Winter 5-11-2018

Transcending existing frontiers to achieve selected sustainable development goals: The role of community libraries in South Africa

Samuel Maredi SM Mojapelo
University of South Africa, mojapsm@unisa.ac.za

Transcending existing frontiers to achieve selected sustainable development goals: The role of community libraries in South Africa

Samuel Maredi Mojapelo
University of South Africa
Email address: mojapsm@unisa.ac.za

Abstract

Globally, extreme poverty remains an enormous socioeconomic and multifaceted challenge, which has a ripple effect on other factors that affect the quality of life of citizens. Continuing and expanding on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the United Nations (UN) developed the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs aimed at improving the livelihood of citizens by entrenching human development particularly in poor and developing countries. This is a conceptual paper based on the document analysis or literature review. The article is aimed at analysing information sources and highlights new frontiers community libraries can play in assisting the general South African public to be aware of the good intentions of the SDGs and to mobilise them to strategically work towards achieving them. As hubs for knowledge economy, community libraries need to transcend their existing frontiers to entrench socioeconomic development and transformation in South Africa to improve quality of life of the citizens.

Keywords: community libraries, socio-economic development, sustainable development goals, United Nations, South Africa

Introduction and background to the study

Depending on their economic status, globally, all countries are categorised according to quintiles ranging from 1 to 5 (Dornan and Regan, 2012). Countries in quintile 1 are the richest countries with well-performing economies. Dornan and Regan (2012: 13) state that, "Europe, the US and Some Asia Pacific nations account for most of the extremely wealthy with more than a third living in the US, 27% in Japan, 6% in the UK and 5% in France." Conversely, countries in quintile 5 are the poorest and developing countries, which are mostly on the African continent. Low economic growth and extreme poverty in low-income generating African countries such as Somalia, Liberia and Eritrea remain enormous socioeconomic and multifaceted challenges which have a ripple effect on other factors such as unemployment, health, hunger, education and infrastructure (Oluwatayo and Ojo, 2018; Osborn et al., 2015; United Nations, 2014; United Nations, 2015). World-wide, it is incontestable that wealth disparities are on the rise, creating extreme inequalities between richest and poorest countries. Gross financial mismanagement and corruption in both public and private sectors are major causes of poverty in poor and developing countries.

Lack of socioeconomic development remains a huge challenge in poverty-stricken countries. However, the UN regularly comes up with programmes, goals and targets directed at member states with the aim of improving citizens' quality of life. The target date for the UN member states to achieve predecessor MDGs was 2015. The SDGs were established by the UN as a continuation and expansion of the MDGs in September 2015 at the UN headquarters in New York (Bradley, 2016; Dodds et al., 2014; Dodds et al., 2017; Ighobor, 2015; Igbinovia, 2017; Sachs, 2012; United Nations Development Plan (UNDP), 2016; UNESCO, 2017). "The aim of the 17 SDGs is to secure a sustainable, peaceful, prosperous and equitable life on earth for everyone now and in the future. The goals cover global challenges that are crucial for the survival of humanity" (UNESCO 2017: 6). Oluwatayo and Ojo (2018: 59) detail how:

> Economic growth and poverty reduction now take the centre stage in most global policy discourse. This is coming at the time that the SDGs are fast gaining global relevance. Africa has witnessed the high but non-inclusive level of growth in the last decade because the continent still grapples with unemployment rate especially among the youths.

Countries worldwide generally face an avalanche of economic, social and political challenges and realities. However, in poor and developing African countries, the situation can be appalling. In their article, Fourie and Meyer (2016: 5) point out that "the realities faced by nations and societies are really overwhelming. Apart from challenges already noted, there are many deeply serious issues such as poverty, poor education and low levels of literacy." Sustainable development in all spheres of life is indispensable for citizens to access and enjoy a decent standard of living, which remains a myth to millions of people in poor and developing African countries (Kim, 2016; Osborn et al., 2015). With abject poverty culminating in persistent inequalities in many African countries, millions of people live in squalor and misery. Oluwatayo and Ojo (2018: 59) posit that, "75% of countries with low human development are in Africa with the continent's economic growth impacting insignificantly on the livelihoods of the people."

In South Africa, owing to the past apartheid legislation, adequate, well-resourced and well-staffed library and information services (LIS) are indispensable in the disadvantaged rural communities to address and redress inevitable backlogs and socioeconomic challenges such as provision of quality education, health issues, extreme poverty and unemployment crises, which greatly affect rural populace. The significance of well-equipped and functional community libraries that guarantee unrestricted access to needed information to disadvantaged rural people cannot be overemphasised. Hoq (2014: 2) postulates that:

> Information can contribute greatly to social and democratic development, cultural enrichment, education and research, microeconomic development and macroeconomic development.

This is true, in fact even more so, in many poor and developing African countries where the lives of needy people need drastic improvement and sustainable development owing to factors such as poverty, weak and struggling economies.

With developed infrastructure and well-performing economies, developed countries stood a better chance of realising and attaining MDGs than their counterparts in poor and developing countries did. Without adequate funds, poor and developing countries struggled to realise and attain most of the goals as stipulated by the UN. As observed by Fombad and Jiyane (2015, 191), "in South Africa, various sectors, institutions and organisations are making efforts to attain these goals." However, it is significant for the South African government as a UN member state to track, evaluate and assess the impact made in achieving the past MDGs. Tracking the progress of MDGs is significant particularly in the disadvantaged rural communities where poverty levels are still escalating owing to high unemployment rates amongst youths. Burger and von Fintel (2009: 1) detail how:

> South Africa's racially divided past impacted most facets of life, including the labour market and the education system. These imbalances have been tackled on the policy front, in order to equalise opportunities relating to labour market entry and access to similar education for all population groups. However, these policies have not had the desired impact. Indeed, while educational attainment is gradually converging across racial groups for the most recent birth cohorts, the previously disadvantaged remain the most severely affected by rising unemployment.

It is a well-publicised fact that most black youths in South Africa are unemployed owing to a variety of factors (Cloete, 2015). Department of Labour (2011/12: 2) points out that:

> Youth unemployment, on the other hand, is currently a big concern to the South African Government. South African youth (15 - 34 years old) has been badly affected by the economy's recession. Young persons account for about 40% of job losses between December 2008 and December 2010.

Oluwatayo and Ojo (2018: 61) citing (Blanke et al., 2013) reiterate that "South Africa has about 3 million young people not in employment, education or training and 600,000 unemployed youths meant to fill 800,000 vacancies." On the other hand, Statistics South Africa (2014) indicates that 67.7% of youth (15 – 34 years old) in the country face unemployment. Statistics South Africa (2015, 7) indicates that with 45. 1%, Northern Cape youth bore the brunt of unemployment in contrast to Western Cape which is 29.9%. As unemployment is a multifaceted socioeconomic challenge, a wide range of factors attribute to this. Lack of appropriate and relevant qualifications and limited requisite skills are some of the factors that make the majority of South African black youths unemployable (Department of Labour, 2011/12). Most of them are school dropouts owing to high poverty levels in the disadvantaged rural communities where they live. According to Beall (2000: 434), they are therefore unable to "find work in the formal waged sector and their only choice is to seek a livelihood in the informal economy." National Treasury (2017: 14) states that:

> Joblessness among 18- to 29-year-olds averaged 43 per cent in the fourth quarter of 2016. About 7 per cent of university graduates are unemployed, compared with 27 per cent of those who have completed only matric. University graduates have far greater employment potential than those who have only obtained a matric certificate. The lack of opportunities to enter the workforce to gain experience, coupled with poor school education and limited networks, consigns many young work-seekers to long-term unemployment.

However, without adequate funding and lack of prioritising quality education by most African governments, most schools are dysfunctional. This is particularly true in schools in disadvantaged rural communities of South Africa which were hard-hit by the Bantu Education Act of 1953 prior to 1994 (Legotlo, 2014; Rakabe, 2015/16). In the majority of the African countries, talking about quality education is simply rhetoric because poor rural communities designated for occupation by black populations were marginalised and therefore under-resourced. With the colonisation of African countries and the implementation of apartheid and its discriminatory laws in South Africa in 1948, low-quality education was offered to needy black learners to prepare them to become labourers in the economic sectors; their schools were therefore grossly under-funded and subsequently under-resourced.

As observed by Fengu (2017: 8), owing to the apartheid education system prior to 1994, South Africa "had a dual education system and labour market. The dualistic education system limits social mobility and perpetuates labour market inequality. It also perpetuates a 'cycle of desperation'." Dornan and Regan (2012: 14) affirm that "inequality transmits poverty from one generation to the next: most cruelly, the poverty of a mother can blight the entire lives of her children."

Realising the plight, with *Our Future – Make It Work: National Development Plan (NDP): 2030,* the National Planning Commission (2011) spearheaded by the national government aims at improving the lives of the millions of South Africans still affected by high poverty levels. The National Planning Commission (2011: 24) indicates that:

The NDP has a number of wide-ranging targets that are broader than the scope of IES [Institute of Education Sciences] and LCS [Living Conditions Survey] data; therefore, this report will only focus on the following select headline indicators from the NDP:

• Reduce the proportion of population living below the lower-bound poverty line from 39 per cent (in 2009) to zero by 2030;

• Reduce income inequality from 0,7 in 2010 to 0,6 by 2030;

• The share of income going to the bottom 40 per cent of income earners should rise from 6 per cent to 10 per cent; and

• Reduce poverty-induced hunger to 0% by 2030.

As a continuation of the MDGs and the National Development Plan: 2030 in South Africa, the new set of goals, the SDGs were developed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, n.d.) for member states "to build on the many successes of the past 15 years" (UNDP, n.d.). SDGs are "new, universal set of goals, targets and indicators that UN member states will be expected to use to frame their agendas, plans and policies over the next 15 years" (UNDP, n.d.). Bradley (2016: 1-2) states that:

The new United Nations 2030 Agenda is an inclusive, integrated framework of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with a total of 169 Targets spanning economic, environmental and social development. They lay out a plan for all countries to actively engage in making our world better for its people and the planet. The UN 2030 Agenda will help all UN Member States focus their attention on poverty eradication, climate change, and the development of people. By achieving this Agenda, no one will be left behind. All countries in the world must achieve the Goals. The goals are universal, and indivisible – all Goals and targets must be achieved in their totality.

Although the UNDP (n.d.) is positive about the progress and achievements made in achieving MDGs, more need to be done to reverse the situation particularly in poor and developing countries.

Firstly, based on the document analysis, the article introduces and gives background to the study. Secondly, it highlights the problem statement and methodology adopted in this study. Thirdly, it explores the situational analysis of community libraries in South Africa and the role they play as drivers of socioeconomic development. Fourthly, the article targeted only seven out of 17 SDGs and highlights transcending new frontiers community libraries can embark on to make the South African population aware of these SDGs and how to realise and achieve them. Lastly, a summary of the study, concluding remarks and recommendations are made.

Problem statement

With the expiry of the target date (2015) for realisation and attainment of the MDGs, the UN has developed yet another community of goals, namely SDGs to serve as an expansion and continuation of the MDGs to improve, among others, the quality of life further by ending extreme poverty and hunger by 2030. Globally, citizens of countries need to realise them and make concerted efforts to assist their countries to achieve and attain them. With economic constraints in South Africa such as junk status, the author argues that as drivers of socioeconomic development, community libraries have a vigorous role to play in assisting citizens to realise and to work towards assisting the country to attain the SDGs by the 2030

target date. The author selected only seven SDGs to highlight transcending new frontiers community libraries can perform to assist South Africa to achieve SDGs.

Research methodology: A literature review

A literature review was used for this article. Documents were critically reviewed and analysed to highlight changing roles and services community libraries can perform to assist South Africa to achieve selected SDGs. Document analysis is viewed by various authors such Bryan (2012), Cresswell (2009) and Flick (2014) as the most prevalent qualitative research approach. Local and international sources were analysed to highlight transcending new frontiers community libraries can adapt to assist citizens of South Africa to achieve the SDGs. To get situational analysis of community libraries in South Africa, local documents were analysed.

Research aim

The aim of the study is to analyse documents to highlight how community libraries can transcend their existing frontiers to assist South Africa to achieve SDGs. In this study, although all SDGs are significant, the author dwelt only on seven SDGs.

Community libraries in South Africa

It is astonishing that 24 years into the new political dispensation, the provision of community libraries in South Africa is still patchy and skewed just like the during apartheid era. The situation leaves much to be desired particularly in the deprived rural areas. As libraries are indispensable resource centres for equitable provision of free information and knowledge for socio-economic development and transformation, their adequate provision in all communities cannot be overemphasised.

Two documents, namely, the National Library of South Africa (NLSA) (2016a) and Cornerstone Report (2013) commissioned by the Department of Arts and Culture (DAC) outline the total number of community libraries per province in South Africa. With a population of nearly six million, Western Cape had 374 libraries. In contrast, with an estimated population of 5 and half million, Limpopo Province had only 74 community libraries- the lowest number in the country. This clearly shows historical disparities in the allocation and distribution of community libraries during the apartheid era. The Cornerstone Report (2013) further indicates massive backlogs in the provision of community libraries particularly in the deprived rural communities in the former homelands of South Africa. In response to this shortfall, without hesitation, the Department of Arts and Culture introduced a community libraries conditional grant in 2007 to build more libraries particularly in the under-served rural communities to redress the backlogs. The National Library of South Africa (2016b: 9) states that:

> The DAC Conditional Grant for Community Libraries and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation grant for the Mzansi Libraries On-Line Project are very important as they serve to complement and supplement the parliamentary grant, thereby boosting the NLSA's performance outcomes and enhancing national development objectives. The NLSA is proud to announce that the above mentioned funding for the projects was utilised for the purposes that it was intended for.

With more community libraries being built in South Africa, the author hopes that these libraries will play a vital role in assisting South Africa to achieve the SDGs. With the Msanzi Online Project funded by Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation aimed at bridging the digital

divide, more users in deprived rural communities will have global access to electronic information from the Internet services.

Community libraries as drivers of socioeconomic development for countries

Numerous researchers such as Fourie and Meyer (2016), Jain and Nfila (2011) and Stilwell (2016) have written extensively about the power of community libraries as enablers for the socioeconomic development of citizens. Internationally, seamless access to information in community libraries to entrench personal and societal development of citizens cannot be overestimated. As information is a human right, therefore, equitable access to the right and relevant information at the right time is the right of all individuals irrespective of their race, social status or class, gender, creed and socioeconomic backgrounds (The IFLA/UNESCO Public Library Manifesto, 1994; Salman et al., 2017; South African Bill of Rights, 2011).

In South Africa, through the Promotion of Access to Information Act (PAIA) 2 of 2000, equitable access to information is guaranteed to all citizens. The IFLA/UNESCO Public Library Manifesto (1994: 1) avows that:

> The public library is the local centre of information, making all kinds of knowledge and information readily available to its users. The services of the public library are provided on the basis of equality of access for all, regardless of age, race, sex, religion, nationality, language or social status. Specific services and materials must be provided for those users who cannot, for whatever reason, use the regular services and materials, for example linguistic minorities, people with disabilities or people in hospital or prison.

Owing to the past discriminatory and oppressive apartheid laws where library provisions were along racial lines, community libraries are indispensable even in the marginalised rural communities of South Africa to empower and develop rural populations. In their article, Jain and Nfila (2011: 370) postulate that "information is power in all spheres of our lives including national development and libraries are the original owners and protector of that power." As selected SDGs deal with pressing socioeconomic challenges faced by the country and aimed at global development of citizens for a better life, the significance of innovative, vibrant and dynamic community libraries in achieving them cannot be overemphasised.

By virtue of their philosophy, community libraries are mandated to address meaningfully the multiple information needs of the citizens of the various countries. The IFLA/UNESCO Public Library Manifesto (1994: 1) states that:

> All age groups must find material relevant to their needs. Collections and services have to include all types of appropriate media and modern technologies as well as traditional materials. High quality and relevance to local needs and conditions are fundamental. Material must reflect current trends and the evolution of society, as well as the memory of human endeavour and imagination.

In developed and civilised countries such as the United States, United Kingdom and Canada, community libraries are recognised in high esteem because of their potentialities to change, influence and orientate people's lives for good. Jain and Nfila (2011: 370) opine that community libraries provide essential platforms for all residents "to actively participate in economic, social and political development resulting in sustained national development" of various countries. In poor and developing countries, socioeconomic challenges such as high unemployment, extreme poverty levels, poor quality education and life-threatening diseases are the order of the day.

World-wide, community libraries are viewed as enablers of socioeconomic development for their countries. With expanded and wide-ranging resources, changing roles and services, community libraries are empowered to meet the multiple information needs of the diverse current and potential users. Through their equitable provision of information and knowledge, community libraries provide ideal and conducive scaffolds for socioeconomic development at personal, societal, national and international levels. This is true particularly in the marginalised rural communities where deprived people struggle to access information owing to inadequacy of community libraries. Realising the value of information, Bradley (2016: 2) states that:

> Access to information supports development by empowering people, especially marginalised people and those living in poverty, to exercise their rights, be economically active, learn new skills, enrich their cultural identity and take part in decision-making.

With a comprehensive collection of wide-ranging information resources in a variety of formats including Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), a community library provides ample space to accommodate all categories of users including users with physical, auditory and visual challenges. With the online public access catalogue (OPAC), users are provided with OPACs of other participating libraries globally to search and retrieve electronic resources (Gupta, 2017). Many researchers such as Mbatha (2015) and Mugwisi (2015) wrote extensively about the value of ICTs including networked computers for provision of unrestricted electronic information. As community libraries are resource centres that provide free public access to the Internet and other technology-driven or enhanced services, users will have equitable and expanded access to global electronic information relating to the implementation of the SDGs (Sigler et al., 2015). Hider et al. (2014: 435) detail how:

> The Internet has enabled public libraries and other information service providers to take information and referral services online, to present rich and wide-ranging community information (CI) to their audiences through web portals that provide information about services and supports available to help people when they need it. People looking for local CI on health care, financial assistance, housing, transportation, education, childcare, recreational activities and local events are increasingly turning to the internet and these portals for relevant information.

As community libraries elsewhere are fighting to address and meet the socio-developmental information needs of community members, innately, they have a pivotal role to play in assisting citizens of countries to achieve the SDGs. Concerning the SDGs, Igbinovia (2016: 16) states that:

> Libraries and other information centers play a crucial role in this movement. Several library and information services will enhance the achievement of these goals by adapting to new roles. Libraries will need to consolidate their services that facilitate the implementation of the SDGs.

Community libraries that are sensitive and responsive to the information developmental needs of the wide variety of users therefore need to adapt, reconfigure and mutate their functions, roles and services to ensure that users implement the SDGs – to advance quality of life (Igbinovia, 2016). With adequate funding and staffing, the author hopes that community libraries can assist poor and developing African countries in implementing and achieving the SDGs.

Roles of community libraries in assisting South Africa to achieve selected SDGs

As previously alluded to, community libraries have a key role to play in assisting countries to achieve SDGs as stipulated by the UNDP. As already alluded to, the author selected only a few goals.

SDG 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere

This goal is aimed at universal poverty eradication and elimination, "bringing the number of people living on less than US $1. 25 a day to zero and reduce by x per cent the share of people living below their country's 2015 national poverty line" (Dodds et al., 2017: 27). Although the goal sounds ambitious, extreme poverty remains a daunting socioeconomic challenge affecting millions of people in poor and developing African countries, which are regularly affected by economic recession and calamities. McGrew (2000: 353) avers that there is a "growing polarisation between the richest and the poorest in the world economy." This preceding statement means that the gap between rich and poor people is widening at an alarming rate.

With high unemployment rates in South Africa, poor people struggle to make ends meet. A decent standard of living remains a myth to millions of people because more than half (54%) of the residents live below the national poverty line (Grant, 2017). Raju (2010: 33) states, "in response to the need to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality, the South African government developed the National Development Plan." Poverty reduction remains a hurdle as the country is unable to provide employment for a growing labour force (Thomas, 2000). In poor and developing countries, inequality is the order of the day. "The social ills associated with poverty are on the rise in many countries with high rates of poverty. These include diseases, family breakdown, endemic crime and use of narcotic drugs." (Sustainable Development Strategies … 2002: 8).

Dynamic, well-stocked and functional community libraries have a responsibility to reduce poverty by offering "job-related" resources and services to community members (Rooney-Browne 2009: 341). Through provision of multiple resources in varying formats, they need to disseminate career and career-related information to the millions of unemployed youth with and without qualifications. With various newspapers and Internet-based services, careers and employment information need to be disseminated to the youth via community libraries (Stilwell, 2016).

With advancement of ICTs, community libraries in South Africa need to have apps (applications) to provide users with the opportunity to do library searches everywhere. In their article, Kerr and Pennington (2018) aver that public libraries in Scotland use mobile apps to extend the library searches, crossing cultural and economic boundaries. They further indicate that a dedicated mobile app or a website in public libraries is imperative for library patrons to use their mobile gadgets such as mobile phones and tablets to access Internet services everywhere. Noticeboards in and out of community libraries can also be used to distribute career information to the unemployed masses. Jani and Nfila (2011) postulate that:

> Libraries and information centres can contribute to youth internship programmes by actively engaging youth in activities and programmes such as teaching information skills to members of the community, developing web sites and portals for specific community information, participation in community projects.

By disseminating information to the youth, community libraries play an integral role in breaking intergenerational poverty cycles, which affect many families in the marginalised rural communities. With well-designed and spell-out programmes, community libraries need to assist youth to find careers of their choice therefore contributing to youth development and poverty reduction. With spacious facilities, community libraries provide conducive environments for youths to discuss development challenges that affect their lives and those of their communities. Through leaflets, brochures and flyers, community libraries can be used to distribute community information for development. They also provide conducive environments for vocational and computer trainings and internship programmes for the acquisition of information literacy skills (UNESCO, 2017).

Community libraries have an important role to play during economic recessions experienced by many poor countries. Dubbed "recession sanctuaries", they offer free resources and services to their communities (Rooney-Browne 2009: 342). Subsequently, users in deprived communities can borrow resources such as DVDs, books and CDs free of charge instead of buying them. In this way, these needy people can save money (Child et al., 2012; Rooney-Browne, 2009).

SDG 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture

This goal aims to end "hunger and protect the right of everyone to have access to sufficient, safe, affordable and nutritious food" (Dodds et al., 2017: 28). This is another ambitious goal because as alluded to, extreme poverty, famine and hunger are profound universal challenges affecting millions of people in poor and developing countries.

The adage 'agriculture is a backbone of the economy' highlights the significance of sustainable agricultural sectors in all countries for food production to feed millions of people and to contribute significantly towards world economic growth. With an ever-increasing human population all over the world, food insecurity poses universal challenges particularly in poor, densely populated countries. An article written by Oduwole and Okorie (2010: 10) aver that:

> Food security is a major concern of Nigeria and other African countries. Various governments
> in the continent have implementing strategies to provide abundant food, including support for,
> and the funding of agricultural research.

As information is indispensable for agriculturalists to make informed decisions, community libraries have a focal role to play in this regard. With well-tailored programmes, community libraries need to conscientise their patrons about the value of providing people with relevant information for sustainable agriculture in food production and stability. Community libraries ought to advocate effective farming equipment, styles, practices, techniques and methods to users. In partnership with the officials of the Department of Agriculture, community librarians can help users to become vigilant about pests that damage crops and contribute to food insecurity. Users can also be enlightened regarding "weed control, disease resistant crops and food storage and processing" (Oduwole and Okorie, 2010). As we live in a technological era, community members can also learn about the use of technology in the agricultural sector for improved food production and processing (Oduwole and Okorie, 2010). Users can also be taught about different soil types and breeds of crops (cultivars) that thrive well in a particular soil and be made aware of the significance of food security in all communities.

In partnership with the provincial and national Departments of Agriculture, to mitigate food security, community libraries need to make residents aware of animal and crop diseases affecting agricultural production. As indicated by Jani and Nfila (2011: 372) in their study, community libraries need to provide users with information relating to "livestock rearing, markets for goods and services" Users can also be taught about the significance of eating clean, nutritious and healthy foods to fight opportunistic diseases and infections associated with hunger and famine. In partnership with clinics and the Department of Health, community libraries are ideal centres to advocate healthy eating programmes, styles and habits among library users to promote healthy life styles among citizens. Coinciding with SDG 5, community libraries can also encourage women to become farmers to fight hunger in their families (Oduwole and Okorie, 2010).

SDG 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

This goal is aimed at ensuring healthy lives and promoting the well-being of all people at all ages of life (UNESCO, 2017). In their article, Parker and Wilson (2000) indicate how life-threatening diseases such as HIV/Aids, tuberculosis, malaria and ebola pose serious threats to human life all over the continent. Health information and knowledge therefore should be made available to community members to encourage healthy living. Huo et al. (2018) point out that:

> Health knowledge plays a very important role in the promotion of health information literacy (HIL) and healthy behaviour, helping people build a health knowledge base and make better-informed health decisions in everyday life.

Huo et al. (2018) further state that:

> If people lack knowledge about the health risks and benefits of a behavior, they may be unmotivated to alter unhealthy habits. Hence, health knowledge can be considered as a precondition for change. If people lack knowledge about evaluating, understanding, and using health-related information, their ability to make informed decisions concerning health may be impaired.

The value of community libraries in repackaging and making health information and knowledge accessible in all communities therefore cannot be overestimated. In collaboration with clinics and the provincial and national Departments of Health, sensitive to the health issues of their community members, community libraries need to run campaigns and programmes to make people aware of diseases and interventions or measures to prevent them. As stated by Jain and Nfila (2011: 373), "libraries provide people with appropriate information on diseases and prevention measures, health care, side effects of premarital affairs, dangers of early pregnancies and any other health information." Community libraries are therefore ideal centres for distribution of leaflets, information brochures and pamphlets about diverse diseases affecting and threatening human life. As indicated by Mojapelo, (2017), in partnership with local clinics, community libraries can also be used as centres where condoms are distributed to fight sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV/Aids. With mobile clinics, vaccinations against diseases can also be organised and take place at community libraries to make people aware that information and knowledge is an essential weapon to fight diseases.

SDG 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

SDG 4 is aimed at fostering inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all (UNESCO, 2017). While many poor and developing African countries experience challenges relating to education, the South African government has made great strides and progress in providing "primary education to all children" (UNDP n.d.) by introducing free and compulsory basic education (from Grades 1 – 12). Rakabe (2015/16) indicates that schools in marginalised communities are categorised in quintiles 1 – 3 and have been declared no fee schools. Learners in these disadvantaged schools get free textbooks and stationery.

However, owing to the legacy of the apartheid education system prior to 1994, the quality of education offered to these children remains a challenging and worrying factor. As stated by Macha (2017: 30):

> The country's education system, in particular, has never fully recovered from the 1953 Bantu education law, which was designed to render the country's majority black population disenfranchised both from the political system and the economy. The law "deliberately sought to make blacks subservient laborers," as the New York Times described it."

The economic growth of a particular country determines the quality of the education offered in that country. In rich and wealthy countries, superior quality education is a priority to produce knowledgeable, professional and skilled citizens to enhance economic growth. UNESCO (2017, 7) states that for individuals to be change makers, "they require the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that empower them to contribute to sustainable development. Education, therefore, is crucial for the achievement of sustainable development." Mojapelo (2017: 3) states,

> Quality education is essential to produce knowledge and skilled citizens who will make a positive contribution to growing the economy. Sufficient educational resources are critical to improving the standard of education in schools.

Much has been written about the inferior quality of the education offered to needy learners in poor and developing African countries. Researchers such as Chisholm (2011), Dirks (2013), Legotlo (2014), Rakabe (2015/16) and Spaull (2015) wrote about immense challenges faced by the education system in South Africa. Researchers posit that without adequate inputs in the form of adequate educational resources, qualified and competent teachers and state of the art facilities, it remains a dream for rural schools to improve the quality of the education they offer. Owing to resource disparities, many schools in the disadvantaged rural communities are poverty traps because they struggle to produce competent learners who are able to filter through the education system and eventually get decent and well-paid jobs (Spaull 2015). Spaull (2015: 34) states,

> The poor quality of education that learners receive helps drive an intergenerational cycle of poverty where children inherit the social standing of their parents or caregivers, irrespective of their own abilities or effort. Recent assessments show that over the past decade, there has been some progress at the grade 9 level, yet performance levels remain extraordinarily low.

Currently, learner outcomes in the majority of rural schools are disastrous owing to inadequate provision and allocation of educational resources and facilities. With more than 50% of the teachers who were trained to teach bantu education prior 1994, achieving quality

education will remain a pipedream particularly in dysfunctional and under-resourced schools which were under-funded during the apartheid education system (1948 – 1994) in South Africa (Africa Institute of South Africa, 2012; Kros, 2010).

As educational resource centres, well-stocked and functional community libraries have a pivotal role to play in fostering quality education. With diverse educational resources covering different learning areas, community libraries need to forge relationships with local schools to augment their few relevant library resources for curriculum enhancement. Block loaning of educational resources by the teachers from community libraries can enhance and promote effective teaching and learning accomplishments. Together with community libraries, story-telling events and competitions can be organised by the schools. With only a few (7%) schools with well-stocked and functioning school libraries, knowledgeable and professionally qualified community librarians can assist learners to pursue their school-related activities such as homework, assignments and research projects.

People who use wheelchairs can easily access libraries where there are ramps. With braille and talking educational resources for users with visual and auditory challenges respectively, the notion of inclusive education can be entrenched by community libraries. As informal educational centres, community libraries play a crucial role in nurturing lifelong learning. Community librarians need to arrange workshops or seminars to entrench the notion of lifelong learning among community members. The IFLA/UNESCO Public Library Manifesto (1994) states that:

> The public library, the local gateway to knowledge, provides basic condition for lifelong learning, independent decision-making and cultural development of the individual and social groups. This Manifesto proclaims UNESCO's belief in the public library as a living force for education, culture and information, and as an essential agent for fostering of peace and spiritual welfare through the minds of men and women.

Community libraries that are also accessible to the general public provide conducive and enabling environments for the youth to pursue independent studies as embodied in the notion of lifelong learning. Ashcroft et al. (2007) affirm that public libraries have an integral role to play to support lifelong learning. They (Ashcroft et al., 2007: 126) further aver that public libraries assist users "in providing a flexible and supportive environment for adult learners" and describe the importance of allowing users to learn "at their own pace, without having to study for a qualification."

SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

This goal is aimed at achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls. In their book, Dodds et al (2017: 38) state that:

> The SDG framework address women's empowerment in a holistic way: it requests that girls have equal access to education, it supports women as mothers and it requests that women have equal economic opportunities.

However, gender inequality is a universal problem where women and girls are still being discriminated against in political, judicial, economic and public life (Dodds et al., 2017). The UNDP (n.d.) states that, "there are still gross inequalities in work and wages, lots of unpaid "women work" such as child care and domestic work and discrimination in public decision-making." Women and girls still experience different forms of exploitations such as physical, sexual and trafficking. Women and girls therefore need to be protected against all these abuses and exploitations including gender-based violence, which is rife worldwide. In Africa,

women and girls experience gender inequalities partly owing to religious and cultural stereotypes such as forced and arranged marriages and female genital mutilations (Dodds et al. 2017: 38 -39).

In collaboration with relevant provincial departments, community libraries need to come up with programmes to make women and girls aware of their fundamental rights and fight gender inequalities and cultural stereotypes, which affect their daily lives. With innovative and well-designed programmes, community libraries can assist women and girls to empower themselves against abuse and gender-based violence which is prevalent in most communities in South Africa. Community libraries need to develop programmes to conscientise women and girls to take part in politics, the economy, leadership and judicial positions.

SDG 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

According to the UNDP (n.d.), "everyone on earth should have access to safe and affordable drinking water." The author views this goal as another ambitious plan taking into consideration that some people in the disadvantaged rural villages still compete with animals for drinking water in rivers.

The adage 'water is life' emphasises the significance of water for life. Governments therefore have a mandate to supply their citizens with clean and consumable water free from endemic waterborne diseases such as typhoid and cholera. As a scarce resource, effective and sustainable management of water in all communities cannot be overemphasised. All people need effective sanitation for betterment of their lives. This is particularly true in the disadvantaged rural communities of South Africa, which are still experiencing sanitary challenges owing to the defunct apartheid legislation and its discriminatory laws. Running water is a prerequisite for effective and robust sanitation.

Western Cape, South Africa, is currently experiencing a severe drought with dams rapidly drying up with resultant water supply cuts and shortages affecting community members. Community libraries need to be strategic and implement programmes and workshops about the significance of water to life and to be vigilant about waterborne diseases and measures to overcome them. It is also imperative for libraries to teach citizens to save and store water (Oluwatayo and Ojo, 2018). Workshops and seminars need to be organised about water conservation and management strategies and purification systems. Users need information on the watershed management and protection of water resources and infrastructure to ensure that water supply is consistent and reliable (Persson et al., 2016). Community libraries therefore have a critical role to play in disseminating information about water.

SDG 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

This goal is aimed at countries to take urgent action to combat climate change and its hazardous impacts. The UNDP (2016: 22) states, "changing weather patterns, rising sea levels and extreme weather triggered by climate change threaten to undermine decades of hard-fought development gains and poverty reduction."

Owing to high carbon dioxide emissions from vehicles and industries, climate change is a global reality associated with "climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries" affecting millions of people (Dodds et al. 2017: 39). With climate change, effects such as severe drought, erratic rainfall patterns with floods, excessive temperatures and heat waves, people all over the globe need to be proactive and act accordingly to mitigate the effects of

climate change (National Planning Commission 2011; Sustainable Development Strategies …, 2002; United Nations, 2014).

Community libraries need to come up with programmes to assist people to realise and be adaptive to climate change. Community libraries need to organise programmes to "improve education, awareness raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning" (Dodds et al. 2017: 40).

Summary, conclusions and recommendations

Universally, extreme poverty remains a huge socioeconomic challenge affecting millions of people in poor and developing countries. With poverty, decent quality of life is a pipedream to citizens living in squalor and miserable conditions. With its ripple effect, extreme poverty affects the quality of education offered to learners, thus contributing to intergenerational poverty cycles in poor families in the disadvantaged rural communities.

In South Africa, owing to a high unemployment rate among the youth, extreme poverty is visible particularly in marginalised rural villages. Poverty is the driver of social ills such as crime, prostitution, human trafficking, teenage pregnancies, corruption and use of narcotic drugs. Like its predecessor, MDGs, the UN has developed SDGs aimed at member states to achieve them by the 2030 target date to improve the quality of life of citizens.

As information is an essential ingredient for socioeconomic development, the study recommends that community libraries need to change, adapt, reconfigure, mutate and expand their roles, resources and services to assist South Africa to achieve the cohort of SDGs by making information available and accessible to the users to achieve the SDGs. The study recommends that the governments at both local (municipalities), provincial and national levels need to provide community libraries with an adequate budget to broaden their collections for citizens to acquire information to achieve the SGDs. Adequate budget is also required for community libraries to change, reconfigure and expand their roles and services to assist the country to achieve the all SGDs to improve people's lives.

References

Africa Institute of South Africa (2012). The failing standard of basic education in South Africa. *Policy Briefing*, Number 72: 1-7.
Available at: http://ai.org.za/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2012/03/No.-72.The... PDF file. Accessed on 07 December 2017).

Ashcroft L, Farrow J and Watts C (2007) Public libraries and adult learners. *Library Management* 28(3)125 -138. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1108/00242531211220744. (Accessed on 11 January 2018).

Beall J (2000) Life in the cities. In *Poverty and development into the 21st century.* Edited by Allen T and Thomas A. New York: Oxford University Press: 425 - 442.

Blanke J, Ko C, Koivisto M, Moyo JM, Ondiege P, Speakma J and Verdier-Chouchane A (2013) *Assessing Africa's Competitiveness*. Available at: https://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/.../The_Africa_Competitiveness_Report_2013.pdf. (Accessed on 28 March 2018).

Bradley F (2016) A world with universal literacy: the role of libraries and access to information in the UN 2030 Agenda. *IFLA Journal* 42:118 – 125.

Bryan A (2012) *Social research methods*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Burger R and von Fintel D (2009) *Determining the causes of the rising South African unemployment rate: an age, period and generational analysis.* Available at: Available at: https://www.ekon.sun.ac.za/wpapers/2009/wp242009/wp-24-2009.pdf. (Accessed on 11 January 2018).

Child R and Goulding A (2012) Public libraries in the recession: the librarian's axiom. *Library Review* 61(8/9): 641-663. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1108/00242531211292123. (Accessed on 14 January 2018).

Chisholm L (2011) *The challenge of South African schooling: dimensions, targets and initiatives.* Available at: https://transformationaudit.org/.../Review-The-challenge-of-South-African-schooling.pdf. (Accessed on 01 June 2017).

Cloete A (2015). Youth unemployment in South Africa: a theological reflection through the lens of human dignity. *Missionalia* 43(3): 513-525.

Cresswell JW 2009. *Research design: qualitative, quantitative and mixed approaches.* 3rd edition Los Angeles: SAGE.

Department of Arts and Culture (2013) *Costing the South African public library and information services bill. Project report.* Available at: https://www.dac.gov.za/sites/default/files/Legislations%20Files/South%20Afri can%20public%20library%20and%20information%20service%20bill.pdf. (Accessed on 09 February 2018).

Department of Labour (2011/12) *Job Opportunities and unemployment in the South African labour market.* Pretoria: Department of Labour.

Dirks N (2013) *The challenges of South Africa's education system- dream to reality.* Available at: https//:dreamstoreality.co.za/the-challenges-of-south-africas-education-system/. (Accessed 10 October 2017).

Dodds F, Donoghue AD and Roesch JL (2017) *Negotiating the sustainable development goals: a transformation agenda for an insecure world.* New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group.

Dodds F, Laguna-Celis J and Thompson L (2014) *From Rio+20 to a new development agenda: building a bridge to a sustainable future.* New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group.

Dornan J and Regan C (2012) 80:20 – Extreme poverty and gracious luxury. In *80:20 Development in an Unequal World.* Edited by Regan C. Pretoria, South Africa: UNISA Press: 11 - 32.

Fengu M (2017) Education, then transformation. *City Press* dated 19 March 2017.

Fombad M and Jiyane GV (2015) School libraries in South Africa and the post-2015 millennium development goals (MDGs). *Libri* 65 (3):192–205.

Flick, U (2014) *An introduction to qualitative research.* 5th edition. Los Angeles: SAGE.

Fourie I and Meyer A (2016) Role of libraries in developing an informed and educated nation. *Library Hi Tech,* 34(3): 422-432.

Grant L (2015) Infographic: poverty in South Africa. *Mail and Guardian.* Available at: https://mg.co.za/data/2015-02-05-infographic-poverty-in-south-africa. (Accessed on 16 January 2018).

Gupta V (2017) Impact of digitalisation of academic institutional libraries on research in Internet age: a study. *International Journal of knowledge Management and Practices* 5(1):1-3.

Hider P, Given LM and Scifleet P (2014) Community information portals: content and design issues for information access. *Library Hi Tech* 32(3):435-449. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1108/LHT-02-2014-0013. (Accessed on 2 January 2018).

Hoq KMG (2014) Rural library and information services, their success, failure and sustainability: a literature review. *Information Development* 1 - 17.

Huo C, Zhang M and Ma F (2018). Factors influencing people's health knowledge adoption in social media: the mediating effect of trust and the moderating effect of health threat. *Library Hi Tech*. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1108/LHT-04-2017-0074. (Accessed on January 2018).

The IFLA/UNESCO 1994 *Public Library Manifesto.*
Available at: https://www.unesco.org/webworld/libraries/manifestos/libraman.html.
(Accessed on 15 January 2018).

Igbinovia M (2016) Libraries as vehicle to sustainable developmental goals (SDGs): Nigerian's current status and outlook. *Library Hi Tech News* 33(5): 16-17. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1108/LHTN-03-2016-0010. (Accessed on 11 November 2017).

Igbinovia M O (2017) Librarians' involvement in cross-disciplinary research and its implication for sustainable development goals (SDGs): The Nigerian experience. *Library Review* 66(4/5): 251-265. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1108/LR-09-2016-0078. (Accessed on 10 November 2018).

Ighobor K (2015) Sustainable development goals are in sync with Africa's priorities: newly adopted sustainable development goals could transform the continent. *Africa Renewal* 29(3):3-5.

Jain P and Nfila RB (2011) Developing strategic partnerships for national development: a case of Botswana. *Library Review* 60 (5): 370-382. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1108/00242531111135290. (Accessed on 20 January 2018).

Kerr A and Pennington DR (2018) Public library mobile apps in Scotland: views from the local authorities and the public. *Library Hi Tech*. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1108/LHT-05-2017-0091. (Accessed on 22 January 2018).

Kim RE (2016) The nexus between international law and the sustainable development goals. *Review of European, Comparative and International Environmental Law* 25 (1): 15-26.

Kros C (2010) *The seeds of separate development: origins of bantu education*. Pretoria: Unisa Press.

Legotlo WM (2014) Orientation. In *Challenges and Issues Facing the Education System in South Africa*. Edited by Legotlo MW. Pretoria: Africa Institute of South Africa:1-14.

Macha W (2017) *Education in South Africa – WENR – World Education Services*. Available at: https://wenr.wes.org/2017/05/education-south-africa. (Acessed on 29 January 2018).

Mbatha B (2015) Diffusion and adoption of information technologies in South African telecentres: selected telecentres in KwaZulu-Natal. *Mousaion* 33(1): 103 -120.

McGrew A (2000) Sustainable globalization? the global politics of development and exclusion in the new world order. In *Poverty and development into the 21st century,* edited by Allen T and Thomas A. New York: Oxford University Press: 345 - 364.

Mojapelo SM (2017) Challenges faced by libraries in a democratic South Africa: a case of three community libraries in Limpopo Province. *Information Development*. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1177/0266666917712337. (Accessed on 01 February 2018).

Mugwisi T (2015) Role of librarians in teaching information literacy in Zimbabwean and South African universities. *Mousaion* 33(1): 23-42

National Library of South Africa (2016a). *The state of conditional grant funded libraries in South Africa*. Pretoria: Department of Arts and Culture and the National Library of South Africa.

National Library of South Africa (2016b) *Advancing access to information: annual report 2015/2016).* Pretoria: Department of Arts and Culture and the National Library of South Africa.

The National Planning Commission (2011) *Our Future-Make It Work: National Development Plan: 2030.* Available at: http://www.poa.gov.za/.../NPC%20National%20Development%20Plan%20Vision%20203 0... (Accessed on 11 March 2018).

National Treasury (2017) *Budget review*. Available at: https://www.treasury.gov.za/documents/national%20budget/2017/review/FullBR.pdf. Aaccessed on 16 March 2018).

Oduwole AA and Okorie CN (2010). Access to agricultural information and millennium development goals. *Library Hi Tech News* 27(1):10-12. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1108/07419051011034130. Accessed on 20 March 2018).

Oluwatayo IB and Ojo AO (2018) Walking through a tightrope: the challenge of economic growth in Africa. *The Journal of Developing Areas* 52(1)59-69.

Osborn D, Cutter A and Ullah F (2015) *Universal sustainable development goals: understanding the transformational challenge for developed countries, report of a study by stakeholder forum*. Available at: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/.../1684SF_-_SDG_Universality_Report_-_May ... (Accessed on 29 January 2018).

Parker M and Wilson G (2000) Diseases of poverty. In *Poverty and development into the 21st century.* Edited by Allen T and Thomas A. New York: Oxford University Press: 75 – 98.

Persson S, Weitz N and Nilsson M. (2016) Follow-up and review of the sustainable development goals: alignment vs. internalization. *RECIEL* 25 (1):59-69.

Promotion of Access to Information Act 2 of 2000. 2000. Available at: https://www.saica.co.za/.../PromotionofAccesstoInformationAct/tabid/.../Default.aspx. (Accessed on 15 February 2018).

Raju R (2018) From "life support" to collaborative partnerships: a local/global view of academic libraries in South Africa. *College and Research Libraries News*. 79(1): 30 - 33. Available at: https://crln.acrl.org/index.php/crlnews/article/download/16863/18486. Accessed on 20 March 2018).

Rakabe E (2015/16) *Equitable resourcing of schools for better outcomes*. Available at: https//:www.ffc.co.za/.../827-2015-2016-tr-chapter-3-equitable-resourcing-of-schools-for-be... (Accessed on 20 November 2017).

Rooney-Browne C (2009) Rising to the challenge: a look at the role of public libraries in times of recession. *Library Review* 58 (5): 341-352. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1108/00242530910961765. (Accessed on 10 January 2018).

Sachs JD (2012) From millennium development goals to sustainable development goals. *Lancet* 379: 2206 – 2211.

Salman AA, Mugwisi T and Mostert BJ (2017) Access to and use of public library services in Nigeria. *South African Journal of Libraries and Information Science* 83(1):26 - 38.

Sigler S, Jaeger PT, Bertot JC, McDermott AJ, DeCoster EJ and Langa LA (2015) The role of public libraries, the internet, and economic uncertainty. *Advances in Librarianship* 34: 19 -35. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1108/S0065-2830(2011)0000034005. (Accessed on 11 January 2018).

Spaull N (2015) *Schooling in South Africa: how low-quality education becomes a poverty trap*. Available at:

http://ci.org.za/depts/ci/pubs/pdf/general/gauge2015/Child_Gauge_2015-Schooling.pdf.
(Accessed on 10 January 2018)

South African Bill of Rights (2011). Available at:
https://www.justice.gov.za/legislation/constitution/SA%20Constitution_2011edition_eng_2.pdf. (Accessed on 10 March 2017.

Sustainable development strategies: a resource book (2002) Compiled by Dalal-Clayton B and Bass S. London, Sterling, VA: Earthscan.

Statistics South Africa (2014) *Poverty trends in South Africa: an examination of absolute poverty between 2006 and 2011*. Pretoria: Statistics South Africa.

Statistics South Africa (2015) *National and provincial labour market: youth statistics South Africa*: Pretoria: Statistics South Africa. Available at:
https://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P02114.2/P02114.22015.pdf. (Accessed on 08 February 2018).

Stilwell C (2016) The public library as institutional capital: towards measures for addressing social inclusion and combating poverty. *Information Development* 32(1):44-59.

Thomas A (2000) Poverty and the 'end of development'. In *Poverty and development into the 21st century*. Edited by Allen T and Thomas A. New York: Oxford University Press: 345 - 364.

UNESCO (2017) *Education for sustainable development goals: learning objectives*. Available at: https://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002474/247444e.pdf. (Accessed on 01 February 2018).

United Nations (2014) *The road to dignity by 2030: ending poverty, transforming all lives and protecting the planet synthesis: report of the secretary-general on the post-2015 Agenda.* New York: United Nations.

United Nations (2015) *Transforming our world: the 2030 agenda for sustainable development.* New York: United Nations.

United Nations Development Plan (n.d.) *Sustainable development goals (SDGs 2030*. Available at:
https://undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/corporate/.../SDGs_Booklet_Web_En.pdf.
(Accessed on 01 February 2018).

United Nations Development Plan (2016) *From the MDGs to sustainable development for all: lessons from 15 years of practice*. New York: United Nations.