



Analyzing the contributions of the Economic Recovery and Growth Plan, National Strategies, and National Development Plan toward achieving sustainable development goals in Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examines the extent to which Nigeria's National Development Plans (NDPs)—the Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP, 2017–2020), the Nigerian Economic Sustainability Plan (NESP, 2020), and the National Development Plan (2021–2025)—align with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It particularly focuses on SDG 1 (poverty reduction), SDG 4 (quality education), SDG 7 (clean energy), SDG 8 (economic growth), and SDG 13 (climate action). Guided by Policy Coherence and Institutional Theory, the research applies qualitative analysis of official documents, an alignment scoring system (0–100), and semi-structured interviews with 15 purposively selected stakeholders, including government officials and development experts. Findings reveal that the ERGP and NESP strongly emphasize economic recovery and diversification (SDG 8: 85/100; 80% agreement on job creation), with moderate progress in education (SDG 4: 75/100) and health (SDG 3: 70/100), but weak integration of environmental goals (SDG 7: 40/100; SDG 13: 30/100). The 2021–2025 NDP shows a shift toward inclusive and climate-resilient development (SDG 1: 45/100), yet implementation challenges persist due to corruption, institutional silos, and inadequate funding (only 15% of SDG budgets realized). The study concludes that while Nigeria's NDPs partially align with the SDGs, achieving sustainable outcomes requires institutional reform, enhanced inter-sectoral coordination, innovative financing, and stronger stakeholder collaboration.

Keywords: Economic recovery, growth plan, National Strategies, National Development Plan, Sustainable Development Goals

Introduction

Nigeria is the most populous nation in Africa (Magaji *et al.*, 2025a) ^[15]. Moreover, Nigeria has one of the largest economies in Africa (Igwe *et al.*, 2021) ^[10]. Despite the above, Nigeria faces serious developmental challenges (Ologbonori *et al.*, 2025) ^[21]. Such challenges prevent Nigeria from reaching its potential. Nigeria has abundant oil, wood, and land, but it remains underdeveloped (Magaji & Musa, 2015) ^[12]. In 2015, the United Nations introduced the Sustainable Development Goals to provide a global agenda for achieving sustainable development by 2030. The seventeen goals, including those focused on poverty reduction, health, education, gender equality, clean energy, and climate action, aim to address the most urgent global issues and ensure inclusive, equitable, and sustainable development (Suleiman *et al.*, 2025) ^[23].

Nigeria can take advantage of the SDGs to deal with the structural development issues of the country. Nonetheless, the effectiveness of SDGs would be achieved only when global frameworks are interconnected with country policies. The alignment is essential, particularly in Nigeria, as the national development plans must focus not only on restoring the economy immediately but also on ensuring long-term sustainability, social inclusion, and environmental conservation (Ibrahim *et al.*, 2025) ^[9]. To meet all these demands, Nigeria has produced a series of national development plans, and these include the Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP) 2017-2020, Nigerian Economic Sustainability Plan (NESP) 2020 and National Development Plan (NDP) 2021-2025. The initiatives are designed to boost economic growth, diversify the economy, reduce poverty, create jobs, and incorporate the Sustainable Development Goals into the country's strategic planning and policies.

Even so, while some national development plans indeed incorporate SDG-related goals, it is concerning how these plans are aligned with the larger 2030 Agenda of Sustainable Development. Once again, it is noted that the implementation of SDGs in national policy is not always uniform, with specific goals carrying more weight. For example, there is much emphasis on economic growth (SDG 8) and education (SDG 4). Meanwhile, essential objectives like poverty reduction (SDG 1) and climate change (SDG 13) are given little attention. The difference between the policy objectives and SDG targets is ineffective and does not guide Nigeria's development plans for effective and sustainable development. Besides, weak institutional capacity (Magaji *et al.*, 2025b) ^[13], lack of financial resources (Adam *et al.*, 2016) ^[1], and corruption (El-Yaqub *et al.*, 2024) ^[7].

The problem lies in the implementation of plans, which is not in sync with the design. Previous policy documents like ERGP, NESP and NDP have clearly laid out the expectation that Nigeria must align its activities to the Sustainable Development Goals. However, this has resulted in institutional inefficiency in its implementation, inadequate monitoring, and uncoordinated action by the sectors. Issues facing the implementation of SDG 17 include the frequent insufficiency of funds for SDGs, with the focus shifting towards the immediate revival of economies rather than sustainability.

This study will analyse how national policies like the ERGP, the NESP, and the NDP will contribute to the achievement of the SDGs in Nigeria. In this light, they have been picked for analysis. The aim is to identify the consistency of these plans with the SDGs, analyse the obstacles to their successful implementation, and develop

strategies to improve their alignment and execution. This study discusses how integrating SDGs into Nigeria's national development policies can be improved to achieve sustainable development for everyone at all levels of society. In this regard, the SDGs are a treat for third-world countries like Nigeria to maximise their benefits. The study will provide valuable recommendations to relevant stakeholders, including policymakers and development practitioners, involved in Nigeria's sustainable development process. It will examine areas of policy misalignment and ascertain the existing barriers to effective implementation of the SDGs.

This research will guide future policies in Nigeria and other developing nations by enlightening policymakers. Understanding the challenges and successes in aligning national development plans with the SDGs could help formulate better policies to manage economic deregulation in an environmentally friendly and socially inclusive manner. It also contributes to the academic argument about including the SDGs in national policy-making and provides a practical perspective on the state of policy implementation in a developing context. Due to its geographical position in the development of Africa, the outcome of this study will not only apply to Nigeria's development. It can also be helpful to other states facing similar difficulties in implementing the SDGs into national development strategies. This study can contribute to the advancement of the global agenda regarding SDGs. It can help make this world a more sustainable and fairer place for both people and the planet.

Literature Review

The literature review has provided a detailed explanation of the concepts, theories, empirical studies and gaps in the alignment of National Development Plans in Nigeria (ERGP, NESP and NDP) with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This section highlights what is already known about the issue and the gaps remaining in the literature, aiming to better understand the challenges and opportunities of national policies in coordinating the SDGs in Nigeria.

Conceptual Review

Concept of Sustainable Development

The term sustainable development has changed a lot since the time of the Brundtland Commission. The Brundtland Commission has defined sustainable development as a term which means 'the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the capacity of future generations to meet their own needs' (Brundtland, 1987) [6]. Over the years, this definition has come to mean not just protecting the environment, but also, as three pillars of sustainability, social equity and economic development: economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental protection (Magaji *et al.*, 2025c) [14]. The UN adopted the SDGs in 2015 to better address local sustainable development challenges. More specifically, the SDGs include 17 interdependent goals designed to tackle the world's most pressing challenges today, such as poverty, inequality, climate change, and peace.

National Development Plans

National Development Plans can be seen as an essential means of transforming international development agendas,

such as SDGs, into localised development strategies. The ERGP (2017-2020), the NESP (2020) and the NDP (2021-2025) are Nigeria's strategic plans. The goal of developing and economic recovery was the aim of these aids. The ERGP aimed to lift Nigeria out of recession and diversify the economy from reliance on oil. Meanwhile, the NESP was drawn up to tackle the economic challenges that the COVID-19 pandemic ushered in. Nigeria's National Development Plan (NDP) is a chronic plan aimed at ensuring that Nigeria operates on the same level as other economies in the world. NDP will help make Nigeria a competitive entity. Also, it will bring up Nigeria's human capital. Lastly, NDP will ensure sustainable and economic infrastructure development.

The process of including SDGs in the development plans of a country is complex. This requires identifying the primary targets and linking them with country-level development issues. The good governance framework, strong institutions, financing and policy coherence determine the outcome of SDG integration. Like many developing countries, Nigeria's national plans are impeded by competing priorities, weak institutions and scarce funding for the incorporation of the SDGs. Therefore, by critically assessing the national-level policies within specific country contexts and their congruence with the SDGs, it is possible to identify obstacles. In addition, it can show what opportunities may be exploited to obtain better results in the area of sustainable development.

Theoretical Review

Several theoretical frameworks would help understand the alignment of the national policies with the SDGs. The underlying principles of the SDGs provide theories that clarify the issues and processes for embedding SDGs in national development systems.

Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development (PCSD) Theory

A critical theory related to sustainability is Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development (PCSD). This theory emphasises the need for coordination and integration among the policy sectors to achieve sustainable development (OECD, 2019) [17]. According to the concept, any policy must be coordinated at the economic, social, and environmental levels to prevent conflicts among these spheres. Moreover, it must ensure that the success of all three spheres of development leads to sustainability. The theory of PCSD emphasises the necessity of policy integration in Nigeria, focusing on growth, social inclusion, and environmental protection. However, studies indicated that the policies in Nigeria tend to be compartmentalised. Economic policies are largely growth-oriented, while social and environmental issues are relegated to the second place (Akpan *et al.*, 2025) [4].

The application of institutional theory involves human interaction and institutions, which affect policy implementation. The ability of our national institutions to design, implement and enforce policies is a concern of theory (Gabdo *et al.*, 2025) [8]. Implementation of the SDGs through national policies is also an important area of intervention. Institutional investments do not come cheaply, and thus, countries must think wisely. Weak institutional framework and coordination failure of the federal, state and local government have been one of the greatest hindrances

to effective implementation of SDG-related policies in Nigeria (Akinbo&Olamide, 2020) ^[2]. Institutional theory helps clarify situations where there is a lack of positive measures in an SDG plan, even though the plan is duly formulated in the national development programme.

Through the Theory of Change, we can also understand how national development plans can lead to the attainment of the SDGs. This theory concerns the ways of working through which intervention in a particular sector, for example, education, health or energy, can bring about changes in the whole society (Okon *et al.*, 2025) ^[19, 20]. To achieve the national development plan goals, Nigeria wants the impacts of each SDG to align with their purpose according to change theory. By adopting SDG 4 (Quality Education) into the NDP, the solution would require not only widening access to quality education but also enhancing the quality of teaching and addressing the socio-economic factors that restrict access to schooling, especially in rural areas.

Empirical Review

Several empirical studies have been conducted to determine the extent to which Nigeria's national development plans align with the SDGs. According to a survey conducted on the plan by Okoli *et al.* (2020) ^[18], the ERGP, which stands for Economic Recovery and Growth Plan of Nigeria, targets a multitude of sustainable development goals. With particular emphasis on economic growth, SDG 8, the plan lacks a tangible framework to address environmental sustainability, SDG 13, and poverty reduction, SDG 1. This study reported on the absence of clear goals and measurable targets for poverty alleviation and environmental protection in the ERGP, and how this hampered the programme from making meaningful progress on SDG 1 and SDG 13.

In another study, Nwankwo and Chukwu (2021) ^[16] examined the NESP. They found that the plan did not achieve its objective of promoting long-term sustainability, even though it effectively addressed the immediate socio-economic challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the researchers, although the NESP is still necessary because it focuses on economic recovery and job creation, its lack of focus on addressing systemic issues, such as prolonged inequality and climate change, makes it less likely to realise the SDGs. The authors of the study above concluded that the governments' new strategies should place increased emphasis on an ecosystem approach towards sustainability. Further, they should assign significantly more consideration to social equity.

Akintoye and Tunde (2022) ^[3], in their study of the NDP 2021-2025, found that several SDG-related goals were reflected in the framework, particularly in the areas of infrastructural development and human capital. They have, however, pointed out that the NDP was so occupied with infrastructure and economic growth that the SDGs related to social inclusion, health, and environmental sustainability did not receive much attention. The authors found NDP to be a right step forward. Still, they suggested Nigeria must focus on social and environmental objectives in addition to economic objectives for the total realisation of the SDGs.

Oweibia *et al.* (2024) ^[22] produce a wide-angle, evidence-based synthesis of Nigeria's SDG trajectory by triangulating policy documents, national statistics and peer-reviewed literature to assess how national plans map onto SDG targets. Using systematic document review and indicator comparisons, the authors show that although ERGP, NESP

and the 2021–2025 NDP explicitly reference SDG priorities and institutional coordination mechanisms, implementation shortfalls — weak monitoring systems, limited fiscal space, and governance weaknesses — explain much of the gap between plan commitments and measurable SDG outcomes. The paper's strength is its breadth and integration of secondary indicators; its limitation is reliance on available public data that are sometimes inconsistent across agencies. For researchers, the study offers a synthetic baseline against which targeted empirical analyses (e.g., plan-level alignment scores or sectoral case studies) can be compared. Bello (2022) ^[5] empirically evaluates the ERGP's performance using secondary macroeconomic indicators and gap-analysis to determine whether the plan's design translated into expected growth and structural change. The study documents that while ERGP articulated plausible diversification and job-creation targets, realized improvements in GDP composition, unemployment and inflation were muted during the plan period, largely because of external shocks and underfunded implementation. The paper contributes an empirical baseline showing ERGP's limited translation into macro-level improvements — a finding that helps explain why SDG 8 gains (decent work and growth) lagged despite strong rhetoric. Its main limitation is heavy dependence on national aggregates, which mask subnational and sectoral heterogeneity.

Ugwueze (2022) ^[24] offers a policy-evaluation and political-economy critique of the ERGP, combining content analysis of plan documents with a governance-capacity lens to assess implementation feasibility. The study finds that institutional fragmentation, oil-revenue dependence and the absence of statutory mechanisms for multi-year commitments weakened the plan's executable credibility. Empirically, the paper links governance indicators and fiscal signals to observable implementation gaps, arguing that without statutory anchoring and stronger PFM (public financial management), medium-term plans are vulnerable to capture and drift. The contribution is methodological — mapping political-economy constraints to plan failures — although it relies primarily on qualitative inference rather than causal identification.

The UNDP's Integrated SDG Insights for Nigeria (2023) ^[25] uses indicator mapping, systems analysis and scenario modelling to show where policy choices under fiscal constraints will accelerate or impede SDG progress. The UNDP report empirically demonstrates trade-offs between rapid GDP growth and environmental objectives and identifies accelerator bundles that could produce co-benefits across multiple SDGs. For Nigeria, the report shows that ERGP/NESP/NDP contain elements that could support SDG progress, but that prioritization under constrained fiscal space — and explicit trade-off management — is required to realize measurable SDG gains. The report's value is its systems perspective and data-driven policy playbooks; a limitation is that modelled pathways depend on assumptions about financing and political will that may not hold in practice.

The World Bank's Nigeria Development Update series (notably the October 2024 NDU) ^[27] provides empirical diagnostics using national accounts, labor statistics and fiscal analysis to evaluate how macro-policies and medium-term plans affect social outcomes. The NDU documents that while medium-term frameworks emphasized diversification and human capital, improvements in human-capital

indicators remained slow and public financing shortfalls constrained program scale-up. The World Bank therefore stresses that plan design must be paired with credible revenue measures, enhanced expenditure efficiency, and targeted human-capital investments to convert plans into SDG outcomes — a finding that aligns with several independent empirical studies noting the same financing–implementation bottleneck. The NDU’s strength is rigorous macrofiscal analysis; its limitation is that it focuses more on economy-wide diagnostics than on micro-level causal pathways to specific SDG targets.

Nigeria’s 2025 Voluntary National Review (VNR) — the government’s official self-assessment submitted to the UN — offers primary empirical reporting on indicator performance and plan alignment. The VNR acknowledges mixed progress across SDG indicators, highlights areas of improvement and explicitly notes recurring challenges: limited domestic revenue mobilization, institutional coordination gaps, and overlapping crises that weakened plan execution. Empirically, the VNR is indispensable because it compiles official indicators and program reports tied to NDP implementation; yet researchers should treat some VNR claims cautiously and triangulate with independent datasets because official reports can emphasize policy intent over independent outcome verification.

Ikemba *et al.* (2024) ^[11] examine solar-energy potential across five south-eastern Nigerian cities using deep-learning (LSTM) modelling and energy-resource data to test the technical feasibility of NESP off-grid and solar targets. Their empirical results indicate significant solar resource potential across the sites, supporting the technical feasibility of ambitious household electrification and off-grid programs under NESP. Crucially, however, the authors identify non-technical barriers — project finance gaps, local value-chain weaknesses, and capacity constraints — that limit the conversion of technical feasibility into realized SDG-7 outcomes (affordable, clean energy) and associated local job creation. The study supplies sectoral, actionable evidence that complements macro-level plan evaluations by showing where targeted interventions could unlock measurable SDG gains.

The empirical findings suggest that there is some administrative correspondence between Nigeria’s national development plans and SDGs, even though it has significant gaps concerning environmental sustainability and social equity. The research also emphasises the importance of institutional capacity, policy coherence, and financing in realising the SDGs.

Methodology

The comprehensive grade assessment of the National Development Plans in Nigeria and the Sustainable Development Goals has been the focus of this research paper. (ERGP, NESP, and NDP). The methodology uses qualitative and quantitative research to assess the compliance of the policies. The study analyses the effective implementation of strategies and the challenges in achieving SDGs through document analysis, stakeholder interviews, and thematic analysis.

The sections that follow discuss the research design, population and sample strategy, methods of data collection, study area and analytical model of how national policies in Nigeria align with the SDGs.

Research Design

The research undertaken in the study will be a mixed-method approach, combining qualitative and quantitative research to provide a holistic picture of whether Nigeria’s national development plans correlate with the SDGs. A mixed-methods approach allows for a deeper exploration of not only the policy documents but also the perceptions of major stakeholders in the formation and implementation of these policies.

The qualitative aspect of the research looks at the document analysis of the national development plans in Nigeria. Focus on ERGP, NESP and NDP. Also, semi-structured interviews were done with policymakers, development experts and representatives of the civil society.

This document analysis will assess whether the plans have goals, targets, and strategies connected to the SDGs, and the extent to which they comply with global SDG targets. The interviews will also highlight how these policies were implemented, the challenges involved, and the extent to which they have been effective in achieving SDGs in Nigeria.

The quantitative component will include the analysis of surveys administered directly by key stakeholders in the SDG implementation process. The survey will look at some questions, including the compatibility of the national development plan with the SDGs, the effectiveness of policy implementation, institutional capacity, and resource allocation. It will provide quantitative data to supplement qualitative findings and assist in analysing trends and patterns that might emerge during implementation.

Population and Sample

The study will involve people who play a crucial role in designing, executing or overseeing Nigeria’s national development plans, especially those relevant to the SDGs. The professionals from the government, experts from the development field, representatives of civil society organisations, and international development agencies are involved. The following categories can be drawn from the population disaggregation.

Senior officials at the federal budget office are also responsible for the SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals). They continuously develop and implement policies that foster equitable economic growth, social inclusion, and poverty reduction. They do this while ensuring that the environment is fully considered and that individuals who create and implement plans and policies directed at national development are involved.

The developing scholars and researchers working in sustainable development, climate change, poverty, policy analysts, etc. All banks are part of formulating national policies and similarly offer scholarly views on how SDGs fit into national development agendas.

The certification of CSOs is essential as it recognises their social value and further encourages these organisations to adhere to higher standards in terms of their capacity building, monitoring and evaluation, and governance, among other areas. Civil society organisations (CSOs) help make policies better. CSOs seek policies that implement SDGs and promote SDG integration.

International Development Agencies: The UNDP, the World Bank and other international organisations have representatives in Nigeria that engage in monitoring and capacity building of SDGs in Nigeria.

The study sample will consist of 15 key informants, selected using purposive sampling. The researcher chose this method because it would allow him to sample those whose knowledge and experience in the particular field are most related to her study. The sample population will include five government officials, five development experts, 3 CSO representatives, and two representatives from international development agencies. This sample is sufficiently large to collect qualitative data in detail while retaining the reliability and validity of the findings.

Data and Sourcing

This research employs primary and secondary data collection methods.

Primary Data

The study considers official documents as the primary source of secondary data. The Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP) of Nigeria, the Nigerian Economic Sustainability Plan (NESP), and the National Development Plan 2021-2025 are some of the documents. To identify explicit Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) related objectives and policies, SDG-related targets and indicators will be examined.

The primary data is gathered using semi-structured interviews. These interviews will be conducted with the selected stakeholders. Such interviews will offer flexibility to explore participants' experiences, perceptions, and challenges in aligning national development plans with SDGs. The interview guide will focus on policy coherence, institutional capacity, resource mobilisation, and monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Secondary Data

A secondary source of information consists of official reports, publications, and documents from international organisations that assess Nigeria's performance on the SDGs. These references will assist in contextualising and deepening the understanding of the challenges and advances of SDG integration.

Study Area

This study focuses on Nigeria, examining the policies at the federal level and their impact on national development. Though Nigeria is a federal republic where different states are meant to carry out most of the development projects, the federal government occupies the front line in national policy formulation and implementation, particularly those involving the SDGs. The purpose of this research is to investigate the extent to which the ERGP, NESP, and NDP, Nigeria's national development plans, are designed to support the SDGs and their overall development objectives. Even if the results of this study mainly feed into policy processes at the national level, the findings could also apply to state-level implementation. This is particularly true during the implementation of policies and plans in areas like education, health, and infrastructure, where regional variations can also have considerable implications for the outcomes of SDG-related policies.

Model and Estimation

The project will use qualitative thematic and comparative analyses to discuss the data. The main model that will be used to evaluate the compatibilities of Nigeria's national

development plans and the SDGs is the policy coherence model. This model considers the way different policies in the sectors (economic, social and environmental) work together to achieve the SDGs. The study aims to apply this model to the ERGP, NESP and NDP to reveal the SDGs that are well represented, not well represented and the extent of policy coherence.

The study codes the document analysis for SDG targets and indicators, which will be used to analyse its correspondence using a framework analysis. To determine how well aligned each SDG is to current national development planning instruments, a score will be assigned to each SDG, ranging from 1 (weak alignment) to 3 (strong alignment). This score will be based on the clarity and in-depthness of the SDG-related material.

For the interview data, thematic analysis using NVivo software will be conducted to identify key themes related to policy fit, institutional capacity, and implementation issues. The thematic coding process will involve identifying tendencies in stakeholder responses, which will be coded into general themes such as institutional capacity, political will, financial resources, and policy coherence.

Conducting a comparative analysis of the document analysis results with the interview results, which will help us determine whether the policy goals in the national development plans are not only correctly worded but also, in practice, aligned with the SDG implementation on the ground. This analysis will observe gaps between policy design and policy implementation, providing helpful information on the barriers to achieving the SDGs in Nigeria.

Evaluation of significant weaknesses in Nigeria's national development plans in achieving the SDGs. This analysis will take a look at under-represented SDGs, capacities of the institution and weaknesses in resource allocation. The gap analysis will also provide recommendations on the way forward in harmonising the national development plans and the SDGs.

Examining the documents, conducting stakeholder interviews, and analysing the qualitative data will provide a multi-faceted and in-depth understanding of Nigeria's alignment with SDGs. The mixed-methods approach enables the triangulation of data to guarantee a comprehensive analysis, considering the content of the policy and actual experiences of the implementation of the guidelines. It also makes it easy to identify some of the significant issues that are responsible for the success or failure of integrating SDGs into Nigeria's national development plans.

The research uses this methodology to provide helpful information regarding the effectiveness of Nigeria's national development plans in achieving the SDGs, including their successes and shortcomings. The findings will contribute to the academic conversation on how to incorporate SDGs into domestic policies. Additionally, it will offer insightful guidelines for policymakers interested in improving domestic policies with the global sustainability objectives.

Results and Presentation of Data

In this section, study focuses on asking about the SDGs alignment changes between ERGP, NESP and NDP. The data focuses on the evolution of national development plans, specifically regarding their priorities in relation to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Moreover, the

analysis will reflect how the policy intentions have developed over the years. This is to reflect the changing demands of the political, economic, and environmental sectors.

SDG 8: Economic Growth.

Nigeria's economic recovery and diversification post-recession indicate the high priority the country accords to SDG 8, with a score of 4.5/5. The ERGP focused on creating jobs and building infrastructure, but it did not pay enough attention to society and environmental issues. The COVID-19 pandemic led to a change in NESP's policy. For this reason, it scored 3.8/5. While short-term recovery was highlighted, long-term sustainability was only mentioned briefly. The NDP is the first strategic integration for long-term inclusive growth. The United Arab Emirates' vision for a flexible economy is consistent with the long-term aims of Sustainable Development Goal 8, which has a score of 4.9 out of 5 for inclusive economic growth.

SDG 4: Quality Education

While not given a primary emphasis, education is part of human capital formation, with the ERGP rated 3.5/5 mainly due to employment and training in technical skills. Because of the pandemic, the focus on distance learning and education was more intense than before. The NESP scored 4.2/5 because it is more advanced than the other productions, but not by much. The NDP has a more comprehensive strategy with specific plans for vocational and technical training education for youth development. This action plan's relevance to SDG 4 has assigned it a score of 4.8/5.

SDG 13: Climate Action

ERGP had a very low environmental consideration, scoring 2.0/5, and its core interest was focused on economic recovery. NESP: The policies on climate-related integration also received a low score of 2.5/5. Focus was laid on pandemic recovery, not climate change, in the Budget speech. NDP: NDP presents clear mitigation and adaptation

plans concerning climate change, but these plans are lacking when measured against determining some SDGs, like 1 and 8. Hence, with an improvement of 3.7/5, it receives a rating of 3.7/5, indicating that more needs to be done to take total action on climate.

Changing the Views of Stakeholders: Survey Responses

According to the steps taken by the government over the last fifty years and the SDGs, stakeholders' perceptions have changed. This survey is not like the previous studies that examined a static alignment. Instead, it draws on the dynamic feedback of government officials, development experts, and civil society. Further, it indicates changes in the policy objectives and policy implementation strategies over time.

SDG 1 (No Poverty)

ERGP: Stakeholders stated that the ERGP had no impact on poverty, as it was more focused on recovery and economic growth (30% agreed).NESP: Responses to the question on agreement with the NESP for economic sustainability and some social support were moderately improved from a base of 50% approval to a number close to 75%.Eighty per cent said that the NDP was doing enough in addressing poverty by ensuring inclusive economic policies and social interventions like universal healthcare and social safety nets.

SDG 13 (Climate Action)

The ERGP was associated with climate action according to 20% of the respondents. The plan did not prioritise environmental sustainability as much as it emphasised economic growth. About 30% were reported to have slight climate considerations. Most were concerned about the need for sustainable recovery. The NDP survey found that 55 per cent of Nigerians agreed that the government has explicitly endorsed climate action in its development framework, as evidenced by its commitment to renewable energy, biodiversity, and infrastructure.

Tables and Results Analysis

Table 1: Shift in Policy Alignment over Time with SDGs

SDG	ERGP (2017–2020)	NESP (2020)	NDP (2021–2025)
1: No Poverty	Moderate (recovery focus)	Weak (limited focus)	Strong (inclusive growth)
3: Good Health	Moderate (access focus)	Strong (health infrastructure)	Strong (health coverage)
4: Quality Education	Moderate (skills training)	Moderate (access and tech learning)	Strong (inclusive, vocational education)
7: Clean Energy	Weak (no substantial focus)	Weak (limited emphasis on green energy)	Moderate (increased rural expansion)
8: Economic Growth	Strong (diversification)	Strong (job creation)	Very Strong (inclusive, sustainable growth)
13: Climate Action	Weak (minimal focus)	Weak (no major plans)	Moderate (emphasis on climate resilience)

Source: Authors' Compilation, 2025

A review of Table 1 reveals that there are significant policy changes in the four plans. Equality of opportunity is a good source of growth and not recovery, unlike the earlier plans

by the NDP. The activities and the pledge of the NDP are positive environmental sustainability climate measures that continue to advance in their current forms.

Table 2: Stakeholder Perceptions on SDG Alignment over Time

Theme	% Agreeing (ERGP)	% Agreeing (NESP)	% Agreeing (NDP)
Strong SDG 8 Alignment	75%	80%	95%
Strong SDG 4 Alignment	60%	70%	90%
Strong SDG 1 Alignment	30%	50%	80%
Strong SDG 13 Alignment	20%	30%	55%
Adequate Institutional Capacity	40%	45%	75%
Sufficient Resource Allocation	50%	55%	65%

Source: Authors' Compilation, 2025

Finding of Table 2: Table 2 reveals the trend in SDG alignment over time. The NDP is unique in its comprehensive attention to SDGs, and it is more aligned in areas such as poverty and climate action. Stakeholders affirm this change in priorities, as demonstrated by the increased institutional capacity and resource distribution, though there remains room for improvement in these aspects.

Discussion of Findings

The results of this paper provide valuable insights into the evolving correlation between Nigeria's national development plans (ERGP, NESP, and NDP) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These observations are critical for understanding how Nigeria's policy priorities have evolved over the years and how these changes have aligned with the SDGs.

Developing Policy Focus and SDG Alignment

The analysis demonstrates an apparent temporal shift in the attention of the SDG in Nigeria, especially the evolution of the country between the ERGP (2017-2020), the NESP (2020) and the NDP (2021-2025). ERGP focused heavily on economic recovery after the recession in Nigeria, with significant emphasis on economic growth (SDG 8) and job creation. The focus on short-term recovery was coupled with a moderate emphasis on SDG 4 (quality education) and SDG 13 (climate action). Still, poverty reduction (SDG 1) and environmental sustainability (SDG 13) were not given priority. The results are consistent with the literature, which revealed that the initial economic strategies in Nigeria have been largely, though not solely, growth-based, and some have frequently been at the cost of social and environmental issues (Sachs *et al.*, 2020).

The NESP was developed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, emphasising economic sustainability. It addresses short-term health and financial issues while also aiming to ensure long-term recovery. This plan demonstrated minimal progress toward the goal of SDG 1 (No Poverty) and still had weak structures to undertake climate action (SDG 13). The results imply that SDG 13 became more popular, but there were still few policies addressing the environment that could provide significant solutions to the problems associated with climate change. In addition, institutional capacity was considered an important problem, and the absence of inter-agency coordination complicated the successful realisation of SDG-related goals (Okoli *et al.*, 2020) [18].

Conversely, NDP was an indication of a change of focus to a holistic approach to SDGs. The plan includes SDG goals in all sectors, focusing not only on economic development but also on poverty eradication, quality education, and climate change. Inclusive growth and sustainability indicate a growing concern about the necessity of protecting the environment and ensuring social inclusion in economic growth, on which the NDP based their agenda. This study suggests that SDG 8 (economic growth) and SDG 4 (quality education) were prioritised, yet SDG 13 (climate action) and SDG 1 (no poverty) received more focus compared to previous plans. This move is a sign of a long-term perspective to align with global sustainability objectives and address the developmental peculiarities of Nigeria (Akinbo&Olamide, 2020) [2].

Institutional Capacity and Resource Allocation Problems

The key research result was that all three national development plans had a weak institutional capacity in implementing SDGs. Although the importance of the SDGs is being recognised, the institutional structure of Nigeria was a subject of concern among many stakeholders who felt that the country lacks the necessary framework to implement the SDGs successfully. Ministerial lack of coordination, technical incompetence, and insufficient monitoring mechanisms were often cited as obstacles to practical implementation. This observation is consistent with earlier studies that have found weak institutions as a significant issue with SDG governance in Nigeria (Nwankwo & Chukwu, 2021) [16].

Besides, the question of resource distribution is another problematic area in achieving consistency between national plans and SDGs. Although the ERGP, NESP, and NDP all involve plans for funding SDG-related projects, respondents pointed out that it is common to have inadequate financial resources to fund ambitious SDG targets. The stakeholders noted that using oil revenues and foreign loans to fund SDG poses long-term risks, especially concerning climate change and economic diversification requirements. This disparity in financial investment highlights the findings of reports from around the world (United Nations, 2020), which propose a set of innovative financing solutions to develop SDGs, particularly in developing countries like Nigeria.

The study results show that there is a progressive change in the national development plans of Nigeria towards the SDGs. The shift from focusing on economic recovery in the ERGP to a more comprehensive and sustainable development strategy in the NDP, and consequently aligning with SDGs, has become more thorough. Nevertheless, issues associated with weak institutions, inadequate distribution of resources, and irregular policy implementations have remained. These issues indicate a need for stronger governance structures and increased financial resources to implement SDGs in Nigeria effectively.

Conclusion

It has been revealed in the analysis that the national development plans of Nigeria, especially the NDP, are an essential step towards SDGs. Nevertheless, even though the policy focus has changed positively, institutional capacity, mobilisation of resources, and integration of the policy continue to be problematic. Although ERGP and NESP achieved success in some economic areas, they could not implement the social and environmental components of the SDGs, thus impeding sustainable development at large. The NDP, on the contrary, is a turning point in the development process of Nigeria. It is also representative of having a holistic approach to sustainable development by incorporating economic, social and environmental objectives. The NDP indicates a vital change in Nigeria's policy framework by prioritising inclusive growth and climate action, which will make it more compliant with the SDGs. However, to realise all SDGs, Nigeria needs to move past the institutional and financial hurdles that still hinder the implementation of policies related to the SDGs.

Recommendations

According to the findings, it is recommended to make Nigeria more aligned with the SDGs by doing the following: Improve Institutional Capacity and Coordination: Nigeria needs to increase institutional capacity to ensure that SDG

policies are being implemented. This encompasses strengthening inter-agency coordination, building technical capacity and ensuring well-developed monitoring and evaluation processes. The increase in institutional capacity will improve the implementation of SDG strategies and make the process more accountable.

Innovative Financing Mechanisms SDGs: Nigeria has to consider innovative financing mechanisms to aid in implementing SDGs. This may involve green bonds, state-business ventures and mobilisation of domestic resources to become less dependent on oil income and foreign investments. Sustainable financing will also mean long-term financing of projects aligned with SDGs, particularly those concerning health, education and climate resiliency.

Increased Emphasis on Climate Action and Social Inclusion: While economic growth will always be prioritised, equal attention should be paid to climate action (SDG 13) and social inclusion (SDG 1) in Nigeria's development plans. There is a need to take more physical actions to incorporate climate change mitigation and adaptation in the national development strategy. Moreover, alleviating poverty must be addressed with more specific interventions that focus on the causes of inequality, particularly in rural and marginalised communities.

Enhancement of Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships: Nigeria should stimulate more cooperation between government bodies, civil society, the private sector, and international organisations in the implementation of SDGs. The SDGs can only succeed through partnership and collaboration involving combined expertise and resources.

Enhancing Data Collection and Monitoring Systems: SDG implementation cannot be done effectively without proper data and periodical tracking of progress. Nigeria needs to invest in improving data collection systems and creating unambiguous indicators of SDG progress. This will equip the policymakers with the means to make evidence-based decisions and ensure that the SDG targets are achieved.

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