relatives. Some visit hospitals on monthly basis to take care of hospital bills of people they have not met before. Certain individual volunteers have also provided accommodations for non-relatives on charity basis. All these call for urgent attention and action on the part of the Nigerian National Volunteer Service.

2.4. Empirical discourse

Dirar, Berhanul, Getachew and Azadi (2016) interrogated financial product development and members' voluntary saving behavior in saving and credit cooperatives in Tigray: A case study in Endamohoni Woreda. The general objective of the study was deconstruct the financial product development and members' saving attitude in saving and credit cooperative societies Endamohoni Woreda district in Tigray, Ethiopia. The study used random sampling and structured questionnaire together with focus group discussion. The study revealed that age, educational level, marital status and number of dependents among others have significant impact on voluntary savings of members of SACCO. It was also indicated that the SACCOs provide inadequate financial products to their members. However, the study revealed that the members have access to other formal financial institutions, outside the ones given to them by SACCO. Drawing on these findings, the study suggested that SACCOs and other relevant authorities should consider the above factors during policy formulation so as to improve voluntary saving of members of SACCO.

Amadasun (2020) conducted a study to convey the experience of Nigerian social work students concerning their field practice education and training. It adopted semi-structured interview with graduating social work students using one-on-one interviews as the basis. The findings of the study revealed that despite experiencing a sense of professional satisfaction and pride as a result of their fieldwork education, the students nevertheless faced a number of difficulties. The conclusions of this study, even though they only involved a cohort of social work students, could have wider ramifications for social work education nationwide. As a result, recommendations were made for social work educators who serve as disseminators of social work information, skills, and values to ensure that students have an enjoyable and stress-free practicum experience.

Hansen and Slagsvold (2020) interrogated an army of volunteers? Engagement, motivation and barriers to volunteering among the baby boomers. The study fundamentally aimed to interrogate various parts of boomers 'participation in and motivation for voluntary work. Utilizing data from the third (2017) wave of the Norwegian life-course, aging and generation study (n=2,993, age 53-71), the study revealed that a significant number of people were engaged as volunteers and a sizable number of non-volunteers have demonstrated their interest in becoming volunteers. It was also shown that there was irregular volunteering and there was insignificant number of volunteers carrying out their duties on weekly basis. The

study also suggested that boomers can be mobilized when non-profit organizations accommodate more people with self-interest and put in place flexible forms of participation. As a panacea, the study advocated for a paradigm shift towards a more reflexive form of volunteering.

Richard, Holly and Simon (2021) investigated volunteers in the sport for development and peace sector: antinomies, liminality, and structural relations. The broad objective of the study was to improve the knowledge of modern sport for development and peace industry, particularly with regard to volunteers and volunteering in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). Being a part of a larger cross-cultural research study on the global SDP sector, the paper draws on significant interview- and fieldwork-based research into SDP in three different locales (Kosovo, Rwanda, and Sri Lanka). The findings reveal the need for further study on volunteering, in other SDP sites, sports, or broader social and development sectors including education, community and youth work, leisure and recreation. It majorly recommended for more effective partnership between volunteers and educational institutions.

Adebola, et al (2022) examined the willingness and motivations towards volunteering during COVID-19 pandemic: A cross-sectional survey among final year medical students in Lagos, Nigeria. It was primarily a descriptive cross-sectional study carried out among final year medical students of two government owned universities in Lagos state. Data collection and analysis were done using web-based and SPSS respectively. The findings of the study revealed that there is high level of willingness among the final students to volunteer during COVID-19 pandemic. It was also revealed that students of Medicine and Surgery were more willing to volunteer during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study recommended among others that measures should be adopted to translate willingness to actual participation in the public health emergency system.

Boulianne and Steen-Johnsen (2023) conducted a study on the role of digital media towards political and civic engagement with special reference to the correlation between websites and social media and volunteering. Utilizing survey data gathered in 2019 and 2021 in USA, UK, Canada and France, the study revealed that information coming from the websites of volunteering organizations have stronger effect on volunteers' mobilization than social media. Notwithstanding, the study recommended for the adoption of multi-method (which will include both websites and social media) approach in communication.

Arguably, the above peer-reviewed papers are relevant to the subject under study as they underscored the place of volunteering in modern society using various cities or countries as their point of interests. However, it could be contended that none of the studies investigated the nexus between volunteering and sustainable development goals precisely in Nigeria. Accordingly, this particular paper is motive in that direction.

3. Methodology

This is a literature-based analytical historical study which naturally draws on secondary data. Essentially, the paper focused on peer reviewed papers on volunteering and Sustainable Development Goals. In searching for relevant and current literature, terms such as volunteering, volunteer, Sustainable Development Goals, gender equality, healthcare, economic growth and climate change were used. Information pertaining to the activities, projects and services of volunteer organizations was critical to the study and they were obtained from the websites of the volunteer organizations such as Nigerian National Voluntary Service, Red Cross Society of Nigeria, Women Environmental Programme, United Nations Volunteers, Voluntary Service Overseas, National Graduate Volunteer and Jummai Aduda Organization. Importantly, the Digital Object Identifier (DOI) and Uniform Resources Locators (URL) of the publications were provided for easier trace. Data gathered from the above sources were painstakingly analysed after adopting formal inclusion and exclusion criteria so as to create a consistent and valid results of the subject under study. It was on this premise that irrelevant literature were discovered and discarded.

4. Results and Discussions

Impact of volunteering on healthcare in Nigeria

The findings of this study demonstrate that volunteering has significant effect on healthcare in Nigeria. This result is strengthened by the submission by National Graduate Volunteers (2022) that the door to door campaign in local languages against malaria and other diseases is a pointer to the immense contribution of volunteering in the Nigerian health sector. Volunteers are at the forefront of the crusade against female genital mutilation. They are found in every nook and cranny of the country exposing the ills of female genital mutilation. Promotion of nutrition is not left out in the scheme of activities carried out by the volunteers in the country. This result is supported by “A 3-Day Capacity Building Training for Journalists in Abuja” organized by Women Friendly Initiative. The training which was organized

with the support of USAID palladium aimed at accelerating sub-national advocacy for implementation of adolescent and youth-friendly health services and the national strategic plan of action for nutrition (National Graduate Volunteers, 2022). The finding is further supported by Abdur (2020) while arguing that volunteering activities in the health sector of the country are known to be widespread especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. To aid in the fight against the transmission and treatment of the Corona-Virus pandemic, Jack Ma, the CEO of Ali Baba and a Chinese businessman, donated medical supplies to the Federal Government of Nigeria on March 27, 2020.

As part of its activities in assisting the government to curtail COVID-19 in Nigeria, the Nigeria Red Cross Society through its Saving Lives and Livelihoods initiative worked to ensure that at least 70% of the Nigeria population got vaccinated against COVID-19 (Nigeria Red Cross, 2022). Its involvement in managing COVID-19 through awareness campaign and distribution of face masks is revealing. Most volunteers are first responders in emergency situations. In March 2020, the federal government received a gift from the United Bank for Africa (UBA) amounting to 5 billion Naira (about \$13 million), which was meant to fund the construction of intensive care units, beds for isolation centers, and facilities for up to 450,000 daily patients to have direct access to medical advice (Aisha, 2020). The Union Bank and 54gene, a US-based genetic research organization, worked together with the support of Atlas Mara to fund the Covid-19 testing capacity in Nigeria to 1,000 per day (Onu, 2020).

Volunteering and gender equality in Nigeria

The result of this paper reveals a significant relationship between volunteering and gender equality in Nigeria. The activities carried out by different volunteer individuals, groups and organizations both local and foreign suggest the significant impact of volunteering on this critical component of SDGs. While lending credence to this submission, the Women Environmental Programme (2023) observed that Women Environmental Programme in its quest to ensure that gender equality is given its rightful place in the country in 2017 came up with a project titled “Ensuring Effective Implementation of Programme, Policies and Legislations, that Contribute towards Achieving Gender Equality in Nigeria by 2030”. Its cardinal objectives were to advocate for policies and legislations geared towards encouraging women’s participation in decision-making as well as addressing challenges undermining women’s empowerment and involvement; and guarantee effective execution of projects and programmes by enhancing the capacity of CSOs,

budget monitoring and awareness creation; This noble project was financially supported by the Kingdom of Netherlands. It was a five project which was implemented in Benue and Zamfara states targeting lawmakers, their Aides, States Executives, Civil Society Organizations, Religious and Traditional leaders (Women Environmental Programme, 2023).

This result is also in tandem with the assertion that, in 2022 a programme titled “Gender and Climate Justice: From Local Action to National Policy (Parallel Event)” was organized by Women Empowerment Programme aimed at educating local women on ways of protecting forests together with climate adaptation in agriculture. Ideas on gender-responsive climate and forest policies were exchanged. It is obvious that the above activities and projects of these volunteer groups have contributed in promoting gender equality in the country. The women folks have become more aware of their fundamental human rights and ways of protecting them. The capacity building exercises have not only led to adequate knowledge of fundamental human rights of the women, but have also resulted to intellectual growth needed for critical decision making in the country.

Volunteering and economic growth in Nigeria

The findings of the study also suggest the significant impact of activities of volunteer individuals, groups and organizations on economic growth in the country. Supporting this result, Women Environmental Programme (2017) inferred that the skills acquisition programmes, grants, soft loans and implementation of economic infrastructure by volunteers have spurred economic growth in Nigeria. In keying into the Federal Girls and Women Initiative in Nigeria (G-WIN), Women Environmental Programme organized training community-led total sanitation (CLTS), leadership and conflict resolution, slab construction and facility maintenance for rural women and girls in four pilot states of Abia, Bauchi, Plateau and Osun. Consequently, sixty (60) women and girls were trained. To reduce the devastating effect of security challenges in the country, Women Environmental Programme designed a project titled “Connecting Women and Youth in Violent Extremist Prone Areas Through Empowerment and Skills Acquisition in Benue State” The project was carried out as part of a collaboration, with WEP acting as the Principal Recipient and four (4) additional organizations acting as Sub-Recipients. The Sub-Recipients are the Foundation for Justice, Development, and Peace, the Gender and Environmental Risk Reduction Initiative, the Angel Support Foundation, and the Center for Development and Social Justice (FJDP) (Women Environmental Programme, 2017). The project consisted of five programmes

which include; preventing the recruitment and radicalization of in-school youth with the goal of helping to prevent the recruitment and radicalization of 16,000 in-school youth (in primary, secondary, and tertiary institutions) between the ages of 15 and 30 in the Ado, Agatu, Kwande, and Logo Local Government Areas of Benue State through awareness-raising, guidance and counseling, monitoring, and the development of innovative life skills; giving livelihood support to out-of-school, unemployed, and unskilled youth precisely to 268 out-of-school, unemployed, and unskilled youth between the ages of 18 and 35 in the local governments by the end of the project's second year; disarmament of armed 55 young people within the age bracket of 18 and 35 years in the area so as to provide an atmosphere needed for their demobilization and reintegration; to stop the ongoing conflict between farmers and herders in the above local government areas as well as expose other individuals with concealed identity creating confusion between the two groups; and restoring peace between the conflicting groups. This project was extended to North-western part of the country precisely Katsina state with direct and indirect beneficiaries are 26, 474 and 52, 948 respectively (Women Environmental Programme, 2017).

Volunteering and quality education in Nigeria

Result of the study also highlights that education has significantly impacted on volunteering in the country. This particular finding is in congruence with the observation by Voluntary Service Overseas (2017) that volunteers and volunteer organizations have made concerted efforts towards promoting quality education in Nigeria. In the wake of the shocking kidnappings and Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria, Georgetown University, under the direction of the Institute for Women, Peace and Security (IWPS), organized a meeting in Washington, D.C. in August 2014 with representatives of a large number of the multinational corporations operating in Nigeria to promote the need for safe schools and to encourage cooperation and collective actions against these vices through volunteering services. The Institute held a conference in September of the same year to promote the necessity of girl child education in Nigeria and beyond. This undoubtedly sparked cooperation between the government and private entities to increase enrollment rates for girls in the northern part of the country. In its project titled "Lab on wheels: Bringing science to Northern Nigeria" which aimed at closing the science gap in Nigeria which made the country to rank 131 out of 139 countries in math and science education, Voluntary Service Overseas launched a mobile van equipped with lab resources and a certified teacher trainer to travel between 15 schools, serving about 7,500 students and 60 instructors. The Organization also provided top-notch instruction and mentoring in learner-centered methodologies

and deployed these recruits to the rural areas to teach English, math and science (Voluntary Service Overseas, 2017).

Volunteering and climate resilience in Nigeria

Unlike the above findings, this particular result shows that volunteering has made insignificant impact on climate resilience. This specific submission is strengthened by the assertion by the Nigeria Red Cross Society (2022) that the Society in its efforts to support the government in providing succor to the affected persons launched a ₦10.6 Flood Emergency Appeal. Most importantly, the Nigeria Red Cross Society initiated an emergency appeal to generate 13 million Swiss Francs, which will be used to support up to 500,000 people with an emphasis on search and rescue, health care, water, sanitation, and hygiene promotion. The Society also promised to deploy Emergency First Aid Teams and do quick needs assessments among others (Nigeria Red Cross Society, 2022). This suggests that the efforts of volunteers and volunteer organizations have not impacted significantly on climate resilience or adaptation in Nigeria. Just like the governments' approach, the services, assistance and care given by volunteers to victims of climate related events in the country seem to be reactive measures rather than proactive. This explains why climate change especially flooding has continued to be devastating in the country. Robust advocacy on climate resilience strategies by volunteers and volunteer organizations to communities appear to be lacking. The focus on palliative measures by way of donation of food items, cash and mattresses can only assuage the suffering of the people which will certainly reoccur even probably in a more devastating manner in another season. This submission is in consonance with the observation by Ofoma, Suleiman and Ejem (2023) that the persistent flooding incident in Nigeria has led to destruction of livestock, crops and seeding stores among others.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study was framed within the context of volunteering in the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals in Nigeria. The result on good health shows that volunteers and volunteer organizations have played critical role in promoting good health among Nigerian citizens. This has manifested in the provision of pharmaceutical equipments, mosquitoes nets against malaria, sensitization campaigns against harmful traditional practices that have negative health implications. The paper also probed into volunteers and promotion of gender equality in the country. As revealed above, the activities and services of volunteers and volunteer organizations have impacted significantly on the promotion of gender

equality. The advocacy for women inclusion in government, fundamental human rights, promotion of girl child education and empowerment of women and girls affected by violent crimes such as Boko-Haram and armed banditry point to this development.

The study also demonstrates the significant relationship between volunteering and economic growth in the country. Several projects have been executed by volunteer organizations such as Red Cross Society of Nigeria and Women Environmental Programmes aimed at equipping the people with the needed skills. This has enhanced the employability skills of the people and by extension enabling them to get jobs. Grants were in some cases offered to the people after the skills acquisition programmes to enable them start up what they have learnt. All these have contributed to economic growth of the country especially in the face of current challenge of unemployment with the government appearing overwhelmed. The correlation between volunteering and quality education was also dissected and it was shown that the projects executed by volunteer organizations such as “Lab on wheels: Bringing science to Northern Nigeria” have significantly impacted on the promotion of quality education in Nigeria.

Notwithstanding the above, the result on volunteering and climate action was rather insignificant as efforts made by the volunteer organizations whose activities were interrogated have not impacted significantly on climate related issues. Building strong resilience and adaptative capacity against climate events seems to be the best way of solving the problems of climate change. Sadly, the activities of volunteers probed have been fundamentally on provision succor to the victims of climate events rather helping them build effective resilience in the event of reoccurrence. Apart from provision of items and cash, there is need for volunteers and volunteer organizations to organize an effective sensitization programmes aimed at educating the people on environmental sanitation and drainage system etc. On the whole, volunteering has impacted significantly in the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals in Nigeria.

Drawing on the above findings as well as conclusion, this paper suggests as follows:

1. There is need for volunteering system to be strengthened in Nigeria in order to enable it performs optimally. This requires review of volunteering policy together with the functions of Nigerian National Volunteer Service (NNVS) for better performance.

2. Volunteer organization should do better in climate resilience by way of sensitizing the citizens on climate resilience mechanisms rather than proving succor after the occurrence of climate incident.
3. Government in conjunction with volunteer organizations and other relevant stakeholders should decentralize security governance for conducive atmosphere to enable volunteers carry out their duties without fear of being attacked.
4. Governments (central and federating units) through their authorities such as National Orientation Agency, Ministries of Information should design a programme aimed at building trust among the citizens.
5. There should be adoption of public-private partnership model aimed at providing infrastructural facilities for volunteers in the country.

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