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IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL (SDG) 6 ON CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION AND THE IMPLICATION FOR THE PERENNIAL WATER PROBLEM IN APA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF BENUE STATE

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ABSTRACT

The research topic titled: "Impact Assessment of the Sustainable Development Goal 6 on Clean Water and Sanitation and the Implication for the Perennial Water Problem in Apa Local Government of Benue State" seeks to examine the efficacy of the SDG 6 in addressing perennial water problems in localities, despite deliberately fashioned and targeted actionable plans. This is seen in the eleven target components of SDG 6 however, for the sake of this study, particular emphasis was accorded to five of the components with a view to identifying the extent of implementation. The components are: (1) Safe and affordable drinking water (2) End open defecation and provide access to sanitation and hygiene (3) Improve water quality, wastewater treatment and safe refuse (4) Increase water use efficiency and ensure freshwater supplies, and (5) Support local engagement in water and sanitation management. To this end, the researchers adopted the qualitative and quantitative survey research design and questionnaire was the instrument used for the study. Based on the report of National Population Census (2006) with a projected growth rate of 2.3%, the population of Apa Local Government is 137,900 delineated across council wards and villages. Considering the wide and diverse spread of the population, stratified random sampling technique was adopted. The research concluded that given particular focus on water with SDG 6, a milestone had been attained however, perennial water challenge remained unsurmountable. It therefore recommended among other things for the declaration of emergency on safe and affordable drinking water.

Keywords: *Sustainable Development, Perennial Water Scarcity, Sanitation, Apa Local Government Area, Benue State, Nigeria.*

Introduction

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) also referred to as the 2030 Agenda is the latest of the global goals of development plans or frameworks of the United Nations (UN) for Member States. It is a sustainable plan of implementable actions for Member States that was ushered into effect on January 1st of 2016 following the consensus adoption of the SDGs in September 2015 heralding the expiration of the time frame for the Millennium Development Goals, MDGs (2000-2015) preceding the SDGs. The new agenda which is an improvement on the MDGs, seeks to be relevant to all countries and focuses on enhancing equity with a view to meeting the needs of women, children, the poorest and most disadvantaged people (World Health Organisation, 2023).

While the SDGs are consolidating the gains of MDGs, it is obvious that both development goals have shared commonalities which principally are reflected in the fact that they are sustainable goals and each has a timeframe of 15 years with the subsisting SDGs spanning through 2016 to 2030. As sustainable goals, it impliedly points to the fact that it is a continuum of activities that dovetails into another with or without variations. However, unlike the MDGs which had eight (8) realisable target goals, the SDGs saw the expansion and elaboration of these goals to seventeen (17) with some subsumed target action plans in the former (that is, MDGs) featuring as core target goals in the SDGs. One of such is the SDG 6 on Clean Water and Sanitation which was a subitem of the MDGs. As a sustainable plan, the extrapolation of potable water as a core goal in the subsisting development goals rightly prioritizes its significance in the annals of critical consideration for an egalitarian global society. The unfolding development asserts the fact that water is life (UN Water, 2018; Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, 2023; Suri, 2023; Guterres, 2023) and crucially needed for well-being and wealth creation (Newman, n.d.; Erickson, 2017; World Bank, 2023). In the views of Kubala & Leech (2023), staying hydrated is one of the best things you can do for your overall health. As a matter of necessity, potable water (and not just water) is one of the ingredients for guaranteed health and health is wealth (Erickson, 2017; World Bank, 2023).

However, it is important to point out that this position has remained in principle with the delineation and/or categorisation of countries as "developed", "underdeveloped" and/or "developing". This categorisation questions whether the SDGs particularly targeted at countries tagged as "developing/underdeveloped" or they cut across all Member States regardless of the

delineation because, even the "developed" nations have need for the SDGs. It is in view of this that Mendelson (2023) argues that since development is a continuum, the U.S. which is considered the standard model of development should not undermine the domestication and implementation of the SDGs because like they say, 'the rich also cries'. Be that as it may, the SDGs are about rights of citizens to the fundamentals of life, as such, limiting it to developing or underdeveloped Member States (or the Global South as they are also known) negates the very essence of the sustainable goals. It is in light of this that the SDG 6 features prominently and strategically in ensuring that global goals for clean water and sanitation is achieved by 2030.

The above notwithstanding, as the expiration date of the SDGs inches close, it is important to reassess the performance of the SDG 6 in Nigeria in relation to the perennial water problem in rural areas with particular reference to Apa Local Government Area of Benue State. By way of explanation, there are 774 local governments in Nigeria and Apa Local Government happens to be one of them. Narrowing this down specifically, Apa Local Government is one of the 23 Local Governments in Benue State. Like some other local governments, it was carved out from the old Otukpo Local Government in order to bring development closer to the grassroots and make them feel the positive impact of governance at the rural level. While the motive for the creation of these local governments remain germane, the reality on ground may not justify this laudable initiative. Apa Local Government Area is predominantly a rural setting bereft of basic amenities and sustainable development since creation to date. Incidentally, like other local governments in Benue State and the country as a whole, water scarcity has become a perennial problem that may hinder the attainment of the 2030 Agenda because of the reality on ground. In Nigeria, there are basically two seasons annually; they are the rainy and dry seasons. While the adverse effects of water scarcity may not be intensely felt because of the availability of rain-fed water during the rainy season, the scathing effects of water scarcity become disturbingly pronounced when the dry season comes in full swing.

Finally, it is certain that opportunities abound in the rural communities for the practical workability of SDG 6 and the reconfiguration of the gradually fading ecosystem for sustainable development, but the challenges have become recurrent and untamed. To this end, the study seeks to identify the issues around the perennial water scarcity in Apa Local Government Area with a view to proffering workable solutions that will fast-track the achievement of the SDG 6.

Statement of the Problem

The connection of the SDG 6 to the perennial water problem in rural communities in the country, Benue State and particularly, Apa Local Government Area cannot be overemphasised. The reason being that SDG 6 as a sustainable goal has the relevant capacities and capabilities of reversing the perennial water problem but that cannot be achieved without the institutionalisation and domestication of the target policies in the national planning of the country indicating proper and workable template of implementation. It is true that Rome was not built in a day but there must be the will power for the dream to become reality. In other words, action steps have to be deliberately taken, pursued and sustained for the perennial water problem to be addressed. What is required therefore is not just about the policies but practical application of the policies on SDG 6 which Nigeria has pledged commitment to domesticate and follow through on the implementation. Certainly, appreciable progress may have been made based on aggregated report on a global scale but the reality on the grounds of disaggregated specific report shows that safe drinking water is still a very scarce commodity for rural communities to access. In the rural communities, while safe drinking water is crucial for the health of dwellers, the situation on ground makes clean water a prized commodity that is perennially inaccessible. Given the severity of the situation in rural communities, the preoccupation of rural dwellers is not about safe drinking water but how to access what is available for consumption.

Today, the mundane and antiquated practices of hauling water from distant places for consumption is still in vogue. As a matter of routine, rural dwellers mostly women and children trek to and from water points such as streams, ponds, wells and boreholes with water containers on their heads to fetch water in order to meet their water needs domestically. The challenge therefore is the purchasing power of the rural people given the poverty level. It is a situation that becomes pronounced during dry season because at such times, people depend on rain-fed water. Unfortunately too, ponds, wells, boreholes (except for some streams) dry up thereby pushing further the hardship of water scarcity. It is also pathetic to stress that most water interventions coming in the form of boreholes installation pack up shortly after commissioning or after short period of being put to use.

The outcome of the palpable gap is that rural communities are usually neglected in the equation thereby giving rise to the incidences of water related diseases such as diarrhea, cholera, skin infections (like Guinea worm disease).

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the research are as follows:

1. To ascertain the level of access of Apa Local Government dwellers to safe and affordable drinking water
2. To determine measures taken to end open defecation that can guarantee access to sanitation and hygiene in Apa Local Government Area.

Conceptual Clarification

Sustainable Development

The term sustainable development is a coinage that has come to stay over the years as far as economic growth is concerned nationally and globally. According to Mensah (2019), "sustainable development has become a popular catchphrase in contemporary development discourse". Similarly, Anon (2017) sees the concept of sustainable development as revolutionary even though it is considered elusive and ambiguous. Notwithstanding the pervasive inroad of the global spectre, the concept still remains unclear as questions continue to emanate about its meaning, history as well as the implication for development theory and practice (Mensah, 2019; Anon, 2017; Kulik, 2025). While these concerns continue to reverberate in scholarly discourse, given that it is seen as condescendingly straitjacket given the hegemonic nature of the West that has further accentuated the gulf between the global North and South.

Despite the above, sustainable development has become a global paradigm that provides development pathways for member countries of the United Nations. In the views of Mensah (2019), the relevance of sustainable development deepens with the reality of each day given that, as population keeps increasing, the natural resources available for the satiation of human needs and wants remain static. The concept of sustainable development is anchored on three components which are: economy, society and the environment. To this effect, the concept according to the Bruntland Commission Report is defined as development that meets the needs of the current

generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. In order to recap, Sustainable Development Goals (2023) notes that sustainable development is how we must live today if we want a better tomorrow, by meeting present needs without compromising the chances of future generations to their needs.

Clean Water and Sanitation

Coincidentally, clean water and sanitation is one of the seventeen (17) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that took effect in January of 2016 with the primary focus of providing safe and affordable drinking water, adequate sanitation and hygiene facilities, improving water quality and protecting ecosystems related to water resources (Close the Gap Foundation, 2025). It may be considered that clean water and sanitation could be separately looked upon as essential needs but both concepts as rightly captured together on item six (6) of the SDGs underscores the mutually compatible nature of the concepts being intertwined as one. As matter of fact, the subject of clean water cannot be achieved without sanitation and in the same manner, for sanitation to be fully expressed, water is a component that cannot be overlooked. According to Hassan (2023) and World Health Organisation (n.d.), clean water and sanitation are two of the most basic needs to human health and well-being. Access to clean water is essential for drinking, cooking and maintaining personal hygiene while proper sanitation facilities are crucial for the prevention of disease and the maintenance of a healthy environment (Hassan, 2023). In other words, clean water and sanitation aims to improve water quality and sanitation access and promote hygiene practices to reduce water-borne diseases (Close the Gap Foundation, 2025).

Rural Communities

Given that Apa Local Government Area of Benue State which is the population of the study is predominantly rural community, the need to provide conceptual underpinning became necessary. Nigeria like other countries of the world is basically stratified into urban areas and rural communities based on existing features. However, since the focus here is on rural communities, further expatiation shall be done on this concept. According to Trading Economics (n.d.), rural population refers to people living in rural areas as defined by statistical offices which, in essence is calculated as the difference between total population and urban population. Study.com (n.d.) observes that rural communities are defined as non-urban with a population between 2,500 and 50,000. A World Bank Report on development indicators puts Nigeria's rural population (% of total

population) at 45.72% in 2023 (Trading Economics, n.d.). While the concept of rural communities is difficult to define (Shucksmith & Thompson, 2012), it is inevitably obvious that rural communities comprise groups of inhabitants who live in rustic or country lifestyle. In summary, Adimorah & Ugoji (n.d.) see community as rural when it lacks the basic social infrastructures, such as pipe borne water, electric power supply, good roads, good schools, healthcare institutions and telecommunications.

Review of Related Literature

The Impact Assessment of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6 on clean water and sanitation and the implication for the perennial water scarcity in Apa Local Government Area of Benue State is critical to appreciating the progress of the development goal in line with the target timeframe. In the same vein, scholars have undertaken similar study previously on the SDG 6 and there was need to review the related literature of some scholars in this regard. In buttressing this, Ortigara, Kay & Uhlenbrook (2018) in their work entitled: "A review of the SDG 6 Synthesis Report 2018 from an Education, Training and Research Perspective" declared that there was progress in the SDG 6 but it was too slow. They advocated for education, training and research as necessary for accelerating the progress of the development goal towards meeting the 2030 Agenda. The study also identified three key areas of engagements to include the following: i) the urgent need for more data and improved monitoring to assess SDG 6 progress and enhance decision-making, ii) the need to address the serious lack of human and institutional capacity that was constraining progress, and iii) the challenge of taking research into policy and practice. Similarly, Singh & Jayaram (2022) in their publication entitled: Attainment of Water and Sanitation Goals: A review and agenda for research noted that one-fourth of the global population was lacking basic drinking and half of the population lacked sanitation facilities. They submitted that the attachment of SDG 6 was bedeviled by administrative, operational, political, trans border, technical and policy challenges. The study of Singh & Jayaram (2022) was conducted five years after the adoption of the sustainable development goals by Member States of the UN and the indication showed that Africa was still struggling with SDG 6 on clean water and sanitation which implied that 17 countries had less than 40% basic drinking water facilities and 16 countries had less than 40% basic sanitation facilities. The study advocated for behavioural change that would bring about a new water culture and the attainment of water and sanitation goals by 2030.

Furthermore, Tomio, Ionkova & Kaza (2024) did a study on "Sustainable Waste Management through Behavioural Science: Case Studies around the World. In the study which centred on waste management, the scholars observed that managing waste more efficiently and in a sustainable manner was critical as climate change continue to pose an ever-looming existential threat to the world. On the other hand, the study of Ishaku, Majid, Ajayi & Haruna (2011) centred on the challenges of water supply in Nigerian rural communities. In the study entitled: "Water Supply Dilemma in Nigerian Rural Communities: Looking towards the sky for an Answer", Ishaku, Majid, Ajayi & Haruna (2011) posited that access to safe water supply has great influence on the health, economic productivity and quality of life of the people. The scholars who stressed that the purpose of the study was to determine water supply had contributed effectively to health, social and cultural development of Nigerian rural communities acknowledged that meeting the safe water need of rural populace was one of the major challenges facing the rural communities of Nigeria today.

In another development, Ajala (2022) in his article entitled: "Can SDGs be achieved in Nigeria before 2030? According to Data, not likely" doubted the capacity of the SDGs as a universal call of duty in ending poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030. Though the study was not particularly on SDG 6 but generally looked at the SDGs and concluded that Nigeria continues to lag behind when it comes to socio-economic development that targeted the goals. Towing the same line of thought, Amata (2021) in his article titled: "Nigerians are getting Poorer Contrary to Buhari's Claim" observed that Nigeria's chances of achieving the Goal 1 of the SDGs which is the attainment of zero poverty was slim. The article noted that the SDG report revealed that the Nigerian Government was not effective at all in lowering poverty among its people if it was making any effort at all. Amata (2021) pointed out that the Nigerian Government was unable to reverse the rising poverty.

Also, Okunna (2020) in her article entitled: "Role of Public Relations in Implementing the Value Chain for Nigeria's National Development" saw the SDGs as the extension of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Though her article did not particularly discuss SDG 6 but the study has close link with the SDG 6 because, like the other SDGs, accusations point to leadership for lacking the wherewithal in bringing the SDGs into full accomplishment. In buttressing her point, she noted that lack of good governance was responsible for the economic woe of Nigeria. In the same strength of argument, Asemah (2020) in his article entitled: "Corporate Social Responsibility,

Poverty Alleviation and Sustainable Development in Nigeria" viewed Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) as necessary in achieving the SDGs. The study which noted that for the eradication or possibly the alleviation of poverty to happen within the time frame of the SDGs, there was need for the private sector to collaborate with Government and multinationals in the discharge of their CSR to the public.

Empirical Review

In line with the discourse of this paper, some related empirical research works have been carefully selected for review. The first in this case is entitled: "Residents Coping Strategies with Water Scarcity in Makurdi Town". The study which examines the degree of water scarcity across Makurdi Town as well as the strategies employed by residents to cope with the problem is related to the ongoing study because of the similarities of the issues at stake. In essence, both studies are concerned about water scarcity problem. Also, there is shared similarity in the adoption and administration which is questionnaire. However, both studies differ in scope with peculiar issues. While the study of Ahile, Udoumoh & Adzande (2015) was focused on Makurdi metropolis, the current study is on Apa Local Government Area of Benue State. This does not negate the fact that both communities are in Benue State.

Secondly, Fatummibi (2024) in its study entitled: "Sustainable Development Goal Six (SDG-6) Water and Sanitation, Impact, on Nigeria, Assessing the Intersection with Public Health and Globalisation: A Systemic Literature Review" underscores the fact that important development encounter in the low-income country such as Nigeria has created challenges. These challenges make it difficult for the availability and sustenance in the management of safe water and adequate sanitation for the citizenry. The study further observed that poor access to potable drinking water and adequate sanitation practices in Nigeria posed a huge problem in the country especially as it had to do with public health burden linked with polluted water and poor sanitation practices. The study further evaluated the effectiveness of global community intervention in addressing the anomalies in relation to Sustainable Development Goal Six (SDG-6) on Water and Sanitation and issues hampering the progress in Nigeria towards the target date of 2030. Like the ongoing study, there is shared similarity in the sense that both studies explored SDG-6 in relation to public health and globalisation. However, both studies differ in scope and approach. Unlike the ongoing study, Fatummibi (2024) adopted content analysis in the review.

In another study done by Echendu (2020) entitled: "The Impact of Flooding on Nigeria's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the focus was on the numerous challenges Nigeria was grappling with in a bid to achieving the SDGs with particular reference to flooding as a major impediment. Given the enormity of the challenge, Echendu (2020) did a systematic literature review that centred on ascertaining the relationship between flooding in Nigeria and the SDGs. The study called for collaborative action by all concerned stakeholders to address the flooding problem and help move Nigeria closer to meeting the United Nations (UN) 2030 SDGs. Although this studies are similar because SDGs are involved, they differ in the sense that, one is viewed from the perspectives of flooding while the ongoing study's attraction is on water scarcity.

Implication of Perennial Water Scarcity on Rural Communities

No doubt, perennial water scarcity has far reaching implications for rural communities in the bid to achieve SDG-6 by 2030. This is because availability and access of water within close proximity as key components in the attainment of SDG-6, continue to pose serious concern given the reality of the situation currently. In the views of Ishaku, Majid, Ajayi & Haruna (2011), access to safe water supply has serious implication for health, economic productivity and quality of life of people but achieving this is one of the major challenges facing rural communities in Nigeria. A report of UNICEF (n.d.) shows that poor access to improved water and sanitation in Nigeria is a major factor to high morbidity and mortality rates among children under five. Water Scarcity therefore is a challenging task for the vast majority of people (Jahura, Islam & Mostafa, 2024). Similarly, in a report of Sustainable Development Goals (n.d.), it was observed that while access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene remain the most basic human need for health and well-being, billions of people will lack access to these basic services in 2030 unless progress quadruples. This goes to explain that by the share definition of rural communities owing to the absence of basic amenities, they bear the brunt of this malady in great proportion (Adimorah & Ugoji, n.d.). It is a disturbing development considering that only 29% of Nigeria's population have access to safely managed drinking water (UN Water, n.d.) and with rural communities lacking in basic amenities, the bulk of the remaining 69% of the population who cannot access safely managed drinking water come from the rural population.

In essence, Nigeria like other developing and underdeveloped nations with widespread rural population is encumbered with the burden of initiating and sustaining the management of safe

water and adequate sanitation for its population thereby exacerbating the problem of public health such as polluted water and poor sanitation practices (Fatunmibi, 2024). The situation is further aggravated in low income countries where the coping strategy in addressing water scarcity problem is crude and depressing. The consequence is that, rural dwellers especially women and girls bear the primary responsibility for sourcing for water. By implication, women and girls take up the task for water collection in 80% of households without access to water on premises (Close the Gap Foundation, 2025). In the views of Close the Gap Foundation (2025), this task requires traveling long distances, impacting their education, safety and overall well-being. According to studies, over 70% of households in rural communities do not have access to improved water supply. They rely purely on self-water supply (free source) such as rivers, perennial streams, water ponds and unprotected wells which is susceptible to waterborne diseases such as typhoid, cholera dysentery, malaria parasites (Ishaku, Majid, Ajayi & Haruna, 2011) and in other climes, dengue.

The implication of the above is that, in the event of meeting personal water needs in the face of daunting challenges, sourced water may not be safe for drinking, cooking and other domestic uses because of obvious exposure to waterborne diseases as noted above.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the World Systems Theory as propounded by Immanuel Wallerstein in his work referred to as: "The Rise and Future Demise of the World Capitalist System: Concepts for Comparative Analysis". According to Blakeley, Hurst & Chapel (2023), Wallerstein in his conceptualisation of the theory categorised countries based on their economic power. The categorisation delineates countries into core, semi-peripheral and peripheral countries. This goes to explain that the core is an embodiment of countries that are more developed technologically with sophistication that controls the global economy. According to Ramin & Hedayati (2020), "the semi-periphery and periphery nations with only a marginal role in vital space expeditions are exploited by the core, which runs and regulates the world in the way it desires". Expectedly, this informed the argument of Wallerstein & Chomsky cited in Ramin & Hedayati (2020) that the benefits of globalisation enjoyed by the core states can be the signal of a new wave of colonisation.

This is exemplified in the gulf of disparity and the existential challenges third world countries like Nigeria face in activating the implementation of SDG 6 and other SDGs in localities. As a matter of fact, the drive towards achieving SDG 6 has brought to fore, the dependence of Nigeria on

developed nations who are seen as "big brothers". The roles core countries such as the United States, United Kingdom, France and other allied countries play within the United Nations remain strategic. This is not without mentioning that as major financiers of the United Nations programmes, the core countries have lasting impact on the overall performance of the SDGs as far as development communication is concerned. A typical example could be seen in the policy direction of the current President of the U.S. in foreign aid to third world countries which has adversely affected the capacity of developed countries (The White House, 2025; National Agency for the Control of AIDS, NACA, 2025). Though exploitative, developed countries are considered wealthy while peripheral countries are considered poor given the vestiges of lack of essential needs leaving them at the mercy of the core countries in a bid to meeting their development needs as far as the SDGs are concerned. To this end, development partners such as UNICEF, USAID and other related Non Governmental Organisations both locally and internationally have encumbered with the challenge of effectively carrying out their humanitarian support.

No doubt, there are self-help water projects and interventions from individuals and NGOs but these efforts may not sufficiently address the issues. As a result, the interventions in terms of expertise, technology and financial support are always sought thereby affirming the dependence of third world countries like Nigeria on the core countries.

To further deepen the discourse in domesticating Wallerstein's theory to the governance structure of Nigeria, it is obvious that the constitutional configuration of Nigeria permits for the operation of a three-tier system of government that is, the federal, state and local government but in actual practice, the essence of the third tier (that is the local government system) in effectively addressing the problems of the grassroots is hampered by the emasculation of this stratum of governance by state governments.

In essence, SDG-6 and the perennial water problem in rural communities of Apa Local Government Area of Benue State brings to fore a vivid representation of the dependency theory which Wallerstein expounds. This development makes the core country like the U.S. the standard for development in the resolution of issues bordering developing and underdeveloped countries.

Methodology

The research is an empirical study that employed quantitative research design. According to McCombes (2022) & University Libraries (2022) cited in Onah, Kente & Santas (2024, p.276) state that using empirical data to answer your research question is known as research design. Since quantitative research method was adopted, the aim was to explain phenomena by the collection and analysis of numerical data using mathematical techniques, particularly statistics (Gunderson, 2002 quoted in Onah, Kente & Santas, 2024, p.276). Based on the survey design method, questionnaires were designed and administered to respondents who are residents of APA Local Government Area of Benue State. Based on the National Population Census (2006) figure at a projected growth rate of 2.3%, the population of Apa Local Government is 137,900. The projected figure is spread across 10 council wards that make up the local government. Using the Krejcie and Morgan formula of determining the different sample sizes needed at 95 percent confidence level, a sample size of 384 was chosen for the study. To this end, 384 questionnaires were distributed across the wards in Apa Local Government using stratified sampling method.

Result and Discussion

Table 1: Access to drinking water

Variables	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
From the stream	150	39.06
From dug well	75	19.53
From borehole	30	7.81
From rain water	80	20.84
From water factory through sale of sachet water	49	12.76
Total	384	100

Source: Researchers' Fieldwork

The above table which is a representation of the sources of access to drinking water showed that stream water had the highest water source accessed for drinking water in rural communities of Apa Local Government Area of Benue State. The reason could be because of the scarce access to safe drinking water sources such as protected borehole. While rainfall was another avenue for rural

dwellers to collect water, the seasonal nature of rain water and the poor preservation strategies for coping make rainwater source unsteady.

Table 2: Assessment of the source of drinking water

Variables	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Very safe	40	10.42
Somewhat safe	29	7.55
Can’t tell	55	14.32
Somewhat unsafe	60	15.63
Very unsafe	200	52.08
Total	384	100

Source: Researchers' Fieldwork

The above table assessed the source of drinking water for rural communities of Apa Local Government. The response showed that the community's open surface water sources such as streams, ponds are usually very unsafe for consumption. This is because surface water sources which happen to be the frequently easily accessible water source pose serious health concerns for consumers.

Table 3: Sensitisation campaign from agencies of government against open defecation

Variables	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	15	3.91
No	369	96.09
Total	384	100

Source: Researchers' Fieldwork

With 369 respondents indicating that they had not witnessed sensitisation campaigns against open defecation showed that there was urgent need to up the ante in order for residents to be aware of the dangers of this practice to public health. Flowing from this, Adikwu & Onah (2025, p.82) aver that media advocacy was necessary in addressing and reversing the common practice of residents

defecating in the open. In their view advocacy campaign will enlist community members in taking ownership and engagement in the process of addressing the problem.

Conclusion and Recommendations

While acknowledging the laudable steps of Government and development partners in pushing for the realisation of SDG 6 on clean water and sanitation by 2030, it is obvious that water coverage in rural communities of Nigeria still remains a far cry from the target objectives. Certainly, the flight has left the tarmac but it is not yet uhuru as far as advancing the stakes of inclusivity is concerned. In aligning with the indicators of SDG 6, it is expected that the perennial water problem in Apa Local Government and other local governments in Benue State and other states of the federation would be addressed in order to usher in improved governance structure and renewed commitment to funding SDG 6 and other SDGs for sustainable development.

Flowing from above, the following recommendations are made:

1. There should be intensified effort by government and development in closing the gap between urban and rural areas in water coverage.
2. There is need for increased budgetary allocation to the water sector in order to address perennial water scarcity problem in Nigeria especially the rural communities.
3. There should media advocacy and sensitisation against open defecation and pollution of water ecosystems.
4. There should be transparency in the implementation process in order to avoid politicisation and diversion of allocations to personal pockets.

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