Libraries and Archives for Successful Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

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The United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provides a comprehensive framework of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) covering social, environmental, and economic development (UN, 2015). Member States committed to leaving no one behind when implementing the SDGs (UN, n.d.). Halfway to the deadline for the 2030 Agenda, *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2023: Special Edition* reveals that we are leaving more than half the world behind (UN, 2023). Over half of the SDGs have seen little to no progress, and 30% have seen a halt or reversal in progress. The report further recommends stronger national institutions, increased accountability, efficient regulatory frameworks, and improved digital infrastructure and data capacity to support the suggested ambitious changes. Archives and libraries are essential institutions to help combat these challenges and accelerate achievement of the goals.

The UN 2030 Agenda envisions a world with universal literacy. Access to information is well articulated in SDGs Goal 16, with target 16.10 aiming to 'Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements' (UN, 2015). This justifies the importance of archives and libraries for sustainable development.

Records, Archives and Libraries for Sustainable Development

As argued by the International Federation for Library Associations (IFLA, 2016), public access to information enables people to make informed decisions that can improve their lives. Communities that have universal access to timely and pertinent information are able to end poverty and inequality, advance agriculture, offer high-quality education, and promote the well-being, culture, creativity, and research of their citizens. Globally, and mostly in developing countries, there are low levels of awareness on the SDGs by the public (Okuonghae & Igbinovia, 2019). This negatively impacts the SDGs implementation. Libraries and archives are great institutions that offer awareness on SDGs and receive feedback that helps in achieving the goals in cost effective ways.

A United Nations report (UN, 2017) highlights the significance of records and information management in the implementation of SDGs. High-quality data and information are essential for governments, international organizations, civil society, the private sector, and the general public to make informed decisions and guarantee an accurate evaluation of the 2030 Agenda's implementation. Globally, libraries and archival institutions offer a wide range of products and services that promote the attainment of each SDGs. These include: offering free access to information; promoting literacy; offering safe spaces; advancing digital inclusion by providing Information and Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure; promoting creativity and innovation; establishing trusted networks; providing evidence of government business and decision making; supporting legal identity, rights and entitlements; and providing access to and preservation of the world's knowledge for current and future generations (Okuonghae & Igbinovia, 2019; Omona, 2020).

Proper monitoring and evaluation of the SDGs requires a substantial amount of accurate data and information. The International Office for Standardization's ISO 15489-1:2016 (ISO, 2016) provides a framework for an efficient and systematic way of managing records that are authentic reliable, useable and possess integrity in support of business activities for as long as they are required. Proper records and information management at national, regional, and global levels ensure efficient and effective reporting which in return enables adequate and successful decision making towards implementing the SDGs. Without archives, the quality of official records would erode steadily, leaving an inadequate evidence base (Anenene & Oyewole, 2020). Archival materials provide the evidence of events and transactions used as reference to support decision-making.

Recommendations

1. Each country should consider including archives and libraries in national development plans, and develop strategies for proper management of the same to aid in meeting the SDGs and local development needs (Government of Kenya, 2020a; IFLA 2016).

2. Promote and support the information science field to aid in ensuring adequate skilled professionals to manage the ever-increasing volume of data, information, and knowledge efficiently and effectively, as guided by the *Lyon Declaration on Access to Information and Development* (IFLA, 2014).

3. Empower archives and libraries as catalysts for social-economic development in the implementation of SDGs (IFLA, 2018; Missingham, 2020). The archives and libraries must support governments in SDG-related capacity building and sensitization campaigns through information literacy programmes.

4. Governments and all stakeholders involved in the implementation of SDGs should adequately fund archives and libraries and provide adequate ICT infrastructure.

5. Governments should appreciate the value of records, archives, and libraries as crucial to the success of SDGs and develop indicators for reporting in voluntary national reviews (Government of Kenya, 2020a).

6. Governments should put in place appropriate policies and regulations to support archives, libraries and information services for the implementation of SDGs and national goals (Abata-Ebire et al., 2018). They should also support the implementation of the existing norms and standards of records and information management.

7. Governments need to apply a more holistic approach towards the management of data, information and records by integrating various tools and techniques in the work of professionals, representing a variety of information disciplines, towards the achievement of SDGs (IFLA 2016; Okuonghae & Igbinovia, 2019; Omona, 2020).

8. Stakeholder engagement and diverse knowledge sharing on SDGs at a national level is important in guiding decision making and implementation of the SDGs (Government of Kenya, 2020b).

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K4DP is an international non-government organization, based in Vienna, Austria. With partners from all over the world, K4DP aims to localize and implement the global *Agenda Knowledge for Development*.
www.K4dp.org

Representatives of the above organisations can be contacted through their respective websites.

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