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## From developing to sustainable economy: A comparative assessment of India and Nigeria

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### ABSTRACT

There is an ongoing debate among private, non-governmental, and governmental institutions about development and its degree of sustainability. This study sets out to answer whether or not India and Nigeria, as developing countries, are on the right path towards attaining sustainable development. If they are not, the study identifies a probable pathway, from developing to sustainable economy. This is achieved by conducting a comparative analysis of the development planning systems and sustainable development indicators, using the case studies of India and Nigeria. The results of this work will be useful to researchers, policy-makers and development workers.

### 1. Introduction

Although development has been defined in different ways by a number of authors (Streeten et al., 1981; Backhouse, 1991; Harris, 2000), the general consensus it is that development should eventually result in structural transformation, sustainable development and peace. This concept represents an observable and measurable progress in the prevalent conditions of a nation; such as human welfare, economic parameters, and educational capability of citizens (United Nations Statistics Division, 2013). Development has attracted the attention of scholars, activists, politicians, development workers and international organizations over the years with an increased tempo (Falebita et al., 2015). Development planning by governments represents an intervention, to aid and improve the pace at which development is taking place (Jhingan, 2004).

Development planning has been defined as a deliberate and conscious government effort to formulate strategies, aimed at influencing, directing, and controlling changes in socio-economic variables (such as consumption, investment, savings, export, imports and so on) of a country within a given time period. The goal is to achieve a predetermined set of objectives, which include: rapid increase in per capita income, a high level of employment, a relatively stable price level, a reduction in poverty and income inequalities, a favourable balance of payment situation and a diversified self-reliant and sustainable economy (Jhingan, 2004; Falebita, 2014). Increased development, however, creates challenges such as increased pollution and other negative impacts on the environment. This has led to the question of the type of development that is needed. It is no longer adequate for growth to lead to development; it must also be sustainable (Pinter, 2013). Some distinctions between the concepts of growth and development are highlighted in Table 1.

The Brundtland Commission Report defined sustainable development (SD) as, “the development that meets the needs of today without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs” (World Commission on Environment and Development

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**Table 1**

Basic distinctions between growth and development.  
Source: Harris (2000); Gupta (2009).

| Growth  | Development   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Is a measurable in terms of expansion in labour force, capital, consumption, etc.</li> <li>● Often referred to as economic growth described by economic development.</li> <li>● Is characterized by a spontaneity and freedom typical of advanced free trade nations.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Is non-quantitative in measures such as economic or social changes that result in growth.</li> <li>● Often referred to as economic development that defines fundamental factors (social attitudes and changes in techniques of production) of economic growth.</li> <li>● Requires direction, management and control, to create and maintain the forces of expansion. A major trait of most underdeveloped countries.</li> </ul> |

(WCED), 1987). In the drive towards attaining SD, development policies have evolved from having an emphasis on industrialization, to focusing on basic needs as reflected by the Human Development Index (HDI), to structural adjustment programs (SAPs), and recently to global development. The numerous challenges encountered, coupled with various criticisms, have led to the concept of SD (Streeten et al., 1981; Backhouse, 1991). The 1992 Earth Summit held in Rio de Janeiro, together with the UN Agenda 21, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development lent credence to the acceptance of SD globally (United Nations, 1992). Other international events and agreements like the 2000 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), (UNDP, 2015) and the 2002 World Summit on SD (UN, 2000), continue to sustain its drive (Munasinghe, 2009).

This paper is structured as follows: Section 2 contains details on the recent focus on sustainable development. Section 3 describes the methodology and the case studies. Section 4 presents' results, the sustainable development indicators (SDI) trends, and the proposed policy drivers and framework. Finally, some pertinent conclusions and recommendations are drawn in Section 5.

## 2. Recent focus on sustainable development

Sustainable development has been given one of its most basic definitions by Blewitt (2008) as “a simple idea, of making the future healthier and improved compared to the present”. Biondo (2010), attempts a review of the concept of SD, emanating from the different yet interrelated concepts of growth and development. She presents sustainability in terms of a sustainable growth rate using a model that incorporates both growth and development.

The article entitled, ‘Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development’ (herein referred to as UN SDG, 2015) prompted the United Nations to announce new sustainable development goals (SDGs) to be attained by 2030. There are 17 sustainable development goals and 169 targets which are aimed at balancing the three dimensions of sustainable development, namely, the economic, the social and the environmental (Pinter, 2013; UN SDG, 2015). These SDGs seek to build on the millennium development goals (MDGs) and complete work that hadn’t been achieved previously. The goals include, but are not limited to (1) ensuring healthy lives and promoting wellbeing for all, (2) ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education, promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all, (3) promoting sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all, (4) taking urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts, and (5) ending poverty in all its forms everywhere (UN SDG, 2015).

Achieving these goals requires identification of various indices for measuring SD. Sustainable development indicators (SDIs) have been employed by various organizations, including the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development; the World Bank and the Consultative Group on Sustainable Development Indicators to define and measure SD across nations and economies (Kates et al., 2005). The OECD, (2001) itemizes about 10 SDIs. Esty et al. (2005) list around 30 SDIs, while the Joint UNECE/Eurostat/OECD Task Force (2013), lists about 90 which include research and development, expenditure, and greenhouse gas emissions. The Inter-agency Expert Group on SDG indicators (IAEG-SDG) enumerates over 80 indicators (IAEG-SDG, 2016).

This study aims to comparatively assess the quest for sustainable development using the case studies of India and Nigeria. It identifies indicators for measuring SD and obstacles to policy effectiveness and suggests a framework for SD in these economies in the light of the UN SDG (2015) and IAEG-SDG (2016).

India gained independence in 1947, while Nigeria became independent in 1960. Both democracies are heavily populated, with India as the second and Nigeria as the eighth most populous nations in the world (Central Intelligence Agency, 2014; World Bank, 2015, 2017). On the basis of the HDI (UNPD, 2014), India with an HDI value of 0.586, ranked 135 representing a medium human development category, while Nigeria with an HDI value of 0.194 ranked 152. Both developing economies are characterized by diverse cultures, tribes and ethnic groups, varied religious practices and high levels of poverty, disparity, and emigration rates. Both countries have also crafted and implemented various development plans since independence.

## 3. Methodology and case studies

The methodology involved the review of the data relating to development plans and selected SDIs of both countries, from 1960 to 2015. These were obtained from textbooks, public documents, journal articles, the UNDP Human Development Report (2014, 1990–1998), the World Bank (2017, 2003), the UN SDG (2015) and IAEG-SDG (2016). The SDIs, shown in Table 2, include life expectancy at birth, CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, energy use/consumption, education expenditure, foreign direct investment (FDI), health expenditure and R & D expenditure. The assumption was that the planning types are the major determinants of SDI performance since

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