



The UN Sustainable Development Goals; Its Success in Africa is critical. The Need for a New Implementation Strategy.

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Background

As early as five years after the United Nations adopted the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), it was clear that Africa would not meet most of the targets of the Millennium Development Goals. Indeed in 2015 we know that while there was advancement in a few areas, Africa did not meet the Goals. Now as the world begins all efforts towards meeting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), it is important to note that Africa meeting all the goals is critical to overall global success. Therefore this paper presents new thinking and strategies that should ensure that United Nations efforts in Africa towards meeting the SDGs are successful. I explain the importance of programme “buy in”, take over and ownership through a homogenous community strategy in Africa.

Africa critical to global success

Africa is where the change sought after by the United Nations development goals must succeed if there will be any collective global success. It is in Africa that we have 65% of the world’s arable land yet 70% of its farmers live in poverty. It is in Africa we find a fast increasing population of those who have been left behind in poverty by the recent economic growth surge where true economic development for all is absent.

As the African nations seek economic development and growth to create jobs and opportunities that lift many out of poverty, it is now we must guide and assist their choices and methods including in the energy production, if the world is to avoid disastrous climate change in the future. Social, political and economic development in Africa as sought after by SDGs will lead to very significant reductions in global poverty, food insecurity, and forced economic and political refugees. It is clear to most that for the United Nations sustainable development goals to succeed overall, its success in Africa is

critical. Against this background it is of concern to me, that for varying factors, United Nations programs and goals in the spirit of the SDGs have had little success in Africa.

MDGs failure in Africa.

In May 2014, the United Nations declared that sub Saharan Africa would not meet the MDGs on water in spite of the prevailing efforts. 40% of the 783 million people in Africa are without access to an improved source of drinking water. The African water vision 2025 explained the critical role that water plays in accomplishing socio-economic development goals. Further more, the 2014 United Nations MDGs report stated that although progress was made, sub Saharan would not meet the MDGs targets by 2015.

The SDGs are a new set of 17 goals to be achieved between 2016 and 2030, such as to promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all, build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation and reduce inequality within and among countries.

New thinking

The reasons for Africa's underdevelopment are complex. I introduce here an ideology that I believe are the solutions, new thinking and innovation towards Africa's true development. Veracity and an extra understanding of Africa as a development destination and location is needed in the process of developing policies and programmes within the SDGs that will succeed in Africa. Therefore it is important to understand who Africans are and what Africa is from a development seeking perspective. I throw important light on how development policies, programmes and initiatives for Africa could be tackled.

What is Africa?

Africa is the continent that consists of the most culturally diverse nations in the world. I must point out that cultural diversity I refer to is not necessarily the same thing as ethnic diversity. In my ideology, Cultural diversity takes a combined recognition of the customs, language, shared local difficulties, religion, living location as well as ethnicity. According to research by Erkan Goren of the University of Oldenberg in Germany, and another by The Harvard Institute of Economic Research, the top 20 most culturally and ethnically diverse nations on earth are in Africa. Much has been written about the positive attributes of diversity, notably that it provides cultural vitality and labor resources to first world countries that could have been seriously hindered by their aging populations.

Nevertheless, experience in Africa tells me that while cultural diversity may be good for a developed nation, it is certainly a deciding hindrance when it comes to trying to kick start sustainable economic and social development in a much underdeveloped nation in Africa. To further exacerbate challenge of sustainable development in Africa, as well as her multitude of tribes, differing customs and culture, are the reality of living within historically "artificial" political boundaries.

Government in Africa, at all tiers are seen as “them” and not “us,” while it is common for corrupt government officials to be hailed and accepted in their villages or local community without question, because they have obtained from “them” and at least brought some back home to “us”.

Interestingly, it is from the governments of these artificial boundaries called nations in Africa, that almost all efforts (programmes, aid, initiatives etc..) aimed at development have to come, go through or partner with. The significant negative hindering effect is that there is never a homogeneous cultural community “buy in” or ownership from the people for any development programme, initiative etc. This is true for government development programmes as well as United Nations partnered or sponsored ones and the likes. My studies and experience reveal clearly that in culturally homogenous community driven projects, the community drives the progress and they almost always meet their objectives across Africa. Therefore all development projects initiatives and the likes especially all within the noble sustainable development goals, must connect to and be driven by Africa’s many different homogenous communities.

What and where are the culturally homogenous communities?

In this concept, culturally homogenous communities are people living together in a location where they share and benefit or suffer from the lack or existence of local infrastructure. People who share benefit or suffer from the same local schools, hospitals, power plants, roads, public transport and other local facilities where available or not available. These culturally homogenous communities in almost all scenarios in Africa do not correspond to the administrative coverage of state governments, counties, local government areas and the likes, instead they correspond mostly to cities and the settlements around them. In many cases the communities correspond to large districts of large cities in Africa. Experience shows that “buy in” take over or ownership of almost any project, programme, initiative etc...by culturally homogenous communities very significantly increases the possibility of it meeting its goals.

The factors enumerated above should be of importance to African governments and all agencies of the United Nations and their likes as all efforts begin towards the world meeting the SDGs. It is important to note for example that a United Nations backed or partnered project or programme to improve the quality of health care services that expectant mothers receive in Africa starting with a given region will not lead to sustainable improvement and development in that area if the culturally homogenous communities of the region are not heavily engaged in a manner that will foster the community’s “buy in”, take over or ownership of the project. Without the communities’ takeover, there will always be incidences of project or programme failure and consequently the need for new aid and projects period after period.

The Action solutions

I assert that all development policies, projects and programmes in Africa within the SDGs must be planned and executed via Africa’s culturally homogenous communities. This should ensure that the SDGs are met in

Africa. The skills set to get this done is available in Africa. It should be clear to all that in some occasions in step with necessity, there may be a moral imperative for humanitarian and charity-based aids to places in Africa. Aid-supported scholarships have certainly helped send African girls to school but without a change in aid-project strategy, they will find no jobs in Africa when they might have graduated, as is the case presently.

Aid can alleviate immediate suffering in some cases but if aid is not infused into culturally homogenous community driven programmes in Africa, then it is clearly no tool for sustainable development. It becomes an addictive drug needed year after year. Over a time period of 60 years the United Nations, World Bank, International Monetary Fund and the likes, as well as many rich and developed countries have given over 1 trillion USD to Africa in aid. Yet, real per-capita income in Africa today is lower than it was in the 1970s, and alarmingly almost half of Africa's population live on less than a dollar a day. This number continues to increase everyday.

We need to also note that as we move into the implementation of efforts towards the SDGs. There is an urgent need for change! Change towards the culturally homogeneous community strategy. Only this will ensure that the SDGs are met in Africa and consequently lead to the most sought after collective global success.

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