

## Exploring Awareness of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Among Rural Communities of Jigawa State, Nigeria

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### ABSTRACT

This research examines the level of awareness and comprehension of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) among rural communities in Jigawa State, Nigeria—an area characterised by high poverty levels, low educational attainment, and inadequate infrastructure. Utilising data gathered from a cross-sectional survey involving 400 participants from selected rural local government areas, the study evaluates familiarity with the SDGs, the specific goals that are most recognised, and the primary channels through which information is obtained. Findings reveal that 62.5% of participants claimed to be aware of the SDGs; however, this awareness is unevenly distributed, being more prevalent among younger, male, and more educated individuals. Recognition is highest for goals that directly tackle local issues—such as SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), and SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being)—while more comprehensive or global objectives like SDG 13 (Climate Action) and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) received lesser acknowledgement. Media and government programs emerged as the most commonly mentioned sources of information; nonetheless, the study highlights notable gaps, particularly among women and those lacking formal education. These results emphasise the necessity for inclusive, community-oriented, and culturally relevant awareness campaigns. The paper suggests enhancing the use of local languages, bolstering community media channels, involving traditional leaders, and incorporating SDG education into school programs. By overcoming these barriers to communication and inclusion, the study provides critical insights for policymakers, NGOs, and development stakeholders seeking to enhance grassroots participation in the global development agenda and accelerate progress toward the 2030 SDG targets in marginalised rural areas.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), introduced by the United Nations in 2015, provide a comprehensive global framework for eradicating poverty, protecting the environment, and promoting peace and prosperity for all by 2030. Comprising 17 interrelated goals and 169 targets, the SDGs aim to address a range of development challenges, including poverty, education, health, gender equality, access to clean water, and climate change (United Nations, 2015). They stress the importance of inclusivity and sustainability, upholding the fundamental commitment to "leave no one behind."

For nations like Nigeria, achieving the SDGs presents substantial obstacles, particularly in rural regions where the effects of underdevelopment are most stark. These areas frequently experience ongoing poverty (Magaji, Musa & Ismail, 2025), a lack of infrastructure, low literacy rates, and restricted access to healthcare and social services (National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2021). Jigawa State, situated in the North-West geopolitical zone of Nigeria, serves as a prime example of these rural development issues.

Established in 1991 from the northeastern segment of Kano State, Jigawa has a predominantly agrarian community, with over 80% of its population involved in subsistence farming and small-scale trade (Jigawa State Government, 2020).

Persistent poverty rates, restricted access to healthcare and education, minimal levels of formal employment, and extensive infrastructural deficits continue to obstruct social and economic advancement (Magaji, Musa & Salisu, 2022). According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2021), Jigawa regularly ranks among the states with the worst human development indicators, including access to clean water, electricity, and education. Adding to these difficulties is the state's youthful demographic profile, characterised by large household sizes (Jafaru, Magaji, & Ahmad, 2024), and deeply ingrained traditional socio-cultural systems, which significantly shape how information is received, processed, and acted upon within communities (UNDP, 2020).

These socio-demographic factors profoundly affect the dissemination and acceptance of the SDGs. Awareness regarding these goals is vital, acting as a crucial entry point for citizen involvement, local ownership, and the success of programs. Without a sufficient understanding of the SDGs' objectives, priorities, and benefits, communities may remain passive or disengaged from development initiatives aimed at them (Sachs, 2015). This research, therefore, investigates the awareness levels of the Sustainable Development Goals within rural communities of Jigawa State. It aims to assess how knowledge of the SDGs varies across demographic factors, including age, gender, education, and occupation; to identify the primary sources of information related to the SDGs; and to determine which specific goals are most widely recognised by the community. The results will provide practical recommendations for development policymakers, civil society organisations, and local authorities aiming to adapt the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. By uncovering knowledge deficiencies and communication obstacles in Jigawa State, this research contributes to the broader discussion on fostering inclusive, community-driven progress within Nigeria and similar rural areas worldwide.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Definition of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) represent a global call to action accepted by all United Nations (UN) member states in 2015 as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The SDGs comprise 17 interconnected goals and 169 distinct targets, designed to eradicate poverty, safeguard the planet, and ensure peace and prosperity for all. These goals build upon the achievements and lessons learned from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), but with a broader and more inclusive approach.

Central to the SDGs is the tenet of “leaving no one behind,” which underscores equity, inclusiveness, and sustainability. The goals tackle a variety of worldwide issues, including poverty (SDG 1), zero hunger (SDG 2), quality education (SDG 4), gender equality (SDG 5), clean water and sanitation (SDG 6), affordable and clean energy (SDG 7), decent work and economic growth (SDG 8), climate action (SDG 13), and partnerships for the goals (SDG 17). They apply uniformly to all nations, regardless of their level of development, and necessitate coordinated efforts from governments, civil society, the private sector, and everyday citizens.

In the context of Nigeria, particularly in rural states such as Jigawa, the SDGs provide a framework for addressing ongoing underdevelopment. The state grapples with issues such as widespread poverty, low literacy rates, high maternal and child mortality, food insecurity, and environmental degradation (Magaji & Musa, 2015). Comprehending the SDGs is crucial in these communities to guarantee local involvement and engagement with development programs. The effectiveness of the SDGs in such rural settings largely hinges on awareness, participation, regional relevance, and continued collaboration among governments and communities (Jafaru, Aliyu & Sule, 2025).

Thus, the concept of the SDGs transcends policy; it embodies a transformative vision that connects global aspirations with local circumstances, ensuring that development is economically viable, socially inclusive, and environmentally sustainable.

Awareness of development initiatives often serves as the initial step towards participation. According to Sachs (2015), a lack of public understanding regarding development goals can significantly hinder their effectiveness. Research by Okonkwo (2019) and Bello & Hassan (2022) indicates that awareness levels in rural areas of Nigeria are generally low, frequently due to inadequate communication infrastructure and limited outreach approaches. Awareness of the SDGs typically refers to the degree to which individuals and communities grasp the purpose, targets, and significance of the Sustainable Development Goals. Awareness involves not only recognising the names or numbers of the goals but also comprehending their implications for health, education, livelihoods, the environment, and governance (Magaji, Ismail, & Musa, 2025).

In rural contexts, awareness is frequently influenced by factors such as access to media, literacy levels, distance from urban centres, and the involvement of development partners. A lack of awareness hinders citizen engagement, undermines program effectiveness, and contributes to policy gaps between government intentions and community realities (UNDP, 2018).

### 2.2 Theoretical Framework

This research is based on the Theory of Diffusion of Innovation. The Diffusion of Innovation Theory (Rogers, 1962) describes how new concepts, technologies, or practices are disseminated within a society or social system over time. The theory highlights key phases in the adoption process—knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation, and confirmation—and underscores the importance of communication channels and social contexts in facilitating the adoption process. In this study, awareness of the SDGs represents the initial phase of diffusion. The capacity of rural communities in Jigawa State to adopt and support initiatives related to the SDGs primarily hinges on their exposure to information concerning these goals. Primary communication channels that shape

the dissemination and comprehension of SDG ideas include mass media, government initiatives, and community awareness campaigns. Socioeconomic factors, such as educational background, age, occupation, and access to information infrastructure, influence how various individuals and groups navigate the stages of awareness and engagement (Musa, Magaji, & Tsauni, 2022).

### 2.3 Empirical Review

The existing literature on SDG awareness, particularly in rural African settings, reveals a consistent trend of limited knowledge and varying levels of understanding of the global goals. These deficiencies are often influenced by socioeconomic, educational, and infrastructural limitations, which impact how communities interact with development narratives and programs. Adebayo and Adeola (2020) conducted a study on SDG awareness in rural areas of Osun State, Nigeria, and discovered that only 45% of participants had ever heard of the SDGs. Their findings indicated that most awareness was superficial, focusing only on specific goals like poverty reduction and hunger, with little comprehension of climate, innovation, or governance-related SDGs. The study recommended grassroots-oriented awareness initiatives that use local languages and participatory techniques.

Similarly, Mohammed and Isa (2021) examined the impact of SDG sensitisation in northern Nigeria, noting that the media, particularly radio and television, played a crucial role in enhancing awareness. However, they observed that rural women and individuals with lower educational backgrounds were significantly less informed about the SDGs. They suggested that government-led campaigns were inadequate and called for collaborations with community-based organisations and religious leaders to strengthen grassroots outreach.

In Kenya, Mutua et al. (2021) discovered that awareness of the SDGs was considerably higher in urban areas than in rural ones, with 68% of urban dwellers indicating familiarity compared to only 29% in rural communities. The research attributed this gap to superior infrastructure, education, and media accessibility in urban settings. The authors emphasised the importance of mobile-based awareness initiatives and the utilisation of local language radio broadcasts to engage remote populations.

Oluwaseun and Nwachukwu (2022) investigated youth awareness of the SDGs in rural Niger State communities and found that merely 38% of young people were aware of the goals. The study highlighted that formal education had a significant influence on exposure to the SDGs, as most awareness stemmed from school-based initiatives or peer interactions. The authors suggested integrating SDG education into school curricula and establishing youth ambassador programs to improve understanding.

Adebayo and Ibrahim (2021) examined a rural setting in Kaduna and discovered that while many had heard of the SDGs, less than 30% could accurately identify any specific goal. The research found a correlation between low awareness and limited educational achievement, as well as inadequate engagement from the local government. The investigators highlighted that community radio and religious institutions could serve as essential instruments for enhancing outreach.

Ogunyemi et al. (2020) surveyed urban and peri-urban regions of Lagos State, reporting significantly elevated levels of SDG awareness, particularly among individuals with tertiary education. They found that social media, educational institutions, and civil society initiatives played crucial roles in fostering awareness. However, they also noted that awareness did not always translate into participation.

Audu et al. (2022) examined the situation in Northern Nigeria. They found that awareness of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) was highest for SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 3 (Good Health), and SDG 4 (Quality Education), while environmental goals like SDG 13 (Climate Action) and SDG 14 (Life Below Water) received very little recognition. In areas where NGOs were active, levels of awareness and engagement were significantly greater.

According to the UNDP Nigeria (2020), awareness of the SDGs was generally low in rural northern states such as Jigawa, Yobe, and Zamfara, with less than 40% of respondents able to mention at least one goal. The report highlighted poverty, lack of education, and insufficient public-sector communication as major obstacles.

Bako and Suleiman (2023) conducted a localised survey in Kiyawa and Dutse LGAs of Jigawa State. They found that, although community members were aware of development initiatives such as school building and health outreach programs, they seldom related these projects to the overarching SDG framework. The authors suggested that connecting existing efforts to the SDGs in local conversations could enhance recognition and ownership of the SDGs.

In a broader West African context, a regional SDG awareness survey by UNDP (2021) indicated that in rural regions of Ghana, Nigeria, and Burkina Faso, SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), and SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being) were the most recognised. However, awareness of SDG 13 (Climate Action), SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions), and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) remained very low. The report underscored the importance of context-specific messaging that resonates with local realities and priorities.

Across these studies, a consistent empirical trend is evident: awareness of the SDGs in rural communities is generally low and uneven, with recognition mainly focused on goals directly related to basic needs. There is often limited engagement with more abstract or systemic goals such as climate action, institutional development, and global partnerships. Furthermore, gender disparities, low educational attainment, and inadequate infrastructure hinder the dissemination of information and participation in discussions related to the SDGs.

The current study in Jigawa State builds on this existing body of evidence by validating many of these observations while providing new insights into the specific challenges and patterns of SDG awareness in northern Nigeria. It emphasises the importance of

culturally sensitive, linguistically precise, and community-engaged awareness initiatives in promoting rural participation in the 2030 Agenda.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Research Design

This research employed a cross-sectional survey design to assess the level of awareness about the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) among rural residents in Jigawa State, Nigeria. The cross-sectional approach was suitable as it facilitated the collection of data from a varied sample of respondents at a single point in time, thus offering a snapshot of awareness levels across different demographic groups. The structured questionnaire used for data collection was meticulously designed to align with the first specific research objective—assessing the extent of awareness of the SDGs in the target population. It included both closed-ended questions (to gather quantitative data) and open-ended questions (to capture qualitative insights).

#### 3.2 Sampling Technique

The study employed a multi-stage sampling strategy to ensure representation from the three senatorial zones of Jigawa State—Jigawa North-East, Jigawa North-West, and Jigawa South-West. In the initial stage, three Local Government Areas (LGAs)—one from each senatorial district—were purposely selected based on criteria such as rural classification, accessibility, and prior exposure to development projects. In the subsequent stage, two wards were randomly chosen from each of the selected LGAs. Finally, systematic random sampling was employed to select households in each ward, with one eligible respondent (aged 18 or older) chosen per household, thereby ensuring a balance of genders and occupations. And household types. The total sample size for the study consisted of 400 respondents, providing a robust dataset for meaningful analysis and generalisation within the study context.

#### 3.3 Data Collection and Analysis

The data gathering process was carried out by research assistants who were trained and familiar with the local dialects and cultural practices of the communities. Structured questionnaires were administered in person to enhance response rates and ensure that the questions were understood clearly. The questionnaire addressed socio-demographic characteristics, awareness of the SDGs, knowledge of specific goals, and channels of information about the goals.

Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages, to summarise the distribution of awareness levels and other variables. These findings were presented in tables and charts for clarity and ease of comprehension. Furthermore, qualitative insights gleaned from open-ended responses were analysed thematically to supplement the quantitative results, offering a more detailed understanding of the respondents' awareness and perceptions of the SDGs.

The analysis specifically targeted the initial research objective: to evaluate the awareness levels of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) among rural communities in Jigawa State. The interpretation of the results also took into account contextual factors such as educational background, occupation, access to media, and the history of community development, all of which could influence awareness levels.

### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.0 Socioeconomic and Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Examining the socioeconomic and demographic attributes of the 400 respondents from rural areas in Jigawa State provides essential context for understanding their awareness and comprehension of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The table below highlights key characteristics:

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	230	57.5
	Female	170	42.5
Age Group	18–30 years	100	25.0
	31–40 years	120	30.0
	41–50 years	90	22.5
	51 years and above	90	22.5
Marital Status	Married	240	60.0
	Single	100	25.0
	Widowed/Divorced	60	15.0
Educational Level	No formal education	150	37.5
	Primary	100	25.0

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Occupation	Secondary	100	25.0
	Tertiary	50	12.5
	Farming	160	40.0
	Trading	100	25.0
	Civil service	60	15.0
	Artisan/Skilled labour	40	10.0
	Others (e.g. unemployed, students)	40	10.0
Monthly Income	₦30,000 or less	230	57.5
	₦31,000 – ₦60,000	90	22.5
	₦61,000 – ₦100,000	50	12.5
	Above ₦100,000	30	7.5
Household Size	1–5 persons	100	25.0
	6–10 persons	170	42.5
	More than 10 persons	130	32.5

The demographic profile indicates that the rural population in Jigawa State predominantly consists of married males who are engaged in either subsistence farming or trading activities. A significant number of respondents exhibit low levels of educational achievement and earn a low income, with many supporting large families. These elements are vital for understanding their access to information and involvement in development programs.

#### 4.1 Awareness of SDGs

Among the 400 individuals surveyed, 62.5% reported being aware of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This suggests a moderate degree of awareness within the rural areas of Jigawa State. Nonetheless, the data indicate that awareness varies across different demographic groups. Younger respondents (ages 18–40) and those possessing secondary or tertiary education were more inclined to acknowledge the SDGs than older, less-educated individuals. This highlights the impact of education and generational shifts on exposure to development topics.

#### 4.2 Recognition of Specific Goals

Among those aware of the SDGs, specific goals are more widely recognised than others. As illustrated in the following table, SDG 1: No Poverty (72%), SDG 2: Zero Hunger (64%), and SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being (56%) are the most acknowledged. These goals address the most immediate and pressing issues facing the community.

SDG	% Awareness
SDG 1: No Poverty	72%
SDG 2: Zero Hunger	64%
SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being	56%
SDG 4: Quality Education	40%
SDG 13: Climate Action	24%
SDG 17: Partnerships	20%

In comparison, knowledge of SDG 13 (Climate Action) and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) was considerably lower. These goals, which are more abstract or internationally oriented, appear detached from the daily concerns of rural households, indicating a gap between overarching sustainable development themes and local circumstances.

Respondents who were aware of the SDGs identified media as the primary source of information (22.5%), followed by government initiatives (17.5%). Other sources, including non-governmental organisations (NGOs), religious groups, and community outreach programs, played a considerably lesser role in generating awareness. This highlights the crucial role of public communication channels, especially radio and television, which are readily available in rural Jigawa, as key instruments for spreading development information.

The study also revealed a significant gender disparity in awareness of the SDGs, with 57.5% of male respondents being aware, compared to 42.5% of female respondents. This demonstrates more profound structural inequalities regarding access to education,



economic opportunities, and media exposure. Regarding education, individuals with secondary (25%) and tertiary (12.5%) qualifications showed much greater awareness of the SDGs than those with no formal education (37.5%), emphasising the strong correlation between literacy and civic knowledge.

These findings underscore the need for inclusive awareness-raising strategies that target women and individuals with lower educational attainment, particularly through culturally sensitive methods such as community discussions, market day initiatives, and broadcasts in local languages. Since awareness is a crucial initial step towards facilitating participation and ownership of the SDGs, addressing these demographic disparities is essential for realising inclusive and fair development outcomes in Jigawa State.

The study evaluated the degree of awareness of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) among rural populations in Jigawa State, Nigeria. The outcomes reveal that 62.5% of respondents indicated they were aware of the SDGs, indicating a moderate level of awareness in the area studied. However, this awareness was not uniformly distributed, with younger, better-educated, and male respondents exhibiting significantly higher levels of knowledge than their older, less-educated, and female counterparts.

Among the 17 SDGs, SDG 1 (No Poverty) had the highest recognition (72%), followed by SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) (64%) and SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being) (56%). Conversely, awareness of SDG 13 (Climate Action) and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) was low (24% and 20%, respectively), reflecting limited involvement with more abstract or globally-oriented goals.

Media channels (22.5%) and government initiatives (17.5%) were the most commonly mentioned sources of information regarding the SDGs, while NGOs and community outreach had minimal influence. This suggests that mass communication is essential for increasing awareness in rural areas.

Importantly, gender and educational disparities have emerged as significant obstacles to inclusively comprehending the SDGs. Male and educated participants were more likely to be aware of the goals, highlighting structural inequalities in access to information and participation in development discussions.

Overall, the findings suggest that although there is a foundational awareness of the SDGs in rural Jigawa State, considerable knowledge gaps remain, particularly regarding complex or long-term sustainability objectives. These disparities necessitate focused awareness initiatives that are inclusive, contextually relevant, and effectively reach underrepresented segments of the populace.

The findings indicate that, while awareness of critical goals, such as poverty and hunger, is robust, understanding of broader sustainability aims is lacking. This carries significant implications:

- i. Limited involvement with environmental and global goals might hinder local engagement in climate-resilient or collaborative efforts.
- ii. Dependence on media and government for information underscores the necessity to bolster community-based communication and grassroots mobilisation.
- iii. The gender and educational divides in awareness highlight the systemic exclusion of women and less educated groups from discussions surrounding development.

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Community-Centric Awareness Initiatives: Utilise local radio stations, native languages, and public forums to clarify SDG concepts and promote inclusivity.
2. Outreach Focused on Gender: Develop programs explicitly aimed at increasing women's engagement and leadership in SDG education and awareness.
3. Engage Traditional and Faith Leaders: These individuals can act as cultural influencers and advocates for sustainability efforts.
4. Broaden Community Media Opportunities: Make investments in local media outlets and storytelling methods that clarify global development ideas.
5. Curriculum Integration in Schools: Incorporate SDG topics into lessons for primary and secondary education to foster early awareness.

## 7. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study indicate that rural communities in Jigawa State have a moderate understanding of the SDGs, especially those goals that relate to their immediate livelihood issues. Nevertheless, there are notable gaps in comprehension regarding broader environmental and governance goals. Addressing this knowledge gap is crucial for achieving inclusive and sustainable development. Enhancing local communication channels, addressing gender and educational barriers, and increasing community participation in SDG planning and implementation will be crucial for achieving the 2030 Agenda in rural Nigeria.

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