

Drivers and Challenges of Sustainable Development in Africa

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Abstract— Sustainable development is at the core of global policy discourse. This is because it emphasises environmental, economic and social considerations in the quest of countries to improve wellbeing. This paper therefore examined the drivers and challenges of sustainable development in Africa. The tale of Africa in terms of sustainable development is mixed-good and bad. The continent is one of the fastest growing economies in the world. Africa has a favourable weather and large landmass for agriculture. The resource endowments especially in terms of human and natural resources are high. However, poverty, inequality, malnutrition, youth unemployment are the highest in Africa. Therefore, it follows that Africa is a land of superlatives. Africa's sustainable development is constrained by corruption, infrastructure deficits, insecurity and reliance on primary products. The study recommends increased and monitored investments in infrastructure. Existing efforts on reducing insurgency and corruption should be intensified. There is also the need to promote value addition in African trade.

Keywords—*infrastructure; inequality; policy; economic; primary products.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Sustainable development is complex, multidimensional and dynamic [1]. Sustainable development refers to the utilization of resources in order to achieve improvements in the economic outcomes of components of an economy without jeopardising access of future generations [1]. This implies intergenerational equity must be applied in all economic considerations for growth to be sustainable. Sustainable development is the core of global economic policy. Therefore, the reason United Nations developed 14 goals tagged Sustainable Development Goals [2] is not far-fetched. Africa is the second most populous continent in the world with a young population of 1.2 billion people. This is because youths account for more than half of the African population. The favourable weather and large landmass make Africa the ideal destination for agricultural production. The continent has huge mineral deposits. Africa is no doubt a land with great potentials. However, poverty, inequality and youth unemployment levels in Africa is worrisome. Africa is home to the majority of the people living below the USD1.20 poverty line globally. In fact, 300 million people in sub-Saharan Africa subsist on less than USD1.0 per day [3]. The task of reducing poverty, maternal and child mortality and malnutrition remain a moving target in Africa. Poverty has been falling in all regions except sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) since 1990 [3].

Earlier developmental efforts was concentrated on raising physical wealth and capital stock within an economy. Sustainable Development paradigm investigates the nature of development from the environmental, economic and social perspectives [1]. According to OECD (2001) sustainable development is the development path along which the maximisation of wellbeing of human wellbeing does not compromise perpetual use by future generations. Therefore, Sustainable Development is a paradigm shift from the economic growth hinged on depletion of resources and environmental degradation. There are several sustainable development strategies in Africa. The strategies include the National Environmental Policy in Ghana, National Development Vision (NDV) 2025 in Tanzania, National Strategy for Solid Waste Management in Egypt [4]. Collectively, 28 African countries under the umbrella of African Union established New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the Regional Economic Council (RECs) in the sub-region [4, 5]. incorporating the applicable criteria that follow.

There are arguments in literature on the appropriateness of a single definition for sustainable development [1]. A school of thought opine that three approaches to sustainable development exist-social, ecological and economic dimensions. This emphasises social justice, economic prosperity and environmental protection. Another option is a dualistic approach that is based on the relationship between nature and humanity [4]. Meanwhile, the most cited definition of Sustainable development is provided in the 1987 Brundtland Commission's Report [1]. It defines sustainable development as the kind of development which satisfies the current needs without endangering the future generations to satisfy their own. Whether dualistic approach or the three pillars of sustainable development are taken into consideration, there is a common denominator. The central message of sustainable development is economic, environmental and social sustainability achievable through rational management of physical, natural and human capital [1].

II. ECONOMIC GROWTH AND STATE OF POVERTY IN AFRICA

Sustainable development focuses on inclusive or broad-based growth sustained over time. Economic growth is the expansion in the production and marketing of goods and services within a nation as a result of improvements in technology or management. Africa's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has been growing in the last one decade. The GDP

grew by 4.5 percent in 2015 and it is projected to increase to 5 percent in 2016 [6]. Africa has almost recovered fully from the 2008/2009 global economic crisis [6]. Africa's growth is driven by agriculture, extractive industries, construction and services and manufacturing (however little) [6]. The average real GDP rose in Africa rose by 3.3 percent from 2003-2004. Africa's GDP increased from USD 600 billion in 2000 to USD 2.2 trillion (adjusted for inflation) in 2013 [4]. This implies Africa's GDP has doubled in a decade. Meanwhile the demographic dividends of Africa have not been harnessed. The high population is a vital domestic market for finished goods, if industrialisation is aggressively pursued. Also, the African population is young as people less than 25 years account for more than 50 percent of the population [4]. However, the performance of Africa in human development indices is very disturbing. About 230 million Africans are chronically malnourished [7] and 40 percent of under 5 children have stunted physical and mental development [8]. Again, an estimated 380 million people live on less than USD 1.25 in sub-Saharan Africa [8]. Poverty is more severe in Africa than any other developing regions. The fact that economic growth, poverty, inequality and youth unemployment co-move in Africa is an economist's nightmare [8, 9]. Socioeconomic indicators like per capita income, life expectancy at birth, access to health care, access to education and access to sanitation facilities further reveal the high level of poverty in Africa [10].

¹ In terms of expenditure in the health sector, African countries spend an average of 5 percent of GDP which is less than USD 10 per person annually compared to the required USD 27 [11]. Again, more than 50 percent of African population do not have access to modern health care facilities while 40 percent do not have access to safe drinking water and sanitation [11]. In fact, per capita income of Africa is 50 percent less than that of the next poorest region (South Asia) [12]. Africa and developing Oceania were noted for lowest life expectancies at birth since 1950-1955 [13]. The average age length of life in developing Oceania has since increased to 64 years while it remained low at 54 years in Africa [14]. Africa has the lowest number of physician per 1000 people in the world estimated at 2.3. This is compared to 14.0 in the world, 11.0 in Eastern Mediterranean and 33.3 in Europe. The under 5 mortality per 1000 live births and maternal mortality are the highest in the world at 107 in 2011 and 620 in 2008 respectively [14].

III CONSTRAINTS TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA

Corruption: Corruption is difficult to define, estimate and curb. This is because most corrupt acts are carried out "off-book". Corruption has been defined as the application of position of trust or authority for financial gains or other personal rewards. In corrupt climes, the rule of law, due process and equity are relaxed. Corruption is a global disease with more influence in Africa [15]. This is because Africa faces developmental challenges and the resources meant to liberate her from sub-human living conditions are

unrepentantly misappropriated. The fact that Africa trails other continents in terms of social indicators can be explained by the high level of corruption, impunity and poor governance [16]. Corruption has an inverse relationship with GDP growth and consequently sustainable development. In fact, a rise in corruption by 1 index point reduces GDP by 0.13 percentage points and GDP per capita by USD 425 [16]. About USD 300 billion is lost to corruption annually. This is 25 percent of Africa's GDP which is significantly higher than donor and foreign aid flows [16]. Africa accounts for 12 out of the last 25 countries in the 2014 Corruption Perception Index (CPI) (See Table 1) [17].

Table 1: Last 25 countries on CPI

Serial No	Name of Country	Rank	Score
1	Paraguay	150	24
2	Congo Republic	152	23
3	Tajikistan	152	23
4	Chad	154	22
5	Democratic Republic of Congo	154	22
6	Cambodia	156	21
7	Myanmar	156	21
8	Zimbabwe	156	21
9	Burundi	159	20
10	Syria	159	20
11	Angola	161	19
12	Guinea-Bissau	161	19
13	Haiti	161	19
14	Venezuela	161	19
15	Yemen	161	19
16	Eritrea	166	18
17	Libya	166	18
18	Uzbekistan	166	18
19	Turkmenistan	169	17
20	Iraq	170	16
21	South Sudan	171	15
22	Afghanistan	172	12
23	Sudan	173	11
24	Korea (North)	174	8
25	Somalia	174	8

Source: [17].

About 92 percent of sub-Saharan African countries scored below 50 in the CPI. This is compared to 84 percent in MENA (Middle East and North African countries), 16 in European Union and Western Europe, 95 percent in Eastern Europe and

Central Asia, 64 percent in Asia Pacific and 68 percent in the Americas. Therefore, it follows that Africa ranks high in the global corruption perception index. The high level of corruption is a consequence of weak judicial system, poor leadership, lack of accountability and transparency, weak governance institutions and general exclusion of the public from governance. Corruption induces inefficient allocation of the resources of state into white elephant projects with insignificant effects on the people. Therefore, sustainable development is very difficult in an unfair, corrupt and unequal environment.

Infrastructure Deficits: Sustainable development is undermined by severe infrastructure deficits that stare African development in the eye. Infrastructure deficits explain the existence of untapped productive potentials of Africa [18]. Africa requires an annual investment of USD 93 billion annually until 2020 [19]. Infrastructure is critical to significant improvements in competitiveness, domestic and international trade and global integration. Currently in Africa, less than 40 percent of the population has access to electricity, 33 percent of rural population has access to roads and only 5 percent of agricultural lands are irrigated [20]. Africa loses about 12.5 percent of production to power outages compared to 7 percent in South Asia which is the next worst case [21]. There are disparities in the allocation of resources to infrastructure among African countries. For instance, while Lesotho, Cape Verde and Angola invest over 8 percent of their GDP on infrastructure, Nigeria and South Sudan spend below 1 percent. Infrastructure deficit remains an undermining factor in Africa's quest for poverty reduction and sustainable development. Africa trails other developing countries in paved road density, telecommunication, electricity and water and sanitation [7, 8]. However, infrastructure has been responsible for more than 50 percent of Africa's recent improved growth performance and thus additional growth prospects [19]. In cases where infrastructure is available, it is too costly for businesses to make profit and grow. This has grave consequence on Africa's sustainable development. The annual per capita consumption of electricity of 124 kw/hr in Africa is just 10 percent of the consumption in other developing regions. The loss of sales as a result of power outages is as high as 20 percent in informal sectors that are unable to afford generating sets [22].

Insecurity: Africa's development is currently threatened by insecurity ranging from "commercial violence", civil wars, terrorism and kidnapping. Currently, Nigeria, Somalia, Darfur and Kenya face security issues. However, terrorism remains the most significant security problem in Africa. There is no universally accepted definition of terrorism but the most popular definition is contained in the UN General Assembly Resolution [23, 24]. It states that criminal acts intended or calculated to provoke a state of terror in the general public, a group of persons or particular person for political purposes is terrorism [25]. Security has been a primary concern and value for all humans and nations from time immemorial [26]. Africa's sustainable development is constrained by insecurity because only "conflict entrepreneurs" make profit in

environments that are insecure. Insecurity is one of the constraints to improvements in economic activities in Africa. Terrorism has been increasing in the last few decades. Boko Haram and ISIS both account for 51 percent of all recorded global fatalities in 2014 [27]. Nigeria recorded the biggest increase in terrorist activity with 7,512 deaths in 2014. This is about 300 percent increase on the 2013 value. The economic cost of terrorism in 2014 was USD52.9 billion [27]. Insecurity in Africa is characterised by deaths, collateral tortures, injuries, rapes and maiming [26]. Ten African countries experience the highest impact of terrorism globally. The countries are Nigeria (3rd), Libya (9th), Egypt (13th), Central African Republic (14th), South Sudan (15th), Sudan (16th), Kenya (18th), and Democratic Republic of Congo (19th) and Cameroon (20th) position (IEP, 2015). The dominant terrorist groups in Africa are Boko Haram, Sudan People's Liberation Movement in Opposition (SPLM-IO), Al-Shabaab and Fulani herdsmen [27]. Africa is at the receiving end of communal clashes, electoral violence, "commercial" violence induced by high youth unemployment among others. Apart from the destruction of lives and properties that come with insecurity, businesses do not grow in unsafe environments.

Imports: The current state of importation in Africa is high. The continent imports commodities she should be producing. How else can one explain the importation of food items in a continent that accounts for 25 percent of global arable land? In 2012, sub-Saharan African countries spent USD 37.7 billion on food imports with trade mis-pricing and other illicit outflows valued at USD 63 billion [8]. Africa exports are mainly primary products and the continent imports finished goods with the balance of trade tilting towards developed countries. This implies Africa benefit less from trade as a result of reliance on primary products.

IV PROSPECTS OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA

Sustainable development is possible in Africa. This is especially so for resource-rich countries. The constraints to sustainable development have been discussed earlier. Africa has a young population that can provide manpower in her quest for sustainable development. Africa has a wealth of resources sufficient to drive the economic growth and social development. The resources include land, minerals, biological diversity, wildlife, forests, fisheries and water [8].

Agriculture is the mainstay of the African economy accounting for 65 percent of labour employment and 34 percent of the GDP. Oil, minerals and agricultural commodities account for 80 percent of Africa's export [28]. The bulk of food production in Africa is carried out by smallholder farmers with about 70 percent being women [29]. Irrigation alone could raise agricultural productivity by 50 percent. It is estimated that for every increment in farm yield there has been 7 percent poverty reduction in Africa [30]. Agriculture accounts for about 24 percent of Africa's annual growth. Therefore, investment in basic infrastructure (water, electricity, and road), farm-level infrastructure (irrigation,

storage facilities) and access to credit and extension services and farmers' driven policies is the way to go. The World Bank estimates that agriculture and agribusiness together could attract a whopping USD 1 trillion presence in Africa's regional economy in the next 15 years [7]. This implies agricultural development is critical to the achievement of sustainable development.

Oil and gas and minerals can also position Africa strategically for sustainable development. This involves the promotion of value addition in the mineral and oil and gas sector. Africa accounts for approximately 30 percent of mineral resources but less than 7 percent of global metal production and fourth largest oil reserves in the world [31].

V CONCLUSION

The paper examined the drivers and challenges of sustainable development in Africa. The resource endowments in Africa is high coupled with presence of domestic market. Generally, Africa has the potential of growing sustainably despite prevailing economic realities. Currently, the continent battles with poverty, infrastructure deficits, youth unemployment, corruption, insecurity, negative balance of trade among others. Therefore, agriculture, entrepreneurship and mineral resources remain important ingredients for sustainable development in Africa. The study suggest the following:

- (1) Government should increase and monitor investments in infrastructure in Africa
- (2) There is the need to adopt public-private partnerships for infrastructure provision in Africa.
- (3) The fight against corruption and terrorism should be intensified while existing anticorruption and antiterrorism laws are implemented.
- (4) Africa should promote value addition in exports.

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