

## **GLOBALIZATION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA: AN ETHICAL PERSPECTIVE**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Achieving sustainable development that will engender inclusive growth and prosperity in Africa has been a matter of concern for decades. This passion has recently led to the articulation of six aspirations encoded in African Agenda 2063 in 2015 by African Union Commission. Sustainable development has been primed on three pillars namely; environmental sustainability, social sustainability and economic sustainability. Consequently, globalization has been considered vital in the pursuit of African development agenda. In addition to this, is ethical values from Christian point of view since; it is disposed in promotion of human dignity and access to the basic necessities of life. This paper examined the challenges and impacts as well as the ethical perspective of globalization and sustainable development in African transformation. Data was generated from secondary source through critical readings of the existing literature related materials. The findings revealed that globalization and sustainable development are relevant in the 21<sup>st</sup> century drive for inclusive development and welfare of citizenry and the future generation. The study therefore, recommends religious ethical consideration to undergird globalization and sustainable development policy implementation and as well, orientation on ethical codes for globalization and sustainable development ethics in curbing crimes, violence and other related social vices.*

**Keywords:** Globalization, sustainable development, ethics

### **INTRODUCTION**

Achieving sustainable development in Africa has been a topical concern for decades in academics, cooperate organizations and governments across the African states since its historical first appearance in an official document signed by thirty-three African countries in 1969 under the auspices of the International Union for Conservation of Nations (IUCN). In the recent time, it has evolved into the articulation of six aspirations tagged African Agenda 2063 in 2015 under the auspices of the African Union Commission. Thus, aspiration 1 states “a prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development, aspiration 5 declares “an Africa with a strong cultural identity, common heritage, values and ethics while aspiration 6 opines “an Africa whose development is people- driven, relying on the potential of African people, especially its women and youth, and caring for children. (AUC, 2015).

The aspirations as enumerated above have in them the objectives for human, economic, social, cognitive, political and cultural developments aimed at lifting the African component

states and her people from the shackles of poverty and underdevelopment to an enviable heights and positions in the global comity of nations in line with sustainable development ideals which stipulates as follows: that meaningful social- economic development should take cognizance of the holistic well being of the future generation.

However, achieving sustainable development in Africa in the context of inclusive growth makes serious demand on many factors and this includes taking cognizance of the rich cultural and religious ethical values which promotes morals, respect for human dignity, justice, equity and human welfare. These are vital in a world where there is an existential interconnectedness in business, politics, technology, social life and cultural homogeneity birthed by globalization and this has reduced the world into a small village. For this reason, Toffer cited by Orji and Amugo (2006) aver that “global condition of the world is a result of the titanic clash of first and second wave civilizations which will yet result in a more revolutionary third wave civilization. By this third wave, the world would indeed shrink to a small village”(p.1). This prediction undoubtedly is here with us as globalization has virtually affected all human activities ranging from politics, economic, culture, philosophy, religion, to information technology and Management. Thus, George and Jeffrey (2014) maintain that globalization is “ the spread of worldwide practices, relations, consciousness, and organization of social life” (p.571).Consequently, these characterizations associated with globalization have contributed in transforming the world from a collection of discrete communities interacting occasionally to an overlapping community of fate and it is very glaring to consider the way the world is increasingly integrating along cultural, political and economic spaces. This has made communities across the world to coexist in a single shared space through artificial demarcated political enclaves called nation-states.

The probing questions remain: To what extent has globalization contributed in achieving sustainable development in Africa especially in the areas of politics, social life and economy in this 21<sup>st</sup> century? What role could Christian ethics play in achieving inclusive growth and sustainable development in Africa via globalization? These are vital considerations since Christian ethics are rooted on fostering human dignity, equity and justice in all societies against the strains of moral values orchestrated by globalization, economic, political and cultural imperialism by the African imperialists.

This paper is set to examine Christian ethical role on globalization and sustainable development in Africa. An x-ray of globalization effects (positive and negative) will be implored to help assess Christian ethical position or implication towards inclusive growth and sustainable development as well as recommendations in foregrounding the way forward.

## **CONCEPTUAL ELUCIDATION**

The essence of conceptual framework is to aid better understanding of key words in a research work. To this effect, the researcher will give a brief elucidation on the following words:

### **Globalization**

Various approaches have been made towards conceptualizing the term “globalization” by different institutions such as the academia, government and corporate bodies. To this end, Sivanandan (1999) opined that globalization is the “latest stage of imperialism” (p.5). To others like Scholte cited by Osmiri (2015) globalization is “the spread of Western modernity” (p.16). Major contemporary theorists on globalization such as Gidden (2000) argue that globalization has both undermined local cultures and served to revive them. To Blieker (2004) “globalization is an omnipresent and unruly phenomenon; whose

manifestations are diverse as its interpretations are contestable”(p.2-3). The obvious existential complexity in globalization concept makes the Scholte conceptualization relevant in examining the need for ethical reflection in Africa. For this reason, Mittelman, (1996), a political Scientist, defines globalization as the compression of space and time. This explains that the technologies of globalization have reduced the significance of the distance barrier and the salience of time in cross- border interactions. A sociologist Roland Robertson cited by Osmiri (2015) refers to “globalization as the compression of the world and the intensification of the consciousness of the world as a whole” (p.8). Giddens (1990) sees globalization as intensification of worldwide relationships which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa”(p.3). The pointer in all the above definitions is the trans-nationalization of which globalization is promoting.

### **Sustainable Development**

The law that constituted the National Environmental Policy Act from 1969, (NEPA) defines sustainable development as “economic development that may have benefits for current and future generations without harming the planet’s resources or biological organisms.

Moreover, the Brundtland Report defines sustainable development as development that meets the needs of the present without endangering or compromise the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Sustainable development generally has a tripod pillars and they are as follows: (1) social sustainability. This is targeted towards promoting social development, and cohesion between and among communities and cultures to help achieve reasonable and satisfactory levels in quality of life, healthcare and education across the globe.

(2) Economic sustainability. According to Azuka (2018) this pillar of sustainability focuses on wealth creation and growth for all without harming the environment. Economic sustainability focuses on sustainable energies which do not lead to much pollution and can be used for longer times and as well, definite idea of conservation.

(3) Environmental sustainability. Environmental sustainability is concerned with assuming that nature and the environment are not an inexhaustible resource and so, it is necessary to protect them from and use them rationally.

### **Ethics**

Ethics is a code or set of principles by which men live. It is the role which guides the action of men in the society. Uduigwomen cited by Odey and Ashipu (2011) defines ethics as being synonymous with moral, both connoting customs, habits and accepted ways of behaviour of an individual or a community” (p.2). However, Christian ethics is a set of ethical virtue which focuses on developing an ethical character, beginning with obedience to a set of rules and laws seen as divine commands reflecting behaviours which are morally required, forbidden, or permitted. Therefore, ethics are the principles of right and wrong that are accepted by an individual or a social group.

### **THE FORCES OF GLOBALIZATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

Several forces or factors have aided globalization. This has attracted various investigations by scholars of different disciplines. However, this work considers the following forces as root motivators of globalization:

Capital flows. According to Collier cited by Adamu (nd), African continent was the first to become highly integrated| into the world economy through capital flight.

International trade. This is vital as a platform for countries to participate in the global economy

Migration of labour. Migration of labour has both positive and negative effects on sustainable development. However, positive effects include emigrants remitting foreign exchange back home, acquisition of better skills and exposure to the use of the latest technology. For Adamu (nd), this will aid technology transfer when they return home and as well provide a good channel for international relationships in terms of important linkages between potential investors and domestic businesses

Improvements in telecommunication and transportation. This helps to increase the ease of communication and transportation and as well, reduces the costs of communication.

### **CHRISTIAN ETHICS PERSPECTIVE**

Christian ethics obviously are primed at revealing the possibility of human beings to know and recognize truth and moral good through practical application of both reason and revelation. It is guided by God's Scriptural revelation above other systems of thoughts. Moreover, it is human centered and characterized with virtues and values promote human welfare and sustainable environment. Hence, human beings are made in God's image.

This makes it imperative for leaders, governments, industrialists and policy makers to promote inclusive human welfare, development and sustainability in all facets of life including global integration via technology and other allied globalization traits. To achieve this, Christian ethics known for exhibiting the character and value of love, care, justice and equity is reap for engagement. These values are not only directing human moral actions and building, but can help societies; Organizations and institutions handle their political, social and economic matters in an equitable manner for inclusive development and sustainability.

Furthermore, the motivating factor for achieving inclusive globalization benefits for African sustainable development should be anchored in lifting the poor masses and developing African nations rather than exploiting them. Jesus showed this concern and care for the poor in both his teachings and ministry. (Luke 4:14-22). In addition to alleviating the poor and reducing poverty in African nations, it will promote moral uprightness, social orderliness and equal distribution of economy, (Lev.23:22, Deut.5:19).

### **THE CHALLENGE OF GLOBALIZATION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA AND ITS ETHICAL IMPLICATION FROM THE CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE**

Orji and Amugo (2004) Observed that globalization engenders worldwide integration; producing a whole series of consequences; economic, political, cultural and environmental which affect nations and polities of the world differently according to their political and economic environment and their position in the new world economic order. The above assertion is an important consideration in underscoring the impact of globalization towards sustainable development in Africa. According to Stuckelberger (nd), globalization is a positive goal and something to aspire if it means the attempt to see the world as one human kind and one ecosystem in its interdependence and to reach a life in dignity for all human and non-human beings and with fair participation of everyone. In the same vein, globalization is a negative goal and needs to be refused if it means the attempt to reduce the world in its diversity to a monotonous single model of economy, culture and political system, to dominate it through a few decision-makers and to give highest priority to economic values only.

Ethical perspective of globalization and sustainable development from the Christian point of view is human focused as God's image on earth with inalienable right and dignity to live and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political welfare ( Gen.1:27-28, Lev.23:22). This premise extends its olive branch to biblical economic and social teachings in both Old and New testaments as well as in International and domestic extant laws of human fundamental rights to basic necessities of life. God detests policies that do not promote justice, equity and fairness in dispensing the material goods of the earth and political development. In a democratic space like ours, globalization will be balanced and more democratic and all inclusive if it is heterogeneously blended and capitalistically relaxed. Sustainable development goals should be matched with action in bringing the underdeveloped nations like Africa par with their counterpart developed nations via globalization policies and implementations. Therefore, globalization can contribute to sustainable development in African agenda and aspirations if it takes the positive position as posited by Stuckelberger, since his assertion promotes inclusive growth and human dignity centeredness. The following challenges and impact of globalization to development in Africa are apt for examination in view of our consideration:

### **(1) Globalization and the challenge of Economic development in Africa**

Economy is crucial in sustainable development goals and as such, it holds a great place in the nations' bilateral relations. Globalization by extension, has promoted various economic ideals including capitalism, cross- border trade of commodities and services and the living standard of people. However, Aluko (2004) observes that globalization seeks to encompass all countries into one economic unit, possibly, without government and borders. This indeed poses a grave challenge to underdeveloped nations such as Africa whose economies and social forces are not strong enough to tap the full benefit of globalization. The capitalism involved in globalization places wealth in the hands of the individual haves and economic strong nations. These, invariably affect the vigor and goal of eradicating poverty in Africa since the haves continue in enriching themselves over the have not. Morally, it negates the virtue of equity, justice and fairness in wealth distribution which ensures that all human persons have same right to access the basic necessities of life. John Chrysostom in the fourth century wrote to condemn such economic inequality of his era, by which the rich amassed wealth through greed and corruption and grew richer and more powerful, while the poor starved and languished in poverty and crushing in debt. Globalization concept can aid sustainable development in eradicating poverty and lifting the poor if an ethical balance which promotes material goods as God's gift to all people is applied through equity and justice.

### **(2) Globalization and Technologies**

The fact remains that technology has contributed greatly in wealth creation, economic growth, access to knowledge and information dissemination. Orji et al (2006) noted that globalization has enriched the world scientifically and technologically and these have diversely benefited many people and nations including Africa. Technology has brought enormous change to our world in steam engines, railways, telegraph, electricity, automobiles, airplanes, chemical industries, modern medicine, information technology and digital revolution as well as in advancement of economic and business opportunities of the citizenry. Technology is a pointer of God's given human creativity and has helped humanity overcome material limitation, remedied countless evils which would have harmed us and limited human beings. Globalization and technologies have aided sustainable development across the globe. However, Francis (2015) opines that the contemporary man has not been trained to use power

well and thus; technological development has not been accompanied by a development in human responsibility, values and conscience. The absence of these values of ethical responsibility and conscience affect environmental sustainability through pollution and other anthropogenic activities as well as human right to life. Besides, human beings have variously used the by-product of globalization such as access to weapons to destroy human lives. Technological products must work in tandem with policies that promote human dignity and value. Hence human rights and welfare remains the primary objective of all social and economic development.

### **(3) Globalization and the challenge of crimes, violence, terrorism and corruption**

The obvious exchange and interchange of ideas and knowledge by human beings across the globe through internet and other social media outlets have contributed to the spread of violence, racism, Cyber crime, terrorism, gambling and immoral living through pornography. They have constituted into problems of concerns affecting the whole of humanity. Such activities have led to ethnic, religious and political conflicts, including inter-personal conflicts, moral debasement and other social crimes against humanity and development processes. This is against the ethical values of peace living, sacredness of life, morality, chastity, unity, love, accountability and integrity taught and promoted by Christian teachings and doctrines. These virtues are stabilizers and sustainers of sustainable development in building collective vision for a crime free society where security of lives and prosperity are guaranteed in Africa. African nations can forestall crimes associated with globalization by radical distinction between what is Africans in character and disposition and what is foreign to them. Furthermore, inculcation of Christian ethics is inevitable to this drive since it contains virtues capable of installing civilization and development without undermining human rights and dignity. Christianity has the history of promoting equity, justice, truth, fairness and social cohesion. Before now, stealing and taking of human lives are taboo in Africa but this sacredness has been upturned by moral debasement birthed by globalization. This calls for drastic change in perception, approach to business and philosophy of life. Africa should blend their globalization drive with moral compass born of Christian ethical background as agent of social control.

### **(4) Globalization and the challenge of brain drain**

The migration of young and educated workers and skilled professionals are taking a large toll on African continent whose human capital is already scarce. There is no doubt that globalization among other factors such as demographic trend, job insecurity; poor policies and poor remuneration are contributory to brain drain in Africa with its consequences on sustainable development. It is becoming an impossible task in today's world to stop brain drain especially in Africa. Repatriation strategies have proved to be ineffective as governments do not attack the root causes of migration. Currently, there is a bill being sponsored by one of the Nigerian senators to prohibit medical doctors from being licensed to practice for a period of five years. The whole essence is to stop brain drain among our medical professionals. However, restrictive policies will not be effective in stopping the drive as long as government officials are paying lip services to good remuneration for workers, conducive working environment and job security of her workers. The underlying factor behind these concerns is the poverty of ethical understanding and value in leadership. This understanding will definitely create sense of priority in government planning and respect for human wellness and welfare. Humanity and its whole wellness must be ultimate, being it economy, politics and social development. Internationally, African nations have been short changed intentionally via brain drain. African imperialists have been constantly used as tools

including brain drain created through impoverishment of Africa to enrich foreign nations and make their nation more lucrative and attractive. The cause is a double edged sword- African leaders and imperialists. The void of value for human dignity is the birth of impunity and corruption in Nigeria and this will continue through support of other nations with the aid of international collaboration and globalization until a reverse of such trend.

### **(5) Cultural imperialism**

The existential cultural diversities among nations and communities of people stand out as a pointer to people's identity and means of social interaction. However, emergency of globalization has affected greatly most of purebred cultures unique to Africa and Africans through the aid of cultural homogeneity. Africa has had their cultures imperialized in the past and this is not without consequences in our practices, socialization and mode of production and education. Invariably, globalization has some levels of influence and submerging on the cultures of people. Cultural heterogeneity helps a people to harness their positive inherent uniqueness in social interaction, economic production, cognitive training and moral upbringing of children and sanity in the society. The collapse of these positive lifestyle, identity and inherent characterization to globalization short changes emulation and sustainability of old days purebred cultures which made different African nations thick, unique and attractive.

### **CONCLUSION**

The fact that globalization has enormous contributions in achieving development in Africa is not in doubt. However, an extreme globalized practice which abhors ethical values of human dignity and equal access to the basic necessities of life is a serious challenge. This manifests in subtlety through capitalism which placed more of the material wealth into the hands of the wealthy nations and created more chasm between the haves and the have not. Christian ethical perspective of globalization to sustainable development is a balanced concept where moral consideration of the poor as promulgated in the bible is extolled in all developmental processes. It follows the vision of inclusive economic growth, social justice in lifting people out of poverty. The prevalent poverty and social injustice in Africa have led to crimes, violence, corruption and immoral living thereby causing severe sufferings to humanity against the vision of sustainable development. Globalization agenda or goals should be up gamed to balance wealth distribution across member nation and to aid Africa in releasing her aspirations for sustainable development.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

That religious ethical Consideration should under guide globalization and sustainable development policy implementation.

Globalization should be tailored towards lifting the underdeveloped nations like Africa in par with the developed nations rather than impoverishment through modern economic imperialism

Orientation on ethical codes of conduct is needed in Africa to help reduce crimes, violence and other vices occasioned by access to information technology and other technological devices.

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