

2023 AFRICA SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT REPORT



Accelerating the recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and African Union Agenda 2063 at all levels

Executive Summary



ECA







EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND KEY POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The year 2023 marks a critical juncture, namely the midway point for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the conclusion of the first 10-year implementation plan (2014–2023) of Agenda 2063.

The achievement of those two overarching agendas is being impeded by global crises and conflicts. In the light of the significant challenges faced by the continent, in the present report, the need to urgently adopt and implement Sustainable Development Goal stimulus programmes, incentivize African States to evaluate and make necessary revisions to their national strategies to achieve the Goals, renew their commitment to supporting the most vulnerable, and create economies and societies that benefit everyone, is underscored.

This year's report also sets out a series of practical and timely recommendations to accelerate country progress towards key Goals and related aspirations, goals and targets of Agenda 2063.

Sustainable Development Goal 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

Goal 6 encompasses not only access to drinking water, sanitation and hygiene but also emphasizes water resource quality and sustainability, which are vital for human survival and global well-being. It plays a pivotal role in advancing progress in other important areas, such as health (Goal 3), education (Goal 4) and poverty reduction (Goal 1).

Safely managed drinking water services are on the rise across the continent, although with significant differences between rural and urban areas

From 2015 to 2020, Africa witnessed an increase in the proportion of people accessing safely managed drinking water, yet with only 39 per cent of the population having safely managed services in 2020, regional disparities persisted, rural-urban gaps were notable and the continent's prospects for attainment of universal access and related targets of Agenda 2063 remained uncertain.

Three out of four Africans lack safely managed sanitation services

Globally, access to safely managed sanitation services increased from 47 per cent in 2015 to 54 per cent in 2020, but the African average of 27 per cent in 2020 highlighted significant regional disparities, with only 2 out of 48 countries on track to achieve universal basic sanitation by 2030 and limited progress in basic handwashing facilities at home in most African countries.

North Africa is at high risk of water stress

Heightened water stress in North Africa, which is exemplified by levels reaching 120.5 per cent in 2019, reveals impending scarcity challenges, while the majority of African countries, aside from those in South Africa, maintained safer water stress levels below the global average of 18.6 per cent.

International cooperation to promote programmes in the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene for All sector in African countries has stagnated, with the focus primarily on public development finance for capacity-building and lacking emphasis on integrated infrastructure development

ODA for water and sanitation programmes remained within the \$2.5 billion to \$3 billion range between

2013 and 2020, indicating limited progress in integrated water resource management and underscoring the need to tap into private sector financing for integrated catchment infrastructure to bolster climate resilience and establish partnerships for transboundary water resource management to further efforts to achieve Sustainable Development Goal targets.

Effective progress towards achieving Goal 6 in Africa, including water hygiene and sanitation services

This requires leveraging synergies with other Sustainable Development Goal targets, addressing data gaps in monitoring and enhancing capacity-building efforts, while emphasizing the need for comprehensive data and resource mobilization.

African countries should strengthen integrated water resource management capacity

Countries should focus on improving monitoring capabilities by collaborating with national and transboundary water resources entities, foster public-private partnerships in the WASH sector, adopt innovative technologies, and address water stress through sustainable management strategies to accelerate the achievement of Goal 6 and the objectives of Agenda 2063.

Sustainable Development Goal 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all

Sustainable Goal 7 encompasses five targets and six indicators that revolve around ensuring widespread access to affordable, dependable and modern energy services. By achieving the Goal 7 targets, the international community will significantly increase the proportion of renewable energy in the global energy mix, double the rate of global energy efficiency improvement, foster international cooperation to facilitate access to clean energy research and technology, and expand relevant infrastructure and upgrade technology to provide modern and sustainable energy services.

Electrification rates are on the increase across the continent, although there are stark differences between rates in rural and urban areas

Electrification rates could be increased by focusing on modernizing and expanding energy infrastructure, promoting rural electrification programmes and enacting energy sector reforms to encourage competition and efficiency.

Universal access to clean cooking fuels and technologies remains a key policy priority

The use of clean cooking fuels and technologies remains limited, as

some countries remain heavily reliant on coal and other fossil fuels for their energy needs. African countries should scale up access to clean cooking options through financial incentives, awareness-raising programmes, research and development and support for local manufacturing, while prioritizing clean cooking in national plans and promoting international cooperation.

The shift from non-renewable to renewable energy is slow, and accelerating a just energy transition remains paramount

To increase the share of renewable energy in total final energy consumption, it remains vital to adopt a systemic approach to a just energy transition by setting ambitious renewable energy targets, improving access to resources and shifting subsidies from fossil fuels to renewables.

Increased funding for infrastructure and technology is required to boost the production of sustainable energy

Greater attention should be given to the development of infrastructure and technology to sustain the continent's sustainable power generation efforts. In addition, countries should improve financing mechanisms through the provision of support for public-private partnerships, dedicated funds, carbon markets, microfinance and green bonds to encourage clean energy investments and cross-border cooperation.

Sustainable Development Goal 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation

Goal 9 encompasses three important aspects of sustainable development – infrastructure, industrialization and innovation – and is strongly linked with many of the Sustainable Development Goals. Hence, in the context of Africa, Goal 9 is highly relevant in efforts to promote development while accelerating structural transformation across the continent.

Africa is performing well in mobile network coverage

African countries have been investing in infrastructure and innovative technologies that support the establishment of mobile telephone networks. In general, Africa is on track in terms of its mobile network coverage. Based on current trends, Africa will meet the relevant Goal 9 target by 2030. However, those few lagging countries need to accelerate their efforts to improve coverage in the coming years.

Progress in infrastructure development is uneven across Africa

Progress in infrastructure development varies across the continent. Notwithstanding the fact that rural inhabitants in most African countries account for up to 85 per cent of the population, rural areas are not

equipped with access to an all-season road within an approximate walking distance of two kilometres. The acceleration of rural road construction and expansion should be prioritized to achieve rural connectivity and regional integration, which in turn will facilitate the full implementation of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area, by 2030.

Disparities among countries in receiving official development assistance for infrastructure

Despite the repercussions of the pandemic, total ODA for infrastructure development has increased in recent years for a number of African countries, although it has fallen sharply for others. The disparities among countries and subregions in receiving ODA and other official flows for infrastructure in 2019 and 2020 can be explained by the fact that priorities vary from country to country. Some countries prioritized the health sector in response to the pandemic. Every effort should be made to ensure that African countries are able to mobilize the resources they need for infrastructure development, including within the context of the Programme for Infrastructure Development for Africa.

Africa continues to underperform in comparison with other global regions in terms of the share of gross domestic product generated by manufacturing

African countries underperformed for a number of reasons, including

inadequate productive capacity, supply chain disruptions resulting from the combined effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the conflict between the Russian Federation and Ukraine, a decline in global demand and limited policy space to deploy fiscal stimulus measures to support the industrial sector, in particular small industrial enterprises, which continue to face significant challenges in accessing credit. African countries need to provide fiscal stimulus and access to financial services in support of SMEs to promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and, by 2030, to significantly increase industry's share of GDP.

Share of employment in the manufacturing sector has slightly increased in Africa

The increase could be attributable to the boom in the construction sector, which, in turn, increased the demand for inputs of manufacturing materials, such as cement and steel. Input production provides synergistic effects in augmenting employment. Expanding manufacturing, increasing value addition and investing in the productive capacities of young people, who represent about 60 per cent of the population, could help to increase employment opportunities for young people in Africa while increasing the share of employment in manufacturing in total employment.

Medium- and high-tech industry is growing in Africa

Although Africa exhibited a 2.41 per cent increase in the medium and high technology industry, industry in Africa is still mainly resource-based and makes use of low-technology activities. As a result, the share of the continent's medium- and high-technology industry value added as a proportion of total manufacturing value added is lower than in the rest of the world. One of the factors for low share relates to the low level of spending on research and development in African countries. African countries need to provide adequate funding for research and development in order to advance the continent's structural transition from resource-based and low-technology activities to medium- and high-technology activities with a view to increasing productivity and creating better paid jobs.

Sustainable Development Goal II: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

Goal 11 supports the establishment of sustainable cities and communities by addressing such factors as accessibility, resilience and sustainability. The assessment of progress towards the achievement of the Goal encompasses an examination of diverse indicators pertaining

to housing, transportation, public spaces, disaster risk reduction, the preservation of national cultural and natural heritage, waste management and air quality.

The continent has experienced a modest decline in the proportion of the population living in urban slums, but limited progress has been made on improving access to public transport

The proportion of the urban population living in slums has slightly declined, but Central, East and West Africa still have high slum populations. Access to public transport remains low. The proportion of built-up urban areas dedicated to public spaces in Africa is less than that recommended by the United Nations. It is imperative for African countries to develop policies and institutions that support sustainable and inclusive urban development, with a focus on agglomeration economies and congestion reduction through transport infrastructure investment and incentives for establishing businesses in efficient locations.

Natural disasters have had a substantial impact on cities and human settlements, resulting in loss of life and economic losses

There is significant variation among countries and subregions in terms of their adoption and implementation of local disaster risk reduction strategies, with particularly slow progress

in Central Africa. To reduce the losses resulting from natural disasters, it is paramount to implement economic transformation policies that incorporate a disaster risk reduction component and give priority attention to the challenges facing cities and to people's well-being, in line with the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063.

Efforts must be made to improve waste management in many African cities in order to meet the relevant Goal 11 targets, and air quality remains a concern in densely populated areas

Waste management in African cities is often extremely poor. Southern Africa has the highest proportion of municipal solid waste collected and managed. There is an immediate need for African countries to resolve current waste management issues and to prepare for the anticipated increase in waste production in the twenty-first century. Moreover, air quality, measured by fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}), is a concern in areas with high population concentrations, in particularly in Central, North and West Africa. Stricter limits for annual mean PM_{2.5} levels globally need to be adopted to reap public health benefits and the corresponding economic benefits.

Sustainable Development Goal 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

Goal 17, which has 19 targets and 25 indicators, covers seven distinct yet critical areas, namely finance, technology, capacity-building, trade, policy and institutional coherence, multi-stakeholder partnerships and data, and monitoring and accountability. Goal 17 is closely linked to the 16 other Goals and is therefore vital in efforts to achieve sustainable development in Africa.

African countries must give priority attention to securing adequate, predictable, and affordable financing through greater domestic resource mobilization

Revenue generation trends in Africa fluctuate and show significant disparities among countries. African Governments need to strengthen domestic resource mobilization while addressing debt vulnerabilities. It is essential to boost intra-African trade by accelerating the implementation of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area, including by reducing tariff and non-tariff barriers, negotiating simplified and effective rules of origin, improving trade infrastructure, fostering the development of regional value chains and coordinating standards.

The use of technology is improving but requires further investment

The COVID-19 pandemic caused a surge in global Internet use, but Africa, excluding North Africa, continues to lag behind other regions in that respect. The combination of low levels of research and development, poor Internet connectivity and inadequate power generation and transmission had a negative impact on the adoption of innovative technology on the continent. Financial and logistical resources are needed at all levels of administration to support the development and implementation of policies, plans, laws and regulations in all relevant sectors, such as health, finance and manufacturing.

Capacity-building is crucial in the implementation of both the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063

Capacity limitations in various areas continue to hinder many countries' efforts to foster development. Policy choices and implementation frameworks play a vital role in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation frameworks that promote the sharing of best practices, expertise and relevant technology, and strengthened partnerships among public, private and civil society stakeholders remain vital to the continent's progress.

Strengthening policy and institutional coherence in Africa

A number of organizations are now coordinating efforts to combat illicit financial flows and recover lost assets. Furthermore, ECA has developed 14 institutional tools to help African countries to reduce tax avoidance. Most African countries have not yet put those tools to use.

Building multistakeholder partnerships and enhancing data, monitoring and accountability

The number of countries reporting progress in their efforts to develop multi-stakeholder effectiveness monitoring frameworks increased from 14 in 2016 to 17 in 2018. Building partnerships that promote shared values, transform systems, empower local stakeholders and encourage the adoption of digital technology will be essential if African countries are to achieve transformative change and ensure that no one is left behind.

Lack of data and statistics hamper the monitoring of and reporting on Sustainable Development Goals and the related goals, aspirations and targets of Agenda 2063

Data gaps remain a major challenge for tracking the Sustainable Development Goals in Africa, where one third of indicators for almost half of all African countries lack sufficient data. African countries, therefore, need to strengthen their national statistical capacity to facilitate the generation of high-quality, timely and internationally comparable data and statistics, with a specific focus on the indicators of the Goals, to monitor and report progress adequately and to evaluate the effectiveness of programmes aimed at achieving the Goals and the related goals, aspirations and targets of Agenda 2063.



