

THE INTERSECTION BETWEEN CSR, SUSTAINABILITY AND THE SDGs

INTRODUCTION

Scary global statistics on drought, floods, epidemics, extreme weather conditions, landslides, mudslides, wildfires, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, tsunamis and several other catastrophic natural disasters give us every reason to be concerned about the future of humans and their landlord – the earth.

Piling human casualties from nature and human induced disasters, as well as the unquantifiable economic and material losses that follow, all raise red flags on the urgent need to save humanity from itself by paying closer attention to the wellbeing of the society, economy and the physical environment.

SUSTAINABILITY, CSR AND THE SDGs

According to the now famous definition in the UN Brundtland Report: "Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This is indeed a classic definition that says it all.

Bringing this further home, I would define Sustainability simply as **the art and science of securing and nurturing mankind's continued existence on planet earth**. Sustainability and its phrasal version, Sustainable Development, is all about the past, the present and the future of mankind and everything in-between, including the corporate world, the economy, the food we eat, the air we breathe, our housing, jobs, clean water, human rights, justice system, public policy, healthcare, society and households, and so on. If you go through the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, the focus is the same – addressing your wellbeing, my wellbeing, the wellbeing of our planet and future generations.

Essentially, Sustainability and Sustainable Development are very much about the future of the world and the children that we love and cherish so much.

MISTAKES FROM OUR PAST

One of the biggest mistakes that humanity ever made was to have treated the earth and its natural resources as infinite. Until the advent of environmental advocacy and sustainability, much of us had believed that water, for example, is a cheap and inexhaustible commodity. In fact, many of us never thought of water as a 'resource' in the true sense of the word. It was too commonplace and too easily available to be classified as production capital, even for businesses where water constituted up to 70 percent of their end products.

But today, we hear seemingly 'strange' stories of how Cape Town, South Africa for example, in 2017/2018, reported that it had ran out of water. We hear how environmental scientists have proven that the amount of water on earth is actually constant, and does not flow from one infinite, inexhaustible source as we had always erroneously believed. We hear how over 1 million species have so far gone into extinction and how hundreds of others are listed as

endangered; we hear how pollution has directly and indirectly killed more than 100 million people around the world; we hear that the deadly 2011 earthquake and tsunami that hit Japan cost that country as much as 25 trillion yen (over US\$300bn) in rebuilding of damaged infrastructure.

But, fortunately, we now also hear that in our little ways and in our different little corners of the earth, we can all do something about the impending danger we are faced with from the seemingly vengeful and rampaging forces of nature. As part of our remedial gestures, we can, for example, avoid polluting our immediate environment; we can manage our corporate and household wastes more responsibly; we can plant trees; switch off electrical appliances that are not in use; trek short distances rather than putting our cars on the roads and further compounding the world's carbon emission challenges; we can treat our neighbours more fairly; encourage justice; equality, gender rights. There is so much we can do as individuals, corporates, governments and members of the civil society to promote sustainability and a better life and future for all.

WHAT THE MILLENNIALS ARE SAYING

According to a report published on August 29, 2017 by the **Business Insider**, for the third year in a row, millennials who participated in the World Economic Forum's (WEF) Global Shapers Survey 2017 believe that climate change is the most serious issue affecting the world today. (www.inc.com/business-insider/worlds-top-10-problems...).

Nearly half (48.8%) of the survey participants chose climate change as their top concern, and 78.1% said they would be willing to change their lifestyle to protect the environment.

According to the report, survey respondents were also almost unanimous about the cause of climate change. Over 91% of respondents answered "agree" and "strongly agree" with the statement "science has proven that humans are responsible for climate change."

According to the Business Insider, more than 31,000 respondents between 18-to-35 years old across 186 countries participated in the survey.

According to the millennials, below are the top-10 most concerning world issues:

- 10. Lack of economic opportunity and employment (12.1%)
- 9. Safety / security / wellbeing (14.1%)
- 8. Lack of education (15.9%)
- 7. Food and water security (18.2%)
- 6. Government accountability and transparency / corruption (22.7%)
- 5. Religious conflicts (23.9%)
- 4. Poverty (29.2%)
- 3. Inequality (income, discrimination) (30.8%)
- 2. Large scale conflict / wars (38.9%)
- Climate change / destruction of nature (48.8%)

Interestingly, all the ten issues prioritised by the millennials are sustainability and sustainable development issues.

As seen in the survey above, Sustainable Development and its principles and indicators, have become the most talked about global topics today. And the reason for this is simple. Sustainability equals humanity and its overall wellbeing. From business, economy, society, healthcare, education, to confronting natural disasters, wars and civil conflicts, child abuse, human trafficking, maternal and infant mortality Sustainability and the Sustainable Development Goals focus on everything HUMAN.

CSR AND SUSTAINABILITY: THE ALIGNMENT

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is a way of business anchored on concerns for the wellbeing being of people and the larger society. Businesses demonstrate their social responsibility by ensuring that their negative impacts are minimised while their positive impacts are maximised. People in the social context means internal stakeholders such as employees, and external stakeholders such as local communities.

Perhaps there is no concept that is more misinterpreted, or subject to much ambiguity as corporate social responsibility. But of all the misinterpretations, the most glaring, in my opinion, is its equation with charity. Corporate social responsibility is not charity; it is what it is - corporate social responsibility. Just as it is a company's responsibility to pay dividends to shareholders and investors because they provide it with the financial capital required to start and sustain its business, so also it is its responsibility to give back to the society and host communities, also, for providing another critical capital – this time, the social capital and license it requires to operate. When a company erodes its financial capital, it could be bailed out by governments, banks and other institutions, so it can continue to operate. But when a company loses its social capital, it loses with it its social license to operate, with catastrophic implications for the future of that business.

So, how is CSR related to Sustainability?

There are three pillars of sustainability, the economic, environmental and social pillars. Corporate social responsibility is the social pillar of sustainability that focuses on the wellbeing of the people and the larger society as already explained.

The economic pillar, on the other hand focuses on the financial numbers, but with emphasis on how the numbers are generated, sustained, distributed and used to create economic value for all stakeholders.

Environmental sustainability focuses on the wellbeing of the earth and its natural resources. How do we treat our waterways? How do we treat our natural resources? How do we treat our trees and forests and biodiversity, and so on?

The 17 sustainable development goals tie all of these together, emphasising the urgent need to improve the condition of the earth and everything in it, including the humans, the forests,

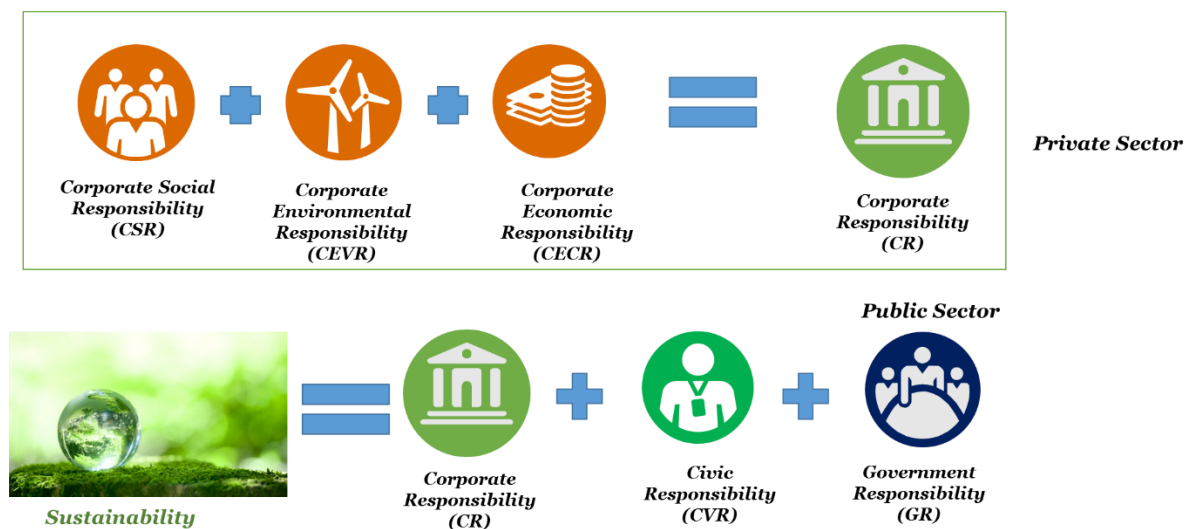
the rivers, the oceans, the air that we breath, the food that we eat, the children that we raise, and the future generations.

So, the strongest link between the concepts of CSR, sustainability and the sustainable development goals is that they are all human-centric. The people, and the society where they dwell, and the earth that they live in are at the core of the three concepts.

The three are so closely knitted that one is often used as synonym for the other. But it is important here to make a clear distinction. While corporate social responsibility focuses on businesses, hence the word, corporate, sustainability and the sustainable development goals are a collective call to action, beyond just businesses. They revolve around sustainable governance and public service, sustainable healthcare, sustainable agriculture, sustainable educational system, sustainable business practices, sustainable resource utilisation, sustainable waste management, and everything else that concerns humans and their host – the earth.

Furthermore, with the rampaging challenges of climate change and global warming, the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility now needs to be expanded to include environmental responsibility. And with the growing inequality, poverty, unemployment, and other human development challenges in our world today, corporate responsibility should now also be extended to include economic impact and stewardship, with emphasis on economic value created for all stakeholders and the larger economy.

MY TAKE ON CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY



Eunice Sampson 28/11/2018

OUR STRATEGY: THE DANGOTE WAY

In line with the Dangote Group’s vision of aligning its business goals and objectives with sustainable development and the Global Gaols, the organisation in 2017 introduced the "The Dangote Way and Seven Pillars of sustainability".

The Dangote Way encompasses the unique 7 pillar approach to successfully embedding sustainable business culture within the Dangote Group. It tackles our corporate sustainability agenda by breaking it down into seven pillars namely, Operational, Institutional, Financial, Economic, Environmental, Social and Cultural. With these seven pillars, every aspect of our business is touched and involved in the agenda to build a sustainable global brand.

We are committed to minimising our negative environmental impact and improving on our positive footprints in every aspect of our business, Nigeria and Pan Africa.

This is why we are building our sustainability agenda around our employees and other key stakeholders, as demonstrated in our recent Sustainability Week and staff volunteering initiatives which brought together over one thousand Dangote staff from across 7 countries for community support activities.

Dangote Group is committed to providing the most conducive environment for our employees to thrive and improving the quality of life of the people in the communities where we operate. We support education, health and infrastructure development in our host communities and embark on initiatives that would enhance household income and human capital development. Our thematic areas of focus are; empowerment, education, healthcare, community safety and welfare, and disaster relief.

Our business ideology has been aligned with the principles of sustainable development, explaining our adoption of the 7-pillar approach and how each of these pillars reflect our commitment to building an enterprise-wide sustainability culture. For us, it is not about regulatory compliance or corporate niceties; it is about making sustainability a work style and our way of business.

THE DANGOTE WAY AND ITS 7 SUSTAINABILITY PILLARS	
Pillar	Definition
Institutional	Build a world-class institution centred around corporate governance best practices and sustainability principles that promote legal and regulatory compliance, transparency and business continuity
Financial	Achieve sustainable financial health through a business model that delivers strong returns to shareholders, whilst creating value in the economies in which we operate by selling high-quality products at affordable prices, supported by excellent customer service.
Operational	Serve and satisfy our markets by working together with partners to deliver the best products and services to our valued customers and stakeholders through continuous product improvement, new business development, product innovation, and employing state-of-the-art technologies and systems to constantly optimise cost efficiencies.
Cultural	Embody our core values in the way we do business, including respect for cultural diversity and giving back to the societies in which we operate. To achieve this, we actively encourage teamwork, empowerment, inclusion, respect, integrity and meritocracy within our organisation
Economic	Promote inclusive, sustainable economic growth, self-reliance, self-sufficiency and industrialisation across Africa, by establishing efficient production facilities and developing resilient local economies in strategic locations and key markets.

Social	Create a learning environment and platform for our employees to grow and achieve their fullest potential, whilst adhering to the highest standards of health and safety. In our host communities, we strive to develop resilient and sustainable prosperity through direct and indirect employment, skills transfer, local entrepreneurial development and prioritised patronage of local suppliers and contractors.
Environmental	Create sustainable environmental management practices, through a proactive approach to addressing the challenges and opportunities of climate change, while optimising our performance in managing energy efficiency, water usage and emissions.

SO, WHY DOES SUSTAINABILITY MATTER?

Sustainable Development matters because it all about our collective wellbeing. In the same vein, Corporate Responsibility matters because when businesses neglect their responsibilities, it could spell doom for host communities and the larger society.

It does not matter how much we love and nurture our children. When we abuse our natural environment, we are threatening their future survival. Whatever excesses we extract from nature today is being borrowed from the future generations. For every excess we enjoy and do not replenish, the future generations are being shortchanged.

Sustainable way of life, way of governance and way of business matter because our survival and perhaps, more importantly, the survival of our cherished future generations depends on it. So, if we would not imbibe best sustainable practices for our own sake, we must do so for the sake of our children and children’s children. You would agree with me that it is most unfair to destroy the earth in our time and leave behind a suboptimal and damaged world for our beloved children to inherit.

IMAGINE A WORLD WITHOUT SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT!

A world without sustainable development is a world without a future. While many still see and treat climate change and the attendant natural disasters as a myth or science fiction, it is unfortunate that many of us might not be here when the disasters begin to manifest more aggressively. But our children will be here!

A world without sustainable development is a world where anarchy would rule; a dog-eat-dog world where anything goes; and where decorum, sense of right are wrong are sacrificed for short term, self-centred interests. It is a polarised world where poverty and environmental degradation would thrive and natural calamities would become the norm rather than the exception.

A world without Corporate Responsibility is a world without sustainable development, and indeed, a world without sustainable development would be a world without human existence, in the long term.

CONCLUSION

Sustainability is not a 'nice to have'. It is the very future of business competitiveness and survival, and effective public governance. It is also the future of human existence because, trust me on this one ... nature will not change for our sake. The burden of change is on us, the humans that depend on earth and its natural endowments for our survival and very existence.

THANK YOU.

Eunice Sampson

Head, Sustainability, Dangote Cement Plc

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