



## ROLE OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION CENTRES IN ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE GOALS SET BY THE UNITED NATIONS

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**ABSTRACT** 17 Sustainable development goals have been identified by the United Nations with a deadline of 2030 to ensure development with sustainability. Government as well as private organizations and general people have a role to play in achieving these goals. Libraries too can contribute in this direction in their own ways. This paper identifies some of such ways.

**KEYWORDS :** Sustainable development, sustainable development goals, SDG, MDG, libraries

### 1. INTRODUCTION

There are leapfrog development activities all around the globe during the last few decades. The unprecedented rate of growth in many key sectors has put resources under a danger of being depleted in a foreseeable future. The depletion of resources is happening at local as well as global levels putting most countries under a state of worry with the realization that if reckless development activities are allowed uncontrolled, the future generations would be left with nothing; not to speak of enormous ecological destructions, putting the very existence of life on the Earth under question. In this background, the concept of sustained development has come to the fore.

### 2. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Ecologically speaking, "The net productivity of biomass (positive mass balance per unit area per unit time) maintained over decades to centuries (Conway, 1987: 96)". A more broad-based definition puts sustainable development as "Sustainable development is about ensuring a better quality of life for everyone, now and for generations to come. It means a more inclusive society in which the benefits of increased economic prosperity are widely shared, with less pollution and less wasteful use of natural resources. (DETR, 1999)".

A group of 22 people representing developed and developing countries, called the World Commission on Environment and Development was established by the United Nations to identify long-term environmental strategies. This commission's report called 'Our Common Future' brought the idea of sustainable development to the attention of the international community. In this report, Brundtland (1987) defined Sustainable development as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

Having this report as a basis, the UN held a World Conference in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1992 called The "Earth Summit". The main aim was to earmark actionable agenda for sustainable development which resulted in the "Agenda 21" with a roadmap for achieving sustainable development.

In the Millennium Summit of the UN at New York in 2000, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which were eight time-bound international sustainable development goals with deadline of 2015. As 2015 ended and as the MDGs concluded, in 2016 much more bold and transformative 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted by the United Nations member countries with 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for the next 15 years. It is

important to note that each SDG has specific target with deadline of 2030 with universal applicability; that is all countries irrespective of the economic status are bound to achieve the goals. This requires an all around action by governments, commercial establishments, civil society and people. It is needless to say that active role by governments in achieving SDGs is of paramount importance due to governments' control over other stakeholders of the process.

### 3. ROLE OF LIBRARIES

Information is a fundamental tool to design any government policies. Without reliable and fairly accurate information it is impossible to conceive a proper plan for achieving a goal. In case of sustainable development too, information plays a vital role in the form of a basic ingredient for formulating various processes for the attainment of sustainable goals. It is rightly said by IFLA President Donna Scheeder that, "there is no truly sustainable development without access to information, and no meaningful, inclusive access to information without libraries" (Libraries and Sustainable Development, n.d.).

Therefore, it is evident that libraries have a very important role to play as information providers. Okoro, Akidi & Arua (2014) are of the opinion that libraries are tools for the development of society. In this connection, Pearson and Hall (2015) identified the following as top ten strategies for libraries to create greater awareness and impact for national and international development:

1. Create and tell your library's story
2. Develop key messages
3. Ensure that staff, Board, and volunteers understand and can deliver key messages and that everyone is speaking from the same script!
4. Engage the media
5. Identify target audiences and create objectives for each audience
6. Engage your audience and allow them to participate
7. Create a public awareness campaign and tie it to an advocacy campaign
8. Use your website, social media, and print materials to spread your message
9. Don't stop with the story make 'the ask' for public or private support!
10. Evaluate your success"

Though these are the broad strategies for development, they somewhat show specific paths for libraries to get involved in the path of development. On the same lines, specific role for libraries can also be identified for each of the SDGs as given below

Sustainable goals set by the United Nations	Role of libraries
Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing free and fair access to information so that people can use that information to find and improve means of livelihood. On the same lines providing quality information</li> <li>• governments, civil society, and businesses to carve out plans to fight poverty</li> <li>• Providing information about outcome of agricultural research, market prices, weather reports, and information about new equipment, success stories to farmers so that they can achieve more productivity.</li> <li>• Providing information about innovations, new practices, new cures, alternative therapies to medical practitioners for practical usage. Providing controlled and refined access to medical information to the general public and families to enhance awareness.</li> </ul>
Goal 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture	
Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages	
Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all	
Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls	

<p>Goal 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all</p> <p>Goal 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all</p> <p>Goal 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all</p> <p>Goal 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation</p> <p>Goal 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries</p> <p>Goal 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable</p> <p>Goal 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns</p> <p>Goal 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts</p> <p>Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development</p> <p>Goal 15: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss</p> <p>Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels</p> <p>Goal 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing convenient access to libraries, Procuring quality resources and ensuring that interest in learning is not diminished because of other distractions.</li> <li>• Providing women-centric information and resources. Ensuring equality in access to information. Ensuring extra facilities and safety whenever needed.</li> <li>• Collect and share information about historical patterns of draughts and floods, rain, ancient irrigation practices, climate change etc. Practicing rain harvest for library's in-house usage</li> <li>• Becoming green libraries with minimal usage of electricity. Employing roof-top solar panels for self consumption. Providing information about renewable energy sources and how to use them.</li> <li>• Providing information about employment opportunities, skill trainings and supporting initiatives to provide self-employments.</li> <li>• Building multi-purpose library infrastructure. Providing reliable high speed Internet facilities wherever needed.</li> <li>• Supporting initiatives by World bodies like the UN, the UNESCO etc in reducing inequality. Actively participate in resource sharing among countries Employing social media and information technology in this direction.</li> <li>• Providing library-based community. activities, Providing extension services, Documenting and preserving information about cultural practices.</li> </ul>
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## CONCLUSION

There is an undeniable rush of sustainable development. Sustainable development will not happen without proper sources of information and proper ways of disseminating such information. Libraries, which have been always considered as vehicles of information flow, therefore have a crucial role to play in attaining sustainable development goals. They can make use of proper and effective use of new age technologies such as social media in this direction.

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