

The Liberian Prospective of Global Education, Research and Technology for Sustainable Development

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Abstract

Sustainable development has been the key word used by many development partners, NGOs and even candidates contesting for governmental positions in my country-Liberia. As a post war and post Ebola country, this word has been used to gain donor funding by NGOs and as a means of convincing electorate to vote for a particular candidate in elections. This paper endeavors to evaluate and ascertain methods that are used to achieve actual sustainable development in underdeveloped country with case of Liberia and causes of failures if any. The Wikipedia defines sustainable development as the organizing principle for meeting human development goals while at the same time sustaining the ability of natural systems to provide the natural resources and ecosystem services upon which the economy and the society depend. The desirable end result is a state of society where living conditions and resource use continue to meet human needs without undermining the integrity and stability of the natural systems. While the modern concept of sustainable development is derived mostly from the 1987 Brundtland Report, it is also rooted in earlier ideas about sustainable forest management and twentieth century environmental concerns. As the concept developed, it has shifted to focus more on economic development, social development and environmental protection for future generations. It has been suggested that "the term 'sustainability' should be viewed as humanity's target goal of human-ecosystem equilibrium (homeostasis), while 'sustainable development' refers to the holistic approach and temporal processes that lead us to the end point of sustainability. <https://en.wikipedia.org>.

Keyword: Sustainable Development, Global Education, Research Technology.

Introduction

After the civil and Ebola crises in Liberia, many organizations and individuals as well as different governments have been trying to provide sustainable development using Global Education, Research and Technology as pillars for such endeavors. The target to achieve sustainable development around the world has been arranged into measurable goals replacing the millennium Development goals. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were born at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro in 2012. The objective was to produce a set of universal goals that meet the urgent environmental, political and economic challenges facing our world.

The SDGs replaced the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which started a global effort in 2000 to tackle the indignity of poverty. The MDGs established measurable, universally-agreed objectives for tackling extreme poverty and hunger, preventing deadly diseases, and expanding primary education to all children, among other development priorities.

For 15 years, the MDGs drove Progress in several important areas: reducing income poverty, providing much needed access to water and sanitation, driving down child mortality and drastically improving maternal health. They also kick-started a global movement for free primary education, inspiring countries to invest in their future generations. Most significantly, the MDGs made huge strides in combating HIV/AIDS and other treatable diseases such as malaria and tuberculosis.

Key MDG achievements

- More than 1 billion people have been lifted out of extreme poverty (since 1990)
- Child mortality dropped by more than half (since 1990)
- The number of out of school children has dropped by more than half (since 1990)
- HIV/AIDS infections fell by almost 40 percent (since 2000)

The legacy and achievements of the MDGs provide us with valuable lessons and experience to begin work on the new goals. But for millions of people around the world the job remains unfinished. We need to go the last mile on ending hunger, achieving full gender equality, improving health services and getting every child into school beyond primary. The SDGs are also an urgent call to shift the world onto a more sustainable path.

The SDGs are a bold commitment to finish what we started, and tackle some of the more pressing challenges facing the world today. All 17 Goals interconnect, meaning success in one affects success for others. Dealing with the threat of climate change impacts how we manage our fragile natural resources, achieving gender equality or better health helps eradicate poverty, and fostering peace and inclusive societies will reduce inequalities and help economies prosper. In short, this is the greatest chance we have to improve life for future generations.

The SDGs coincided with another historic agreement reached in 2015 at the COP21 Paris Climate Conference. Together with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, signed in Japan in March 2015, these agreements provide a set of common standards and achievable targets to reduce carbon emissions, manage the risks of climate change and natural disasters, and to build back better after a crisis.

The SDGs are unique in that they cover issues that affect us all. They reaffirm our international commitment to end poverty, permanently, everywhere. They are ambitious in making sure no one is left behind. More importantly, they involve us all to build a more sustainable, safer, more prosperous planet for all humanity.

The Liberia perspective

According to the UNDP (<http://www.lr.undp.org>) Liberia's 2010 Millennium Development Goals (MDG) report represents the programs and processes the Government of Liberia is undertaking to advance the social and economic wellbeing of the nation. It describes the enabling environment for conducting and implementing MDGs and identifies challenges, bottlenecks and recommendations to accelerate the achievement.

- Liberia makes significant progress on its development agenda, leading to the completion point of the Heavily Indebted Poor Country Initiative.
- Liberia has now embarked on a long-term economic planning exercise - Liberia Rising 2030 - to realize our goal of inclusive social, political and economic growth and development.
- Liberia's MDGs successes include promoting gender equality and empowering women (Goal 3), in which Liberia won the prestigious MDG Three Award in 2010; combating HIV/AIDS with a current prevalence rate of 1.5 %, (Goal 6); and developing a global partnership for development (Goal 8).

Liberia is a low-income country that relies heavily on foreign assistance. Civil war and government mismanagement destroyed much of Liberia's economy, especially the infrastructure in and around the capital, Monrovia. Many businesses fled the country, taking capital and expertise with them, but with the end of fighting and the installation of a democratically-elected government in 2006, several have returned. Liberia has the distinction of having the highest ratio of direct foreign investment to GDP in the world.

Liberia is one of 14 countries that have recorded impressive Human Development Index (HDI) gains of more than 2% annually since 2000, according to the Global Human development report released by UNDP. Countries like Afghanistan, Sierra Leone, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Angola, Timor-Leste, Myanmar, Tanzania, **Liberia**, Burundi, Mali, Mozambique, Democratic Republic of the Congo and Niger have

shown a remarkable change on their HDI. Between 2007 and 2012 Liberia moved up by 3 points in its rank. The country is now recorded as one of the 14 countries with highest gain in Human Development Index, with an increase of about 2% a year.

Liberia is located on the West Coast of Africa with a population of 3.489 million, bordered by Sierra Leone to the west, Cote D'Ivoire on the east, Guinea to the North and the Atlantic Ocean to the South. Liberia has **579 km of coastline** and **111,370 sq. km. land mass** with 15 political subdivisions known as Counties namely, Bomi, Bong, Gbarpolu, Grand Bassa, Grand Cape Mount, Grand Gedeh, Grand Kru, Lofa, Margibi, Maryland, Montserrado, Nimba, River Cess, River Gee, Sinoe. English is the official language with 16 local languages. It has a mixed legal system of common law (based on Anglo-American law) and customary law and an annual rainfall of 4,650mm per year in the coastal areas and 2,240mm in the interior and possesses about 40% of the West Africa's rainforest.

Christians in Liberia form 85.6% of the population, Muslims 12.2%, Traditional 0.6%, other 0.2%, none 1.4% (2008 Census). Liberia is rich in natural resources, including iron ore, gold, diamonds, timbers and rubber. Freed slaves from the United States settled in Liberia in 1822. By 1847, the country declared her independence becoming the first black independent country in Africa where America-Liberians were able to establish a republic. Liberia has a Republican form of government with three branches including Legislature, Judiciary and Executive. Liberia has a growth rate of 2.1 per annum, of which 1.6 million or 44.5% reside in the urban areas and 2.0 million or 55.5% reside in the rural. About 2,891,723 million or 83.2% of the population is between the ages of 0-39 years meaning that Liberia has a youthful population. (<http://www.lr.undp.org>)

With all the above reports, progress and gains on the global stage, what remains lacking is the ordinary Liberian ability to understand, feel, see, know or benefit the impact of the SDGs. This research uncovered that there are many Liberians who do not know the meaning of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) before even thinking about interpreting the results in the communities in Liberia.

Methods

The study was conducted in Liberia specifically in Buchanan Grand Bassa County. Buchanan is the third largest city in Liberia, lying on Waterhouse Bay, part of the Atlantic Ocean. It is referred to as Gbezohn in the local Bassa language. As of the 2008 census, Buchanan has a population of 34,270 (Wikipedia). This study was conducted only for people living in Buchanan City. The main instrument used was questionnaire copies of which were served to each head of twenty five communities which is presumed to have had some sort of knowledge regarding sustainable development. The questionnaires were developed and distributed based on the number of zones and communities in the city. There are about twenty five major communities in Buchanan. So the numbers of questionnaires were based on such.

Result

Demography

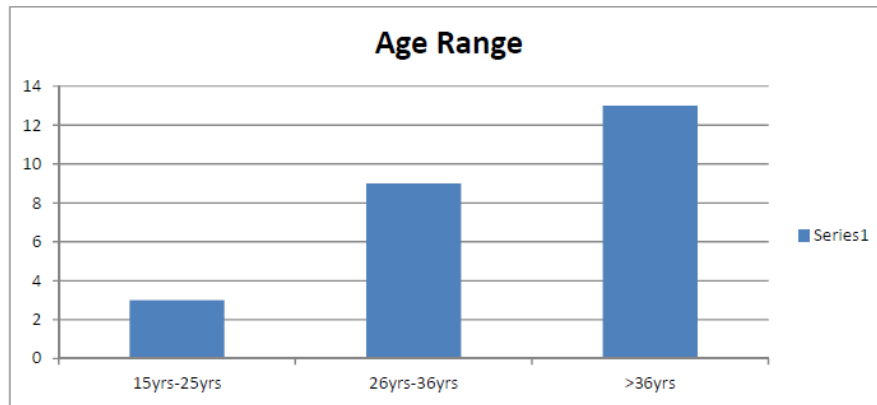
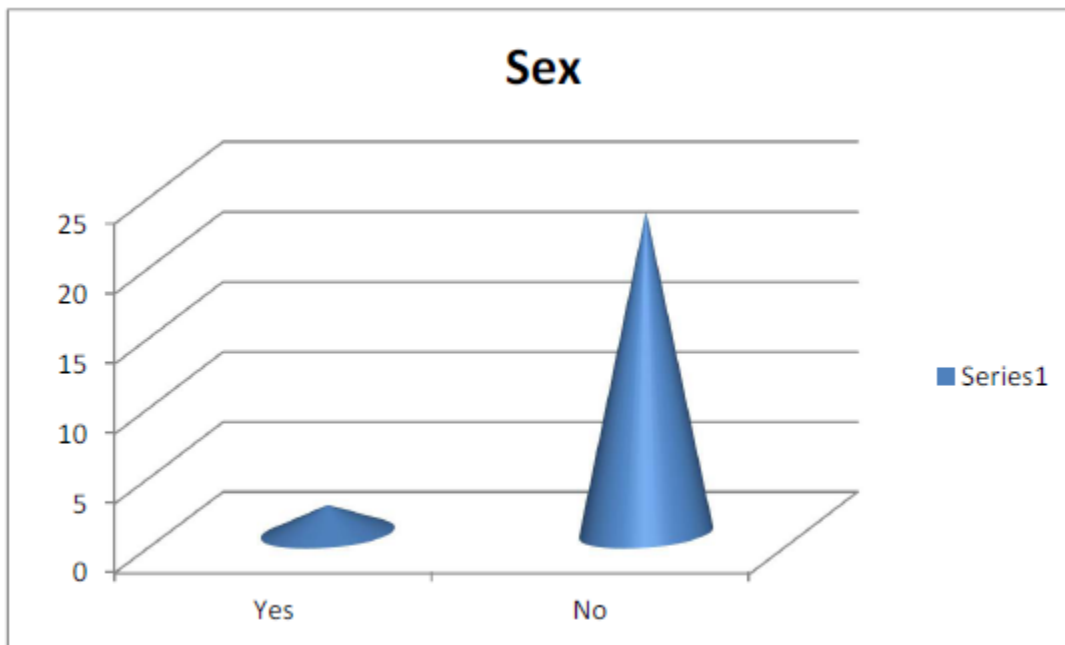


Figure 1. Age range for respondents

This figure shows that among the respondents, 3(12%) respondents are between 25 to 36yrs, 4(16%) are between 26-36 yrs and 18(72%) is above 26yrs



Figures 2. Sex

This figure shows that among the respondents, 18(72%) are male and & (28%) are females

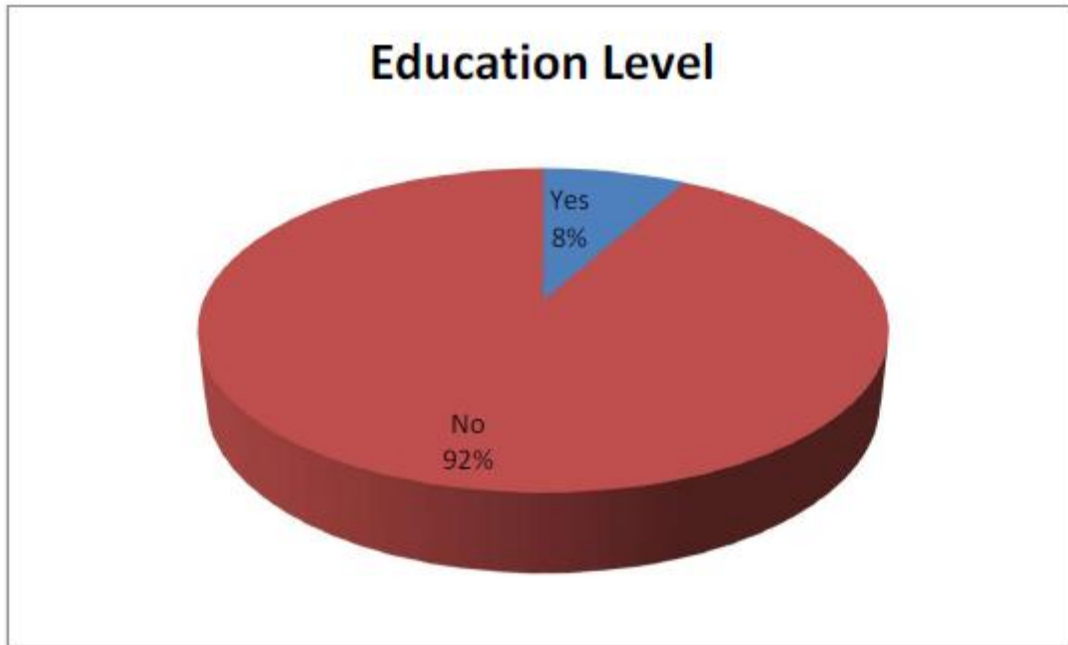


Figure 3. Education level

This figure shows that 10(40%) of the respondents hold University degrees, 5(20%) are junior high level, 2(8%) are at elementary level and 5(20%) of the respondents do not have any form education

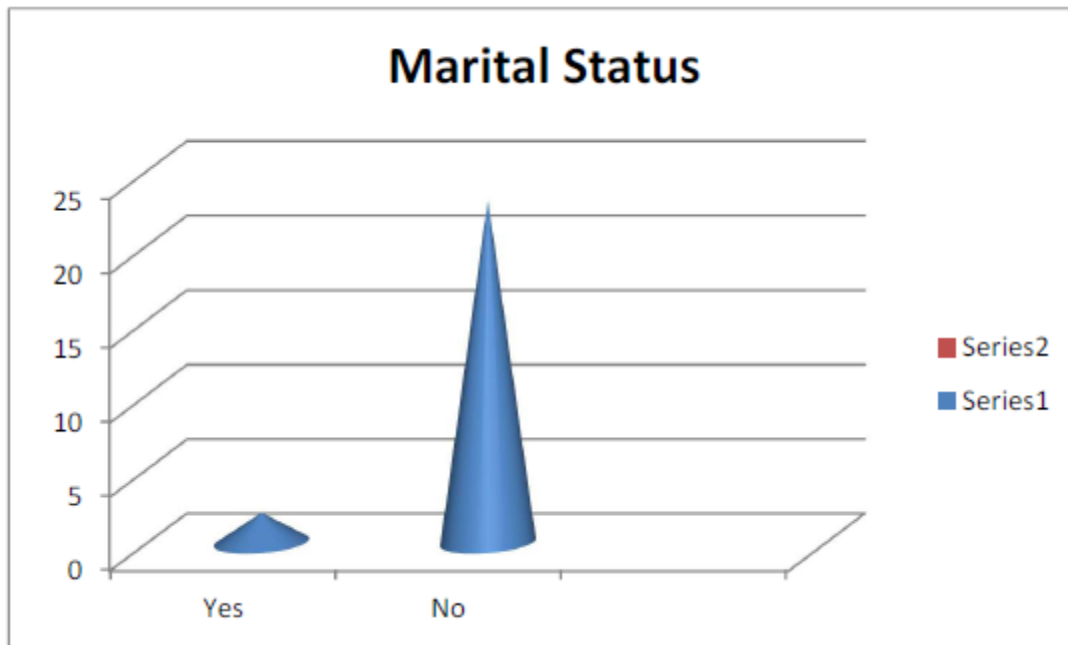


Figure 4. Marital status

This figure shows that 18(72%) of the respondents are married, 7(28%) are not married and none of the response is divorced.

Table 1. Are you employed?

Variables	Respondents	Percentage
Yes	15	60%
No	10	40%
Total	25	100%

Table 1 shows that 15(60%) of the respondents are employed and 10(40%) are not employed.

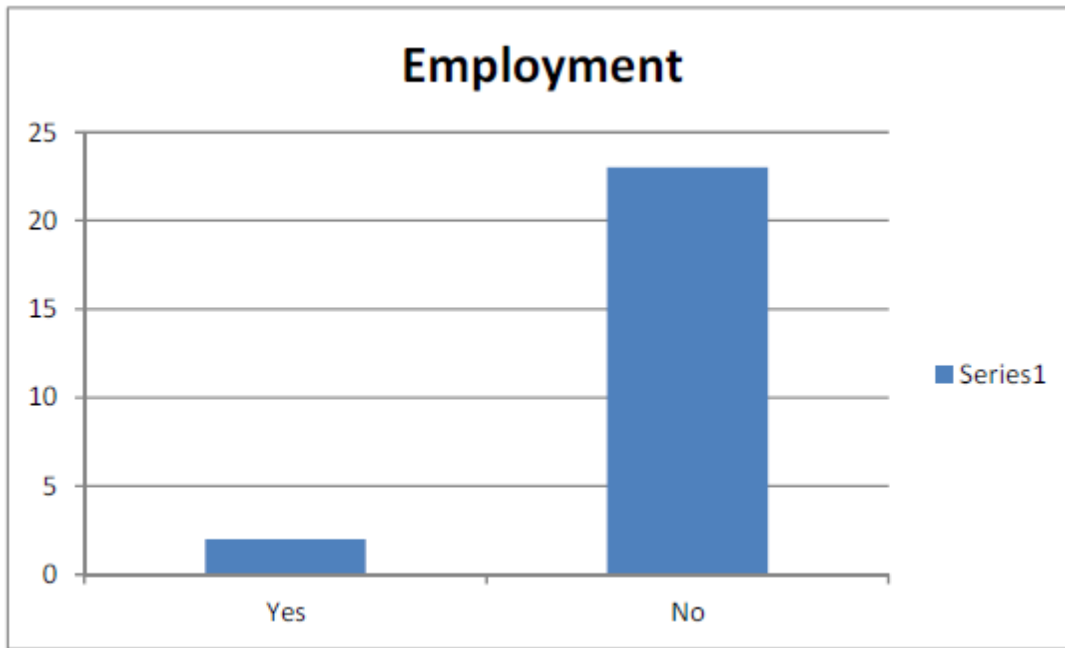


Figure 5. Employment

Table 2. Do you know what the sustainable development goals (SDGs)

Variables	Respondents	Percentage
Yes	12	48%
No	13	52%
Total	25	100%

Table 2 shows that 13(52%) of the respondents do not have knowledge on what the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is and 12(48%) of the respondent know what the SDGs is.



Figure 6. Knowledge about SDGs

Table 3. Do you think people in your community can afford daily meal?

Variables	Respondents	Percentage
Yes	6	24%
No	19	76%
Total	25	100%

Table 3 shows that 19(76%) of the respondents cannot afford their daily meal and only 6(24%) can actually afford their daily meal.

Table 4. From your own knowledge, do you think you eat healthy and balanced meals daily?

Variables	Respondents	Percentage
Yes	5	20%
No	20	80%
Total	25	100%

Table 4: shows that only 5(20%) of the respondents can actually eat healthy and balanced meals on a daily basis and 20(80%) cannot eat healthy and balanced diet.

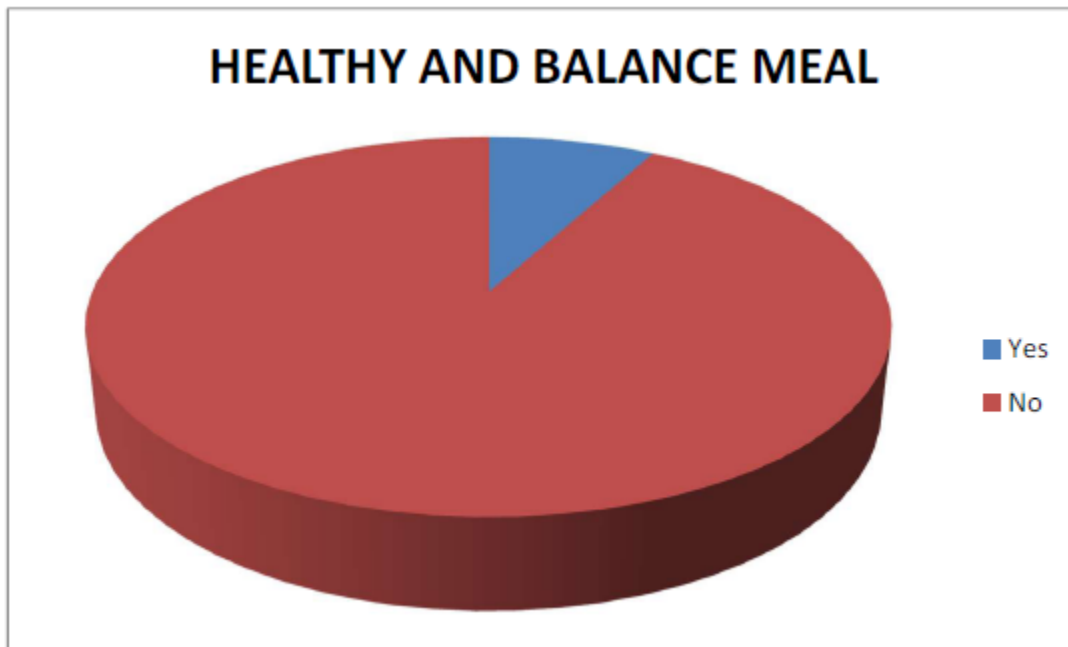


Figure 7. Healthy and balance meal

Table 5. Does your community have access to safe drinking water?

Variables	Respondents	Percentage
Yes	9	36%
No	16	64%
Total	25	100%

Table 5 which is one of the most important variables when it comes SDGs, shows that of the 25 respondents; only 9(36%) have access to safe drinking water. The rest of 19(64%) do not have access to safe drinking water.

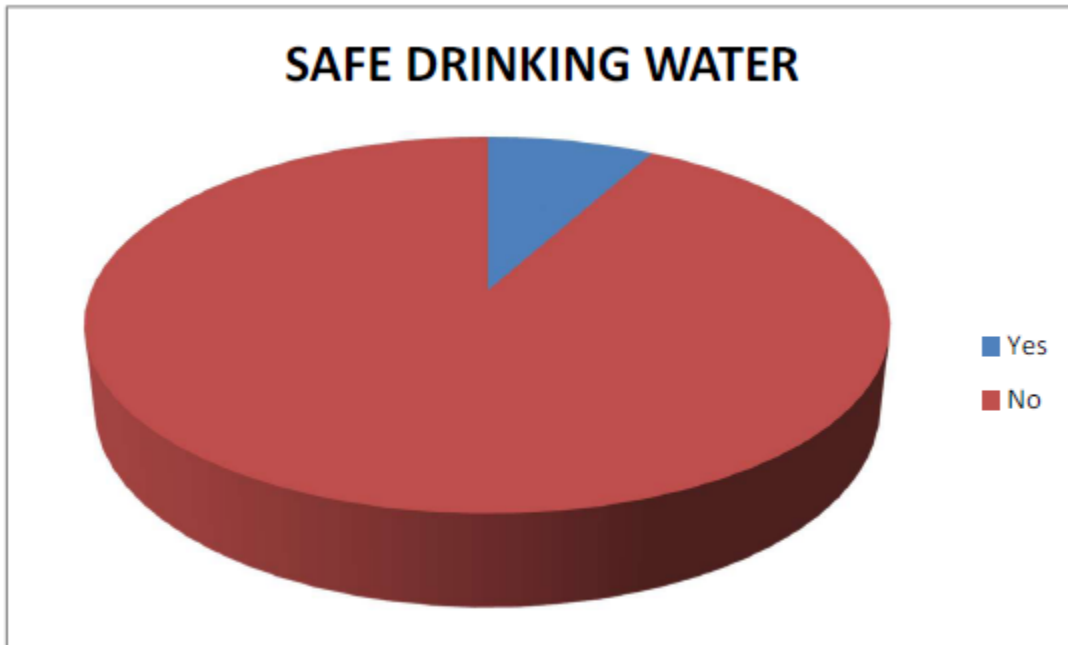


Figure 8. Safe drinking water

Table 6. Does your community have access to affordable and quality education for you or your kids?

Variables	Respondents	Percentage
Yes	7	28%
No	18	72%
Total	25	100%

Table 6 shows that 7(28%) have access to affordable and quality education while 18(72%) do not have access to affordable and quality education

Table 7. Does your Community have access to affordable and quality medical facilities for your family?

Variables	Respondents	Percentage
Yes	2	8%
No	23	92%
Total	25	100%

Table 7 shows that only 2(8%) of the respondents have access to affordable and quality medical facilities. and the rest of the 23(92%) do not have access to medical facilities

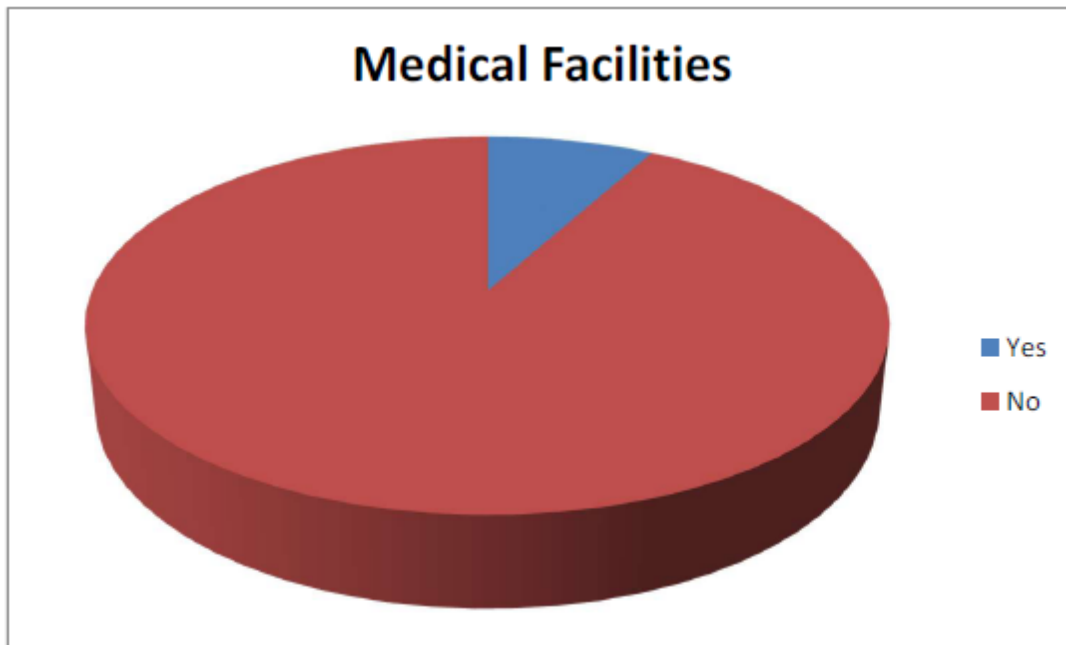


Figure 8. Medical facilities

Table 8. Do you think many people can die while giving birth in your community?

Variables	Respondents	Percentage
Yes	10	40%
No	15	60%
Total	25	100%

Table 8 shows that 10(40%) of the respondents die while giving birth and 15(60%) survive during delivery. This is referred as maternal mortality

Table 9. Do you think people in your community suffer from hunger and starvation?

Variables	Respondents	Percentage
Yes	18	72%
No	7	28%
Total	25	100%

Table 9 shows that 18(72%) of the respondent suffer from hungry and starvation while 7(28%) do not suffer from starvation.

Discussion

The above result from the questionnaires confirms the assertion of this paper that sustainable development is not reflected among the ordinary Liberians as reported on the Global stage. According to <http://www.globalgoals.org/>, the 17 goals for sustainable development include:

1. No Poverty- from the data above, 72% of the respondents suffer from hunger and starvation. 80% of the respondents do not have healthy and balance meal and 76% cannot afford daily meal. How than can we measure Liberia progress with the SDGs
2. Zero Hunger- The short survey conducted in 25 communities in Buchanan shows that 18(72%) go hunger every day.

3. Good Health and Well Being- from the questionnaires, 23(92%) communities do not have access to affordable and qualities medical facilities
4. Quality Education-data from table 6 shows that 18(72%) of communities in Buchanan do not have access to affordable and quality education
5. Clean Water and Sanitation-Table 5 shows that 16(64%) do not have access to safe drinking water

These are just five of the 17 goals for sustainable development and none of which gets positive result among the lives of Liberia. Therefore using Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as the means as a tool and its “Report of Progress” would be very wrong and this again cannot be seen and felt by the Liberians.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the only national tool that can be used in Liberia to measure global education, research and technology for sustainable development is the SDGs and the level of progress reflected in reports on the global stage does not match with the actual reflection in different communities. <http://www.globalgoals.org/>

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