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Module code: BMHP6021

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Assignment Title: Report

WORD COUNT: 4000

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Introduction

All over the world, countries including the United Kingdom are striving for development in all sectors, including economic, social, environmental, and health using the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a bench mark for measuring development (Morton et al., 2017). The SDGs were developed in 2012 during a sustainable development in RIO De Janeiro, the SDGs which contains seventeen (17) goals was enacted in 2015 to replace the 8 millennium development goals which ended in same year and these 17 SDGs are considered as the global blue print for success in the next 15 years (UN, 2017). According to Morton et al., (2017) the Sustainable development Goals set of global objectives which aim at ensuring fairness and sustainable health for all. The Central focus of this global agenda is to eradicate poverty, protect the environment and everything within it, whiles ensuring that there is peace and prosperity for all both now and in the future (UN, 2017).

In the United Kingdom (UK) for instance for the purposes of effective implementation of the SDGs, various departments have been assigned the responsibility of executing the various elements, for example the Department of Health and Social Care has been mandated to ensure health and wellbeing in the UK whiles the Department of Education is also responsible for ensuring quality education and the Department of International Development which is now the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) is responsible for overseeing international aid and partnership of the various SDGs to ensure that no one is left behind (Stewart, 2019). With just about seven more years until the end of the fifteen-year life span of the SGDs, the UK has only been able to achieve

just 17% of the global goals it signed up to in 2015 (Fox and Macleod, 2022). Nonetheless the United Kingdom has performed satisfactorily in goals relating to Good Health & Wellbeing, Quality Education, and Partnerships to achieve the Goals. This report therefore analyzes the policy interventions implemented by the UK government that led to the achievement of these goals. It assesses how the people living in the borough of Essex have benefited from sustainable development initiatives.

Overview of the 17 SDGS

According to Calib et al. (2018) the 17 SDGs were built around the 5Ps, that is, planet, people, prosperity, peace, and partnership. The goal, according to Al Salim et al. (2022), focus on implementing a set of international objectives that ensure sustainable environment, equitable economy and just political environment that ensure that humanity live in peace. In reviewing these goals it can be seen that all the different goals which make up the 17 SDGs are interconnected hence, efforts towards achieving any of the SDGs must take into consideration gender dimensions, which **goal 5** seeks to achieve, and climate change actions, which are split out in **goal 13**. Similarly, partnership, which is a goal on its own that is **goal 17**, is required to achieve the other entire goal and vice versa (Gov.uk, 2021). Moreover ensuring quality education and inclusiveness as well as gender equality which **goal 4** and **5** seeks to achieve will have a positive impact on **goal 8** which seeks to ensure decent work and economic growth for all, having decent work and economic growth means people will have the required income to be able to fend for themselves and their families (Bond, 2022) and according research has also shown that quality education is one of the most effective ways of elevating world poverty and that there could be 12% reduction in poverty if students especially those in the low income

countries are able to acquire basic reading and writings skills from school, further research also reveal that having a basic reading and writing skills can increases earnings by 10% which is also a means of ending poverty and hunger in all its forms which **goal 1 and 2** seeks to achieve (Calib et al., 2018).

Moreover, the UK has led large bilateral donors in focusing on poverty alleviation and has contributed significantly to ensuring that all countries around the world have fair economic wealth which is also a way of reducing inequality among countries contributing to **goal 10**. According to World Bank (2020) bridging the inequality gap among countries creates a platform for the achievement of inclusiveness, just society, promotion of peace and sustainable development which goal 16 envisioned. Again **goal 3** is centered on ensuring quality health that promotes wellbeing among humanity. The UK for instance is doing pretty well in this area. In relation to **Goal 7** which focuses on ensuring cost effective and clean energy the government of UK is working towards its achievement by installing 2,400 MW of clean energy capacity and enhancing access to energy for 41 million people between 2011 and 2020 (GOV.UK, 2021). This will also help achieve goal 15 because the world's terrestrial resources have been severely exploited, resulting in massive degradation, and must therefore be fixed and sustainable practices developed and adapted. This goal has a direct linkage to **goal 14**, which states that the global economy and human lives are dependent on natural resources, and their sustainable use is significant to sustainable development (UN Habitat, 2020). In relation to **Goal 11**, the United Nations (2022) envisioned that by 2030, 60% of the people in the world will be living in cities. In order to achieve sustainability in terms of consumption and production patterns by 2030, under **Goal 12**, the UN Habitat (2020) recommends for the world needs

to make significant changes of producing more goes from fewer resources. Lastly Stewart (2019) argues that, by recognizing the interlinkages among the goals, businesses, governments, and civil organisations can partner with each other to develop a holistic plan that aim at implementing all the 17 SDGs at a goal to achieve the best intended results.

Discussions on Goal 3, 4 and 17

Goal 3: The achievement of the SDGs is evidenced by its achievements so far, especially in goals 3, 4, and 17 (Stewart, 2019). According to the Sustainable Development Report (2022), currently the UK is ranked 11 in terms of performance in the implementation of the SDGs. This is as a result of its unique policy arrangement. For instance, in relation to **goal 3**, which aims to **promote good health and wellbeing** for all, HM Government (2019) identifies health as one of the most valuable assets in the UK; its policy on universal access to health offers a healthier, fairer, and better future for people, enhancing happiness and the growth of the economy while preventing diseases. Another policy that has contributed to the success in goal 3 is the Affordable Care Act, this Act have 3 major primary goal which includes making affordable health insurance affordable to more people, expanding medical programs to cover adults with low income and supporting innovative medical initiatives designed to reduce the cost of healthcare delivery (GOV.UK, 2020). There is also the disability inclusion and right strategy for 2022-2030 which aim to make the UK the global leader for achieving inclusive health for all disable people (GOV.UK, 2020). To further improve healthcare delivering, there is the policy that seeks to reduce maternal death by 30% by 2030 and aim to make the NHS the best place in the

World to give birth (NHS, 2013). Again, the UK has achieved a high score in goal 3 due to its policy on health infrastructure and has rollout a 5year programme to invest in health infrastructure including building new hospitals, modernised the existing ones through innovative technologies and also improved mental health facilities (GOV.UK, 2019). However during the coronavirus pandemic, the focus of promoting wellbeing shifted to improving global health security and innovative preparedness to tackle the pandemic (Bond 2022). Nonetheless Baffes et al., (2020) revealed that the plans and programs put in place continues to promote public health and provides the right care at right time in the right place.

Goal 4: Again the government of UK has achieved success not only in goal 4 but is also doing well when it comes to goal 4 which seeks to ensure quality education. According to Boggs et al (2021) education in the UK is considered as a fundamental human right which has the potential to shape the future of children as well as young adult in the UK and the world at large, therefore policies and structure has been put in place to ensure quality and inclusive education that promote lifelong learning. Hence education standard in the UK have seen tremendous improvement over the years enhancing numeracy and literacy levels (HM GOVERNMENT, 2019). Bond (2022), explains that the United Kingdom has made strides in leading global initiatives to enhance academic achievement, which has contributed to its high scores in goal 4 of the SDG. For example, in relation to its domestic educational initiatives, the UK government has rolled out various interventions in the following forms, which include a free education policy that focuses on substantially enhancing primary and lower secondary education (Labrie 2022). Morrins (2017) also added that measure has been put in place to create a sustainable framework that

enhance higher education, for instance the enactment of the Higher Education Act and Research in 2017 has created avenue for students to choose from higher competitive education while ensuring value for money and has also improve the quality of educational research. Also to ensure inclusiveness and access to quality education for the vulnerable, 15hours per week free education has been provided for all disadvantage 2year olds in England (Bond 2022). Again, the UK Department of Education (2021) report that a total of £750 million has been set aside to assist local areas who have initiated programmes to support people with good learning skills that enhance knowledge to promote employability, this program is actively being rolled out in Scotland. There is also the 2017 Social Mobility Plan in England, which aims to help build inclusive education systems for people in places that need them the most (HM Government, 2019). Wales has taken a person centred approach to enhance its workforce by providing additional financial support for Children and young adult in the who have additional learning needs are also being supported (HM GOVERNMENT, 2019). Lastly, through the SURE Start program, Ireland has invested in close to 40, 000 children below 5years and who are living in deprived communities to have access to quality education to help improve their intellectual skills, and their social development (HM GOVERNMENT, 2019).

Goal 17: Under the 2030 agenda for sustainable development, Goal 17 requires advanced nations to fully implement their Official Development Assistance (ODA) commitments; including many advanced countries' like the UK's commitment to spend 0.7% of their Gross National Income (GNI) to promote economic development in developing countries, this target was achieved in the UK in 2013 for the first time and the government of UK has made efforts to meet it in the subsequent years (Hambrey, 2017),

although the target of the 0.7% was reduced to 0.5% of the GNI due to the COVID 19 pandemic (House of Common Library, 2022). Stewart (2019) also stated that the UK is committed to strengthening relationships and collaboration with other partners in order to collaborate in achieving all other goals and leaving no one behind. That is, people and organizations in the UK such as UK Aid, 'employer supported volunteering', 'Women For Women' and several others are generously donating their monies and resources to the challenged areas they are interested in and are also collaborating with other governments and civil society organizations to contribute to the achievement of the remaining 16 goals both domestically and internationally.

In relation to policies for achieving goal 17, the UK National Statistician launched the Data Disaggregation Action Plan (2017) for international development at the World Data Forum in 2017. The action plan focuses on creating a disaggregated resource library where learning and data on gender, age, geography, and disability status are collated from other partners and can be assessed by partners on the library platform (Fox and Macleod 2022). The UK does not only assist partners with information sharing but also provides technical support on how the data can be used to inform decision-making by partners (HM Government, 2019). Moreover, the Wales for Africa programs and 'Scotland Climate Justice Innovation Fund' has been established under SDG 17 in the UK to support people from Africa to take action in eradicating poverty, supporting exchange programs that aim at tackling climate change (UN Habitat 2020). It is therefore not surprising that the, UK is ranked 3 out of 40 countries for its policies and investment towards achieving goal 17 (House of Common Library, 2022).

The City of Essex

Essex is one of the over 149 cities in the UK and according to the UK Department of Education Essex has a population of over 1.47 million people as of 2018. The Essex County Council (ECC) covers an administrative area of about 3670 square kilometers and is considered as one of the largest upper tier authority in terms of area in the whole East of England and also covers about 12 districts including Basildon, Chelmsford, Harlow, Colchester, Braintree, Brentwood, Epping Forest, Castle Point, Maldon, Rochford, Uttlesford and Tendring. ECC Its economy is more robust than many city regions, producing about £40 billion in output annually (Essex County council, 2022). Essex has over 600 local businesses and three universities. It is the home of two largest container ports in the UK. Although the Essex economy has much strength, it is necessary to increase economic resilience by diversifying the economic base and securing growth in important opportunity sectors (Essex County council, 2014). Like the UK Essex has made considerable gains in terms of efforts towards achieving the SDGs and this is explained below.

Performance of County of Essex in Sustainable Development Goal 3, 4 and 17

Firstly, ensuring healthy lives and promoting wellbeing of people at all ages is an essential element for development and that is what **goal 3** of the SDGs seeks to achieve. In the County of Essex promoting health and wellbeing for people living in Essex remains paramount. Therefore all the 13 councils in the County of Essex have collaborated in promoting health and wellbeing through the living well campaign. This campaign has been initiated to engage communities, families as well as individuals to provide person centered care through the provision of information on all the offers about health and wellbeing in Essex. Some of these health offers in the County of Essex include providing children

under the age of 18 and young families with NHS support which about 1461 children and young people have benefited, working with professionals to ensure residents of Essex have the best access to mental health and clinical services and this service has supported about 21,685 adults in ECC, the offers also include raising awareness on healthy eating and also encouraging people to undertake regular physical activities where 17 projects aim at improving physical activities have been initiated to improve their health and wellbeing in the County of Essex (ESSEX GOV.UK. 2022). Moreover there is also the Essex Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy, which runs from 2018 to 2022, the aim of this strategy is to improve 55% mental health, address 66% obesity, change conditions and behaviors associated with health inequality, and support people who have chronic illnesses and disabilities and improving health at all levels (ESSEX.GOV.UK, 2022). . Also in 2021 ECC invested one million pounds in Educational Excellence Task force and also recruited about 17, 000 children to the summer reading challenge to improve their reading and public speaking skills (ECC, 2022). Again, it is estimated that in 2020 to 2021 the County of Essex spent about £668 million on public health programs and support for older people (ECC, 2022). Moreover about 250 organizations in Essex have been supported to improve health of their workforce including training on about 4500 mental health courses. Nonetheless the challenge of inequality in mental health especially suicide rates in Essex remains a major concern in the County and three districts in Essex is among the top four of suicide rate in the UK (ECC, 2022). Hence future policies need to focus on how tailored intervention can be provided in the provision of mental health services in other to reduce the suicide rate in the County.

Secondly, the educational system in County of Essex is largely inclusive which could be contributing to the overall all achievement of UK in **goal 4** which aim to promote inclusive and quality education that enhances lifelong learning opportunities for all and indicator 4.5 of goal 4 seeks to include persons with disability and vulnerable children in the main stream. This indicator have been achieved in ECC through the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) policy, in Essex about nine out of ten children representing 89% percent of children with SEND have access to education in the main stream setting, also there are about 19 special schools in the county with 5 of them rated by Ofsted as providing an outstanding educational provisions whiles 10 of them also provide good educational services (ESSEX.GOV.UK, 2022).

Also according to the Educational Policy Institute, (2021) the provision of quality education in Essex County has seen major success. For instance the pupil attendance policy in schools in the twelve district of Essex developed by School authorities, teachers, school governors, parents and care-givers acknowledges that positive lifestyle and good attendance are essential for the standards of pupil attainment to be raised and to give all young persons the best possible educational experience. The policy makes sure all children of school age are entitled to suitable and productive full-time education suitable at their age and to also ensure that any special need they may have in terms of education are provided. The policy also requires every parent who have their wards in school to make sure that their wards attend the schools they are registered makes it a legal responsibility on the part of the parents. In addition, parents are obliged legally to ensure their ward is regular at the school. This implies their ward must be present everyday

school opens unless there are permissible circumstances like serious illness or permission for an absence is granted by the school in advance.

Also the strategy on school improvement in Essex County which aims to empower schools in the twelve districts to improve themselves by collaborating with each other to improve school systems in Essex to support children and young people age between 0-25 years to improve their educational aspirations and attainment while enhancing employment. This strategy since its inception in 2015/2016 has led to the establishment of about 37 School Led Improvement System (SLIP) who are supporting each other to improve schools and employability in Essex (Morton et al., 2017). This strategy is in line with the objectives of goal 4 which seeks to increase the number of young people with the best educational attainment and relevant skills for employment (Stewart, 2019).

In relation to [goal 17](#) which seeks to promote partnerships in order to achieve the rest of the goals, in working with partners Essex has secured £489m from the housing infrastructure fund and £27m from building fund project which funds have been channeled to the development of other key areas especially in promoting quality education and improve wellbeing (Essex County Council, 2020). Moreover in 2016 the Essex Partner Groups developed detailed strategy and integrated programs that involve everyone from the local area as well as from public partners and international bodies to discuss issues of major concerns in their area and also build consensus on how those issues could be addressed by the end of 2017 about 100 partners from different backgrounds both internationally and locally came together and contributed ideas on the issues the areas they are representing faces and made individual pledges on how the issues can be

addressed at the local level to help achieve the sustainable development goals set at the national and international levels (Local Government Association, 2017).

Again even though the COVID 19 pandemic reduced the support to finance the implementation of the SDGs, Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) report that developing countries continues to struggle in achieving the SDGs and predicts an annual financial gap of 2.5 million dollars in financing the SDGs especially in least developing Countries (Bond 2020). Hence the County of Essex aims to support programs that will help low and middle income countries to achieve their targets set in achieving the SDGs (Local Government Association, 2017). For example ECC has made it a priority to support programs that aims to provide local initiatives and actions aim at improving access to quality health care and reducing inequality in access to quality healthcare in developing countries and have set aside £24million to tackle this course.

Recommendations

1. Given the interruption of progress towards achieving the global SDG goals, by the UK, it is important that the various departments tasked to implement the SDGs expedite action in order to meet the 2030 timeline for achieving the goals for instance by fast tracking programs that aim at grass root development to help elevate poor household from extreme poverty (Bond 2022).
2. Work with partners, to deliver place-based regeneration and growth programmes, addressing the socioeconomic determinants of health that is income, education, employment, and housing in order to reduce the proportion of the Essex population living in the most deprived by 20% of by 2030 (Essex County Council, 2022)

3. It is also recommended for a comprehensive data to be collected on marginalized population living in the Borough of Essex, this data can be updated regularly so that tailored intervention can be provided to cover all the disadvantage group in order to live no one behind (Bond 2019)
4. The Essex County council should capitalize on the UK's efforts in driving partnership for development to secure collaboration in all forms for tackling the development challenges in the area especially in reducing inequality in the access to mental health and support interventions that aims at providing mental health patient with person centered care and tailored services that aims at reducing suicide in Essex County (Fox and Macleod 2022).

Conclusion

A broad review of policies reveals that even though the UK have had significant achievement in three of the seventeen SDGs' implementation, there is more to be done in terms of the remaining fourteen goals. Various interventions, policies or projects designed in line with the SDGs are being implemented by various departments with aim of successfully achieving the global goals. However, a review of the various policies, projects and strategies towards achieving the goals show that there is still much to be done by the various departments responsible for implementation of the strategies and policies. The global Covid-19 pandemic has negatively impacted progress across all sectors of national economies across the globe, and the UK cannot insulate itself from it. For instance, a report published by the UK Department for Works and Pensions in 2021 showed how people's livelihoods especially those in the developing countries has been impacted by COVID 19 which has made it more difficult to finance the implantation of the

SDGs more than before hence the need to establish a string collaborations and delivering welfare support package competently and compassionately to support the least developed countries in other to leave no one behind. Also with regards to the borough of Essex, just like the many cities in the UK several interventions, policies and strategies have been put in place to achieve the 17 SDGs and just like the entire UK the County of Essex have also achieve success in goal 3, 4 and 17. It can be concluded that, Essex County have significantly contributed to the Success of the entire UK's achievement in these three areas of the SDGs but must put more interventions in place towards achieving the remaining 14 SDGs in other to make the world a better place and help people live a happier life.

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