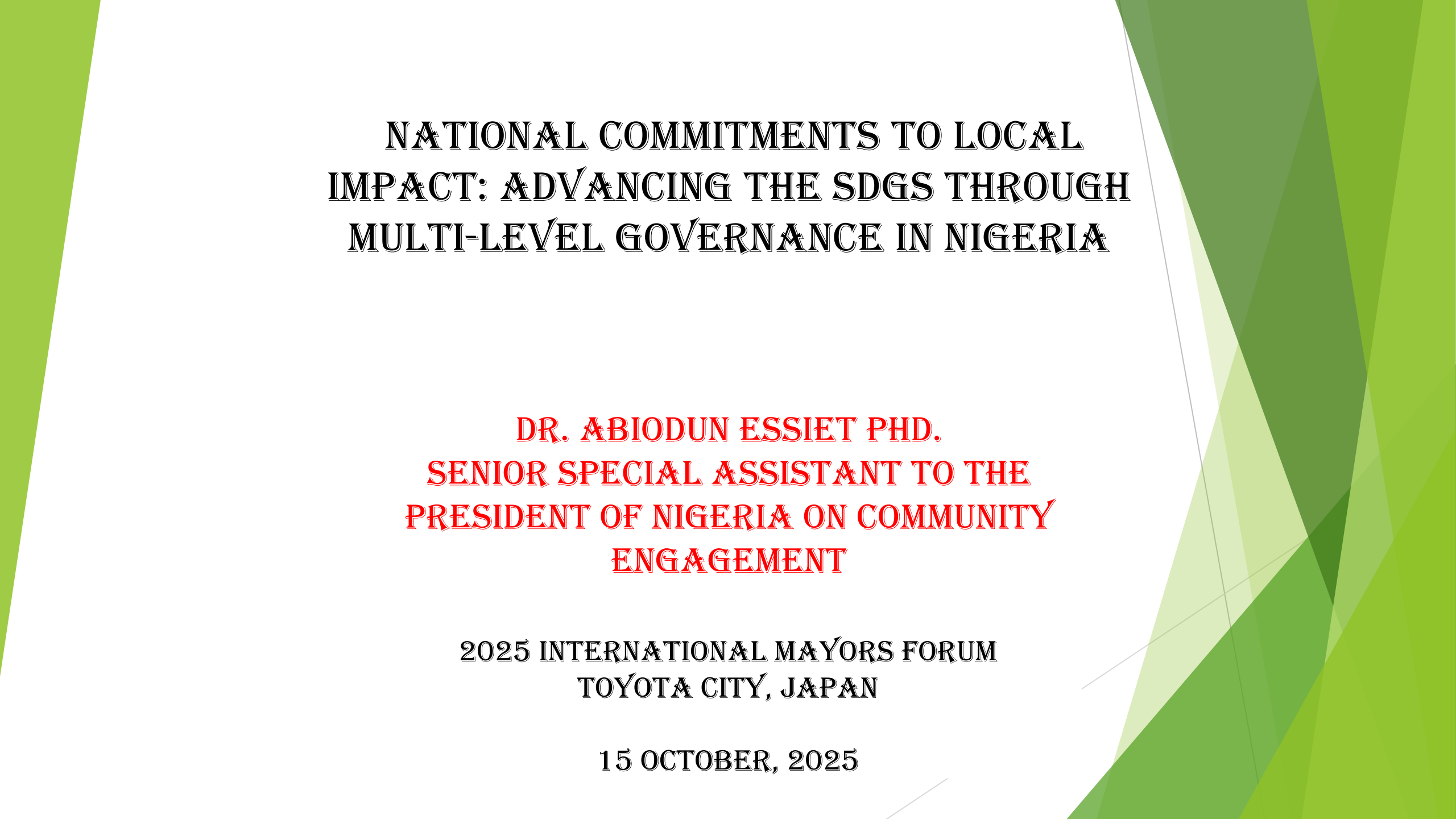


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NATIONAL COMMITMENTS TO LOCAL IMPACT: ADVANCING THE SDGS THROUGH MULTI-LEVEL GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA

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**2025 INTERNATIONAL MAYORS FORUM
TOYOTA CITY, JAPAN**

15 OCTOBER, 2025

BACKGROUND

Nigeria stands as Africa's largest federal democracy, embarking on an ambitious mission to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. With a complex three-tier federal system encompassing 36 states, the Federal Capital Territory, and 774 local government areas, the nation faces unique challenges and opportunities in translating global aspirations into grassroots reality.

This federal structure is designed to balance power across tiers while promoting unity and accelerated development. The system ensures that governance reaches every citizen, from national policy formulation to community-level service delivery, creating a comprehensive framework for sustainable development implementation.



OSSAP-SDGS: NIGERIA'S STRATEGIC COMMAND CENTER

Nigeria commenced the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2016. In the same year Nigeria established the Office of the Senior Special Assistant to the President on SDGs (OSSAP-SDGs) within the Presidency, demonstrating unprecedented political commitment to sustainable development. This strategic positioning ensures direct access to presidential authority and cross-ministerial coordination.

The office serves as the nerve center for horizontal and vertical intergovernmental coordination, managing representation, advocacy, partnership building, resource mobilization, and comprehensive monitoring and evaluation across all government levels

With a dedicated budget that has grown to ₦2,201,402,960 in 2025, OSSAP-SDGs reinforces political ownership and strategic alignment of SDG efforts nationwide.

Localization Challenge & Systematic Barriers to Progress

Capacity Gap

Despite **65% of SDGs being achieved at community level**, none of Nigeria's 774 LGAs currently have localized action plans in place, while only 20 states out of 36 states have developed their state action plans. Local governments lack capacity to translate National Action Plans into concrete Local Action Plans.

Political Interference

Politicization and interference remain major obstacles. Some of the political appointees often lack technical capacity and continuity needed to drive sustainable development, leading to weak institutions and misaligned priorities.

Weak Inter-Agency Collaboration

Weak collaboration among state MDAs on SDG activities slows progress. For example, while Nigeria's National Gender Policy has been mainstreamed at the federal level with MDAs establishing gender desks, this structure is largely absent at the state and local government level.

Resource Constraints

- Limited resources at the local level hinder awareness and implementation.
- For instance, according to the National Bureau of Statistics, **62% of Nigerian households, predominantly in rural areas still rely on wood as their primary cooking fuel**, with little or no awareness of the environmental and climate consequences.
- With the Supreme Court's ruling on financial autonomy, local governments will soon be better positioned to drive grassroots development, strengthen institutions, and accelerate SDG localization.

Limited Digital Inclusion

Large sections of rural Nigeria face low digital literacy and uneven broadband connectivity, leaving them unable to fully participate in digital opportunities. As a result, digital initiatives meant to drive inclusion and efficiency often fail to reach or benefit the very communities they are intended to serve, widening inequalities rather than closing them.

Data and Reporting Gaps

A poor culture of record keeping and reporting at the LGA and community levels impacts the quality, timeliness, and completeness of routine service data

Limited Knowledge Sharing

Limited participation of local administrators in national and international forums hinders knowledge sharing and slows SDG localization.

Security concerns

Security threats in some of the implementing states or LGAs.

FROM POLICY TO ACTION: FOSTERING COLLABORATION ACROSS ALL LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT

- ▶ Nigeria's transition strategy from the MDGs to the SDGs focused on three phases: building on existing foundations (2016-2020), scaling up SDGs implementation (2021-2025), and accelerating implementation efforts (2026-2030) to ensure 'no Nigerian is left behind'.
- ▶ OSSAP-SDGs worked with key partners to ensure the integration of the SDGs' economic, social, and environmental dimensions into the Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP) (2017-2020) of the federal government. Many core areas, such as food security, agriculture, energy, infrastructural development, industry, macroeconomic stability and inclusive growth, were given due attention in the NDP (2021-2025) and Nigeria's Agenda 2050. The domestication and customization of the Nigeria iSDGs Model enabled MDAs to channel resources towards the SDGs.
- ▶ It works best when the national, state, and local governments collaborate closely to deliver policies and programs. To strengthen this coordination, several efforts have been made, including intergovernmental mechanisms, policy frameworks, and inclusive platforms that connect all levels of governance. These approaches encourage joint planning, fair resource use, and ensure that national policies are tailored to meet grassroots needs. The following steps highlight these efforts:

► National Coordination and Institutional Leadership

OSSAP-SDGs serves as the lead coordinating institution. It is responsible for mobilizing political support, aligning national SDG objectives with sectoral plans, and overseeing SDG performance monitoring and evaluation (M&E). OSSAP-SDGs collaborates with all federal MDAs, state governments, CSOs, private sector actors, and development partners.



➤ Strengthening Institutional Mechanisms for SDGs Implementation

The establishment of OSSAP-SDGs within the Presidency reinforces political ownership and strategic alignment of SDG efforts. Similar institutional arrangements exist at the state level. In addition, the creation of the Presidential Delivery Unit (PDU) within the Office of the Vice President is enhancing delivery of national development priorities and the SDGs. The domestication and customization of Nigeria's iSDGs Policy Simulation Model and the National Statistical System (NSS) realignment are also major institutional successes.

➤ Integration at the Sub-National Level

Nigeria's strategic approach to SDGs implementation extends to both national and sub-national levels. The 36 states and FCT have been supported to mainstream the SDGs into their medium- and long-term development policies and plans, as well as into annual budgetary allocations. These will ensure coherent and smart implementation of the SDGs across the country. By linking national development planning to the SDGs framework, the process of localizing and achieving the SDGs is made seamless.

Many States Development Plans (SDPs) are aligned with the SDGs, and some states actively incorporate the three dimensions of sustainable development into their programmes. Efforts are underway to encourage local government areas to develop miniature development plans consistent with the SDG framework. Conditional Grant Schemes (CGS) are utilized to accelerate progress by requiring counterpart contributions at the state level, motivating sub-national governments to plan and mobilize resources for national developmental priorities like the SDGs.



➤ Partnership and Coordination

Nigeria has established a comprehensive, multi-tier coordination structure to support effective implementation of the SDGs at both national and sub-national levels. This inclusive coordination framework reflects the country's commitment to integrated SDG implementation, financing, and performance tracking across all tiers of government. Several coordination platforms have been established to foster stakeholder engagement, including the Presidential Council on the SDGs, Inter-Ministerial Committee on SDGs, the Development Partnership Forum, the Private Sector Advisory Group, the Civil Society Organizations Strategy Group (CSOSG-SDGs), and the SDGs Standing Committees of the National Assembly. These initiatives demonstrate Nigeria's commitment to localized, inclusive, and results-oriented SDG implementation.

At the sub-national level, state governments are mainstreaming SDGs into State Development Plans, and working toward community-level coordination. For example, Kaduna state has established a Project Support Unit (PSU) and Technical Working Group (TWG) to coordinate inter-agency efforts. These efforts are further supported by Integrated National Financing Framework (INFF) state-level workshops that foster alignment and cross-sectoral engagement.

► Voluntary National Review

Nigeria has demonstrated a strong commitment to the 2030 Agenda through the periodic conduct of VNRs (The third one was done this year). Nigeria's approach to VNR preparation is integrated, participatory, inclusive, and evidence-based. It involves a wide array of stakeholders, including federal and sub-national governments, CSOs, Volunteer Involving Organizations (VIOs), organized private sector, academia, parliamentarians, youth groups, women's organizations, persons with disabilities, and media organizations. This inclusive approach to reporting demonstrates a commitment to multi-stakeholder engagement in the SDG process. Nigeria plans to continue submitting biennial VNRs until 2030 (2022, 2024, 2026, 2028, and 2030) to sustain momentum and reinforce national accountability.

► National Community Engagement Framework

Nigeria is currently developing a National Community Engagement Framework aimed at strengthening a bottom-up approach to governance and advancing the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The framework seeks to ensure that community feedback is systematically integrated into government policies, projects, and initiatives from conception through to implementation. Its overarching goal is to institutionalize a participatory model that actively involves citizens, stakeholders, and communities in decision-making processes, covering policy formulation, governance strategies, legislative development, as well as the design, planning, execution, and evaluation of programs and service delivery at national, sub-national levels—with a strong emphasis on sustainable development.

ADVANCING SDG IMPLEMENTATION LOCALLY

Nigeria has recorded several notable achievements, innovative practices, and successful reforms in SDG implementation, offering lessons and models for other countries:

- **Integrated Sustainable Development Goals**

The Integrated Sustainable Development Goal (iSDG) Model is a home-grown policy simulation tool developed to help align national development strategies and programmes with the SDGs. It supports policymakers and planners in evidence-based policy analysis, planning, and implementation at national and sub-national levels.

- **Integrated National Financing Framework (INFF)**

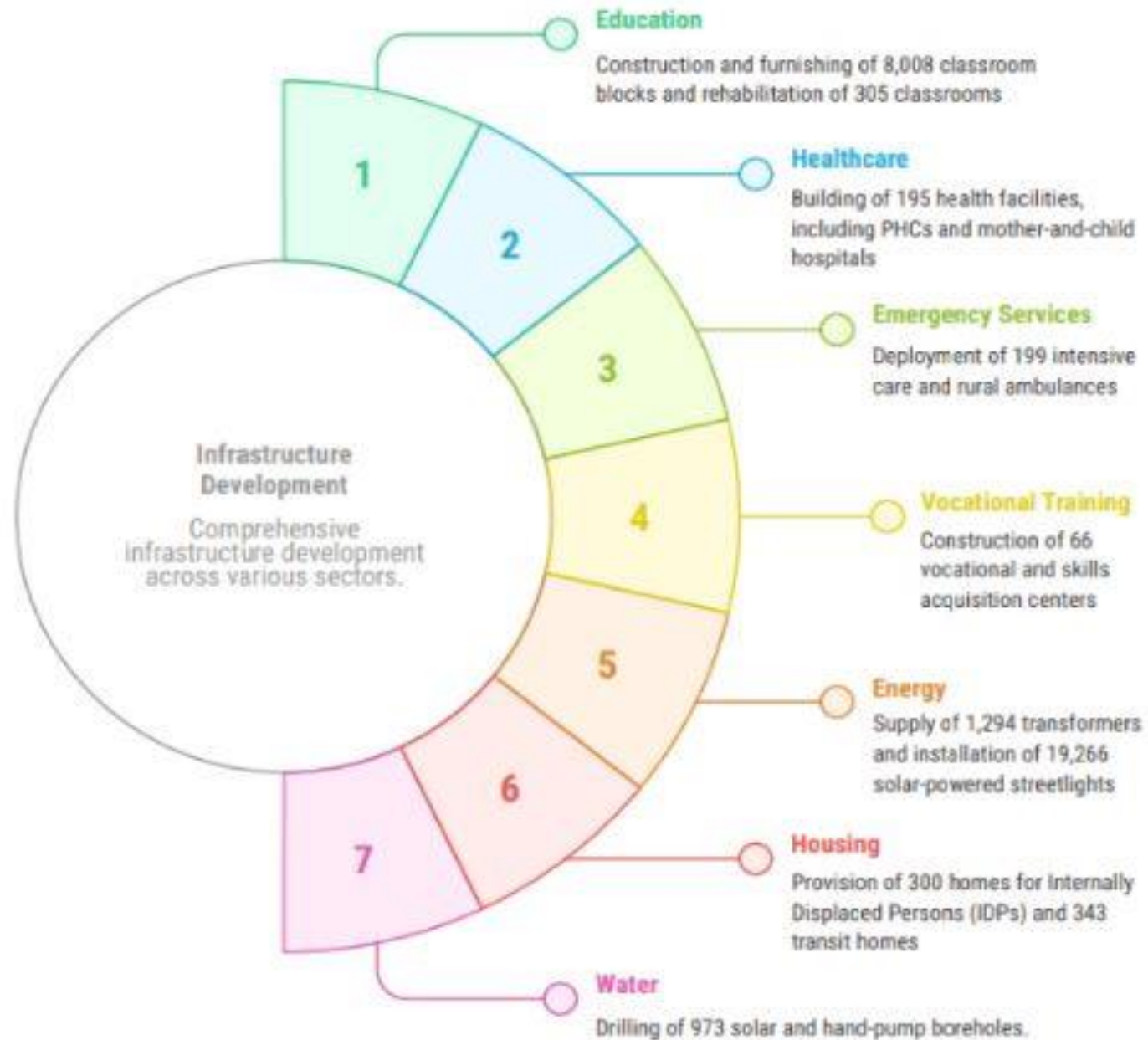
In September 2022, Nigeria launched the Integrated National Financing Framework (INFF) for Sustainable Development on the margins of the 77th session of the UN General Assembly. The Integrated National Financing Framework (INFF) is being implemented as a tool to strengthen planning and financing processes and overcome impediments to financing sustainable development. A central component, the Integrated Financing Strategy (INFS), integrates and aligns public and private financial policies, regulatory frameworks, instruments, and business processes with sustainable development, linking financing sources, policies, and practices to National Development Plan objectives.

- Support to the 36 states on SDGs based Development Planning

OSSAP-SDGs in partnership with UNDP Nigeria has been supporting the states to develop medium and long term SDG based Development Plans. This has been ongoing since 2017. Specifically, we fund the Needs Assessments and Costing exercises; Stakeholder consultations; and M&E Framework

- Special Interventions across the country

As a result of these innovative practices, between 2016 and 2025, OSSAP-SDGs has implemented extensive special interventions to fast-track SDG achievements in Nigeria such as the construction and equipping of Mother and Child Hospitals; Classroom Blocks; Skills Acquisition Centres and other basic infrastructure.



CONCLUSION

- Nigeria's experience demonstrates that achieving the SDGs requires more than national policies, it depends on strong collaboration across all tiers of government, active community engagement, and inclusive partnerships.
- By strengthening institutions, enhancing local capacities, and aligning financing with development priorities, Nigeria is laying the foundation for accelerated progress toward 2030.
- The path ahead calls for deeper localization of the SDGs, continuous citizen participation, and stronger accountability mechanisms to ensure that no Nigerian is left behind.

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THANK YOU.