

ACHIEVING THE UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGS): STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE POVERTY REDUCTION IN AFRICA

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Introduction

It is a common knowledge that human right to dignity and a decent life are not achievable in an environment of extreme poverty. Yet, in many parts of Africa, poverty has prevented many people from enjoying these rights. New data suggests that by 2030, a significant percentage of world's population living in extreme poverty will be in sub-Saharan Africa.

In a bid to end the scourge of poverty and other social problems by 2030, the United Nations at a Conference in Rio de Janeiro initiated and adopted a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to tackle the multifaceted problems bedeviling development around the world.

Causes of Poverty and Possible Solutions
Knowing the causes of poverty and recognizing its existence is the first step towards finding

the appropriate solution to it. Poverty is the complete lack of means to meet basic personal needs. According to a BBC report, Nigeria which is widely recognized as "the giant of Africa" is now the poverty capital of the world overtaking India.

Also, according to statistics in an article by Quartz Media, of all 15 countries where extreme poverty is increasing, 13 of them are in Africa. Given these alarming statistics, one would wonder what could be the causes of poverty that threatens the future of even generations yet unborn.

Among several other causes is illiteracy and lack of quality education. According to a statistic by the SOS Africa, about 59 million children between the ages of 5-17 in sub-Saharan Africa prefer to work than get education, and that 1 in 3 children are out of school. Education is one of the strongest and most basic foundations on which a prosperous nation can be built. In a society of many uneducated people, poverty is bound to thrive because people will be ignorant of the potentials and resources available to them.

In many African communities, illiteracy continues to foster poverty as some African states do not even have free basic

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education for children and adolescents. Some African countries still fall below 40% of adult literacy. Show me a continent not giving attention to education and I will show you a continent which in years to come will be robbed of progress and will be grossly cheated. Without any doubt, basic education is a necessity

and in Africa, it is a bridge from misery to economic hope.

Secondly, poverty thrives in Africa due to conflicts and problem of political instability that have rocked the continent since the 1960s and 70s. These include the recent problem of Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria, the war in Somalia, and the conflict between Sudan and South Sudan that has resulted in refugee crisis.

These scenarios and many more across the continent can be regarded as causes of poverty as funds meant for socio-economic

development are diverted into managing the crisis and post-conflict reconstruction. Since crises and conflicts do not encourage local investors or attract foreign investment, African states must build peace and political stability that would facilitate the inflow of resources needed to eradicate poverty.

Another problem causing poverty in Africa is poor economic management. As extreme corruption and greed by political office holder increases, maladministration as well as mismanagement of development funds becomes the bane of African development. This anomaly has crippled most sectors of the African economy, from health to education sectors; and it has left many African societies very poor.

A scenario where a certain government official diverted funds to the tune of 6 million dollars to acquire personal assets is not pleasant to hear. Africa is blessed with immense wealth in the form of mineral resources, but this does not reflect on the standard of living in Africa. A continent with 30% of the world's mineral resources being poor is not good enough and this is due to maladministration and corruption. These practices must be stopped in order to move Africa forward – a goal that is achievable with credible leaders in government.

In addition, the African growing population without good infrastructure is another great hindrance to the continent's socio-economic development. According to the United Nations statistics and projections, Africa is expected to double in size by 2050, making the region the second largest in the world. African states have to double their current infrastructural facilities in order to cater for their teeming population. For

instance, only a few states in Africa can boast of steady power supply which is important for production of goods and service. New infrastructure and upgrade of existing ones will engender wealth creation because good road networks, security of life and property, and healthcare will boost labour productivity in rural and urban areas.

In order to turn around the problem of poverty in Africa, education should be given top priority. Governments at all levels must provide access to free basic education that would eradicate ignorance and illiteracy. In some states, the cost of higher education is high and people find it difficult to get proper training. Given the need for capacity building in the developing countries of Africa, government

should increase education budget and reduce the cost of secondary and post-secondary education.

In addition, both public and private sectors in Africa should help institutions of higher learning with financial aid for infrastructure while hardworking students should be

encouraged with scholarships. Since education is an important tool for the development of any society, technical and vocational training should be organized people who are not interested in formal education. In particular, farmers should be trained in the use of modern equipment and credit facilities should be made available to them in order to procure such tools.

Political elites and state leaders should embrace peace for the sake of socio-economic development. In the quest for political power, most people resort to violence by causing chaos and political

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instability which are inimical to development. Tolerance should be preached among ethnic and religious groups in a bid to eradicate intergroup conflicts. Africans should learn to love one another because this is a strong basis for peace and development that can eradicate poverty.

As no individual, group or states will invest in an unstable environment, African states should strive to create an enabling environment that would attract local and foreign investment. Significantly, corruption should be dealt with in a decisive manner. In China for example, capital punishment is approved for corrupt politicians in order to deter others from embezzling the funds meant for development. Laws allowing the seizure of assets of corrupt officials will also help in reducing corruption which would in turn reduce poverty. It is often said that "there is enough for everyone's need but not enough for everyone's greed." Hence, youths should be enlightened on the long lasting impact of corruption on development while political leaders should also be closely monitored by people and remind them that they are not voted into office for their pockets but to improve the welfare of their people.

Finally, family planning and birth control measures should be put in place to curtail overpopulation. In rural and urban areas, life planning education and programs should be sponsored in order to educate people on the dangers of having children they have no financial power to care for. In addition, infrastructural facilities should be provided for the growing population since most communities in Africa lack the basic amenities that would aid their fight against poverty. With good road networks, stable electricity, and credit facilities for

entrepreneurs, poverty eradication goal of the UN will be accomplished as people will be able to work.

Conclusion

The SDG of poverty eradication by 2030 would be in jeopardy if African leaders and people fail to rise up to the challenge. Poverty is a killer of destiny and it should have no place in our world. The strategies discussed here are part of a large number of ways through which poverty can be eradicated in Africa by 2030. As Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela once said, "as long as poverty, injustice and gross inequality exist in our world none of us can truly rest. Therefore, eradicating poverty is the responsibility of everyone, not just the government.

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