

2024

Africa Sustainable Development Report

Reinforcing the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 and eradicating poverty in times of multiple crises: the effective delivery of sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions

Executive Summary



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Jointly produced by

**The African Union, African Development Bank, United Nations
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2024 Africa Sustainable Development Report (ASDR) reviews the status of the implementation of the two Agendas in Africa and offers policy recommendations to facilitate their attainment. As in previous years, the 2024 report aligns with the theme and corresponding Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the high-level political forum on sustainable development (HLPF) selected for any particular year. In this context, the SDGs under review by the 2024 HLPF focus on ending poverty (Goal 1); eliminating hunger (Goal 2); combating climate change (Goal 13); promoting peaceful societies (Goal 16) and strengthening global partnerships (Goal 17). Each SDG is analysed in relation to the corresponding goal of the African Union Agenda 2063.

The findings of the report highlight the need for Africa to accelerate progress on SDGs 1, 2 and 17, reverse the negative trend on climate action (Goal 13) and strengthen statistical systems to track performance particularly on good governance (SDG 16), where data limitations abound and inhibit performance tracking. For Africa, less than 6 percent of the 32 measurable SDG targets are on track to be achieved by 2030. Of the remaining measurable targets, 21 need achieving in the region and the negative trends for 8 need to be reversed. Overall, data gaps prevent a full picture of the continent's performance.

KEY FINDINGS

1. Ending poverty in all its forms everywhere

Modest progress in poverty reduction offset by multiple crises in recent years

Since 2000, Africa has made steady and significant progress in reducing the proportion of the population living below the poverty line. However, multiple crises, including COVID-19, have offset these gains, causing economic contraction and increased poverty. In 2020, an estimated 55 million Africans were pushed into poverty, and as at 2022, Africa accounted for more than half (54.8 percent) of people living in poverty worldwide. The share of

the population living below the national poverty line increased from 33.3 percent in 2013 to 38 percent in 2023, well short of the 23 percent target value for 2023 set by the Agenda 2063. Africa's unemployed poor population (31.09 percent) is also higher than the world average (6.38 percent).

Social protection in Africa is inadequate in coverage, fragmented and largely informal

Social protection systems in Africa are fragmented and inadequate in coverage, with only a 17.4 percent of the population covered by formal social protection systems compared with the global average of 46.9 percent. However, with ramped up efforts, countries like Botswana exceed the global average with national and rural social protection coverage rates of 57.7 percent and 68.3 percent, respectively.

Modest increase in access to drinking water services and basic sanitation services

Access to drinking water in Africa increased, on average, from 68.7 percent in 2015 to 72.9 percent in 2022. Access in Southern (90.2 percent) and North Africa (93 percent) are however comparable to the world average of 91.2 percent based on 2022 figures. With respect to basic sanitation services, access in Africa increased less than 1 percentage point annually over the 2015–2022 period, rising from 46.9 percent in 2015 to 52 percent in 2022. Except for North Africa (93 percent), access to basic sanitation services in Africa was lower than the world average (81 percent) in 2022.

2. The state of hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition

Alarming increase in the number of people facing hunger, undernourishment and stunting

The number of people experiencing hunger in Africa increased by 11 million: rising from 270.6 million in 2021 to 281.6 million in 2022; and by a staggering 61 million since the outbreak of

the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. The adverse trend in hunger has been associated with drought and conflict resulting in increased food insecurity, undernourishment and stunting. The prevalence of undernourishment increased from 19.4 percent in 2021 to 19.7 percent in 2022, while 1 out of every 3 children (under five years of age) is stunted as of 2022. Sixty percent of Africa's population experienced moderate or severe food insecurity in 2022, up from 45.5 percent in 2015. Similarly, in 2022, 80 percent of Africa's population was unable to afford healthy food while an estimated 145 million children, under 5 years, experienced food poverty.

Investments and official development assistance (ODA) to the agricultural sector have experienced a downturn in most subregions

Globally, the agricultural share of government expenditure decreased by approximately 2.13 percentage points between 2015 and 2021. In Africa, this reduction was even more pronounced at about 2.69 percentage points during the same period. East Africa exhibited a significant reduction of 3.58 percentage points. Recent declines in ODA flows to the agriculture sector may explain this trend. ODA to agriculture in Africa increased over the 2015–2020 period but declined in 2021 from US\$5.98 billion to US\$4.673 billion in constant prices.

3. Combating climate change and its impacts

Africa remains the lowest per capita contributor of global carbon emissions, but is highly vulnerable to its impacts

Africa accounts for less than 4 percent of global carbon emissions, but it is highly exposed to its impacts. Approximately 52 percent of African countries have been impacted by climate change. More than 110 million were directly affected by climate, weather, and water-related hazards resulting in an estimated \$8.5 billion in economic damages in 2022.

Notable strides taken in combating climate change at the strategic policy level but integrating strategies into plans remain limited

All but two countries have ratified the Paris Agreement with ambitious nationally determined

contributions to climate action (NDCs). Twenty-one African countries have developed and submitted national adaptation plans out of a total of 53 submissions by developing countries globally. A further eight countries have submitted long-term low emissions development strategies out of a total of 68 global submissions. However, little progress has been made from 2015 to 2022 in adopting and implementing policies to reduce disaster risks, including the updating and domestication of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction into the Africa Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction. Only 29 of 54 African countries have established national and local disaster risk reduction strategies, reflecting little progress in policy adoption since 2015.

Climate finance mobilized on the continent is far below the target of \$100 billion per year

About \$2.8 trillion (\$277 billion annually) is needed between 2020 and 2030 to implement Africa's NDCs. By 2020, total annual climate finance flows to Africa from domestic and foreign sources accounted for only \$29.5 billion or 11 percent of the total need. Climate finance to Africa is highly concentrated in 10 countries (Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Morocco, Nigeria, Mozambique, South Africa and Tunisia) accounting for 60 percent of climate finance flows.

4. Promoting good governance

Corruption remains a significant challenge across many African countries

According to the 2023 Corruption Perceptions Index, most African nations are either stagnant or failing to make progress in the fight against corruption. For instance, the proportion of persons who reported to have paid a bribe to a public official at least once or were asked for a bribe in the preceding 12 months increased from 9.5 percent in 2013 to 31.4 percent in 2021. Nevertheless, some African countries have instituted legislative and regulatory measures to address the challenge. Malawi, for instance, established the integrity committee for every public institution, coordinated by the anti-corruption bureau, and commits at least 1 percent of budget from each institution to the integrity committee.

Conflict related deaths have halved in the past decade, yet pockets of disputes and wars persist

The number of armed conflicts in Africa increased 37 percent, (from 75 to 98) during the 2015–2022 period, representing about 53.8 percent of global conflicts (182). Despite the high and rising number of conflicts, conflict-related deaths per 100,000, dropped 86 percent from 202 in 2013 to 28 in 2023, which is well ahead of the Agenda 2063 target of 101 by 2030.

High illicit financial flows obstruct financing of the two Agendas

The total value of inward and outward illicit financial flows remains substantial and continues to undermine efforts to achieve the two Agendas. Illicit outflows from developing countries reached approximately \$1.3 trillion in 2020, while illicit inflows amounted to around \$1.1 trillion during the same period. As at 2019, Africa was losing about \$88.6 billion, representing 3.7 percent of its GDP annually in illicit financial flows.

5. Strengthening partnerships for sustainable development

Domestic resource mobilization in Africa remains below global averages

Average tax revenue as a percentage of GDP in African countries stands at 16 percent, compared with 34 percent in Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries. However, government revenue as a percentage of GDP has increased from 2018. Several countries are introducing tax administration and policy reforms to improve revenue generation. For example, Rwanda increased its tax-to-GDP ratio from 12.3 percent in 2010 to 16.7 percent in 2021 through the digitization of tax services.

ODA to Africa falls short of 0.7 ODA to GNI target

ODA to Africa in 2023 increased by 2 percent in real terms compared with 2022. However, the ODA total represents 0.37 percent of DAC donors' combined GNI for the second consecutive year, which is below the longstanding United Nations target of 0.7 ODA to GNI. Only five DAC members met or exceeded this target in 2021. Additional ODA is needed to meet the growing financing gap for the SDGs in Africa, estimated at \$1.3 trillion per year.

Foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows to Africa have stagnated in recent years

FDI inflows to Africa have stagnated in recent years, reaching \$83 billion in 2021, the same level as 2020 but below the 2014 peak of \$91 billion. Macroeconomic instability, weak infrastructure and fragmented markets continue to hinder investment attraction. However, the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) is expected to generate new FDI opportunities.

Persistent debt distress across Africa leads to development distress

Africa's public debt ratio is stabilizing at around 60 percent of GDP in 2023. However, many African countries still face high borrowing costs, tight financing constraints and ongoing debt vulnerabilities. As of 30 April 2024, 20 out of 38 low-income countries in Africa were either in debt distress or at a high risk of distress.

Gaps remain in Africa's statistical systems despite some progress

Africa has made progress in strengthening statistical systems, but key challenges include limited financial and human resources, weak administrative data systems and inadequate data dissemination. In 2022, only 26 African countries had national statistical plans that were fully funded. Weak statistical systems are undermining evidenced based policymaking in support of vulnerable groups. Existing data shows that only 27 countries have comprehensive systems to track and make budgetary allocations for gender equality and women's empowerment.

1. Key recommendations

Accelerating the achievement of the SDGs and Agenda 2063 and eradicating poverty in times of multiple crises requires sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions. African countries are advised to:

- **Undertake forward-looking debt sustainability analyses** to avert debt vulnerabilities and sustain funding for key social services (i.e. health, education, social protection) and productive investments that prioritize people-centred development to advance sustainable development.
- **Implement comprehensive economic and institutional reforms to enhance efficiency and optimal use of resources** by prioritizing investments in physical and human capital, as well as skills and technology adoption, which will be key in alleviating poverty.
- **Strengthen climate information services and early warning systems** to ensure more agile responses to climate related hazards. Strengthening weather and hydro-meteorological observation networks and early warning systems is also crucial, alongside updating regional strategies for disaster risk reduction.
- **Fully implement AfCFTA** by supporting local industries and regional value chains, thereby driving economic integration and growth across the continent
- **Advocate for scaled-up access to concessionary development financing** in the context of reforms to the global financial architecture.



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