

Sustainable Development Goals in Africa

Introduction

In September 2015, the United Nations Development Program adopted seventeen Sustainable Development Goals as a part of the United Nations Resolution 70/1, 2030 Agenda. These Global Development Goals were adopted as a call to action for people worldwide to address five critical areas of importance by 2030: people, planet, prosperity, peace, and partnership. Mainly the United Nations aimed to perfect these characteristics in zones where the humanitarian crisis was in a critical condition such as Africa.

Humanitarian Situation in Africa

As of the year 2021, 19.6 million people were in dire need of humanitarian aid in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and by the end of the year 5.5 million people were internally displaced within the country. This meant that these people living below the poverty line did not have access to health facilities during the Covid-19 Pandemic and were also at high risk of facing the impacts of climate change. All in all Africa is considered as one of the most underdeveloped continents in the entire world. From military dictatorships, corruption, civil unrest and war, nations in Africa have witnessed it all. The United Nations has set up The Sustainable Development Goals Centre for Africa to oversee all development in regards to the fulfillment of SDGs within the region. It acts as an international organization that supports government, civil society and businesses to boost progress towards the fulfillment of these goals.

SDG 1 (No Poverty)

The fulfillment of the first SDG which aims to eradicate all poverty is just another dream for the people of Africa. To eradicate poverty, it is integral that the root cause of this problem is first taken care of. Low pay scales and wages, less job opportunities, lack of public unity, lack of transparency in state affairs and lack of independent detective agencies have urged several governments within Africa to use funds irresponsibly and for themselves. There is no major concept of democracy within the continent as the Former President of Tanzania: John Magufuli undermined his people and the constitution of the country by allegedly rigging the 2020 elections and also acted as a barrier in between a peaceful electoral process. The current president of Equatorial Guinea: Mr Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo has served as the longest ruler of the country and is one of the largest oil producers on the continent. But at the same time, the country ranks very poorly on the United Nations Human Development Index. Despite the overgrowing problems which are acting as a hindrance to the fulfillment of SDG 1, the UNDP still remains adamant on their mission statement. They aim to bring down poverty by at least 50% by the end of 2030 and also aim to implement nationality-appropriate social protection systems.

Furthermore, to allow equal economic distribution the United Nations is also committed to allocating equal ownership rights in Africa alongside basic services, technology and economic resources. The United Nations Development Program will also be looking forward to building resilience to economic and social disasters which include famines and floods. By bringing in custodian agencies such as the World Bank, International Labor Organization and United Nations Human Settlements Program, a poverty eradication policy framework will be established at all levels.

SDG 2 (Zero Hunger)

Despite being an agriculture-based continent African countries are facing high levels of food insecurity thus acting as another barrier to the fulfillment of SDG 2 in Africa which calls for Zero Hunger. Lack of investment in the international market, trade deficits, and unsuitable weather conditions have caused 27 million people in West Africa in a state of hunger. As of now only 1% of the cultivable land in the Horn of Africa is irrigated and that is primarily due to a lack of modernized farming techniques, insufficient budget for the agriculture sector, and inadequate water control. This shortage of food has led children to malnutrition causing deficiencies such as Kwashiorkor and Marasmus. In Somalia, 90% of the country is currently facing drought, 1.4 million children are suffering from acute malnutrition, crops have failed, water levels are depleted and livestock has been lost. During these trying times Non Profitable Organizations such as International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement have ramped up operations in counties such as Somalia, Kenya, Nigeria, and Burkina Faso. The majority of these nations were dependent on Russia and Ukraine for wheat which is a very important part of their staple diet. As a call, the war in Ukraine wheat imports have been decreasing at a rather exponential rate thus leaving behind a large un fed population. The main aim of the SDG 2 is to promote small scale subsistence farming where people would not have to be dependent on a third party for basic food commodities. The UNDP also aims to maintain the genetic diversity of seeds, plants and animals. Implementing the second sustainable development goal would lead to increased investment due to enhanced international cooperation, it would prevent distortions in world agriculture markets and lastly it would ensure proper functioning of food commodity markets. Due to the efforts of UN subsidiary bodies such as the World Food Program, Northern Africa has experienced relatively low hunger levels as per the Global Hunger Index.

SDG 3 (Health Care)

Lack of access to medical facilities has alarmed the local populace of Africa due to the rapid spread of the Covid-19 Virus, the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and Measles etc. Over the past few years the death rate of the continent has been exponentially increasing and at the same time the birth rate is also increasing which eventually led to a lack of medical facilities for the local populace. Less than 2% of the drugs consumed in Africa are produced locally while

others do not have the capability to purchase imported medicines. Furthermore, the medical facilities within the continent are below satisfactory. In some parts of Zimbabwe nurses provide patients with painkillers as a "treat all drug". Many African nations do not have the capability to conduct high-scale drug production as a country must abide by Current Good Manufacturing Practices (CGMP) which are enforced by the United States of America. As of now, the World Health Organization aims to implement its Framework Convention on Tobacco Control. It aims to manufacture and provide access to excellent quality vaccines and medicinal drugs. In order to curb the health crisis, the United Nations aims to reduce maternal mortality, end all preventable deaths under five years of age and fight communicable diseases. In collaboration with the implementation of another sustainable development goal, progress has been made on increasing access to clean water and sanitation in order to decrease the risk of malaria, tuberculosis, polio, and HIV. Substance abuse is another major reason why a health crisis has emerged within Africa, therefore the UNDP aims to strengthen the prevention and treatment of substance abuse including narcotic drug abuse and harmful use of alcohol. Road incidents also have to be reduced especially after the first Global Ministerial Conference on road safety was conducted.

SDG 4 (Quality Education)

SDG 4 aims to raise issues regarding quality education and also aims to provide education to all human beings regardless of race, color, or ethnicity. Mainly the SDG aims to provide education to all boys and girls till the end of 2030. Due to Covid-19 Pandemic, several students did not have access to educational facilities and were not able to go to school for more than a year. The problem arises when the same children who are not going to school are somehow linked to terror groups and are associated with them. Conflict in Northern and Western Asia has led to an increase in the number of children not attending school. The UN has been able to make the most progress in the Sub-Saharan Desert where primary school enrollment has increased from 52% to 78%. The goal also aims to provide educational skills via the setting up of vocational training centers, especially for women and men. This SDG is directly linked to the fulfillment of SDGs 1, 3,5,9, and 10.

The United Nations itself aims to prevent all sorts of discrimination in-between humans. Combatting racism and xenophobia was one of the bases of the formation of the United Nations. The SDG promotes a system thinking approach as it is the base for global sustainability. This sustainable development goal aims to end all forms of discrimination and violence against men and women. Organ Trafficking is a major underground business in the towns of African States. The major way to achieve the target has been set by the UN itself. It is imperative that there is proper awareness in terms of reproductive rights and health. Furthermore increasing the percentage of women in the work sector will allow for an equilibrium to be established in regards to men and women in the sector. The UN has emphasized on the need for proper gender equality legislation in African Nations.

The Future

Now that it has been defined that the continent has been facing the above-mentioned problems at the same time, the United Nations has been able to come up with a feasible solution to correcting the mess that has been created over the years. The 2020 Africa Sustainable Development Report has been able to note down the progress that has been made since 2015. The report was produced by the UN Commission of Africa in collaboration with the African Union Commission, the African Development Bank and the UNDP. It has been established that the fulfillment of the sustainable development goals could open 12 trillion dollars market opportunities and 380 million jobs by 2030. The Africa Continental Free Trade Area is another agency that allows the continent to implement the SDGs. Events related to the discussion of SDGs have also taken place such as the 8th Session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development in Kigali, Rwanda. The report overall states that governments have been able to incorporate SDG fulfilling strategies in their domestic and foreign policies. The report has divided the SDGs into five pillars: People, Prosperity, Planet, Peace and Partnerships. The pillars are there to divide the goals as per their importance of fulfillment as well as which sector it would benefit. Most African countries are on track to fulfill the goals that have been set yet they aim to work more efficiently in order to ensure the goals are met by 2030.

