Organizing Government to Deliver on Sustainable Development Goals: A Regional Perspective

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Abstract: Africa as a continent is in the provisional period following the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that were due to be achieved by 2015. The new phase began in September 2015 with Agenda 2030 for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Most of the countries on this continent are aiming for substantial change. The anticipated transformation will occur in each country with the implementation of Agenda 2030 by each government. The success of this programme will be achieved by incorporating the seventeen goals into each country's national development plan. The integration of Agenda 2030 into the national development plan requires a thorough understanding of the sustainable development goals by government officials. In the past two years most countries began implementing the seventeen goals. This study will attempt to evaluate the progress of the Agenda 2030 on the African continent. A progressive change will occur on the continent once the governments are able to achieve all the SDGs. The research will use secondary data to analyse the progress of the 2030 Agenda on the continent. For the purpose of this research, a desktop analysis and an extensive literature survey will be undertaken.

Keywords: Agenda 2030, National development plan, Service delivery goals, Sustainable development goals, Programme implementation

1. Introduction

The implementation of the MDGs in Africa was not a successful undertaking among the various governments on the continent. The main reason for this failure is because numerous countries in Africa have failed to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. The level of poverty and hunger on the continent is higher than ever and access to clean energy and water is still very low in most countries. This paper will not focus on the failure of the MDGs, but on the implementation of Agenda 2030. Reflection on the fifteen years of MDGs' implementation on the continent will assist most of the governments in executing the 2030 Agenda successfully. The transition period in Africa after the Millennium Development Goals' end in May 2015 requires attention. The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (2015:3) asserts that "Africa is off track in achieving most of the targets, so the MDGs will still remain relevant important beyond 2015". The post 2015 period and implementation of Agenda 2030 saw a need for complementarity between the MDGs and the current programs. A matter of concern is that African states should continue working toward meeting all the objectives before the 2030 deadline.

For the past two years the majority of African governments have begun introducing the Sustainable Development Goals 2030 into their national development plans. According to Hajer, Nilson, Raworth, Bakker, Berkhout, Boer, Rockstrom, Ludwig, and Kok (2015:1) "the SDGs have a potential to become a powerful political vision that can support the urgently needed global transition to a shared and lasting prosperity". Supporting this argument, Agenda 2030 in Africa will become an indicator of the development in the various sub-regions of the continent. Each government should prioritize the execution of the seventeen goals on an annual basis. This would require a collaboration of all stakeholders within each country. For any change to occur in Africa, there is a need for an integrated approach for each country regarding the execution of the SDGs. This study will attempt to answer one question. What mechanism should African governments employ to achieve the Agenda 2030 goals for sustainable development? The focus of this study will be discussed under four headings. The first part will discuss the foundation of the sustainable development in the world. The second part's focus will be on the implementation of Agenda 2030 in Africa, the third part will discuss the challenges African countries encounter regarding the Agenda 2030 implementation's oversight mechanism and lastly, a conclusion.

2. The Foundation of Sustainable Development

The development of Africa today requires resilient governments to achieve prosperous societies for future generations. This particular statement is linked to the concept of sustainable development (SD). The discussion of SD began several years ago and there is no need in this study to provide a historical background of SD. For the sake of this paper, the generally quoted definition "development *that meets the need of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*" will be used (WCED, 1987:8). Under this definition it is understood that each country should improve progress for the current generation taking the next generation into consideration. The priority of our government today is to achieve development that satisfies all communities. Nobody can be left behind in terms of job creation, economic opportunity and access to services provided by the government. Africa made the decision to take a holistic approach with regard to sustainable development. That approach suggests that economic, social, environmental and political factors should be integrated under the same dimension. Any decision regarding development in Africa must take all four factors into consideration. This particular statement is supported by the Sustainable Development Report on Africa (2005:7), which claimed that the "Africa Union adopted the New Partnership for Africa Development (NEPAD) in 2001 to provide a regional framework for holistic development in Africa". Looking at Agenda 2030, most of the countries in Africa could work toward NEPAD's vision. Challenges to achieving sustainable development are encountered in most of the countries on the continent. A number of these challenges will be discussed in more detail in this paper.

Numerous countries in Africa made good progress during the implementation of the MDG programs but not all the goals were achieved successfully during the fifteen-year target set by the United Nations. Sachs (2012:2206) posits that "the probable shortfall in achievement of the MDG is indeed serious, regrettable, and deeply painful for people with low income". This particular failure in Africa can be blamed on the political authorities and also on those who implement government policy. It would be wrong to share this responsibility with other stakeholders. With the application of Agenda 2030, African countries should take responsibility instead of waiting for assistance from other stakeholders. Any development should come from within, which means that political authorities and other stakeholders in the country should take the lead.

Sustainable development goals on the continent could be considered as a move towards development, as the majority of the countries need to implement the seventeen goals. This move towards development is not going to be easy for many governments on the continent and specifically in sub-Saharan Africa. Many countries are struggling to raise a higher annual budget in response to the demands of the people. This particular observation is based on the political, economic, environmental and social realities some countries are facing. Mthembu (2017:108) holds that the achievement of Agenda 2030 in Africa could be realized by the cooperation referred to as North-South-South. This cooperation can be implemented between two countries, one from the developed world and another from among the developing countries. Through this kind of rapprochement, there is the possibility of achieving some of the SDGs on the continent. One of the key goals the African continent should strive to achieve is the reduction of poverty and hunger in various countries.

According to Biermann, Kanie and Kim (2017:1), "while past global governance efforts have relied largely on top-down regulation or market-based approaches, the SDG promise a novel type of governance that make use of non-legally binding, global goals set by the United Nations Member States". This kind of governance is legally bound by international law. It is being said that the SDGs are confined under international law, but do not have any immediate effect in any country. Every government should discuss this in their parliament and approve it. The SDG agenda can be integrated into the national development plan. Under that particular perspective, there is a possibility to access the applicability of the Agenda 2030. At least each government must take a bold decision to implement every single goal and be able to evaluate the progress every year.

3. Organised Delivery of Sustainable Development Goals in Africa

Since the launching of the 2030 Agenda on the 15 September 2015 by the United Nations, the Africa Union undertook another initiative by adopting

the Africa Agenda 2063 in January, 2015. These two agendas work concurrently for the development of the continent. The two programs have attempted to reaffirm the centrality of development across nations in Africa. Today, Africa wants a strong integration for both 2030 and 2063 agendas for progressive change on the continent. Africa as a continent requires a determined decision to achieve the 2030 agenda on sustainable development. Sachs (2012:2209) holds that "At every level, government and official agencies should be responsive to the citizenry". There is also a need for private sectors and other stakeholders to unite in working towards the accomplishment of the sustainable development goals. In addition, cooperation among governments should be tools to use for the delivery of SDGs.

Every government should have a national planning framework for the implementation of the SDGs, suggesting that the Agenda 2030 must be included in the national development plan. The national government of each country must prioritize the integration of the 2030 Agenda into the national development plan. The central government should work in collaboration with other spheres of government. The researcher's own recent experience with a local authority during a telephonic interview indicates that the local authority, (Emfuleni Local Municipality), is not aware of the 2030 Agenda. None of the 17 goals was included in the "Integrated Development Plan" for 2018 to 2019 in the municipality's budget. Based on the current truth, the government must share information, exchange ideas, encourage meetings and brainstorming with the local authorities or senior managers. The researcher acknowledges that this situation cannot be generalised but that it is a reality in at least one of the local municipalities in South Africa.

4. Implementation of Sustainable Development Goals in Africa

The progress of SDGs on the continent is very slow with numerous problems or realities being faced by various countries. The availability of data to measure the progress of each country is challenging. According to Africa's SDG report (2017:2), "the scope and depth of analysis of the report is framed by the availability of data which is weak, particularly on the indicator pertaining to environmental sustainability, and the growth on democratic and electoral governance, human rights and rule of law". There is a problem with regard to the lack of data across

many countries on the continent. That is one of the reasons that many African scholars are demanding that government consolidate the statistic system for each country. This particular situation cannot be generalised across the continent. There are countries in Africa whose statistical bureau is effective in terms of data availability. For example, the South African statistical bureau is the principal reporter on the SDG progress in the country. In other countries, the ministries of planning have the ability to report on the progress of the Agenda 2030. This study will attempt to discuss some of the goals and assess the progress made by the continent over the past years.
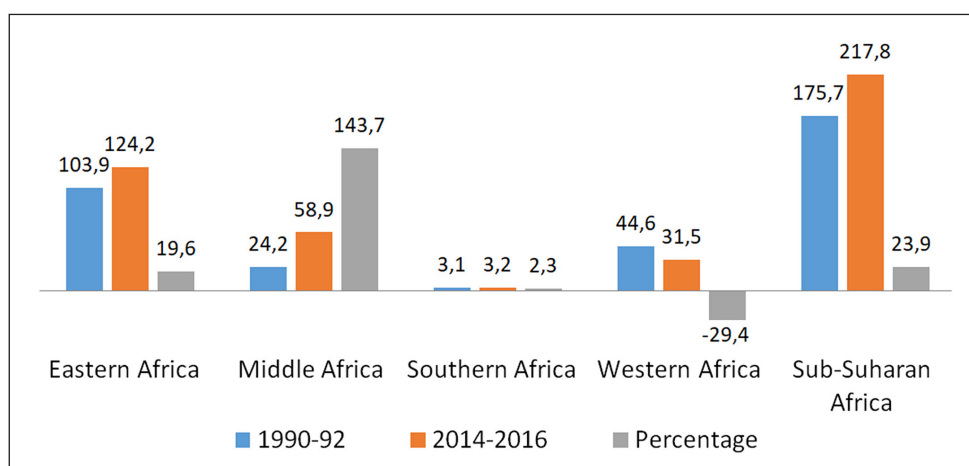
4.1 Goal 1: End Poverty

This is one of the areas where the majority of countries are still failing. The Africa Union recognized the slow progress of poverty reduction on the continent. According to the Africa SDG report (2017:4), "the rate of decline in extreme poverty (1 American dollar per day) has been slow in Africa, declining a mere 15% during the period of 1990-2013. Women and the young people bear the brunt of poverty". Job opportunities in many African countries are limited and many graduates are forced to remain at home without employment. The report cited above also holds that 60% of the jobs across the continent are vulnerable and the risk of losing one's job is high. Not many people in sub-Saharan Africa are eligible for unemployment benefits. The statistics indicate that only 1% of the population is entitled to unemployment benefits and 19% are covered by social assurance. The rate of poverty in Africa is high compared to other continents. There is hope that with the application of Agenda 2030, governments will be able to reduce the poverty on the continent. What is required in Africa today is that the governments should prioritize opportunities for new investment in various sectors of the economy. By doing so, people will have more employment opportunities and poverty on the continent will decline in the coming years.

4.2 Goal 2: Zero Hunger

The production of food on the continent needs to improve in order to satisfy the daily demands of the communities. If every country has a food security strategy the level of hunger on the continent would decrease. According to the SDG report (2017:4), almost 64% of the people in Africa are malnourished. Looking at in terms of numbers, 355 million

Figure 1: Number of Undernourished People (millions), in Sub-Saharan Africa

Source: Food Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (2016)

people on the continent were moderately or severely food insecure in 2015. In some countries this could be related to political instability and also civil war, as is the case in South Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia and others. Food insecurity on the continent impacts negatively on the large population, specifically in sub-Saharan Africa. Figure 1 represents the number of people on the continent that are undernourished.

Figure 1 illustrates that the zero-hunger goal in Africa still needs extensive work to reduce the number of undernourished people on the continent. The highest numbers of malnourished people are found in the Central Africa region, followed by eastern Africa. The west of Africa is in the third position and Southern Africa has the fewest malnourished people.

A significant challenge to achieving the second goal is finding a way to reduce the number of those who are struggling for access to food. According to the regional overview of food insecurity in Africa (2015:2), the continent is still challenged with the fast growing population, as this affects the ability of countries to assure a stable supply of, and access to food.

4.3 Goal 3: Good Health and Wellbeing

There is a decrease in child mortality on the continent. The data indicates that the rate of decline in child mortality increased in 34 African countries during the periods 1990-2000 and 2000-2010. The majority of countries in Africa have made great strides in reducing the rate of child mortality. From the perspective of Agenda 2030, governments must prioritize the wellbeing of the people. The health

sector is a priority for any government that takes the wellbeing of its people seriously.
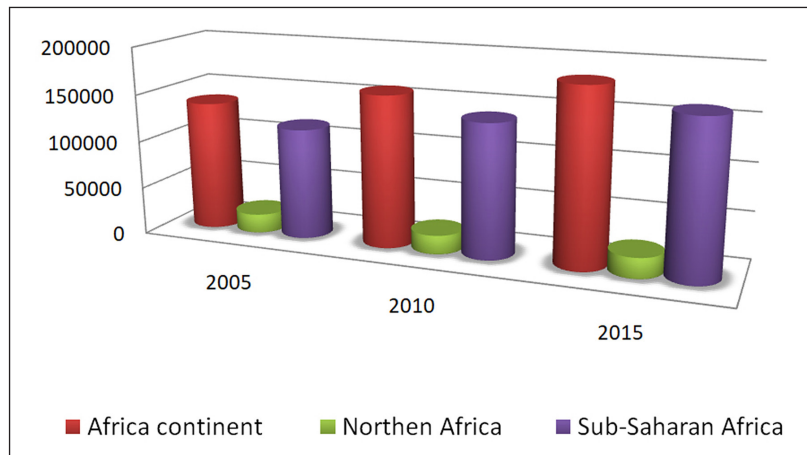
4.4 Goal 4: Equality of Education

Governments should ensure that everyone has access to education. The onus should be on the government to prioritize free education for all.

There is significant progress in terms of enrollment in primary schools across the continent. Many countries are requesting that parents send their children to school. In some of the countries access to primary education is free to everyone and there is no need for any parent to pay any fees. This particular procedure cannot be generalised to all 54 countries in Africa. This is one of the goals that numerous countries have shown progress in achieving. However, more effort must be exerted to improve the quality of the education that is offered. Figure 3 on the next page indicates the number of girls and boys enrolled in primary schools in Africa from 2005 to 2015.

The enrollment of girls in primary schools in sub-Saharan Africa still lags behind that of boys. The parity between the two genders is far apart in sub-Saharan Africa and the various governments should attempt to close this gap. The evolution toward reducing the rate of illiteracy in Africa remains moderately weak. Northern Africa is the leading region in terms of the enrollment of children in primary schools.
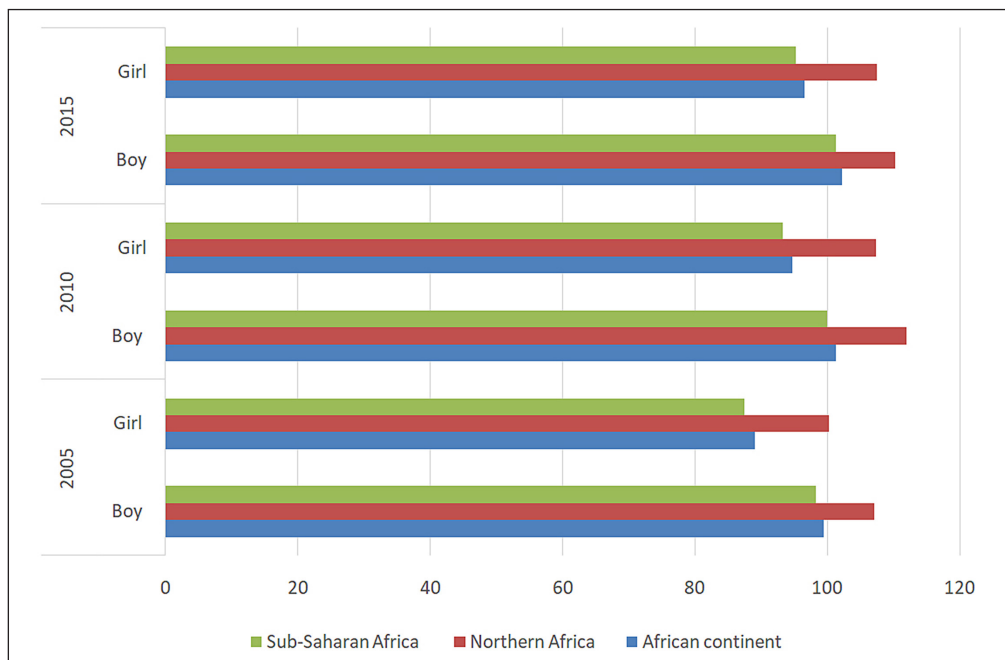
Agenda 2030 promotes the enrollment of girls in primary schools in each country. Most of the parents must encourage their female children to enrol in school. According to the Economic Commission for

Figure 2: Primary School Enrollment on the Africa Continent

Source: United Nations (2017)

Figure 3: Boys' and Girls' Primary School Enrollment from 2005-2015

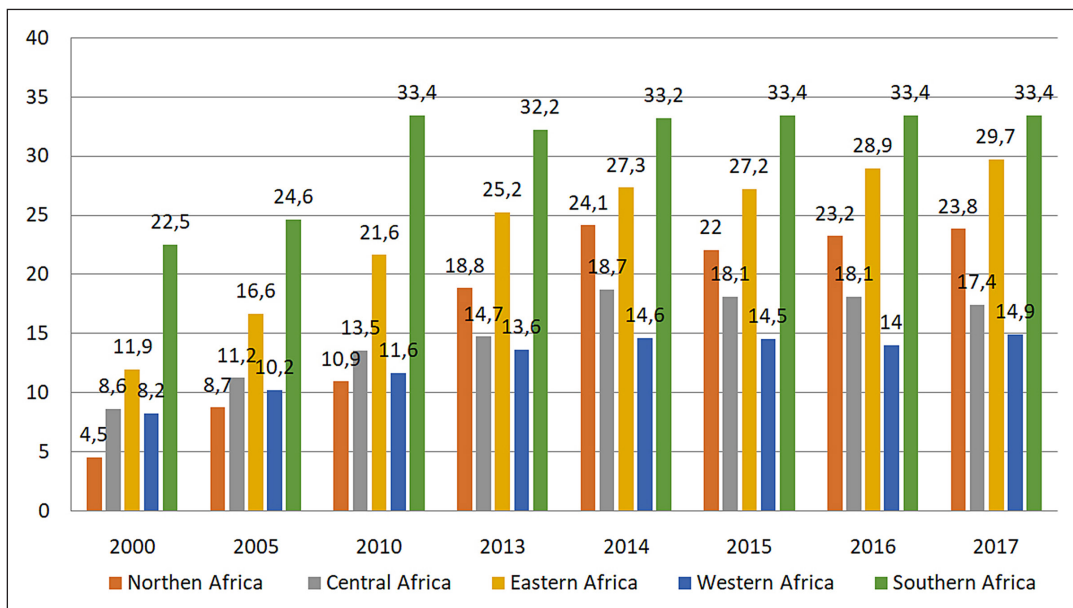

Source: United Nations (2017)

Africa (2016), "there is progress in primary school enrolment was supported by substantial public investments in primary education, the implementation of policy frameworks that promotes access to education opportunities especially for underprivileged girls and children, and the mobilization of civil society and the international community". It is a priority for each government to promote the education of children. Both genders must be empowered in terms of access to better education. In addition, the problem of political instability and civil war in Africa should be reduced to avoid instability in terms of school enrolment. This kind of instability can be found in countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, South-Sudan, Central African Republic, Nigeria, Mali and Somalia. Political instability and civil war has a negative impact on school enrollment. There is a strong indication that before the end of the 2030 Agenda many countries in Africa will have reached their target in terms of school enrollment.

4.5 Goal 5: Gender Equality

Numerous countries in Africa are promoting gender equality in various sectors of society. The empowerment of women in sub-Saharan Africa is taking place in many sectors of the economy and can be seen in politics and public institutions. Ernst and Young

Figure 4: Seats Held by Women in National Parliaments in Africa

Source: United Nations Statistic Division (2017)

(2014:10) hold that South Africa's public sector work-force is made up of 30% women and 70% men but only 8% of those women are in leadership positions. LeanIn.Org and McKinsey (2015) posit that women are less likely to advance in the workplace than men. They experience an uneven playing field, with odds of advancement lower at every level. There is a persistent leadership gap in the most senior roles and gender diversity is believed to be priority. Currently, in many parliaments in Africa, women do occupy seats. Figure 4 above illustrates the percentage of women occupying seats in parliaments in Africa.

In terms of progress with regard to gender equality in Africa, many governments are attempting to close the inequality gap. The representation of women in parliament in Africa is growing, with the Southern African sub-region having women hold 33.4% of the seats in parliament from 2000 to 2017. This is closely followed by eastern Africa with 29.7%. The North African countries' representation of women in parliament is progressing at a slow pace when compared with countries in sub-Saharan Africa. The Economic Commission for Africa (2016) states that since 2015 female representation in national parliaments averaged 15%, up from 9.1% in 1990. However, the continent's progress remains well below the target of 30%. This increase occurred because of the quota some of the governments decided to implement. With the implementation of Agenda 2030 there is a possibility for additional progress before the SDGs' 2030 end date.

4.6 Goal 6: Clean Water and Sanitation

Access to clean water and sanitation in Africa remains problematic in many countries. It is a priority for each government to provide access to clean water and sanitation. Millions of people in sub-Saharan Africa are struggling to find clean water for drinking, cooking and washing every day. Some of them walk a long distance to fetch that water. There is a need for every government to implement a policy of access to clean water and sanitation by 2030.

4.7 Goal 7: Affordable and Clean Energy

Access to electricity in sub-Saharan Africa demands a commitment from the governments. Our continent lags behind when compared with other continents in terms of access to clean energy. There are 36 countries in Africa where only 2 in every 5 households have access to a reliable supply of energy. According to the World Bank (2018), "24% of the population of SSA has access to electricity versus 40% in other low income countries. Excluding South Africa, the entire installed generation capacity of SSA is only 28 Gigawatts, equivalent to that of Argentina". The affordability of energy in Africa requires attention from each government before the objectives of Agenda 2030 can be achieved. The researcher cannot address all seventeen of the Agenda 2030 goals in this chapter but the aim here was to highlight that commitment is needed from each government in Africa vis-à-vis the implementation of the

2030 Agenda. The accomplishment of sustainable development in Africa lies with every government, as each budget must adjusted to implement the 2030 Agenda. The integration of the SDGs into the various government programs will have an impact on the development of each country. Most of these countries have planned to include the 2030 Agenda into their national development planning. This will allow them to ensure that every goal will be implemented. The office of the Premier Minister would play the role of coordinator. For example, in Uganda the office of the Premier Minister has the responsibility to oversee the implementation of the SDGs in Uganda. The same office would monitor, evaluate, report, and provide awareness on all matters pertaining to the SDGs (United Nations, 2017). In every government there are specific ministries that are responsible in terms of financing the SDGs program. The accomplishment of the SDGs in Africa must be localized into each country's programs, which will be the best approach for the achievement of the SDGs in Africa.

5. Challenges Regarding the Implementation of 2030 Agenda in Africa

There are many challenges the African continent is facing regarding the applicability of the Agenda 2030. A particular challenge is because of another program the Africa Union decided to implement almost at the same time as the SDGs. The Africa Union adopted the Africa Agenda 2063 in January 2015. This means that each country must comply with the specifications laid down by both programs. Most of the governments have decided to combine the two programs without compromising either of them.

As previously stated, each government should have a national planning framework to implement the Agenda 2030 and 2063 recommended by the Africa Union. There is a demand for coordination by each government. This will assist with report any progress made by a country leading up to the target year. Any progress with regard to SDGs will require statistical data to support the report by senior government officials on the Agenda 2030 achievement. That is a challenge for many countries on the continent. A statistical data report in most African countries is not well presented. Many sub-Saharan African countries struggle to produce reliable statistical data. Collaboration with other stakeholders will

be necessary to obtain the information required to report on the progress made by each country. Another challenge many countries are going to face is in implementing the Agenda 2030 successfully due to budget constraints. All seventeen goals require adequate funding to support government programs. Countries cannot expect funding from donors to implement the seventeen goals. Many are silent concerning the successful achievement of the SDGs in Africa. According to the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (2017), "the implementation of the 17 SDGs, points to an infrastructure gap of some $1 trillion to 1.5 trillion annually in developing countries, while estimates of the global gap generally range from $3 trillion to $5 trillion annually." In analysing this quotation there appears to be a need for a comprehensive approach regarding the financing of Agenda 2030. There is a need for a clear understanding on the way in which the Agenda 2030 will be financed. Various mechanisms should be utilised to finance the Agenda 2030; every country must develop a model to finance the implementation of the SDGs. Multilateral cooperation is recommended by the UN to finance the SDGs but this is not going to be enough, as there is a possibility that some of the partners might not comply with their pledge. Consequently, governments should come up with their own strategy for funding the Agenda 2030 objectives.

6. Training of Civil Servants to Implement Agenda 2030

It is crucial to train public officials or civil servants to understand the importance of Agenda 2030 objectives within government programs. This particular training should be apart from other training provided by the national, provincial and local government. Training regarding SDGs must be focused and specific to the level of seniority in the administration hierarchy. Local politicians require SDG training to relate it with local municipal programs. As long as the local politicians understand the 2030 Agenda's importance, it will be easy to align with the local government programs. Training should be focused on the senior and middle management because they implement the national government policies and local municipal programs. Vertical training from the bottom up is recommended. All three spheres of government should participate and understand the implementation of the sustainable development goals in the country. Other stakeholders, such as the United Nations Development Program, can assist by providing advice where there is a lack of expertise.

7. Oversight Mechanism to Achieve Agenda 2030 in Africa

The importance of oversight is fundamental to evaluate the progress of each government concerning the Agenda 2030. Key ministries and other government agencies should be appointed to provide feedback on the progress of the SDGs within the country. The selected agency will check if governments are striving to achieve all 231 indicators in accordance with the SDG time frame. In Africa, UN agencies should work with the host country to access data regarding the implementation of the SDGs within that specific country. This is already the case in most of the countries in sub-Saharan Africa. The oversight mechanism will be a structure for a check and balance regarding the progress of the Agenda 2030". This indicates that any effort government makes will get support from the international partners. The best strategy would be for each country to use the parliamentary platform to check on the progress their government is making in terms of Agenda 2030. It will be better for the policy maker to evaluate the commitment of their government vis-à-vis international engagement.

8. Conclusion and Recommendations

Finally, sustainable development goals in Africa have been accepted by the member states. The majority of the governments do not want to see the Agenda 2030 fail in the same way as the implementation of the MDGs, where many countries did not achieve their targets. For the past three years most of the governments have begun implementing Agenda 2030. It is difficult at this time to evaluate any progress or achievement. Many countries on the continent have chosen to align Agenda 2030 with their national development plan to facilitate the application of the seventeen goals into government programs. Under that particular initiative the various African governments will be able to implement the SDG programs.

There are challenges regarding the applicability of Agenda 2030. These challenges could be linked to several realities on the continent. The first challenge is linked to another program the Africa Union (AU) decided to embark upon at the same time as Agenda 2030. The AU adopted Africa Agenda 2063, which means that each country must ensure compliance with both programs. The majority decided to combine the two programs without compromising either of them. The second challenge that countries

could face is the compilation of data by each country concerning the progress of Agenda 2030. This will require enough effort by each government in terms of data collection. African countries will need to train civil servants on the SDGs in different spheres of government. Public officials should know about Agenda 2030 and the way in which all seventeen goals are to be implemented. Agenda 2030 should be monitored and progress assessed and reported every year.

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