# The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and African Development: The Question of Food Security

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**Abstract** – In discussing African Development and its attendant food security question, it is important to examine critically what sustainable development means in the African context in relation to United Nations championed sustainable development goals. Such a definition will open our horizon in an attempt to search for alternative approaches and solutions to African developmental problems with the hope to improve the lives of the local peoples. The idea here is that any new alternative approaches to development must touch the social, spiritual, cultural, economic, political, and cosmological aspects of the indigenous people. Therefore, if the current wave of UN driven theory of sustainable development issues in Africa is to be understood and applied it must address the local people's problem of hunger. It must be situated in the appropriate anthropological context that provides practical and social meaning to the African actors as the real subjects of a developmental discourse and not as passengers. The current approach of defining and operational zing sustainable development agenda from the perspective of the world capitalist economy and the associated globalization processes at the same time does not make sense to an average hungry local African. The rapid social change and transformation of indigenous societies require a different methodology to the problem of social development and existentialism. Hence the need for re-theorization and re-conceptualization of the issues associated with poverty and food security like urbanization, demography trend, and agriculture, etc. It is against this background that this work examined the United Nations' sustainable development goals, African development, and the question of food security using secondary data such as books, newspapers, journals, and the internet.

***Keywords:*** United Nations, Sustainable Development, Food Security, Africa.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The question of food security is premised on eliminating food insecurity conditions which are characterized by insufficient access to quality nutritious food. The right of access to sufficient food is one of the seven components of human security as listed in the United Nations Trust Fund of Human Security Handbook (United Nations, 2016). It went further to classify food insecurity as a human security threat. If food insecurity were a human security threat, food security is, therefore, the opposite. The UN/FAOdefined food security as a condition when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs, and food preferences for an active and healthy life(FAO, 1996). This definition highlighted critical but interrelated elements in food security nest which is an indication of evolutionary change food security has undergone. From the above definition, we can identify the issue of food availability, food access, reliability of the food, and food distribution chain.

In the past, it was taken for granted that adequate food production will ultimately guarantee the availability of food in the market and for household consumption. Later it became self-evident that availability must be backed with purchasing power and without which there will be no access. But purchasing power is a function of jobs and other livelihood opportunities. Equally, even when the conditions of availability and access are met, yet the consumption of the accessed food is dependent on the body being able to absorb the food biologically. The absorption of food my body is not a standalone action; it is related to factors like clean drinking water, environmental hygiene, and primary health care. Lastly, if physical and economic access conditions were satisfactorily met, climate and environmental factors will largely influence the long term food security system.

It is against this background that both United Nations 200 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the United Nations 2015 Sustainable Development Goals (MDGs) aspire to integrate the global community approach in the eradication of poverty. The MDG which its declaration sought global partnership to eradicate poverty by

 

2015 through shared goals of universal primary education, gender equality, reducing child mortality, improving maternal health, ensuring environmental sustainability by combating diseases such as HIV/AIDS, malaria, and others. In response to dire emerging complex and compound global development challenges not adequately covered by MDGs, the UN in September 2015 approved SDGs as the new cohesive and integrated development global framework. The SDGs advocated a broader and more universal integrated approach focusing on all countries of the world, unlike the MDGs which explicitly focused on developing countries. The express intent of SDGs is to achieve long term wellbeing of the peoples of the world and to ensure that such development condition is economical, socially, and environmentally sustainable. The first goal of SDGs is to eradicate poverty in all its ramifications everywhere in the world by 2030.

So how does the conceptualization of SDGs correspond to, or reflect on the contemporary African development challenges? Is SDGs simply a Western hegemonic understanding of development lack of Africa and what they need to do to escape the poverty trap? Does SDGs offer insight into the social realities of the rural African people as they toil to satisfy their basic livelihoods? These and other associated issues are important to interrogate when SDGs are discussed in the context of African development problems especially its import improving the wellbeing of African critical mass. What is the condition of food security in Africa? Despite Agriculture providing about 70% of employment, 40% of exports, and one-third of GNP in sub-Saharan Africa food insecurity remains high. Out of roughly one billion people lacking access to food globally 240 million dwells in Africa (Bremner,2012).

This is probably so because the majority of the region's population lives on small-scale, low productivity farms which have resulted in undernourishment. The social reality associated with the issues is: they do not have access to enough food at all times to live active and healthy lives; as population increases in geometric progression, it is not accompanied with an increase in food production at the same rate; rapid urbanization with poor food distribution chain; starvation and reliance on food importation. What all this suggests is that Africa now cannot feed itself. What can African farmers do to improve productivity or perhaps the kind of agricultural production to employ?

In this paper, we shall critically examine the United Nations sustainable development goals and African development, through the perspective of Food Security and identify the various challenges, and prospects in Africa, using secondary data such as journals, books, newspapers, and the internet. Furthermore, the paper underscores the lack of availability of food security to the most vulnerable in the continent. It explores the Sustainable Intensification (SI) theory, which focuses on how to achieve improved yields over the long-term in fragile environments of Africa. The study concludes that, for Africa to achieve food security, they need to put their resources on cost-effective programs that can mitigate the challenges of chronic poverty and hunger driven by alternative approaches that are predicated on the uniqueness of African local ecosystems and culture.

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The variables of UN Sustainable Development Goals, Africa Development, and the Question of Food Security are interconnected. These variables are cobwebbed and require multidimensional approaches in their examination especially as it relates to food security. The answer to Africa's food security problem is dependent on its ability to achieve sustainable development. In mirroring sustainable development through the lens of food security, the study employed a Sustainable Intensification analytical framework. The concept of Sustainable Intensification (SI) originated in the 1990s focusing on how to achieve improved yields over the long-term in fragile environments of Africa (Musumba, M., Grabowski, P., Palm, C., &Snapp, S( 2017). Productivity in Africa at that time was largely low and there was huge concern about the degradation of natural resources in the continent.

Sustainable Intensification is premised on the assumption that rapid rising demand coupled with supply-side stressors threats would cause an increase in food prices to levels where hunger and malnutrition might trigger politico-economic disruption. SI protagonists believe that the world is facing the challenge of feeding the increasing world population, and the situation is worsened by limited resources. Arising from this backdrop, the framework tends to proffer solutions on how to balance the environmental, economic, and social objectives of agriculture. The idea behind SI is not to provide a set of food production practices rather create pathways to sustainable food production that vary by location and scale based on prevailing realities of the producing area. It is an approach based on accommodating varying agro-ecological zone, farming systems, cultural preferences of farmers, institutions, policies, as well as other factors (Pender et al., 1999).

The advocates of SI believe that the starting point in meeting food security is to increase output levels per unit input per unit time, and at the same time mitigate against negative environmental impacts. They are aware that the large share of the anticipated production increase is coming from existing agricultural land and the question of sustaining productivity need to be addressed. Finally, they advocated for the employment of a broad range of tools and production methods to achieve these goals. At the initial stage SI is narrowly conceived as the production of more food on the same piece of land while reducing the negative environmental impacts, and at the same time increasing the contributions to the natural capital flow of environmental services (Zurek et al., 2015). However, this perception of SI blossomed to include non-environmental aspects such as social issues, economics, and the human condition (Loos et al., 2014).

Implicit in the above definitions is that SI has to do with productivity (crop yields, animal production & variability of production), economic (profitability, the variability of profits, labor requirement), environmental (biodiversity, water quality & soil quality), human (nutrition, food sustainability, health), and social (equity/gender, social cohesion & collective participation). From the nature and aspiration intent of SI, the study divides into two components of SI, namely: Techno-ecology, and Dependency, and the world-system.

(a) The techno-ecology approach is driven by the conviction that technology and human ingenuity are the greatest resources available to sustain food production. Techno-ecologists believe that through human action and technology yields can be increased while reducing environmental harm. To them, future global food challenges can be met by adapting agricultural methods to produce enough food. For example, the use of fertilizer and intensification of agriculture are associated with human adaptation. (Boserup, 1965). This example is one of the driving forces behind the philosophy of the "Green Revolution". Their argument is that the perceived disturbing fears for the planet are oversimplified because with human actions those apprehensions can be conquered. Do they want to provide answers to questions like what sorts of technologies will make sense to rural farmers in Africa? What are the appropriate mechanisms to control pests, drought, and flooding? Other associated issues like making a choice between mechanical and conservative techniques, and the need for improved genetics through traditional plant breeding or by extra genetics. Therefore, policies and practices intended to increase food production to feed the global population should consider the need to reduce environmental impact.

(b) Dependency and world system approach, food security is a phenomenon with global implications. In the sense that the food security situation in one country is organically linked with world food order. One must, therefore, consider international factors affecting global hunger (McMichael, 1994). Due to the negative consequences of food security as a global phenomenon, they drew attention to the issue relating to a country's pattern of social change and how it correlates with accomplishing development goals. To them evaluating these issues in individual countries would assist in understanding global food security needs. For instance, what is the trade patterns of food products between the developing and developed countries? What is the impact of IMF and World Bank imposed conditionality on debtor nations' agricultural policies? To what extent have these policies improve food production? What about the issue of food aid and its tendencies to disrupt indigenous markets by deflating prices? And the issue of how the global economy has transformed self-sufficient, subsistence agriculture to export-driven production characterizing the international capitalist order (Lappe, Collins, & Rosset, 1998). From all the discussions above in respect of SI, the framework touched critical issues impacting Africa food production ranging from human ingenuity, technology adaptation to suit cultural realities, environmental factors, and influence of international community. Especially the issue of global economy pushing African countries to be food import dependant. This paradigm has sufficiently linked the issue of sustainable development and factors affecting the quest of Africa to Food Secured.

## 3. HUMAN SECURITY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The concept of sustainable development and human security especially food security have continued to invoke deeper understating. Before now they were exclusively standalone thematic research fields, but all that has changed with greater recognition of their interlink ages (Hallding, Nykvist, et al. 2013). This is because there is a broader and deeper understanding of human ecosystem dynamics like the impacts of climate change and variability, poverty, and consumption on the earth system over the last decades (Bierbaum et al. 2014). Today's world is a relatively insecure place with threats of natural disasters, violent conflicts especially by non-state actors, prevalent of diseases, transnational organized crimes, etc. That impedes prospects for sustainable development, peace, and stability. These crises are complex spilling into all aspects of the people's wellbeing, destroying entire

communities, and crossing borders.

Presently, the world is saddled with the complexity of COVID-19 pandemic. The disease came with rapid disruptions and a sudden halt in human activities. The Covid-19outbreak has spread across over 100 territories and countries in every continent of the world, snuffing lives out of mankind (Albert-Makyur, 2020). This is a severe public health concern, and has affected every aspect of global activities. This is an attestation of how insecurities overlap and reinforce each other. A global problem of this nature highlights the imperative of connecting security and sustainability to achieve healthy development outcomes.

Arising from this reality, in September 2015, the United Nations initiated and approved the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to provide a global framework for shared action for people, planet, and prosperity. The UN 17 SDGs clearly exposed the interlinkages between sustainable development and human security by addressing multiple factors that are interconnected and mutually reinforcing. Consequently, the UN went further to develop human security approaches which when applied, can significantly enhance the realization of the transformative promise SDGs. The United Nations have defined human security as the right of the people to live in freedom and dignity, free from poverty and despair (United Nations,2005). Therefore, making human security a critical ingredient in the pursuit of sustainable development. Echoing the correlations, the intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change on its Fifth Assessment Report, for the first time employed human security approach by devoting a chapter which analyzed climate change-induced security challenges (IPCC, 2014).

Essentially the discourse of human security is inextricably focused on the conditions of the poor and vulnerable populations (Mathew et al., 2020). Confidently, the success of one leads to the success of others. For instance, if a country were able to combat hunger (food security), it has direct implications on the agricultural system and its rural development. It equally has manifestation on economic growth and income generation, natural resources management, the health of its population; all these involve coordinated efforts across the private and public sectors. To ensure functionality and security, the state and its citizenry need adequate access to necessities of livelihood such as food and water, and other economic resources. The human security approach has wittingly or unwittingly bridged the gap between security and development sustainability. Understanding the broader concept of security and its attendant implications on community sustainability expands the threat landscape to include those challenges triggered by demography, resource, and climate.

Piqued by this reality, the U.S. National Intelligence Council (2012), opined that many U.S. partner countries will be distracted from working with the United States on important U.S. policy objectives due to climate change-induced problems such as floods, water shortages, poor water quality, and increase in regional tensions. In relating these complexities to Africa, in 2014, the Africa Centre for Strategic Studies observed that sharp reductions in precipitation and concomitant temperature increase in parts of the continent (Granit, 2015), have increased inter-group inequalities, raised the prospect of violent competition for diminishing resources and resulted in selective population shifts that could potentially foment insecurity. Equally changing rainfall and temperature patterns were analyzed as a potential threat multiplier and driver of conflict in Africa (Hendrix &Salehyan, 2012). This analysis can be interrogated with farmers and herders' conflict in West Africa, especially Nigeria. Even though it is difficult to generalize because there are other local economic and political peculiarities interplaying, they remained germane factors. Yet another issue that requires shared effort for people, planet, and prosperity, is the transboundary river basins.

Trans boundary river basins are crucial for multiple development outcomes and require collaborative effort for it to adequately supply both private and public goods from these shared resources (Granit, 2012). Trans boundary water resources cover almost half of the Earth's land surface and the successful management of it is a regional public good (Jagerskog et al. 2007). Such successful management of the water resources is a public good because it avoided overt conflict (Wolf, 1998). Although U.S. Intelligence Community Assessment cautioned that manipulation of water resources in shared basins may increasingly be used for leverage, even by terrorists, as water shortages become more acute beyond the next ten years (U.S. National Intelligence Council, 2012). The Boko Haram and ISWAP terrorist groups are currently leveraging Lake Chad Basin a shared water resources in their activities. Their activities have severely impacted economic activities in that region and are threatening human security and sustainable development in Lake Chad Basin countries. Even in researching the fields of sustainable development and security, they share notable common characteristics like short- and long-term perspectives, uncertainty, irreversibility, and multi-stakeholder challenges.

### 1.1 Food Security

The contested concept of food security is at the front burner of the 21st-century global policy agenda. It has been described by some as one that is deceptively simple (Rayfuse&Weisfelt, 2012). The term food security has evolved over the years since it was first adopted at the 1974 World Food Conference following the food crisis of 1972-5. It has evidently attracted the attention of scholars them citing hundreds of definitions of food security throughout the literature (Carolan, 2013; Maxwell & Smith, 1992). These definitions offered different perspectives on how to approach the study or understanding of food security. There are some who approached it from the angle of individuals and individual households. Others equally viewed it essentially from the daily caloric intake or nutritional measure. Yet there are those who analyze it from the national level or a nation's ability to meet and sustain self-sufficiency in food production.

To the last group, the condition of food security is satisfied when a nation can feed itself at all strata of its socio-economic classes through self-sufficiency in food production. The keyword in this definition is "self-sufficiency" and that is critical in eradicating global hunger and undernourishment. Although importation of food can be used to ensure availability and sometimes accessibility as practiced in the current global food system, dependency has exacerbated the challenge of world food insecurity. Despite global net food production can feed the entire world population, there are unimaginable problems of global hunger and malnutrition. This is an obvious indication that "the current food system is broken" (Zsoldos et al., 2014). While the developed nations of the world have a surplus, the developing countries of the world are struggling with the challenge of attaining and sustaining food availability. Hence the complexities inherent in both conceptualization and operationalization of food security.
It is against this reality that Shaw observed that "the complexity of food security as a multi-dimensional and multi-sectoral concept has been a major obstacle in reaching consensus on how to define and achieve it, and lack of agreement on effective policy prescriptions has resulted in inadequate concerted and coordinated national and global action( Shaw,2007)". Similarly, the 1974 Conference definition focused on availability always of adequate food supplies of basic foodstuff, sustaining steady expansion of food consumption, and offsetting fluctuations in production and prices. While the 1992 World Food Conference in Rome perceived food insecurity from production and supply problem premise and counseled that it can be alleviated through food production increase (Shaw, 2007). Also, the World Bank definition centered on the access and supply of food necessary for having an active lifestyle (Clay, 2003).

According to the Food Agricultural Organization, food security condition is met, when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food which meets their dietary needs and food preferences for active and healthy life(FAO,2018). This definition progressed from the issue of having access to healthy food, to include having access to the preferred food. And of course, the issue of having access to preferred food is dependent on several variables like cultural differences. Also, the definition projected four obvious elements or dimensions of food security namely availability, access, utilization, economic and political stability. Availability is concerned with providing adequate food supply to meet basic dietary needs.

Basically, it is the study of food security based on the issues associated with undernourishment. Naturally, high food availability connects with a low prevalence of undernourishment in most regions of the world (FAO, 2015). However, availability does not always provide an answer to the question of undernourishment prevalence. In line with this understanding, some argued that starvation is a matter of some people not having food to eat, and not a matter of there being not enough food to eat (Sen, 1981). Sen observed that during many of the recorded global food crisis, food was available to those that needed it but not accessible. What this suggests is that food availability itself does not necessarily translate to access for those who cannot access it ab initio. Therefore, it is a misconception to equate food availability with access. The issue of access is determined by economic, social, or physical limitations. For instance, infrastructural deficiencies like lack of paved good roads can impede accessibility of food and thereby threaten food security realization. Added to this issue is economic accessibility because accessing food is backed with purchasing power, which has direct implications on one's income. If we also factored the issue of obesity into the food access equation, we would see that access is not a sufficient indicator of food security. Even when food was available and accessed by the person who needed it, food security can be limited by the inability to consume food due to gastrointestinal diseases and infections. Think also about the impact of food commodities price fluctuations, war and famine, and other natural intervening variables on food availability. Hence, natural disasters often have the greatest impact on the most vulnerable and food insecure (Altieri,2009).

Therefore, from the above, food security can be analyzed from macro- and micro-levels as multidimensional approaches intersect to address the issue of food insecurity. At the national or macro level, for example, a country can ponder over various alternatives like deciding to pursue strategies to enhance local food production, depending on food importation, enter into international trade agreements, or the combination of any of these strategies. Nigeria currently in the quest to achieve self-reliance in rice has banned the importation of foreign rice into the country and closed her land borders to combat the smuggling of rice through the land borders. This policy has paid off in countering the possible severe effect Nigeria would have suffered in the face COVID-19 pandemics if she had relied on rice importation from China and other Asia countries. Yes, countries need to import food if adequate food production were not feasible but forced importation due to neo-liberal policies of the Bretton Wood Institutions is counterproductive.

For example, the World Bank and IMF pressurized some African countries into liberalizing their agricultural trade policy as a prior condition for obtaining loans or credit support from the two institutions. This conscripted African countries into becoming net agricultural importers. In the same line, many developing countries liberalized their agricultural trade policies under pressure to obtain World Bank loans and IMF balance of payments support (Clapp, 2014). This situation created import addiction syndrome in most African countries as they withdrew their attention from agriculture and focus on the importation of manufactured goods. Currently, the World Bank approach to food security is primarily through poverty reduction and freer trade, instead of pushing for food self-reliance.

### 1.2 Food Sovereignty

The assumption that food security analytical framework is flawless and all-encompassing, ranging from macro-level indicators associated with food prices to microorganism issues that could possibly obstruct food absorption is held in question. This contestation birthed the idea of food sovereignty not only as a critique of food security but to equally offer an alternate or expansive concept. Its origin can be traced to the actions of Via Campesina peasant movement in the 1990s in response to the untold impact of globalization on agriculture and agricultural communities (Martinez-Torres & Rosset, 2014). Critics of food security believe that the framework does not allow direct participation of food producer constituencies and other citizens. To them, availability and access as primary indicators of food security are not comprehensive enough in providing information regarding the conditions under which food is produced and procured.

However, the juxtaposition of what are overlapping conceptualizations is mostly shorthand for broader arguments around food system that is spurred by academics and romanticized populist agrarian discourses of virtuous peasant farming systems (www.core.ac.uk). Essentially the idea of food sovereignty is centered on people's right to define their own food and agricultural regime. Food Sovereignty is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through sustainable methods and their right to define their own food and agricultural systems (www.books.google.com.au).

Fundamentally, the element of this concept is the right of the people to define their own food and agricultural policies which are a significant departure from IMF/ World Bank imposed institutional reform policies. At the heart of this concept is the understanding that indigenous alternatives and choices should be sufficiently considered in the sustainable development discourse especially in food production. Food sovereignty movement is an agenda seeking to invoke discourse in food policy at the global level and provide a voice for smallholder food producers who are hitherto not heard. The quest for inclusive food and agricultural political decision making invariably recognizes power symmetries in society that result in unequal opportunities to participate in the policy process for those subject effects (Patel, 2009). The argument here is that we need to understand where and how power is relevant in the arena of food and agricultural governance.

Food Sovereignty, therefore, implies new social relations free of oppression and inequality between men and women, peoples, racial groups, social classes, and generations (Nyeleni report, 2016). An agitation which that started as a simple declaration of rights snowballed into inclusive issues such as production practices, gender, race, and social class. Although this development complicated the concept and aided its irregular interpretation, it nevertheless coincided with the emergence of agro ecology. If food sovereignty were the goal, agro ecology is the tool for its implementation (Agosto & Palau, 2015). Agro-ecology is set principles aimed at transitioning food systems away from fossil fuel-based systems that promote monoculture agriculture for export and biofuels (Altieri

& Toledo, 2011).

These principles are based on the idea of food sovereignty through the reduction of external inputs which causes local farmers to be dependent on chemical fertilizers, herbicides, and sometimes on pated GMO varieties. The agro ecology framework is offering alternatives to food production and agricultural policies that reflect the reality of the people. Africa needs such an alternative approach to sustainable development; away from the one framed by Western hegemonic which does not correspond with their reality. So, for Africa to achieve sustainable development by extension food sovereignty, she must embrace indigenous alternatives and choices adequate to cause self-sufficiency in food production.

Currently, there is concern over the impact of UN SDGs in the lives and living conditions of the African rural populace, especially how it has widened the inequality gap. SDGs paradigms in practice do not are too Eurocentric to consider culturally constructed ways people live their daily lives and the surrounding environment. Therefore, the means of achieving sustainable development must acknowledge the contextual variability of the problem (Matowanyika, 1989). Premium should be placed on the issue of access and control of production resources by the local people. Local people will identify their food and agricultural needs, and then development experts can assist them to plan and execute strategies to meet the defined needs. This bottom-top approach is the gravitational force for food sovereignty agitation and indeed sustainable development. This approach is not in way diametrical opposed to industrial agriculture, rather a framework to involve food producers' clusters in the transitional food and agricultural policy processes. It is the understanding that the food sovereignty approach is a more comprehensive method to analyze food regimes from availability, accessibility, utilization, and stability of food. Evidently from the above discussion is the complementarily nature of both food security and sovereignty. Distinctly, food sovereignty provides a harmonizing perspective of the food system, its cultural suitability, attendant environmental impact, and the direct role of producers in the entire process.

## 2. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND FOOD SECURITY IN AFRICA

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals intend to cause development in Africa and by extension achieve food security end state in the continent. The first two goals (to end poverty and to eliminate hunger) of UN Sustainable development Goals are directly linked to food security. The issue of food security through multidimensional practice is premised on achieving agricultural surplus. Recent strategies to agricultural development in Africa are yet to reduce geometrically the number of food insured individuals and/ or ensured environmental sustainability. Even though global food production has witnessed tremendous improvement in recent years, it has been accompanied by widening global disparities in food entitlements. Issues relating to the ability to acquire and gain access to food, and the control of the productive resources continue to abate. The majority of the people in this category are living in Africa. Yet African countries have largely subscribed to food security issues and strategies crafted in UN Sustainable Development Goals.

The FAO has stated that Africa accounts for 73 million of the 135 million people experiencing chronic hunger in 2019. About 5 million of the numbers are living in Northern Nigeria. Therefore, there is probably a disjoint somewhere why the UN Sustainable Goals are not intersecting with African developmental needs especially in ensuring food security for the peoples of Africa. Do not forget that institutions like the World Bank and IMF have a significant role in providing financial and technical assistance to member states in respect of achieving the UN Sustainable Goals. It is either the African sustainable development problems that are not malleable, or the Western-imposed approaches do not fit into African realities. So, what could be the disconnection? To unpack this issue, we must interrogate what sustainable development means in the African context and the need to find alternative approaches to the current strategies. What is sustainable development? It is a development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Jeucken, 2004). This is conceptualization provided by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED).

This definition implies that the applicability of the term development and sustainability in the development process should reflect the specific realities of the intended population. Can we say this is true with UN Sustainable Development Goals as framed in Western modes of thought? The issue of sustainability must be perceived from a peoples' culture, history, ethno ecology, local ecosystem, and human's role in nature (Sachs, 1987; Matowanyinka, 1989). Sustainable development must evidently enhance the environment and socio-economic status of most of

the population. This has not been seen in Africa despite UN resetting developmental strategies from Millennium Developmental Goals to Sustainable Developmental Goals especially about food security. An approach that has entrenched hierarchical power distinctions between the intellectual experts and the local peoples. A situation that denied the local people from articulating their experiences to the outside world. They are only seen from the erroneous perspective of accomplishment created by development protagonists. There is untold social harm associated with prejudicially appropriating and accepting a given knowledge over and above another in the development process.

For example, Ezeanya-Esiobu in her 2017 TEDTALK narrated the traditional success story of the Tassa or Kai irrigation method in Niger republic against. While most of the World Bank's irrigation projects. While the World Bank irrigation projects were struggling to provide commensurate yields, the Tassa system yields were tremendous. This is a testament that development experts should consider and embrace local knowledge and experiences that are challenging and inaccessible to their social position. This invokes the question about what constitutes an appropriate technology for Africa development. In deciding the appropriate technology, it is important to look inward and understand the skill sets driving these local communities' survival over the years. Such introspective will offer an insight into where these local skills can intersect with the contemporary method. So sustainable development should not just be about a process least destructive to the natural environment. This process must be mirrored from the angle of integrating indigenous knowledge and traditions.

According to FalsBorda, indigenous knowledge could be defined as the common-sense knowledge and ideas of local peoples about the everyday realities of living from their cultural heritage (Borda, 1980). This is basically holistic and inclusive patterned knowledge that is organically linked with mental, spiritual, and physical self-development, and in the unison of nature. To achieve alternative approaches that would accommodate this understanding of sustainable development, researchers need to search and develop solutions to human problems embellished with local specificities. This will involve exploring the grassroots understanding of human problems and their strategies of problem-solving. A development agenda that emerged from this sort of research will be characterized by the role of the local population driving and controlling the developmental process even in the face of challenges. In the words of Rahmato, a rural coping strategy also inform us about the relationship between local production systems, social structures, and ecological base (rahmato,1992). To understand sustainable development in the African context is to have answers to issues of what to produce, from whom to produce, and who should possess or control the production means. It is against this background that food sovereignty is premised. That is a condition under which African states can decentralize the power held by various cooperate interests within the food production and supply chain, provide legitimacy to indigenous approaches. This is simply an approach employing the intersection of the ecosystems and social systems to ensure that cultural and anthropological accounts of hunger, people-oriented policy, and production approaches are captured in food security discourse.

## 3. CHALLENGES OF FOOD SECURITY IN AFRICA

The issue of African Food Security is threatened by myriad of factors which all cannot be fully analysed in this paper. The study will examine those factors considered as being special challenges because they cut across the continent.

### 5.1. Productivity

The issue of availability is directly linked with productivity both in cropping and livestock system. Africa now is still unable to feed her population despite having about 80% of the population engaged in farming (Odhiambo, 2007). The low productivity is caused by factors like environmental degradation, poor planning, and lack of infrastructure. Additionally, the rural peoples of Africa do not have access to and control over their productive resources. Most times they are alienated from participating effectively in the agricultural production chain because they lack funds to invest in land and labor. The state in concert with the domestic and international accomplice usually appropriate wealth from rural people hiding under the cloak of institutional reforms in defense of their action. These reforms are imposed on African countries by international governmental organizations like the World Bank and the IMF. This inability to make food available for the teeming population results in hunger and vulnerability to diseases. From the SI framework, the approach to employ in this situation is techno-ecology because it recognizes human and technology adaption in line unique to indigenous preferences.

### 5.2. Poverty and Food Access

One of the factors affecting food security in Africa is poverty and food accessibility. Even when food was available, most of the people lack the purchasing power to afford food. Availability does not necessarily mean accessibility to the hungry. Because of widespread poverty in most people living in poverty hardly have access to food. In fact, there is a direct correlation between poverty and hunger. Remember hunger and undernourishment is an impediment to building the necessary human, physical, and social capital to escape poverty. Therefore, to galvanize national economic growth, it is imperative to ensure adequate food access to the hungry and poor. Added to the issue of high poverty rate is the uneven income distribution caused by the global economy premised on the structure of global value chains (GVCs) and global production networks (GPNs). The pattern of global income inequality witnessed across the world today is predicated on the way the international political economy is organized. Africa is impacted harshly by this global economic system because of her import dependence on the western world. Though income disparity is a global concern it has impacted Africa more especially in accessing food. This is where the SI dependency and world system approach comes handy.

### 5.3. Population

African demographic trends if not matched with a corresponding increase in food production will compound food security problems in Africa. The UN's medium fertility forecast predicted that Africa's population in the course to rise from 856 million in 2010 to 2 billion by 2050 and 3.4 billion by 2100(United Nations,2010). It projected the region's share of the world population to move from 7% in 1950 to 33% in 2100. But remember population is both assets and liability, which is important the quality of the human capital. Harnessing high human capital from the rising population would ultimately flatten the curve and make the production chain robust. If nothing were done, Africa with its current sustainable development strategies would not be able to meet the food needs of the rising population. It is against this background that the strategies proposed by techno-ecological theorists need to be revisited to chart the path for Africa overpopulation solution. The dangers of overpopulation are multidimensional such as youth bulge, children out of school, high infant mortality rate, and pressure on environment due to rising demand for arable land, pasture, forest products, water.

### 5.4. Natural and Man-made Disasters

These two variables are of great challenge to the issue of achieving food security and agricultural pioneered economic growth in Africa. Some areas of the continent like the Sahel, Sahara Desert, Kalahari Desert, and East Africa are arid. While some in the semi-arid areas have soil that is inherently infertile with water constraints that limit production and productivity. The biggest catastrophe is experienced by those farmers who still rely on variable rainfall for their farming. Vulnerability to drought is compounded by the continent's rising population because agriculture has encroached into forests and marginal lands. This situation has led perennial farmers and pastoralist clashes, especially in Nigeria. Yet another human-made problem is the issue of terrorist activities like the Boko Haram and ISWAP disrupting economic activities in certain parts of Africa. An example is the ravaging effects of Boko Haram activities in North-Eastern Nigeria. For over ten years the region's economic activities have been disrupted by insurgents. Even youths, farmers, and hunters have been recruited into the "Civilian Joint Task Force", an indigenous group collaborating with the Nigerian Army in battling Boko Haram. Wrong agricultural policies can as well impact food production in the same way natural intervening variables do

## 6. FINDINGS

During the study, attempts have been made to demonstrate the interconnectedness of sustainable development, African development, and issues impeding African food security accomplishment. The analysis shows that the UN Development Sustainable Goals as being charted in Africa is not enough to cause sustainable development in the continent that will usher self-sufficiency in food production. The path to the Africa food security problem is to employ a Sustainable Intensification framework by adopting the techno-ecology approach. For African countries to achieve food security, they need to put their resources on cost-effective programs that can mitigate the challenges of chronic poverty and hunger. Such cost-effective programs should be driven by alternative approaches that are predicated on the uniqueness of the African local ecosystem and culture. The aim of the alternative approaches is to achieve food self-sufficiency and by extension food sovereignty.

## 7. CONCLUSION

In the past decade, the United Nations have championed sustainable development goals across Africa. The African Development and the question of food security are important to what sustainable development means in the continent. The open our horizon and the attempts to search for alternative approaches and effective solutions to the developmental problems with the hope to improve the lives of Africans is imperative. Basically, the new alternative approaches must touch the social, spiritual, cultural, economic, political, and cosmological aspects of the indigenous people to achieve development. For that reason, to address the indigenous challenges of hunger in Africa, the United Nations' drive for sustainable development must be understood and applied efficiently to derive good results. This must be placed in an appropriate context which gives social and practical meaning to the actors in Africa as main developmental drivers and subjects but not as spectators or passer-by. As the present method of operational zing and defining the agenda for sustainable development from the western and capitalist economic perspective which is grossly linked to the processes of globalization without consideration for the average hungry African will not make sense nor add value. The rapid transformation and social change desirous of indigenous societies must require distinct methods to achieve social development in Africa. Hence there is the need to re-conceptualize and re-theorize the challenges associated with food security and poverty such as agriculture, urbanization, and demography trends. Finally, to achieve food security and sustainable development in the region, the African leaders must collaborate by gathering resources and investing in programs such as agriculture, socio-economic empowerment of citizens, equal employment opportunities, research and design institutes that are cost-effective, and can mitigate the issues of severe hunger and poverty. These should be driven by alternative methods that are hinged on indigenous culture and the unique nature of the continent's ecosystem and aimed to achieve food self-sufficiency and food sovereignty in Africa.

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