



2

The Sustainable Development Goals: Accelerating progress

ESSAY

Getting the SDGs back on track in Africa	50
--	----

VIEWPOINTS

Morocco's journey toward achieving the SDGs: Prioritizing economic resilience and social transformation	58
Navigating rough patches: Financing Africa's SDGs and the path forward	61
How well is Africa doing across the Sustainable Development Goals?	66
Why 2025 could be a litmus test for African agency	68
Delivering the Africa of the future: AUDA-NEPAD's role in achieving Agenda 2063 and the SDGs	72

Getting the SDGs back on track in Africa

**AHUNNA
EZIAKONWA**

United Nations Assistant
Secretary-General and
Director, Regional Bureau
for Africa, UNDP

[@ahunnaeziakonwa](#)

Instead of chasing individual SDGs in isolation, African countries and their partners must harness the powerful, mutually reinforcing synergies among the goals.

Halfway through the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) timeline, only 17% of the targets are on track globally and almost 35% are stagnating or regressing.¹ The picture across Africa follows a similar trend.² Reversing this troubling trajectory in Africa will require a bold, new strategic approach, adequate and affordable financing, and renewed political commitment. The path to progress is clear, but it demands a radical shift: Instead of chasing individual SDGs in isolation, African countries and their partners must harness the powerful, mutually reinforcing synergies among the goals. Emphasizing key enablers like technology and energy over individual indicators can boost economic output, spur innovation, encourage value-addition in economic activity, protect the planet, create jobs, and enhance human capital. An allied imperative required to get the SDGs back on track in Africa is reforming the way Africa's development is financed. Coordinated global efforts to improve tax efficiency along with an increased use of creative mechanisms to finance sustainable development will unlock Africa's immense potential.

The United Nations' (UN) Pact for the Future articulates a new multilateral framework that can help African countries move toward achieving the SDGs faster and outlines clear pathways toward ending poverty, reforming trade, addressing critical financing gaps, and protecting the planet.³ Of particular note is the annexed Declaration on Future Generations, which calls for concerted action to secure the well-being of generations to come.⁴ Africa's path to achieving the SDGs is within reach—but only if the commitments in the Pact are more than just promises on paper. Immediate implementation is the only way forward. This is why U.N. agencies like the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) are working across the continent to foster innovation, strengthen capacity, and invest in Africa's future.⁵

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, African countries were experiencing slow but steady progress. On average, Africa's GDP grew by 3.3% annually between 2010 and 2019,⁶ while net capital inflows rose from \$70 billion in 2007 to \$113 billion in 2017, providing some optimism

1 "The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2024," (New York: United Nations, 2024), <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2024/>.

2 "2024 Africa Sustainable Development Report | Reinforcing the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 and Eradicating Poverty in Times of Crises: The Effective Delivery of Sustainable, Resilient and Innovative Solutions" (Addis Ababa, Abidjan, New York, Addis Ababa: African Union, African Development Bank, United Nations Development Programme, and United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, 2024).

3 "The Pact for the Future," United Nations General Assembly (A/RES/79/1), September 22, 2024.

4 "REV3 Declaration on Future Generations" (United Nations, n.d.), <https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/soft-declaration-on-future-generations-rev3.pdf>.

5 "Home | United Nations Development Programme," accessed UNDP December 18, 2024, <https://www.undp.org/>.

6 Mayowa Kuyoro et al., "Reimagining Africa's Economic Growth: Turning Diversity into Opportunity" (McKinsey & Company, June 5, 2023), <https://www.mckinsey.com/mgi/our-research/reimagining-economic-growth-in-africa-turning-diversity-into-opportunity>.

that more countries would be in a better position to invest in key sectors and capabilities.⁷ However, the pandemic disrupted Africa's SDG aspirations. Development gains were eroded, as seen in the historic drop in the Human Development Index in 2020/21.⁸ In addition, roughly 23 million Africans were pushed back into poverty in 2020,⁹ millions of children could not attend school,¹⁰ inequalities deepened, and millions suffered disruptions to health services.¹¹ Unfortunately, the pandemic and subsequent geopolitical and supply chain shocks further stymied progress in African countries.¹²

The IMF's October 2024 World Economic Outlook painted a gloomy picture, noting that the anemic near-term global GDP growth is insufficient to eradicate poverty, create adequate jobs, or generate enough fiscal revenue to service debt.¹³ This sobering assessment highlights the dual growth conundrum facing African countries. African economies must grow much faster than the medium-term GDP estimates, and the type of growth matters. High growth rates alone will not accelerate attainment of the SDGs in Africa if they do not create jobs or generate wealth. Addressing these issues requires concerted and coordinated actions by African countries and their development partners on four fronts.

First, African countries must transition from focusing on individual SDG targets to adopting an "SDG ecosystem approach," which entails prioritizing core activities that improve multiple SDGs. For instance, promoting smart agriculture reduces poverty, creates jobs, enhances human capital, reduces income inequality, and mitigates hunger in a way that protects the planet. This approach helps consolidate resources and action by both public and private development actors. UNDP's Regional Stabilization Facility, which operates on this principle, has reached 1.7 million people (including 1 million women) across six countries. It has helped resettle more than 500,000 internally displaced persons by strengthening regional institutional capacities, thereby putting many communities back on track to attain multiple SDGs.¹⁴

7 "Regional Economic Outlook | Sub-Saharan Africa: Capital Flows and the Future of Work" (Washington, D.C.: International Monetary Fund, 2018).

8 "Human Development Report 2023/2024 | Breaking the Gridlock: Reimagining Cooperation in a Polarized World" (New York: United Nations Development Programme, 2024).

9 Kibrom A. Abay, Nishant Yonzan, Sikandra Kurdi, and Kibrom Tafere. "Revisiting Poverty Trends and the Role of Social Protection Systems in Africa during the COVID-19 Pandemic." (Washington, D.C.: International Food Policy Research Institute, 2022). <https://doi.org/10.2499/p15738coll2.136411>.

10 "40 Percent of Children in Eastern and Southern Africa Are Not in School," UNICEF (press release), July 27, 2021, <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/40-cent-children-eastern-and-southern-africa-are-not-school>.

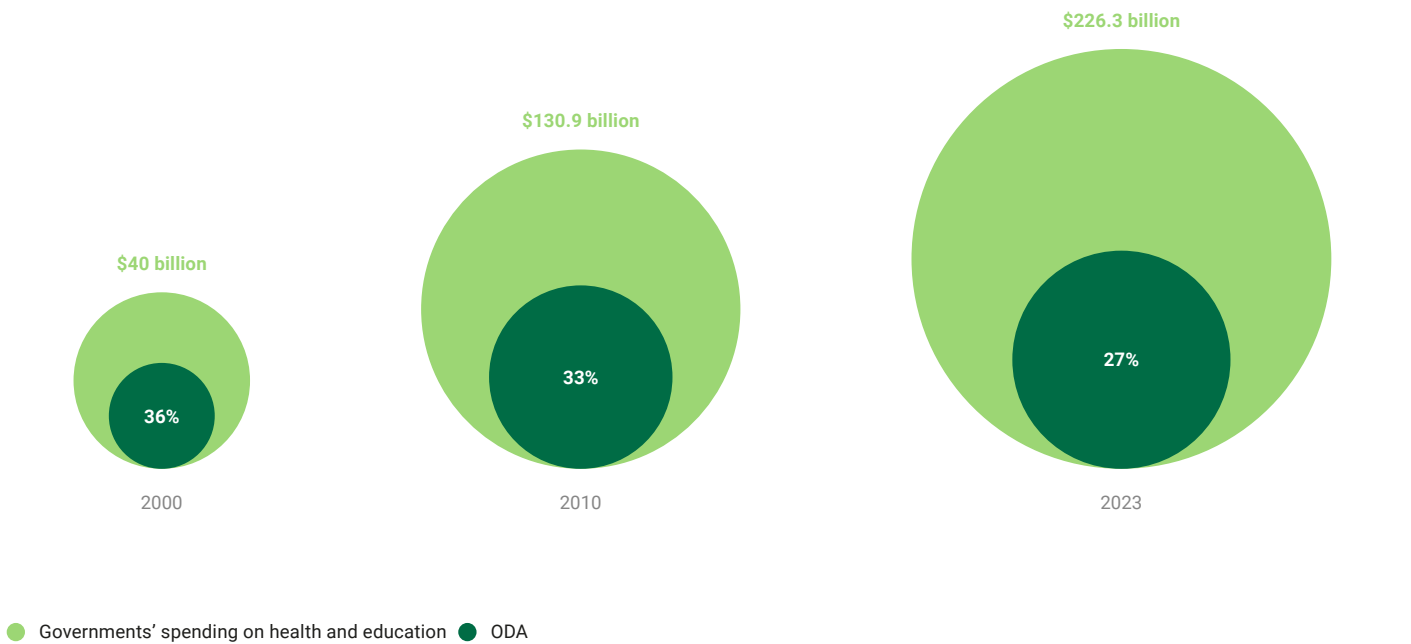
11 Elliot Koranteng Tannor et al., "The Impact of COVID-19 on Health Service Utilization in sub-Saharan Africa—a Scoping Review," *BMC Global and Public Health* 2, no. 1 (August 7, 2024): 51, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s44263-024-00083-0>.

12 "Regional Economic Outlook | sub-Saharan Africa: Living on the Edge" (Washington, D.C.: International Monetary Fund, 2022).

13 "World Economic Outlook: Policy Pivot, Rising Threats" (Washington, D.C.: International Monetary Fund, 2024).

14 "Regional Stabilization Facility for the Lake Chad Basin and Liptako-Gourma Regions: Factsheet 2023" (Dakar: UNDP, 2024), <https://www.undp.org/africa/waca/publications/regional-stabilization-facility-2023-factsheet>.

FIGURE 6
AFRICAN GOVERNMENTS' SOCIAL SPENDING VS ODA RECEIPTS



Source: World Bank, World Development Indicators data; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Development Assistance Committee data.

Second, Africa and its development partners must be better prepared for the post-official development assistance (ODA) era of development financing. Figure 6 illustrates the reduction in ODA as a proportion of spending by African governments on health and education. African countries must also prioritize efficiency enhancements in domestic development spending, which far exceeds aid dollars. Additionally, the financing of strategic investments (particularly infrastructure, energy, and technology) requires increased ingenuity and ambition. Africa's regional financial institutions can use their leverage ratios and market positions to expand the pool of financial resources available to African countries while greatly reducing their lending costs. A recent report by Fitch Ratings suggests that multilateral development banks could increase their lending by an additional \$480 billion without compromising their credit ratings.¹⁶

15 "World Development Indicators | DataBank," 2024, <https://databank.worldbank.org/source/world-development-indicators>; "Indicators" (OECD), accessed December 18, 2024, <https://www.oecd.org/en/data/indicators.html>.
16 "Major MDBs Have Rating Headroom for USD480 Billion in New Lending," Fitch Ratings, October 9, 2024, <https://www.fitchratings.com/research/sovereigns/major-mdbs-have-rating-headroom-for-usd480-billion-in-new-lending-09-10-2024>.

This is a practical way to bridge Africa's \$4 trillion SDG financing gap.¹⁷ Regional development banks in Africa should be enabled and empowered to use financial innovation in this regard.

Third, African institutions must put a premium on regional value chains. African countries account for less than 3% of the global value chains in which they are involved.¹⁸ Take the lithium-ion battery value chain for example. If African countries continue exporting unrefined cobalt, lithium, and nickel, they will command an \$11 billion market. Refining increases the value fourfold, while the component production can increase the value to almost \$400 billion.¹⁹ Reengineering Africa's value chains can increase income, spur much-needed economic diversification, create jobs, and retain value on the continent. Such reengineering will be much easier (and quicker) regionally. The World Bank estimates that regional integration via the African Continental Free Trade Area agreement could lift 50 million people out of extreme poverty by 2035 and expand incomes across the continent by \$571 billion.²⁰

Fourth, the global community should do more to ensure that African resources finance Africa's development. Improving public financial management and closing tax/contractual loopholes could generate almost twice the amount of ODA that African countries currently receive. The Tax Inspectors Without Borders initiative has saved \$1.8 billion in Africa since inception by providing technical assistance on natural resource contracting and closing tax loopholes.²¹ The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development estimates that illicit financial flows cost African countries on average \$88.6 billion annually.²² Particular attention should also be paid to potential revenue streams like carbon markets and rare earth metals. Furthermore, enhanced economic governance and efforts to eliminate corruption are crucial if the continent is to make meaningful and sustained progress with the SDGs.

Enhanced economic governance and efforts to eliminate corruption are crucial if the continent is to make meaningful and sustained progress with the SDGs.

17 "Africa's Multi-Trillion-Dollar SDG Funding Gaps Demands Urgent Financial Reforms," United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, November 16, 2024, <https://www.uneca.org/stories/africa%27s-multi-trillion-dollar-sdg-funding-gap-demands-urgent-financial-reforms>.

18 Sebastian Krantz, "Africa's Integration Into Global Value Chains," Africa Monitor, July 28, 2022, https://africamonitor.ifw-kiel.de/datastories/africas_GVC_integration.html.

19 Theophilus Acheampong, "From Mines to Markets: How Africa and Europe can Become Green Industry Partners of Choice," European Council on Foreign Relations, April 24, 2024, <https://ecfr.eu/publication/from-mines-to-markets-how-africa-and-europe-can-become-green-industry-partners-of-choice/>.

20 "Free Trade Pact Could Help Lift Up to 50 Million Africans From Extreme Poverty," World Bank (press release), June 30, 2022, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2022/06/30/free-trade-pact-could-help-lift-up-to-50-million-africans-from-extreme-poverty>.

21 "Tax Inspectors Without Borders: 2024 Annual Report Launch | Remarks by Mathias Cormann, OECD Secretary-General" OECD (speech), April 29, 2024, <https://www.oecd.org/en/about/news/speech-statements/2024/04/tax-inspectors-without-borders-2024-annual-report-launch.html>.

22 Dan Ngabirano, "Tackling Illicit Financial Flows in Africa Arising From Taxation and Illegal Commercial Practices" (New York: United Nations, November 2022), https://www.un.org/osaa/sites/www.un.org.osaa/files/tackling_iffs_in_tax_reform_and_illegal_commercial_practices_-_nov_2022.pdf.

There are some green shoots of optimism indicating that SDG progress is not only attainable, but within reach. By 2035, more young Africans will enter the job market annually than in the rest of the world combined, with small-to-medium enterprises accounting for 80% of jobs.²³ Africa's youthful entrepreneurs are increasingly tech-savvy, with 160 million Africans gaining broadband access between 2019 and 2022.²⁴ The 2024 Stanford AI Index reports that Kenyans are the world's third most frequent ChatGPT users.²⁵ A study of AI use in Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, and South Africa suggests that technology could create a \$136 billion boost to economic benefits in these countries by 2030.²⁶ Engaging tech-savvy youth through employment across sectors could help Africa turn the corner in its efforts to attain the SDGs.

A viable "last mile" push is warranted. While most countries will be unable to meet all of the SDGs by 2030, we can still attain the aspirational goal of putting African countries on a fast track to achieving shared global development goals and regional aspirations like the African Union's Agenda 2063. In the face of unprecedented challenges, getting the SDGs back on track in Africa is not just a bureaucratic objective—it is a matter of dignity, survival, and hope for over a billion people. Africa's young and dynamic population, its rich natural endowment, and its untapped potential for innovation represent a powerful force for change, but only if this potential is fully harnessed.

Getting the SDGs back on track in Africa is not just a bureaucratic objective—it is a matter of dignity, survival, and hope for over a billion people.

Every step toward the SDGs is a step toward a future where children thrive, families build sustainable livelihoods, and nations stand resilient and self-reliant. This vision goes beyond numbers on a chart—it is about empowering a generation that refuses to inherit a world plagued by poverty, inequality, and environmental ruin. The good news is that Africa's abundant natural resource endowment, positive regional synergies, and vibrant youthful population offer a promising path forward. African communities and countries are already taking steps to seize these opportunities and reshape the continent's development trajectory.

23 Chido Mpemba and Chido Muniyati, "How Africa's Youth Will Drive Global Growth," World Economic Forum, August 16, 2023, <https://www.weforum.org/stories/2023/08/africa-youth-global-growth-digital-economy>.

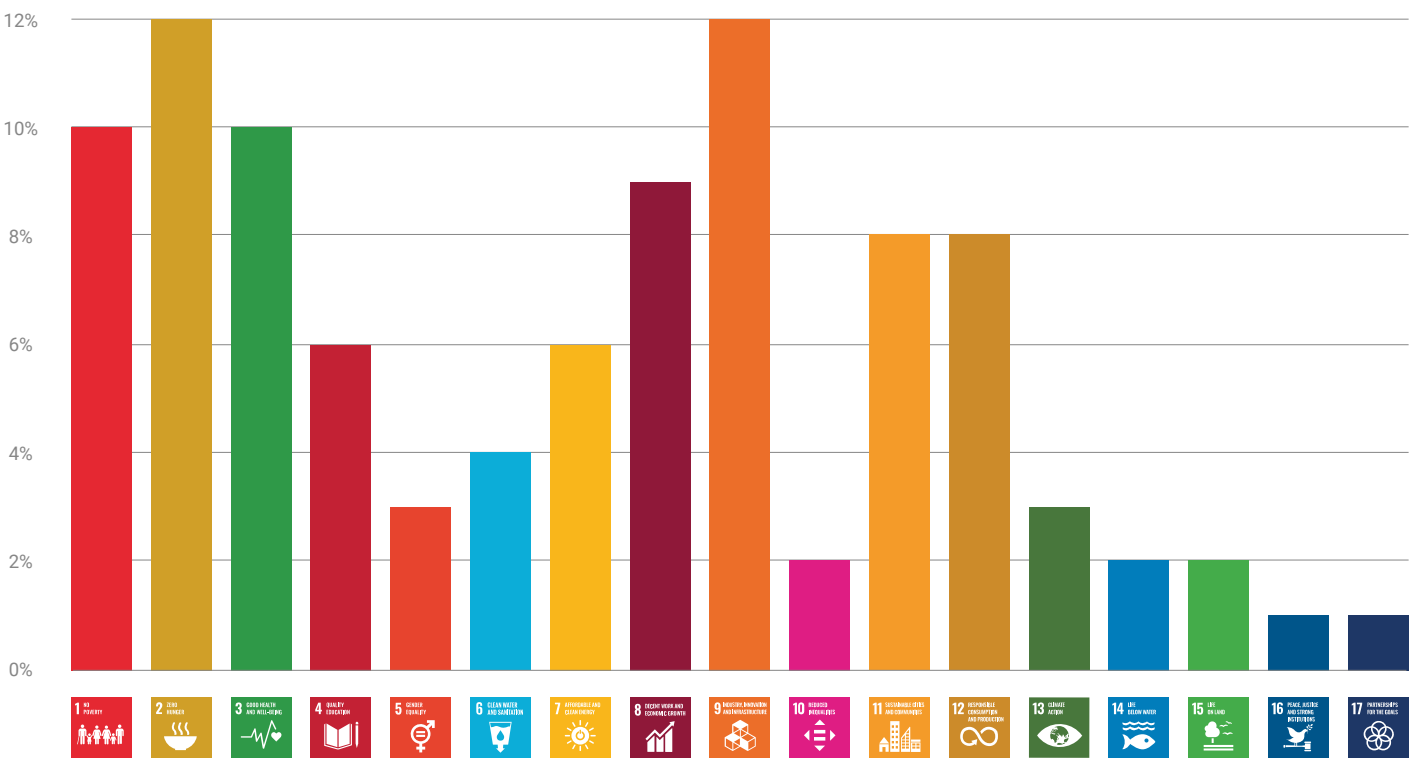
24 "Digital Transformation Drives Development in Africa," World Bank, January 18, 2024, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/results/2024/01/18/digital-transformation-drives-development-in-afe-afw-africa>.

25 Nestor Maslej et al., "The AI Index 2024 Annual Report" (Stanford: AI Index Steering Committee, Institute for Human-Centered AI, Stanford University, April 2024), https://aiindex.stanford.edu/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/HAI_AI-Index-Report-2024.pdf.

26 "AI in Africa: Unlocking Potential, Igniting Progress" (London: Access Partnership, September 2023), <https://accesspartnership.com/ai-in-africa-unlocking-potential-igniting-progress/>.

FIGURE 7
AFRICAN STATUS ON SDGS 2 (ZERO HUNGER) AND 9 (INDUSTRY INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE)

SDGs 2 and 9 are the most addressed SDGs in Africa

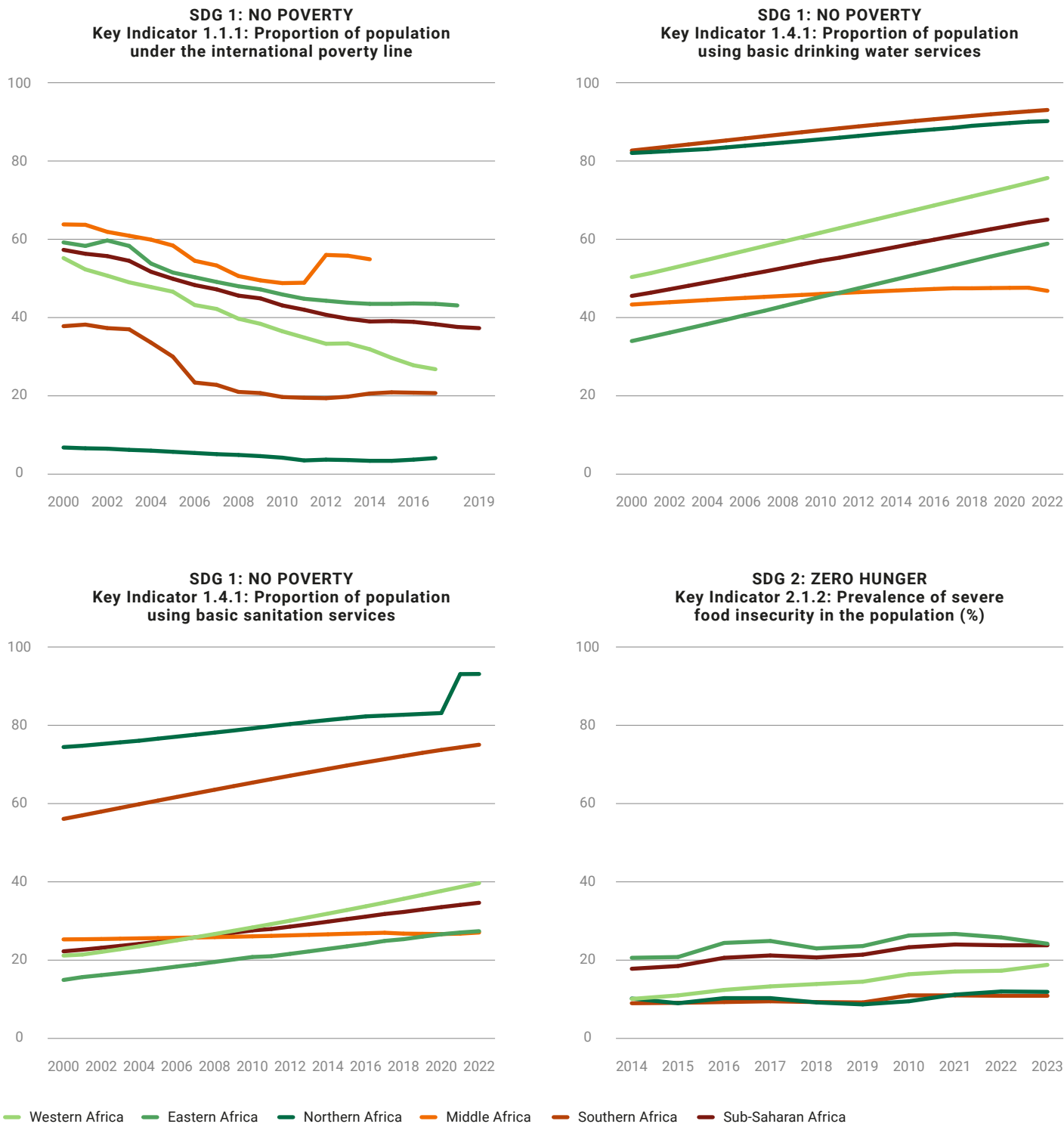


Note: Primary Addressed SDGs (%) The UNDP Africa Investment Insights Report provides an overview of private sector investment opportunities with the potential to deliver on Sustainable Development Goals targets.
Source: UNDP Africa Investment Insights Report 2022.

FIGURE 8

ADVANCEMENTS TOWARD KEY METRICS NEEDED TO REACH SDGs

Key indicators used to determine success for key SDGs

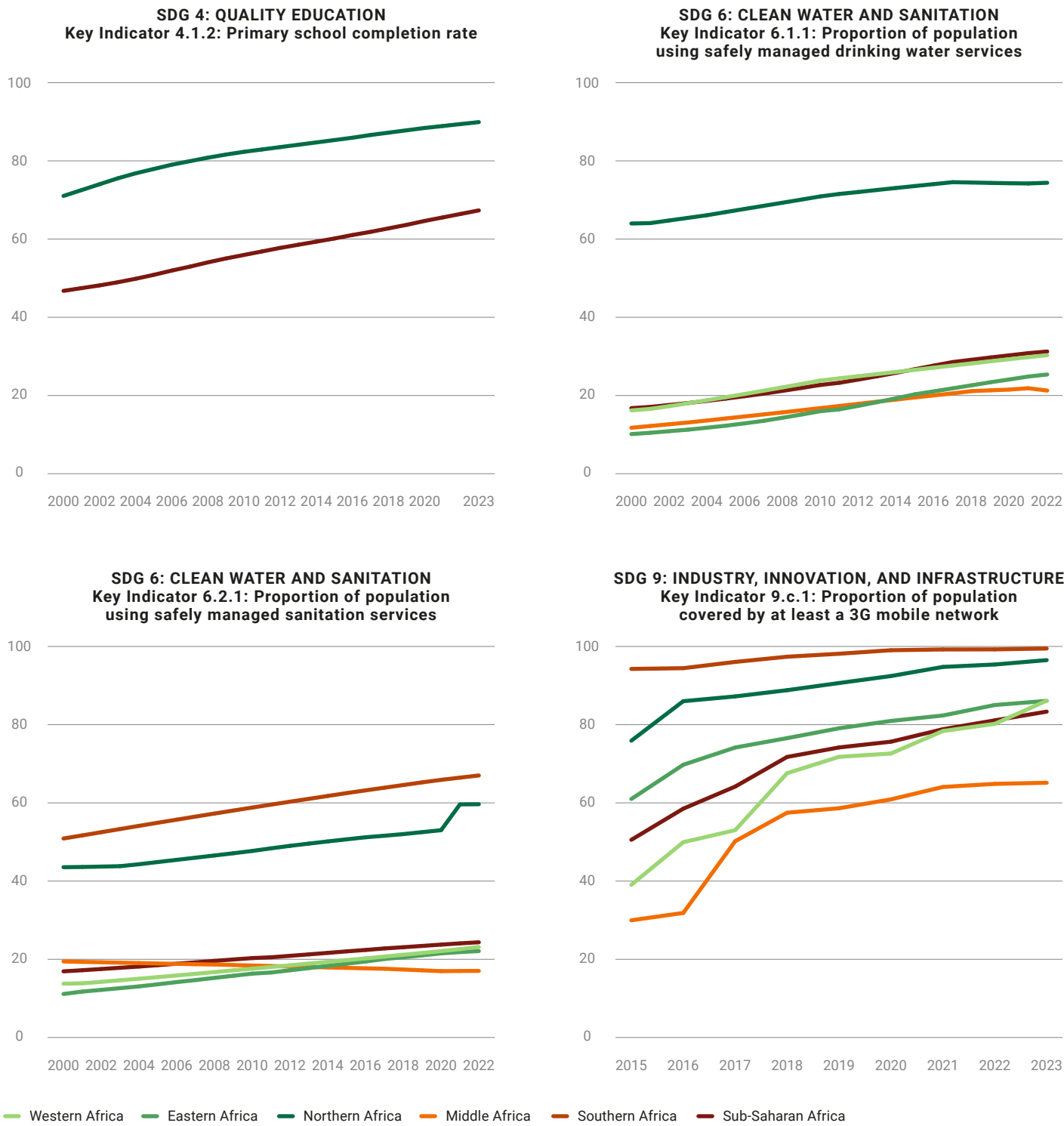


Note: Each graph represents the percent of the population that meets the SDG goal indicator.
Source: "SDG Indicators Database" (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, December 13, 2024), <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/dataportal/database>.

FIGURE 8

ADVANCEMENTS TOWARD KEY METRICS NEEDED TO REACH SDGS

Key indicators used to determine success for key SDGs



Note: Each graph represents the percent of the population that meets the SDG goal indicator.
Source: "SDG Indicators Database" (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, December 13, 2024), <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/dataportal/database>.

Morocco's journey toward achieving the SDGs: Prioritizing economic resilience and social transformation

**NADIA FETTAH
ALAOU**

Minister of Economy
and Finance, Kingdom
of Morocco

@FettahNadia

Morocco has recently charted an extraordinary path toward economic resilience and sustainable development. Over the past two decades, the Kingdom has demonstrated its unwavering commitment to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through structural reforms, inclusive policies, and transformative initiatives. King Mohammed VI's strategy has emphasized inclusive growth, which has reduced inequality, and safeguarded social cohesion, laying the groundwork for sustainable prosperity.

Economic transformation: Diversification and resilience

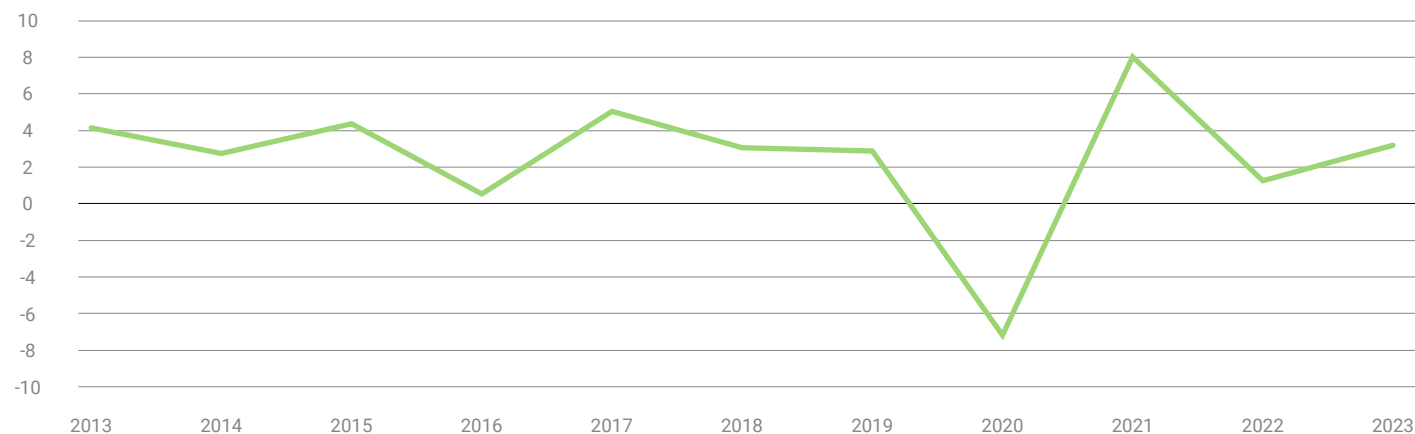
Transitioning from a low-income to a lower-middle-income country, Morocco has cultivated a diversified economy with resilient fundamentals. Over the past decade, the Kingdom's GDP growth averaged 3.2% annually, despite a severe downturn during the COVID-19 pandemic (Figure 9).¹ This growth was predominantly driven by strategic sectors such as renewable energy, automotive, and agriculture. Key achievements include becoming the largest car manufacturer in Africa, exporting 700,000 vehicles in 2024, shifting toward electric vehicles,² and generating over \$14 billion annually in export revenues, benefiting from one of the largest port infrastructures in the region (Tangier Med).³

The renewable energy sector is another pillar of Morocco's transformation. The Noor Ouarzazate Solar Complex is one of the largest concentrated solar power plants globally. While there have been some challenges in managing such an immense complex, overall, this project exemplifies Morocco's ambition to derive 52% of its energy capacity from renewable sources by 2030. This commitment not only mitigates climate risks but also underscores Morocco's global leadership in advancing SDG 7 on affordable and clean energy.

- 1 "Overview: The World Bank in Morocco," World Bank, accessed December 11, 2024, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/morocco/overview>.
- 2 Sam Metz, "Morocco Prepares for its EV Era," Associated Press, May 15, 2024, <https://apnews.com/article/morocco-automobile-industry-electric-vehicles-2981a049578c411b95b525752d243f93>.
- 3 Ahmed Eljehtimi, "Morocco's Tanger Med Port Expects to Exceed Nominal Container Capacity," Reuters, June 10, 2024, <https://www.reuters.com/business/moroccos-tanger-med-port-expects-exceed-nominal-container-capacity-2024-06-10/>.

FIGURE 9**MOROCCO'S ANNUAL GDP GROWTH (%), 2013-2023**

Morocco has managed to secure a 3.2% annual GDP growth rate over the last 10 years



Source: World Development Indicators.

Social transformation: Prioritizing inclusion

Morocco's journey toward the SDGs is deeply anchored in a strong social orientation. King Mohammed VI's administration has prioritized inclusive policies to address poverty, inequality, and access to basic services. The launch of the Generalization of Social Protection project in 2021 represents a groundbreaking initiative aimed at extending health coverage to 22 million Moroccans by 2025.⁵ Similarly, the introduction of direct cash transfers to vulnerable households launched at the end of 2023 will improve the living conditions of nearly 7 million children and 3 million families,⁶ demonstrating the government's commitment to SDG 1 on eradicating poverty.

Investments in education and health care have also yielded significant dividends. Net primary school enrollment increased to 99% in 2022,⁷ while maternal mortality rates fell from 227 per 100,000 live births in 2004 to 72.6 in 2020.⁸ These advances exemplify Morocco's dedication to ensuring that no one is left behind in its development trajectory.

4 "World Development Indicators | DataBank," World Bank, 2024, <https://databank.worldbank.org/source/world-development-indicators>.

5 El Otmani, "Social Protection Generalization Shows Outlines of HM the King's Social Policy to Build Morocco of tomorrow," *MapNews*, April 15, 2021, <https://www.mapnews.ma/en/actualites/politics/social-protection-generalization-shows-outlines-hm-kings-social-policy-build>.

6 Abderrafie Zaanoun, "The Intersections of the Political and the Technical in the Design of Morocco's Social Targeting System," *Arab Reform Initiative*, September 20, 2024, <https://www.arab-reform.net/publication/the-intersections-of-the-political-and-the-technical-in-the-design-of-moroccos-social-targeting-system/>.

7 Veronika Samborska, "Primary Education in Morocco: From Less than Half to Nearly Universal Attendance," *Our World in Data* (blog), April 26, 2024, <https://ourworldindata.org/data-insights/primary-education-in-morocco-from-less-than-half-to-nearly-universal-attendance>.

8 Sanae Elomrani et al., "Approaching the SDG Targets with Sustained Political Commitment: Drivers of the Notable Decline in Maternal and Neonatal Mortality in Morocco," *BMJ Global Health* 9, no. Suppl 2 (May 6, 2024): e011278, <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjgh-2022-011278>.

As global leaders reflect on pathways to achieving the SDGs, Morocco's experience underscores the power of transformative leadership, targeted reforms, and an unwavering commitment to inclusive development.

Shared insights for global leaders

Morocco's positive development path has been underlined by some key factors:

1. Invest in infrastructure and diversification: Strategic investment in high-impact sectors such as renewable energy and industry drives economic transformation and generates employment opportunities.
2. Strengthen social safety nets: Implementing universal health coverage and direct cash transfer programs ensures inclusive growth while reducing inequality.
3. Adopt a long-term vision: Strong leadership and a clear strategic vision, as exemplified by the New Development Model, are critical to achieving sustainable development.
4. Harness partnerships: Leveraging international cooperation, such as Morocco's partnerships with the World Bank and IMF, amplifies progress on global goals.

As global leaders reflect on pathways to achieving the SDGs, Morocco's experience underscores the power of transformative leadership, targeted reforms, and an unwavering commitment to inclusive development. By embracing these principles, nations can not only build economic resilience but also secure a brighter, more sustainable future for their citizens.

Navigating rough patches: Financing Africa's SDGs and the path forward

HANAN MORSY

Deputy Executive Secretary
and Chief Economist,
United Nations Economic
Commission for Africa

@ECA_OFFICIAL

@HananMorsy14

The rough patches ahead to meet the SDGs in Africa

Progress toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has had a mixed record across the globe. For African countries, steady progress was made until the end of the commodity price supercycle in 2016 then started to decline, a situation precipitated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine. Since 2023, this trend has reversed. The rest of the world's experience has been slightly different, with progress on the SDGs having been stalled since the financial crisis of 2008/2009.¹ In both cases, even in the best of times, progress toward the SDGs has been dismally inadequate. For example, to achieve the SDGs, as captured by the aggregate SDG index,² African countries, on average, must grow at a rate of 4% per year. The average annual growth rate in the SDG index achieved by African countries is less than 1%, even at their best. The performance of non-African countries is even worse, with the highest annual growth rate in the SDG index recorded close to 0.6%, much less than the 3% required to meet the SDGs.³

The question before us, therefore, is whether the recent upward trend noticed in Africa could be sustained and accelerated to meet the SDGs by 2030?

Among the several factors required to accelerate progress toward the SDGs, availability of development finance or investment in the SDGs is the most critical. As Africa approaches 2030, the financing gap for achieving the SDGs is vast. According to estimates by UNECA,⁴ successful implementation of the SDGs would require \$1.3 trillion annually, of which it is estimated African countries could mobilize a little over 50%, leaving a huge financing gap. According to the African Development Bank, this gap has been exacerbated by global economic downturns, the COVID-19 pandemic, and climate change-related catastrophes, creating significant pressure on national budgets and development efforts across the continent.⁵ These challenges coincide with rising public debt in most African countries, making reaching the SDGs by 2030 a daunting task.

1 "SDG Index," SDG Transformation Center, June 17, 2024, <https://sdgtransformationcenter.org/sdgindex>; "Transformation Center," SDG Transformation Center, accessed December 11, 2024, <https://sdgtransformationcenter.org>.

2 "SDG Index.," "Transformation Center."

3 "SDG Index.," "Transformation Center."

4 "Long-Term Financing for Sustainable Development in Africa," United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, 2020, <https://unece.org/chapter/economic-report-africa-2020/long-term-financing-sustainable-development-africa>.

5 "\$4 Trillion is New Annual Financial Target to Save Sustainable Development Goals, Says African Development Bank's Adesina," African Development Bank Group, April 29, 2024, <https://www.afdb.org/en/news-and-events/press-releases/4-trillion-new-annual-financial-target-save-sustainable-development-goals-says-african-development-banks-adesina-70346>.

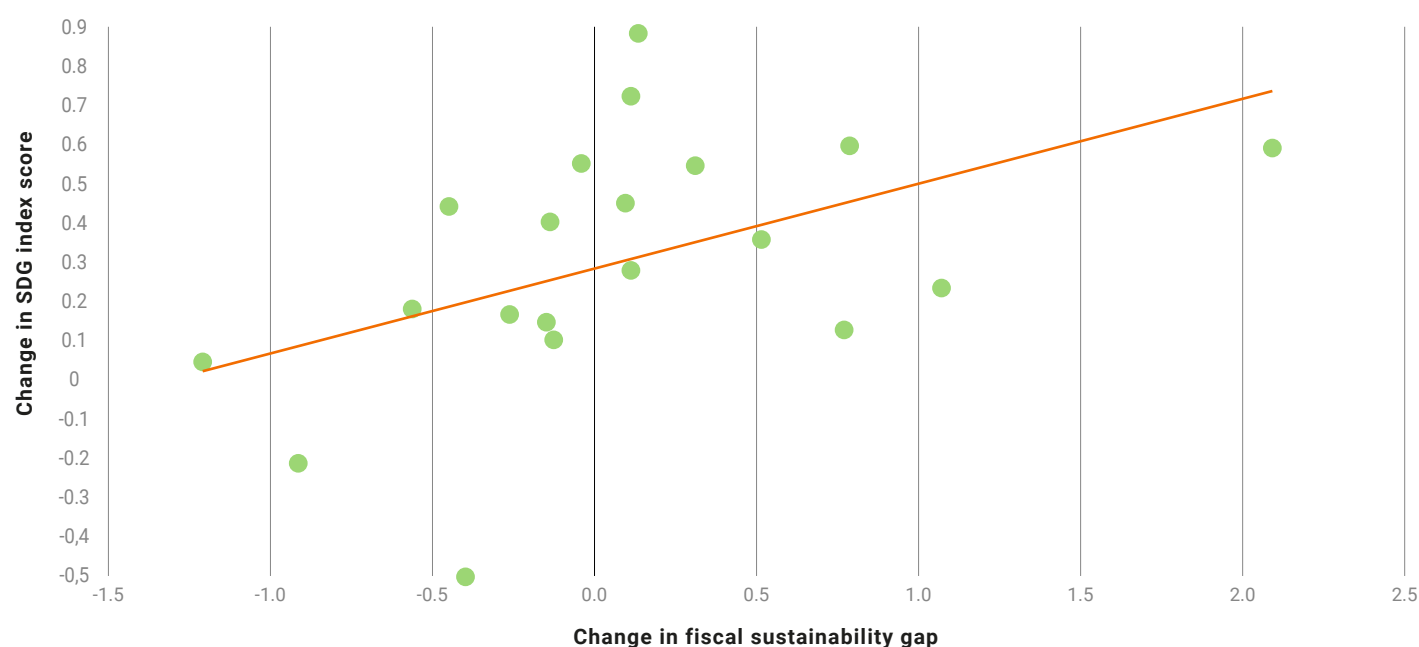
Various reports and studies confirm the tight fiscal space in which many African countries currently find themselves leading to a continuous underinvestment in the SDGs. Indeed, countries that have a severe fiscal sustainability gap experienced a decline in the speed of progress toward SDGs, and in some cases a reversal (Figure 10). In addition, some estimates suggest that financial flows to low-income countries targeted to address the SDGs have declined significantly in the wake of recent global shocks.⁶

Several key challenges hamper the mobilization and effective allocation of financing for the SDGs, both at the national and global levels. First, *domestic resource mobilization* remains limited, with many African economies struggling with narrow tax bases, tax evasion, and inefficiencies in public financial management.⁷ While much has been said about the need to increase overall tax mobilization efforts by strengthening state capacity, the differential effect of different sources of tax revenue on the progress toward SDGs has not been

FIGURE 10

CHANGE IN SDG INDEX SCORE AND FISCAL SUSTAINABILITY GAP IN AFRICA

A severe fiscal sustainability gap results in a decline, or even reversal, in the speed of progress toward SDGs



Note: Binscatter controlling for per capita income levels, sovereign debt risk ratings, financial deepening, and proportion of concessional lending.

Source: SDGs Index, Sustainable Development Solutions Network; M. Ayhan Kose et al., "A Cross-Country Database of Fiscal Space," *Journal of International Money and Finance* 128 (November 1, 2022): 102682, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jimonfin.2022.102682>.

6 Isabella Massa and Leslie Bermont Díaz, "SDG Financing Needs an Urgent Global Reboot," in *SDG Action*, 2023, <https://sdg-action.org/sdg-financing-needs-an-urgent-global-reboot/>.

7 Logan Wort, "African Countries Must Collaborate to Fix Tax Challenges," *AllAfrica.Com*, September 6, 2017, <https://www.proquest.com/docview/1935886956/citation/B8F56E7911D9439DPQ/1>.

8 "UNU WIDER"; "SDG Index."

adequately addressed. As shown in Figure 11 the larger the share of direct taxes in overall tax mobilization efforts, the greater the chance of achieving the SDGs. This certainly implies progress in growth processes underpinned by structural changes that enhance the share of the formal economy.

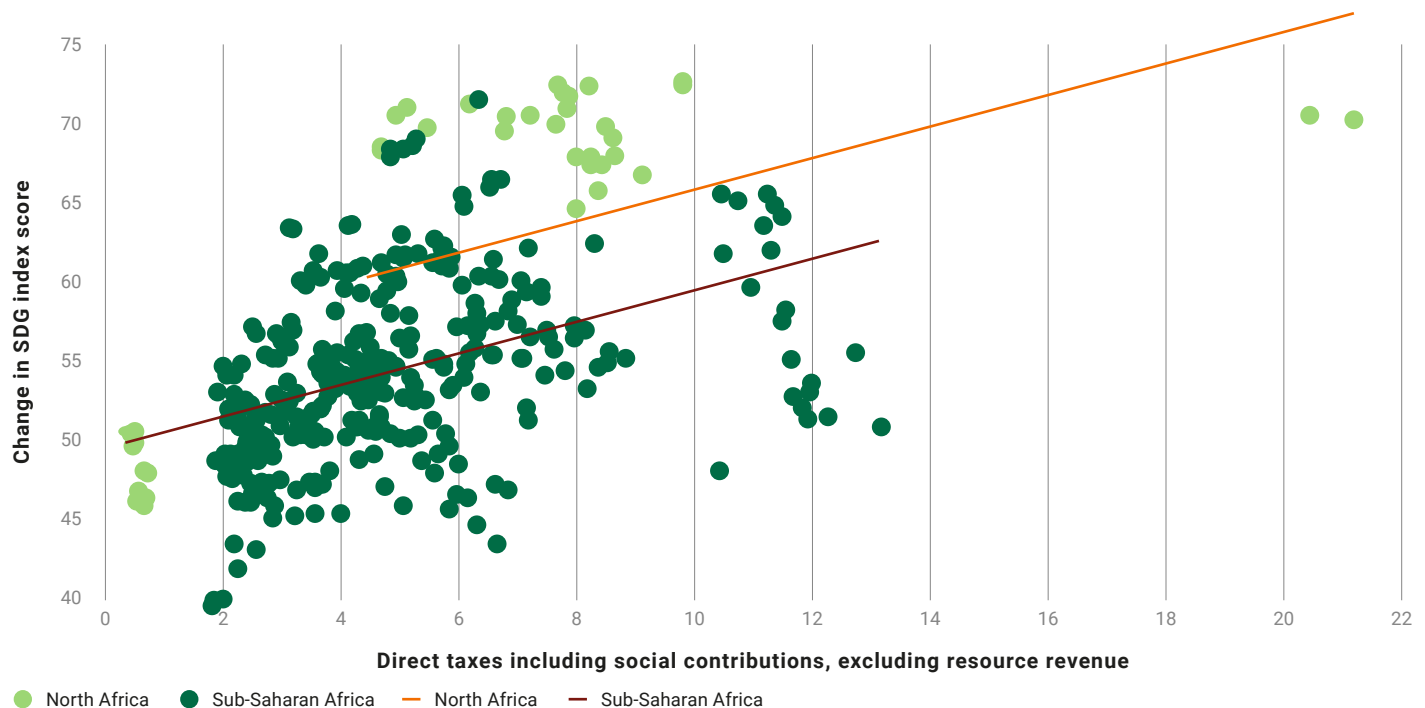
On the other hand, the greater the share of taxes emerging from resource extraction, the less effective they become in advancing the SDGs in different parts of Africa. Figure 12 clearly shows the relatively strong and positive relationships between tax revenue generated from resources and the SDGs in North Africa, while a perverse negative relationship in sub-Saharan Africa raises an important concern on the dimmer outlook for the SDGs that rely on simple government revenue mobilizations without the necessary institutional or structural reforms. Moreover, external financing sources, including foreign direct investment, official development assistance, and remittances, are often volatile and insufficient to meet development needs.

Secondly, *the high debt burden* of many African nations has crowded out public investment in critical sectors such as health care, education, and infrastructure, undermining efforts to achieve the SDGs. Additionally, financing tends to be skewed toward short-term projects, with less emphasis on long-term, sustainable investments that could yield lasting impact. The fragmented nature of global financial flows, coupled with the lack of coherence in policy frameworks, further complicates efforts to align financing with the SDGs.

FIGURE 11

DIRECT TAX REVENUE AND SDGS INDEX SCORE IN AFRICA

Share of direct taxes in overall tax mobilization efforts highly correlated with a nation's chance of achieving the SDGs



Source: Computations based on UNWIDER Government Revenue Data Set and SDG Index Score data developed by the SDG Transformation Centre Sustainable Development Solutions Network.

FIGURE 12

TOTAL RESOURCE REVENUE AND SDGS INDEX SCORE IN AFRICA

The greater the share of taxes emerging from resource extraction, the less effective they become in advancing SDGs in different parts of Africa



Source: Government Revenue Data Set, UNWIDER SDG Index Score data, SDG Transformation Centre Sustainable Development Solutions Network <https://sdgtransformationcenter.org/>.

Opportunities for improving financing composition and allocation

Despite these challenges, several opportunities exist to improve the composition and allocation of financing for the SDGs. *Blended finance*—the strategic use of public funds to attract private sector investment—holds significant promise for addressing financing gaps.⁹ By de-risking investments, especially in infrastructure, energy, and agriculture, blended finance can catalyze private capital flows to sectors critical for sustainable development.

Moreover, strengthening *public-private partnerships (PPPs)* can provide a vital channel for funding large-scale projects, particularly in renewable energy and digital infrastructure, which are crucial for economic transformation. African countries can also leverage innovative financial instruments, such as green bonds, diaspora bonds, and impact investing, to attract diverse pools of capital aligned with the SDGs.

At the global level, aligning *international development cooperation* with national SDG priorities can foster more efficient resource allocation. Greater coordination among development actors, such as multilateral institutions, donors, and private investors, can ensure that

The larger the share of direct taxes in overall tax mobilization efforts, the greater the chance of achieving the SDGs.

⁹ "How Blended Finance Works," IFC, accessed December 11, 2024, <https://www.ifc.org/en/what-we-do/sector-expertise/blended-finance/how-blended-finance-works>.

While Africa faces a significant financing gap to achieve the SDGs by 2030, innovative financing mechanisms, strategic partnerships, and robust national policies present opportunities to bridge this gap.

financing is directed toward the most impactful and scalable interventions. It is also important to emphasize the significance and urgency of reforming the global financial architecture with all its ramifications to accelerate Africa's progress toward the SDGs.

Effective national strategies for SDG investment

Several African countries, such as Ethiopia, Rwanda, and South Africa, have adopted national strategies and policies that have proven effective in facilitating long-term investment in the SDGs that emphasize sustainable industrialization, infrastructure development, and human capital investments, all of which are closely aligned with SDG targets.¹⁰ These national strategies prioritize fiscal discipline, attract foreign direct investment, and foster private sector growth, thereby creating an enabling environment for SDG-aligned investments.

Additionally, domestic resource mobilization efforts such as leveraging information technology to improve tax mobilization capacities that include identification, detection, and collection capacity are very important.¹¹ These policies aim to improve tax collection, reduce leakages, and enhance accountability in the management of public resources.

In conclusion, while Africa faces a significant financing gap to achieve the SDGs by 2030, innovative financing mechanisms, strategic partnerships, and robust national policies present opportunities to bridge this gap. By leveraging these solutions, African countries can chart a path toward sustainable, inclusive growth and successful SDG implementation.

10 Helen Hai, "Making Industrialization in Africa Sustainable," *United Nations* (blog) (New York: United Nations, December 1, 2020), <https://www.un.org/en/un-chronicle/making-industrialization-africa-sustainable>.

11 Oyebola Okunogbe and Gabriel Tourek, "How Can Lower Income Countries Collect More Taxes? The Role of Technology, Tax Agents, and Politics," *The Journal of Economic Perspectives* 38, no. 1 (2024): 81–106, <https://doi.org/10.2307/27282175>.

How well is Africa doing across the Sustainable Development Goals?

HOMI KHARAS¹

Senior Fellow, Center for Sustainable Development, Global Economy and Development, Brookings Institution

JOHN W. MCARTHUR

Director, Center for Sustainable Development, Senior Fellow, Global Economy and Development, Brookings Institution

@mcarthur

Compared to the rest of the world, Africa is being left behind on almost all assessed indicators.

Two strong narrative threads are shaping the global development discourse heading into 2025. One is an ongoing concern that the world is far off course from reaching most of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030.² Another is that lower-income countries are being left behind as growth slows and conflict and debt service pressures rise.³

Figure 13 below links these two narratives together, with a specific focus on Africa. In a recent report on country-by-country SDG progress, we and our colleague Odera Onyechi review what has happened to two dozen quantifiable benchmarks.⁴ We conduct a range of empirical assessments to distill trends, including a simple before-and-after test on the indicators, showing the human consequences of changes as of 2023 relative to 2015. The figure extracts Africa-specific results from the analysis and shows a cross section of people-focused indicators ordered according to the continent's progress. Green bars show overall improvements in the number of people affected since 2015, and red bars show declines.

The chart draws attention to the wide range of issue-specific SDG trends across Africa. For instance, the green bar furthest to the right shows that, across countries with available data, Africa reduced the number of people without antiretroviral therapy (ART) coverage by an estimated 69% since 2015, from 11.3 million to 3.5 million. Similarly, the annual incidence of HIV infections dropped by nearly half, from 1.1 million in 2015 to 597,000 in 2023. Conversely, the red bar furthest to the left indicates 78% more Africans faced food insecurity in 2023—236 million compared to 132 million in 2015. Estimates of undernourishment also worsened by 55%, climbing from 193 million Africans in 2015 to 300 million in 2023.

The figure also compares Africa's progress with that of the rest of the world. For each indicator, shaded bars show estimates of changes since 2015 for countries outside of Africa (again for those with available data). The pattern is clear. Compared to the rest of the world, Africa is being left behind on almost all assessed indicators. This is despite the continent having registered important gains since 2015 on issues like under-5 child mortality, access to electricity, and access to the internet. But in several areas—poverty reduction, access to sanitation, malaria incidence, obesity, secondary schooling completion, noncommunicable disease (NCD)

1 We thank Charlotte Rivard for outstanding research assistance.

2 Yinuo, "With Less than One Fifth of Targets on Track, World Is Failing to Deliver on Promise of the Sustainable Development Goals, Warns New UN Report," *United Nations Sustainable Development* (press release), June 28, 2024, <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2024/06/press-release-sdg-report-2024/>.

3 Moussa Faki Mahamat et al., "2024 Africa Sustainable Development Report" (Addis Ababa, Abidjan, New York, Addis Ababa: African Union; African Development Bank; United Nations Development Programme; United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, 2024), <https://www.undp.org/africa/publications/2024-africa-sustainable-development-report>.

4 Homi Kharas, John W. McArthur, and Odera Onyechi, "How is the World Doing on the SDGs? Four Tests and Eight Findings" (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, July 17, 2024), <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/how-is-the-world-doing-on-the-sdgs-four-tests-and-eight-findings/>.

Africa's global leadership is most prominent on two issues where it is clearly outperforming the rest of the world—expanding ART coverage for people with HIV/AIDS and reducing HIV incidences.

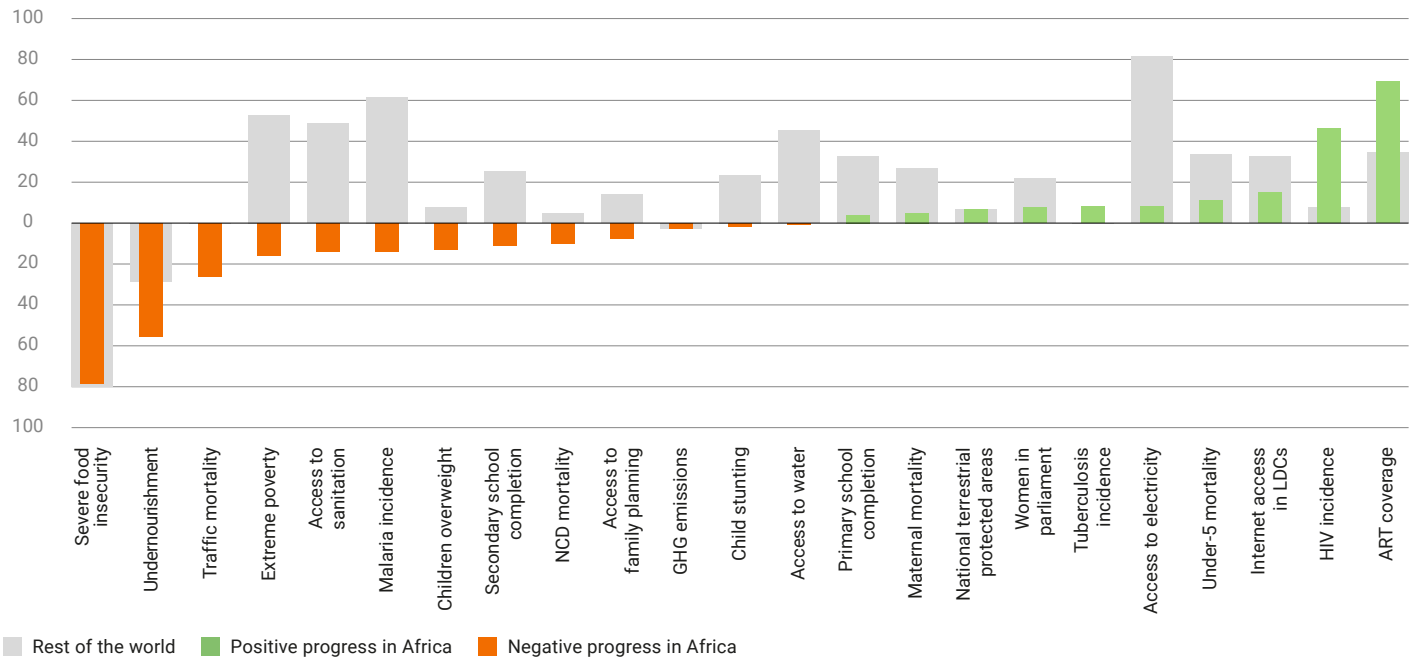
mortality, and access to family planning—the number of Africans facing challenges is growing, as indicated by a red bar, while other regions are making progress, albeit slowly.

Africa's global leadership is most prominent on two issues where it is clearly outperforming the rest of the world—expanding ART coverage for people with HIV/AIDS and reducing HIV incidences. In both cases, action and funding have been prioritized by national and global institutions, with countries like Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of the Congo showing some of the world's greatest accelerations in ART progress since 2015. Africa is also outpacing the world in reducing tuberculosis infections.

The human consequences of global shortfalls offer a sharp reminder of the stakes embedded in the SDGs. If recent trends are extrapolated out to 2030 and compared to the targets for ending extreme poverty, food insecurity, and stunting, or gaining universal access to secondary education, sanitation, safe drinking water, and electricity, we find tens or hundreds of millions of people will be left behind on these basic needs. This is in addition to millions of excess deaths linked to shortfalls or NCD mortality, child mortality, traffic mortality, and maternal mortality.

Overall, the variations in progress show that good results can be achieved even in challenging operating environments. Strengthened implementation systems lie at the heart of better progress for the SDGs, bridging government, science, civil society, and the private sector. This has been done successfully for some issue areas, most notably in the health domain, but it must be done in many more areas if Africa's sustainable development is to accelerate.

FIGURE 13
AFRICA'S ESTIMATED SDG PROGRESS, 2015-2023, COMPARED TO THE REST OF THE WORLD
While progress has been made in some areas, specifically in health, other indicators are lagging behind



Source: Kharas, Homi, John W. McArthur, and Odera Onyechi. "How Is the World Doing on the SDGs? Four Tests and Eight Findings." (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution, July 17, 2024), <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/how-is-the-world-doing-on-the-sdgs-four-tests-and-eight-findings/>.

Why 2025 could be a litmus test for African agency

HANNAH RYDER

Chief Executive Officer,
Development Reimagined

@hmryder

@devReimagined

As African countries seek to revitalize global partnerships for sustainable development (Sustainable Development Goal 17), major global financial architecture reform can often seem like a lofty goal—especially when African leaders and finance ministers are having to fire-fight management of currency fluctuations, interest rate increases on external debt, and other monetary shocks. Often, the inclination is to focus less on structural reforms of the system and more on immediate, short-term debt relief or actions African governments can take themselves, such as providing better data or transparency of debt finance.

None are mutually exclusive, and all have merits, but the big prize is reform.

It might sound contradictory, but focusing on short-term solutions such as debt relief or “capacity building” can be detrimental to Africa’s agency and the case for reform.¹ For example, countries cannot claim to be responsible and therefore require less conditionality when borrowing yet call for debt relief for borrowing that their parliaments and citizens have already approved transparently—a situation that has occurred often. These kinds of actions seem attractive and easier in the short term, but in the long term serve to exacerbate perceptions of “African risk.”²

2024 presented exactly this kind of conundrum and demonstrated why, in 2025, the major goal should be structural reform.

Focusing on short-term solutions such as debt relief or “capacity building” can be detrimental to Africa’s agency and the case for reform.

2024 marked the 80-year anniversary of the Bretton Woods institutions, as well as the first full year the African Union (AU) served as a permanent member of the G20, the world’s economic version of the United Nations Security Council. The AU’s involvement created movement toward reforms with the emergence of the “Africa Club” or Alliance of African Multilateral Financial Institutions³ and the African Credit Ratings Agency inching closer to being a reality.⁴

1 William Easterly, “How Did Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Become Heavily Indebted? Reviewing Two Decades of Debt Relief,” *World Development* 30, no. 10 (October 1, 2002): 1677–96, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0305-750X\(02\)00073-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0305-750X(02)00073-6).

2 Gregory Smith, *Where Credit Is Due: How Africa’s Debt Can Be a Benefit, Not a Burden* (London: Oxford University Press, 2021).

3 “African Multilateral Financial Institutions Forge Historic Strategic Alliance to Serve as Catalyst for Sustainable Economic Development and Financial Self-Reliance in Africa,” Afreximbank, February 21, 2024, <https://www.afreximbank.com/african-multilateral-financial-institutions-forge-historic-strategic-alliance-to-serve-as-catalyst-for-sustainable-economic-development-and-financial-self-reliance-in-africa/>.

4 “Africa Credit Rating Agency on UNGA79 Agenda: Reforming the Global Financial Architecture,” *African Union*, November 21, 2024, <https://aprm.au.int/en/news/press-releases/2024-09-25/africa-credit-rating-agency-unga79-agenda>.

Additionally, in August, the IMF announced the addition of a third African seat on its board (out of a total 25 seats).⁵ The International Monetary Fund (IMF) also reduced lending costs by cutting surcharges, benefitting African borrowers.⁶ Despite these recent achievements, major shifts in how the Bretton Woods institutions, credit rating agencies, and foreign investors do business with respect to the continent remained elusive.

Will truly significant, major reforms in Africa's interest begin to arrive in 2025?

Two new opportunities will present themselves to African governments as settings for achieving reform in 2025 beyond the usual African Union engagements in Addis Ababa and the Bretton Woods meetings in Washington, D.C. First, South Africa became president of the G20 on December 1, 2024.⁷ A strong, "Africa-focused" G20 can help enable African leaders to advocate for change and offer specific ideas for action. Second, the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD) will be taking place,⁸ which, as a U.N. forum, arguably offers Africa an even larger voice than the G20. But what might African leaders put on the agenda for these two special opportunities? There are four potential outcomes linked to specific 2025 deadlines and existing work by these and other international financial organizations.

First, African governments should support a change to the formula of IMF quotas to create more space for African shares.⁹ Such a formula is expected to be presented by IMF staff and agreed upon by the IMF board in June 2025 for the 17th General Review of Quotas. Africa having more shares would not only enable the continent to have a weightier voice on the IMF board for all decisions, but it would also enable governments to actively use the IMF as an automatic stabilizer during economic crises, rather than having to negotiate with the IMF first, which often enables the IMF to impose highly unsuitable and citizen-unfriendly economic conditions.¹⁰

Maintenance of the status quo would mean AU member states continuing to collectively possess only 5.2% of total quotas, while single countries such as Germany and Japan have similar share proportions yet hardly need the IMF for financial stability.¹¹

5 "IMF Expands Executive Board with Addition of 25th Chair," *IMF*, November 1, 2024, <https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2024/11/01/pr-24403-imf-expands-executive-board-with-addition-of-25th-chair>.

6 "Africa Credit Rating Agency on UNGA79 Agenda."

7 Mkhululi Chimoio, "South Africa's G20 Presidency in 2025: A Pivotal Moment for the Country and Africa," *Africa Renewal* (blog), November 4, 2024, <https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/november-2024/south-africas-g20-presidency-2025-pivotal-moment-country-and-africa>.

8 "The 4th International Conference on Financing for Development | Financing for Sustainable Development Office," *United Nations* accessed December 13, 2024, <https://financing.desa.un.org/ffd4>.

9 Hung Tran, "Understanding the Debate over IMF Quota Reform," *Atlantic Council* (blog), March 28, 2024, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/econographics/understanding-the-debate-over-imf-quota-reform/>.

10 Danny Bradlow, "The IMF is Failing Countries like Kenya: Why, and What Can be Done about it," *The Conversation* (blog), July 2, 2024, <http://theconversation.com/the-imf-is-failing-countries-like-kenya-why-and-what-can-be-done-about-it-233825>.

11 Travis Lwere, Rob Floyd, and Hannah Ryder, "Reimagining the IMF's Quota System and Representation in Africa's Interest," Policy Brief, Reforming the International Financial Architecture (Rio de Janeiro, Brasilia: CEBRI, IPEA, 2024), https://www.t20brasil.org/media/documentos/arquivos/TF03_ST_01_Reimagining_the_IMF66e199480230f.pdf.

2025 has the potential to be a crucial year to shift the current global financial architecture toward African interests.

However, IMF staff should not be left to do the work. African leaders should come up with their own position. For example, were African shares to be doubled and a new formula drawn up on that basis, a decrease in the shares of the largest shareholder—the U.S.—from 17.4% to 16.0% as well as China's from 6.3% to 5.8% would follow.

Second, African governments should support a change to the IMF and World Bank's debt sustainability analysis. The IMF and World Bank's analysis used to determine which countries are classified as "debt-distressed" has been observed to overrepresent African countries.¹² For instance, in 2019, 64 countries around the world had debt-to-GDP ratios over 60%, only one-third of which were African. However, the only 12 countries in this group that were classified as being debt-distressed were from Africa. Post COVID-19, this observed bias increased; in 2022, 79 countries had debt-to-GDP ratios over 60%, again only one-third of which were African. However, the only 23 countries in the group that were classified as being debt-distressed were from Africa.¹³ At the highest international levels, Africa is being portrayed as a risky lending and investment destination, information that organizations such as credit ratings agencies and investors then use to determine their risk premiums. This results in high interest rates that make access to private finance more costly for the affected countries.

There are numerous reasons for this observed bias within the debt sustainability analysis. For example, the current framework does not account for the growth that debt produces, and the thresholds used (such as debt-to-GDP) are not backed by evidence.¹⁴ In 2025, African governments should request that these methods are investigated as part of a review of the debt sustainability analysis that was launched in April 2024 and is expected to continue in 2025.

Third, African countries should aim to bolster African-led and Africa-first financial mechanisms, in order to accelerate progress on the Sustainable Development Goals. The African Development Fund is the second-largest concessional financial instrument available to African countries. It is due to be replenished in 2025, with the African Development Bank (AfDB) calling for its donors—African and non-African—to collectively contribute \$25 billion.¹⁵

In addition, no G20 country has reallocated Special Drawing Rights, a claim on the freely useable currencies of IMF members, to the AfDB. The AfDB deserves huge support given its strong delivery on infrastructure, which requires patient capital. Meanwhile, Africa's other multilateral financial institutions, such as Afreximbank, the Trade and Development Bank, and the Africa Finance Corporation will also continue to raise finances in 2025, and equally deserve significant support for their work from both African governments and external partners.

12 Carlos Lopes, "African Countries Can't Resolve Their Debt Crisis under a System Rigged against Them," *The Conversation* (blog), May 5, 2024, <http://theconversation.com/african-countries-cant-resolve-their-debt-crisis-under-a-system-rigged-against-them-228905>.

13 "Infographic: The 'African Debt Crisis' Playbook - What's the Real Story?", *Development Reimagined*, September 26, 2022, <https://developmentreimagined.com/africandebtcrisisrealstory/>.

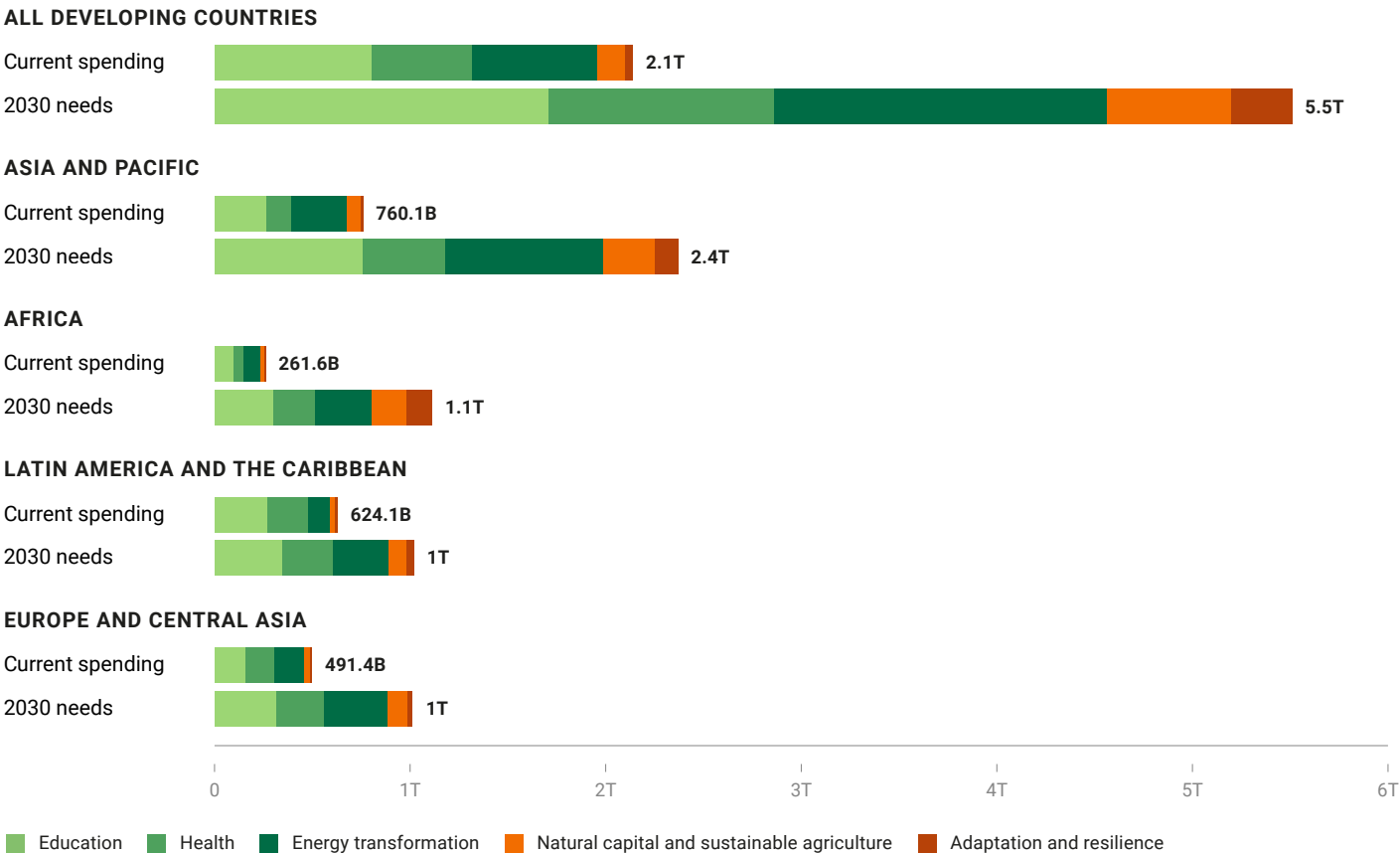
14 Lopes. "African Countries Can't Resolve Their Debt Crisis under a System Rigged against Them."

15 "African Countries Push for \$25 Billion Replenishment of the African Development Fund as Sudan Tops up its Pledge," *African Development Bank Group*, October 28, 2024, <https://www.afdb.org/en/news-and-events/press-releases/african-countries-push-25-billion-replenishment-african-development-fund-sudan-tops-its-pledge-76157>.

FIGURE 14

INVESTMENT NEEDS FOR DEVELOPING COUNTRIES BY SECTOR

Needs exceed current spending, but the deficit is equal or less than other developing regions of the world



Note: Investment needs expressed in U.S. dollars.
Source: Totals calculated from old investment needs dataset done by Amar Bhattacharya, Meagan Dooley, Homi Kharas, and Eleonore Soubeyran.

Fourth, exploring how the financial architecture can be reshaped to deliver more concessional finance and cross-border infrastructure development in Africa—a major gap in development finance that is holding back the success of the African Continental Free Trade Area—to enable borrowers, coordination mechanisms to both consolidate and flourish will be crucial in 2025. These are all areas on which the G20 and FfD can make significant progress.

There is no doubt that 2025 has the potential to be a crucial year to shift the current global financial architecture toward African interests, even more so than 2024. However, African governments must keep their eyes on the prize and, avoid short-term distractions and arguments that make the victims—African governments—do more work while the system remains the same. If anything is a litmus test of African agency in 2025, it will be this.

Delivering the Africa of the future: AUDA-NEPAD's role in achieving Agenda 2063 and the SDGs

NARDOS BEKELE-THOMAS¹

Chief Executive
Officer, African Union
Development Agency-New
Partnership for Africa's
Development
(AUDA-NEPAD)
[@nardosbthomas](#)
[@NEPAD_Agency](#)
[@_AfricanUnion](#)

**Through the African
Medicines Regulatory
Harmonization program
and the Pharmaceutical
Manufacturing Plan for
Africa, AUDA-NEPAD
has established local
manufacturing plants
across Africa.**

In the year 2025, Africa is focusing on the dual aspirations of the targets set out by the African Union's Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).² Currently, Africa has a long way to go to achieve the SDGs by 2030.³ In an effort to accelerate progress toward achieving these two sets of important intergovernmental objectives, the African Union Development Agency created the New Partnership for Africa's Development (AUDA-NEPAD) in 2001 with the intention of initiating programs that promote sustainable development and accelerate inclusive economic growth.⁴ Since its genesis, AUDA-NEPAD has engaged in a systematic deployment of initiatives that affect various parts of African society to accelerate progress. While there are still many outstanding challenges, there are several areas that have been successful.

One such success story occurred when the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA) enhanced intra-Africa trade through the construction of the Kazungula Bridge, which links Botswana and Zambia. Both countries have experienced an increase in trade volumes since the bridge's inauguration, and the time to cross the border decreased from days to minutes.⁵ Additionally, PIDA has supported over 100 priority infrastructure projects which have collectively contributed to reducing Africa's infrastructure financing gap, currently estimated at \$68 to \$108 billion annually.⁶

One area where many nations on the continent are still falling behind, however, is in health care. Facilities are outdated, understaffed, and under-resourced. Through the African Medicines Regulatory Harmonization program and the Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Plan for Africa, AUDA-NEPAD has established local manufacturing plants across Africa. Notable examples include the Aspen Pharmacare facility in South Africa, which produces over 300 million doses of vaccines annually, and the Dangote Petrochemical Manufacturing Complex in Nigeria,

- 1 We extend our gratitude to Nichole Grossman, Research Analyst at Brookings Africa Growth Initiative, for her outstanding research and editorial support.
- 2 Lina Henao, Mary Hui, and Gordon Shaw, "Africa 2030: How Africa Can Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals" (Kigali: The Sustainable Development Goals Center for Africa, November 2017), https://sdgcafrica.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/SDG_2030_Nov_2017.pdf; "Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want" (Addis Ababa: African Union Commission, September 2015), https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/36204-doc-agenda2063_popular_version_en.pdf.
- 3 Jeffrey D. Sachs, Guillaume Lafortune, and Grayson Fuller, "The SDGs and the UN Summit of the Future. Sustainable Development Report 2024" (Dublin: Dublin University Press, 2024), <https://www.tara.tcd.ie/handle/2262/108572>.
- 4 "African Union Development Agency-NEPAD (AUDA-NEPAD)," Africa Renewal, accessed December 18, 2024, <https://www.un.org/africarenewal/african-union-development-agency-nepad-auda-nepad>.
- 5 Gertrude Kitongo and Tom Page, "How a \$260M Bridge Negotiated Africa's Most Unusual Border," CNN, August 22, 2022, <https://www.cnn.com/2022/08/17/africa/kazungula-bridge-botswana-zambia-spc-intl/index.html>.
- 6 "Africa's Infrastructure: Great Potential but Little Impact on Inclusive Growth" (Abidjan: African Development Bank Group, 2018), https://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Publications/2018AEO/African_Economic_Outlook_2018_-_EN_Chapter3.pdf.

which provides raw materials used in the manufacturing of generic drugs. Facilities such as these are necessary for Africa to reduce its reliance on imported pharmaceuticals, which are too expensive for many patients and hospitals to provide in sufficient supply.⁷

Nations across the continent can also benefit from increased economic engagement from women and youth. Programs focused on women and youth empowerment provide the skills necessary for these groups to enter the formal economy at levels that have yet to be seen. AUDA-NEPAD's 100,000 Micro, Small, and Medium Sized Enterprises Initiative has provided business and digital skills, through vocational training programs such as the Skills Initiative for Africa, to over 2 million entrepreneurs, with 60% of the beneficiaries being women and/or youth.⁸

The Agenda 2063 Digital Platform and Dashboard, developed and operated by AUDA-NEPAD, enables real-time data analytics and evidence-based decisionmaking and helps countries across Africa monitor their progress on metrics from both initiatives.

Meeting both Agenda 2063 and the SDGs will rely heavily on Africa's ability to transform to a digital economy. Data-driven decisionmaking is one way to increase effectiveness and efficiency of policies. The Agenda 2063 Digital Platform and Dashboard, developed and operated by AUDA-NEPAD, enables real-time data analytics and evidence-based decisionmaking and helps countries across Africa monitor their progress on metrics from both initiatives while also identifying future challenges.⁹

However, these projects have a long way to go to address the enormous gap between current reality and the SDGs. Economic vulnerabilities exacerbated by global inflationary pressures and limited fiscal space have resulted in anemic GDP growth, averaging 3.2% continent-wide in 2023,¹⁰ falling well short of the 7-10% annual growth required to meet Agenda 2063 targets.¹¹ Annual financing has been roughly \$402 billion below what is needed.¹² More needs to be done to create a development environment that maximizes every dollar spent to reach the highest number of people in need.

Climate change has exacerbated the costs associated with development. Climate adaptation methods are still lagging what is needed, with an expected necessary expenditure of \$30-50 billion annually over the next decade to match the adaptation needs of the continent.¹³

7 Tefo Pheage, "Dying from Lack of Medicines: Encouraging Local Production, Right Policies the Way Out," *Africa Renewal* (blog), November 25, 2016, <https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/december-2016-march-2017/dying-lack-medicines>; Aderaw Yenet, Getinet Nibret, and Bantayehu Addis Tegegne, "Challenges to the Availability and Affordability of Essential Medicines in African Countries: A Scoping Review," *ClinicoEconomics and Outcomes Research: CEOR* 15 (June 13, 2023): 443–58, <https://doi.org/10.2147/CEOR.S413546>.

8 "Projects," SIFA Skills Initiative for Africa, accessed December 18, 2024, <https://skillsafrica.org/projects>; "The 100,000 MSMEs Initiative African Union," accessed December 18, 2024, <https://au.int/en/articles/100000-msmes-initiative>.

9 "Agenda Dashboard v2," AUDA-NEPAD accessed January 7, 2025, <https://nepad.org/agenda-dashboard-v2>.

10 "African Economic Outlook 2024: Driving Africa's Transformation The Reform of the Global Financial Architecture" (Abidjan: African Development Bank Group, June 6, 2024), https://www.afdb.org/sites/default/files/2024/06/aeo_2024_-_chapter_1.pdf.

11 "Sustain Minimum Growth Rate of 7-10% of GDP to Achieve Inclusive Growth and Sustainable Development in Africa, Experts Say at AU Summit," *African Development Bank*, February 19, 2023, <https://www.afdb.org/en/news-and-events/press-releases/sustain-minimum-growth-rate-7-10-gdp-achieve-inclusive-growth-and-sustainable-development-africa-experts-say-au-summit-5915>.

12 "African Economic Outlook 2024 | Driving Africa's Transformation: The Reform of the Global Financial Architecture" (Abidjan: African Development Bank, 2024), <https://www.afdb.org/en/documents/african-economic-outlook-2024-highlights>.

13 "Africa Faces Disproportionate Burden from Climate Change and Adaptation Costs," *World Meteorological Association*, September 2, 2024, <https://wmo.int/news/media-centre/africa-faces-disproportionate-burden-from-climate-change-and-adaptation-costs>.

Climate disasters such as droughts, flooding, and rising sea levels have already led to increased migration and poverty.¹⁴

AUDA-NEPAD's ability to provide development programming is reliant on funding from donor countries. Delays in these contributions have often left the organization incapable of scaling these initiatives to meet a greater proportion of those in need. Long-term strategies are often halted due to financial constraints.¹⁵ This is further complicated by diverging goals between member states, the African Union Commission, and Regional Economic Communities.¹⁶

Even so, there are lessons to be learned from AUDA-NEPAD's successes and struggles. One way to overcome diverging goals is to create initiatives through strategic partnerships. Partnerships with the stakeholders mentioned above have often led to the unlocking of funds on projects with which they are affiliated.¹⁷ Additionally, they provide a level of technical expertise that enhances the project outcomes.

Furthermore, the enhanced monitoring framework under the Second Ten-Year Implementation Plan (STYIP) aims to underscore the importance of data-driven decisionmaking. These include an enhanced Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for Agenda 2063, a Core Indicator Handbook providing granular profiles of the STYIP, and a data-entry, analysis, and reporting template that aligns both the STYIP and the SDGs. These protocols have been developed from lessons learned from the First Ten-Year Implementation Plan's successes and failures.¹⁸

As 2025 unfolds, collective priorities should be set that push all of Africa toward achieving the SDGs and Agenda 2063 priorities. We propose the following:

1. Africa must work toward financial independence by mobilizing domestic financing.¹⁹ Relying on the domestic bond market to prop up strategic markets could provide a more sustainable approach to long-term goals such as transforming into a green economy. Green bonds attract investors who are environmentally conscious while supporting

14 Simeon K. Ehui and Kanta Kumari Rigaud, "Climate Migration—Deepening Our Solutions," *Brookings* (blog), March 17, 2022, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/climate-migration-deepening-our-solutions/>.

15 Temiloluwa Anne Ojo-Lanre and Akeem Amodu, "NEPAD and Right to Development in Africa: A Critical Review," *Kashere Journal of Politics and International Relations* 2, no. 2 (September 3, 2024): 407–18.

16 Temiloluwa Anne Ojo-Lanre and Akeem Amodu, "NEPAD and Right to Development in Africa: A Critical Review."

17 "African Union Development Agency-NEPAD"; "AUDA-NEPAD and EU Join Forces for Africa's Future," *AUDA-NEPAD* October 17, 2024, <https://www.nepad.org/news/auda-nepad-and-eu-join-forces-africas-future>; "AUDA-NEPAD and Mercy Ships International Forge Strategic Partnership to Strengthen Health Systems for Safe Surgical Care in Africa," *AUDA-NEPAD*, December 17, 2024, <https://www.nepad.org/news/auda-nepad-and-mercy-ships-international-forge-strategic-partnership-strengthen-health>; "AUDA-NEPAD Renews MoU with UN World Tourism Organization," *AUDA-NEPAD*, June 15, 2021, <https://www.nepad.org/news/auda-nepad-and-mercy-ships-international-forge-strategic-partnership-strengthen-health>; "Fostering Synergy: Advancing Africa's Development Agenda through Collaboration," *AUDA-NEPAD*, February 27, 2024, <https://www.nepad.org/news/fostering-synergy-advancing-africas-development-agenda-through-collaboration>; "NEPAD / AU Development Agency," *African Union*, accessed December 18, 2024, <https://www.un.org/africarenewal/african-union-development-agency-nepad-auda-nepad>.

18 "Decade of Accelerated Implementation: Second Ten-Year Implementation Plan 2024-2033," Agenda 2063 (Addis Ababa: African Union, 2024), <https://www.nepad.org/publication/agenda-2063-second-ten-year-implementation-plan-2024-2033>.

19 "Advancing Agenda 2063: AU Considers Feasibility of Development Fund," *AUDA-NEPAD*, July 2024, <https://www.nepad.org/news/advancing-agenda-2063-au-considers-feasibility-of-development-fund>; "PIDA's Decade of Transformation: AUDA NEPAD Paving the Way for Africa's Prosperous Future," *AUDA-NEPAD*, October 9, 2023, <https://www.nepad.org/news/pidas-decade-of-transformation-auda-nepad-paving-way-africas-prosperous-future>.

green initiatives such as renewable energy. Kenya and South Africa have already begun exploring these opportunities.²⁰

2. More countries need to turn toward data-driven decisionmaking and digitization of government. The Agenda 2063 Digital Platform should be frequently utilized by policymakers across Africa to maximize their impact. Digitizing government services is another way that governments can reach the highest number of people. Countries like Rwanda, with its digital-first approach, demonstrate how e-governance enhances public service delivery, reduces corruption, and boosts citizen trust.²¹
3. Investments in climate resilience are vital to the health and well-being of all Africans. Investments in renewable energy, sustainable agriculture through the Africa Fertilizer and Soil Health Action Plan, and disaster risk reduction platforms are building Africa's capacity to adapt to climate challenges.²² AUDA-NEPAD recently launched the Africa Disaster Risk Management and Recovery Platform, which provides solutions by mobilizing financial and technical resources to address climate-related needs.²³ 2025 will provide nations the first chances to leverage this resource to its fullest.
4. The African Continental Free Trade Area has provided a framework for improved regional integration.²⁴ Infrastructure projects, trade, and knowledge-sharing are made feasible through the Agreement. Continued up-scaling of such initiatives is necessary for Africa's development.

Through the use of these strategies, Africa can not only achieve the SDGs and Agenda 2063 goals—it can exceed them. Strategic partnerships, particularly through the Africa Team Program Framework and regional delivery offices, will be key to accelerating impact. Simultaneously, AUDA-NEPAD's focus on innovative financing mechanisms—such as blended finance and green bonds—promises to unlock new resources for sustainable development. The “Africa We Want” is not just a dream; it is a collective commitment.

20 Nicholas Mukono, “Forecasting the Term Structure of Government Bonds in Kenya,” University of Nairobi (thesis), 2018.; Chege Kamenju, “Effect of Macroeconomic Factors on the Development of Bond Market in Kenya,” University of Nairobi (thesis), 2018.

21 “Rwanda Digital Transformation: Charting the Future of Global Data Access,” World Economic Forum, *C4IR: Impact on the Ground* (blog), September 2024, <https://cdn.jwplayer.com/previews/WoBLOioi-ncRE1zO6>.

22 “African Fertilizer and Soil Health Action Plan: 2023-2033,” (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: African Union, n.d.).

23 “A New Era in Disaster Management: Launch of the African Disaster Risk Management and Recovery Platform,” AUDA-NEPAD, November 15, 2024, <https://www.nepad.org/news/new-era-disaster-management-launch-of-african-disaster-risk-management-and-recovery>.

24 “AfCFTA Update November 2024,” *International Trade Administration, Market Intelligence* (blog), November 1, 2024, <https://www.trade.gov/market-intelligence/afcfta-update-november-2024>.

TABLE 1

CURRENT TRAJECTORY FOR MEETING THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS BY 2030

Despite the overall negative outlook for meeting the SDGs by 2030, Africa is outpacing much of the world on SDG 12 (Responsible consumption and production) and 13 (Climate action)

COUNTRY	SDG1	SDG2	SDG3	SDG4	SDG5	SDG6	SDG7	SDG8	SDG9	SDG10	SDG11	SDG12	SDG13	SDG14	SDG15	SDG16	SDG17
BRICS members																	
BRICSplus members																	
East and South Asia																	
Eastern Europe and Central Asia																	
Latin America and the Caribbean																	
Middle East and North Africa																	
Oceania																	
OECD members																	
Small Island Developing States																	
Sub-Saharan Africa																	
Low-income Countries																	
Lower-middle-income Countries																	
Upper-middle-income Countries																	
High-income Countries																	
World																	
Tunisia																	
Morocco																	
Algeria																	
Egypt, Arab Rep.																	
Libya																	
Mauritius																	
Cabo Verde																	
Namibia																	
Gabon																	
Botswana																	
South Africa																	
Senegal																	
Ghana																	
São Tomé and Príncipe																	
Côte d'Ivoire																	
Kenya																	
Rwanda																	
Togo																	

Dashboard Goal achievement Challenges remain Significant challenges Major challenges Insufficient data

Time series On track or maintaining achievement Moderately increasing Decreasing Stagnating

Source: Jeffrey D. Sachs, Guillaume Lafortune, and Grayson Fuller, (2024). The SDGs and the UN Summit of the Future. Sustainable Development Report 2024. Paris: SDSN, Dublin: Dublin University Press. doi:10.25546/108572, <https://s3.amazonaws.com/sustainabledevelopment.report/2024/sustainable-development-report-2024.pdf>.

TABLE 1

CURRENT TRAJECTORY FOR MEETING THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS BY 2030

Despite the overall negative outlook for meeting the SDGs by 2030, Africa is outpacing much of the world on SDG 12 (Responsible consumption and production) and 13 (Climate action)

COUNTRY	SDG1	SDG2	SDG3	SDG4	SDG5	SDG6	SDG7	SDG8	SDG9	SDG10	SDG11	SDG12	SDG13	SDG14	SDG15	SDG16	SDG17
Tanzania	→	→	↗	↗	→	↗	→	→	→	→	→	↑	↗	↓	→	→	→
Sierra Leone	↗	→	↗	→	→	↗	→	↗	→	→	→	↗	↑	→	→	→	↗
Mauritania	→	→	→	↗	→	↗	→	→	↗	→	→	→	↓	↗	→	↓	→
Eswatini	→	→	↗	↑	↗	→	↗	→	↗	→	→	→	→	→	→	↓	↗
Zimbabwe	↓	→	↗	↗	→	→	→	→	→	→	↓	↑	↑	→	→	↓	→
The Gambia	↓	→	→	→	→	↗	→	↗	↗	↓	→	↗	↗	↓	↗	→	↗
Cameroon	→	→	→	→	↗	→	→	→	→	↗	→	→	↑	↗	→	→	→
Mali	→	→	→	↓	→	↗	→	→	→	→	→	→	↗	→	→	→	→
Benin	↑	→	→	↓	→	↗	→	↗	↗	↑	→	↗	↗	→	→	→	↗
Malawi	↓	→	↗	→	→	↗	→	→	↗	↑	→	↗	↗	→	↓	→	→
Guinea	↗	→	→	↗	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	↗	↓	→	↓	↗
Uganda	→	↗	↗	→	→	→	↗	→	↗	→	→	↗	→	→	↓	→	→
Burundi	↓	→	→	→	→	↗	→	↗	→	→	→	↗	↗	→	→	↓	↓
Lesotho	→	→	→	→	↗	↗	→	→	↗	→	→	→	→	→	↗	↓	→
Ethiopia	↗	→	↗	→	↗	→	→	→	→	→	→	↗	↗	→	→	→	→
Nigeria	↓	→	→	→	→	↗	→	→	↗	→	→	↗	↑	↗	→	↓	↗
Zambia	↓	→	→	→	→	↗	→	↗	↗	↗	→	→	↗	→	→	↓	↗
Mozambique	→	→	→	↗	↗	↗	→	↗	↓	→	→	→	↑	↗	→	↓	↗
Burkina Faso	→	→	↗	→	→	→	↓	→	→	→	↗	↗	→	→	→	→	↗
Congo, Rep.	↓	↓	→	→	→	↗	→	↗	→	→	→	↗	↗	↗	→	↓	↓
Liberia	↓	→	↗	↓	→	↗	→	→	↗	→	→	↗	↗	→	→	→	↗
Comoros	→	↓	→	→	→	↑	→	→	→	→	↓	→	→	↓	→	→	→
Angola	↓	→	→	↗	→	↗	↗	↗	→	→	↓	↑	↑	→	→	→	→
Guinea-Bissau	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	↑	→	→	→	→
Djibouti	↗	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	↓	→	→	→
Madagascar	→	→	→	→	→	↗	→	→	→	→	→	↑	↗	→	→	→	→
Sudan	↓	→	→	→	→	→	↗	→	→	→	→	↗	↑	→	→	→	→
Niger	→	→	→	↓	→	↗	→	↗	→	→	→	↗	↗	→	↗	↓	↗
Congo, Dem. Rep.	→	↓	→	↗	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	↗	→	→	↓	↗
Somalia	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	↗	→	↓	→	↑
Chad	→	→	→	→	→	↗	→	→	→	→	→	→	↑	→	→	→	→
Central African Republic	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→
South Sudan	↓	→	→	→	→	↗	→	↗	→	→	→	↑	→	→	→	→	→
Eritrea	→	↓	↗	→	→	↑	→	→	↗	→	→	↗	↗	↓	→	→	→
Equatorial Guinea	→	↓	→	→	→	↑	→	↓	→	→	→	↑	↑	→	→	→	↓
Seychelles	↑	→	↗	→	→	↗	↗	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	↗

Dashboard ■ Goal achievement ■ Challenges remain ■ Significant challenges ■ Major challenges ■ Insufficient data

Time series ↑ On track or maintaining achievement ↗ Moderately increasing → Decreasing ↓ Stagnating

Source: Jeffrey D. Sachs, Guillaume Lafortune, and Grayson Fuller, (2024). The SDGs and the UN Summit of the Future. Sustainable Development Report 2024. Paris: SDSN, Dublin: Dublin University Press. doi:10.25546/108572, <https://s3.amazonaws.com/sustainabledevelopment.report/2024/sustainable-development-report-2024.pdf>.