

DOMESTICATING THE INTEGRATED SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS
POLICY SIMULATION MODEL FOR USE IN NIGERIA BY: BARTHOLOMEW T. FEESE,
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EXERCISE 22ND MARCH, 2018

The Integrated Sustainable Development Goals (iSDGs) policy simulation model was recently launched in Nigeria as a useful addition to the existing family of development planning tool kits. Like many African countries, one major challenge confronting the country today is how to achieve policy coherence by aligning national plans and budgets. Strengthening the collaboration between the various tiers of government (Federal, State and Local Government in this case) towards improved budget implementation for a better delivery of public services is another one.

It will be recalled that during the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) era, specifically between 2006 and 2015, the application of the Paris Club Debt Relief Funds (DRG) in funding the Conditional Grant Scheme (CGS) between the Federal and State Government provided a good opportunity for a paradigm shift in the country's policy formulation and development planning, as well as budgeting processes. This was evidenced by the fact that the introduction of rigorous Needs Assessment and Costing of projects and programs as a basic requirement for preparing a local development plan led to improved budget performance – averaging 98% over this period, as against the usual rate of less than 50%. Needless to say, being a key pre-condition for accessing the counterpart funds by state governments, this approach ensured a closer budget-plan link and engendered better collaboration between the national and sub-national levels of government. The modest gains of the CGS point to a good model that should be implemented at scale during the SDG era.

The SDGs, being the global protocol for completing the unfinished business of the MDGs, as well as other issues, is even more ambitious, and is aimed at *inter alia*, eradicating poverty, improving the well-being and tackling multiple deprivations, while ensuring environmental sustainability, by the 2030. The iSDGs model is a planning tool developed by the Millennium Institute, a Washington based think tank, that allows policy makers and experts to test various combinations of policy measures and their effects on the well being of the citizens, before they are actually implemented. It also assists policy teams to assess the costs and impacts of various development paths, policies and programs, with a view to selecting those with optimum benefits and least adverse effects. Through a partnership the Office of the Senior Special Assistant to the President on SDGs (OSSAP-SDGs), the Ministry of Budget and National Planning (MBNP) and UNDP Nigeria Country Office, the iSDGs model is being customized for use in long term planning and scenario analysis in Nigeria. The model employs the system dynamics approach to goal-based planning, which it demonstrates in exposing the causal relationships among sectoral interventions that create synergies. In more specific terms, the iSDGs model is being used in Nigeria to construct scenarios for i) doing business as usual (no change in policy implementation), ii) implementing the government's on-going Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP) 2017-2020, and iii) reaching the SDG targets by 2030. The analysis of the cost implications and the impacts/benefits of implementing these policy options will give policy makers and development practitioners a good insight into Nigeria's best strategic choices. It will also provide a good basis and the required milestones for tracking the progress of the implementation of these policies at all tiers of government. It is noteworthy to mention that

costing results from other static costing models, like the Excel-based intervention models (used in MDGs Needs Assessment) which do miss out on these [inter-sectoral] synergies, invariably leading to double counting, however, provide a good tool for programming of expenditures in the budget, and are useful for short and medium-term planning (in budgets and mid-term sector strategies); while the iSDGs model is better used for long term planning. These two tools will thus be applied in a complementary fashion at both the Federal and sub-national levels. Befittingly, a pool of sector experts and policy analysts is being trained to drive the process and, ultimately, conduct regular updates of the model in response to changing circumstances; as well as roll-out the process to the sub-national level.



Policy Analysts-in-training with the Trainer from Millennium Institute, Washington, DC, (Max Kleemann, 4th from left) and the National Coordinator (Barth Feese, 5th from the left) at the iSDG Policy Simulation Model Capacity Building Training Workshop, 12th – 16th March, 2018 in Abuja.