

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

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Introduction

Created to succeed the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which expired in 2015, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are set of 17 aspirations articulated by the United Nations (UN) General Assembly which are aimed at actualizing global development by 2030.

These goals are ambitious, vast, and encompassing practically every aspect of human society. Under each goal are list of targets which are measure using multiple indicators. Thus, from the 25th of September 2015, the UN adopted 17 SDGs with 169 interconnected targets and 232 indicators. The adopted SDGs include:

- Goal 1 - End poverty in all its forms everywhere
- Goal 2 - End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
- Goal 3 - Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
- Goal 4 - Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
- Goal 5 - Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
- Goal 6 - Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
- Goal 7 - Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all
- Goal 8 - Promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all
- Goal 9 - Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation

- Goal 10 - Reduce inequality within and among countries
- Goal 11 - Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable
- Goal 12 - Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
- Goal 13 - Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts
- Goal 14 - Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development
- Goal 15 - Protect, restore, and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss
- Goal 16 - Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels
- Goal 17 - Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development (Anon., 2018)

From 2015 till date however, different arguments have been made regarding the possibility of achieving these ambitious global goals within the stipulated period. Truly, when compared to the previous MDGs, the SDGs appear more effectual as they deal with the causes of societal problems whereas the MDGs only dealt with few challenges of development.

Critics of the SDGs opine that the targets are too ambitious which makes their achievement difficult to track and measure. One thing which critics and supporters appears to agree on is the fact

that the achievement of the 17 goals hinges on the attainment of the first goal which seeks the eradication of poverty.

Poverty Eradication in Africa

Poverty can be defined as the state of being poor. According to Encyclopedia Britannica, poverty is the state of one who lacks a usual or socially acceptable amount of money or material possessions. It is said to exist when people lack the means to satisfy their basic needs. In monetary terms, the United Nations fixes the poverty line to be below \$2 daily, i.e. anyone living on less than this amount per day is living in poverty.

The need for the eradication of poverty is not as urgent anywhere else as it is in Africa. Although according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) as at 2018, Africa is the 5th richest continent based on her

Gross Domestic Product which is based on purchasing power parity. When this is however viewed in relation to the populations of the continent, the level of poverty in Africa is obvious.

This is historically rooted in the damage colonialism did to the continent as well as the post-colonial problem of bad leadership that has prevented development since the 1960s.

In order to ensure that these SDGs are met worldwide, and especially in Africa, the UN encourages national governments to incorporate these goals into their own development planning and create policies and budgets to meet them.

These countries are also encouraged to openly and actively seek partners and garner support from the private sector in a bid to foster Public-Private Partnerships.

Across Africa, awareness and sensitization program has been deployed in order to allow the participation of stakeholders. The fact remains that Africa has a considerable population, a significant percentage of which is made up of energetic youths who are mostly unemployed or underemployed. While political instability, insecurity, lack of power supply, and maladministration in many African countries deter investors from coming to the continent, eradicating

poverty through job creation and employment becomes a mirage.

In this context, local training programs need to be initiated and pre-existing ones should be equipped and staffed. This training of youths in technical and vocational skills will empower them to create opportunities

for themselves and other around them. Apparently, the success of their entrepreneurship will reduce unemployment and ultimately eradicate poverty.

Also, governments, corporate bodies (both foreign and local) and NGOs should collaborate with one another so as to develop a periodic federal event aimed at linking youths between the ages of 18 and 35 with national and regional companies that are seeking raw talents for employment. This networking initiative can also be expanded to provide soft loans and credit facilities for young individuals to start, grow, and sustain their own businesses which would then lead to poverty reduction.

The significance of both formal and informal education cannot be

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overemphasized in any poverty eradication program. With literacy comes enlightenment which can help people make wise choices and plan their life properly. For example, a population with high number of literate citizens would likely choose good leader through a democratic process.

Since government has an immense role to play in determining poverty level of its people, a good government would create and entrench good development policies that would empower poor people, abolish gender inequality, and provide basic amenities for people's comfort (Singh, 2016).

As it stands now, a large portion of Africans are farmers. Therefore, emphasis should be placed on mechanised agriculture or at the very least making subsistence farming easier by educating farmers on the usefulness of modern farming methods. In addition, fertilisers, credit facilities and viable seeds should be made available to farmers. People with disability should also not be left out of the development programs, but rather, they should be accommodated and taught trade or skills necessary for themselves to be self-reliant.

All individuals should be encouraged to engage in personal development which would give rise to self-help. It should be noted that while majority of the reasons for poverty in Africa is man-made, there are other natural causes such as natural disasters and climate change problems. Many parts of Africa are experiencing drought, flooding, landslides, disease outbreaks, and desertification.

While it is important to discover and apply indigenous knowledge to tackle these problems, African states should also

collaborate with advanced countries and international organizations, including the UN and World Health Organization (WHO) on how to manage these crises. Advanced irrigation methods, damming, low-cost housing scheme, vaccinations kits, and disease control methods developed within and outside Africa will help in combating and alleviating poverty in the continent. Importantly, any initiative adapted must be SMART - Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Resource-based, with Time-based deliverables.

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This last possible solution, which is reliable data, is particularly important for the attainment of SDG 1. Based on lessons learnt from the success and limitation of the MDGs, lack of reliable or qualitative data is likely to will hinder accurate monitoring of the SDGs as it was the case with MDGs. This is because the

SDGs are more complex and require much more data collection and management. Without qualitative data, it may be difficult to measure the progress that has been made in the fight against poverty, and simply impossible to tell the level of work left to be accomplished. Hence, it is necessary for African states to invest in building capacity that is needed for data collection and management.

Conclusion

In summary, the 2030 Agenda is transformative and can be applied to virtually all African states. The above listed strategies for effective poverty reduction and possible eradication must be implemented at all levels in a holistic and integrated manner if the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals are to be met by 2030.

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