



**Economic Commission for Africa
Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development
Sixth session**

Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, 24–27 February 2020

Item 6 (a) of the provisional agenda*

Plenary round-table panels and parallel meetings on in-depth review, peer learning and dialogue on the sub-themes of the Regional Forum: plenary round-table on the sub-theme of people

Background paper on people (in reference to Sustainable Development Goals 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5)

I. Introduction of the sub-theme including interlinkages among the Goals in the cluster

The links between the given cluster of Sustainable Development Goals and other Goals, and implications for the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals in general

1. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is often referred to as an integrated agenda or an “indivisible whole”. There is a presumption that the interactions between Goals and targets are – for the most part – mutually supporting. Yet, there can be trade-offs and conflicts between the Goals.¹
2. Interlinkages between Sustainable Development Goals imply that there are policy implications for implementation. For instance, eradicating hunger and ensuring food security are bottom-line requirements for achieving sustainable development and well-being. A careful and context-sensitive assessment is required of the needs and critical trade-offs with other Goals and targets. Multi-level governance and multi-stakeholder partnerships; capacity development at institutional to individual level; resource mobilization towards research, innovation and technology development to mitigate trade-offs; and supportive policies and investments are needed to realize the full potential of Sustainable Development Goals 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5, and related targets and Goals.
3. Looking at key interactions between Sustainable Development Goal 2 and Goal 1, for example, eradicating poverty cannot be achieved without ensuring food and nutrition security for all. While Goal 2 is a strong enabler for Goal 1, increasing agricultural productivity and incomes requires complementary policies that benefit the poor and vulnerable communities in rural and peri-urban areas, and reduce their exposure to adverse environmental

* ECA/RFSD/2020/1.

¹ Mollier, L., F. Seyler, J.-L. Chotte, and C. Ringler, C. (2017). *SDG 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture. A guide to SDG interactions: from science to implementation*. Paris: International Council for Science.

Le Blanc, D. (2015). *Towards integration at last? The sustainable development goals as a network of targets*. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Working Paper No. 141.



shocks. The achievement of Goal 2 will also complement and contribute to the achievement of other Sustainable Development Goals, including, in particular, those relating to poverty eradication, gender equality and women's empowerment, education, water and sanitation, peace and good governance, and ecosystem management.

4. Similarly, a closer look at the interlinkage between Sustainable Development Goal 2 and Goal 3 reveals that health and well-being cannot be achieved without access to adequate food, in terms of both quantity and quality. For instance, efforts to tackle famine are positively interlinked with improvements in nutrition outcomes such as reduced stunting. Indeed, significant progress has been made in tackling famine and related hunger in Africa, as evidenced by recent successes in dealing with severe food insecurity and droughts, which affected about 38 million people in Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, Somalia and South Sudan. How the Sustainable Development Goal 2 targets related to increasing agricultural production and productivity are achieved will have a major influence on soil and water quality, land use, and ecosystem health and functioning, which are key environmental determinants of health. Achieving Goal 3 supports Goal 2, because a healthy population is essential for achieving nutrition and agricultural production targets.¹

5. There are also interlinkages between Goal 2 and Goal 5 such that achieving the targets related to access to food, quality nutrition for all and agricultural incomes will provide key enabling conditions for women's empowerment and gender equality, especially concerning women's land rights issues. Conversely, gender equality and enhancing women's rights can help achieve the targets related to sustainable, increased food production and nutrition, and can enhance the role of women in sustainable agriculture. In a similar vein, interlinkages between Goal 3 and Goal 1 can be deciphered from the fact that universal health care, linked with a strong workforce and supportive research infrastructure, underpins all health targets.

6. In terms of financing, Africa needs to mobilize from \$600 billion to \$1.2 trillion annually if the continent is to achieve its targets as set out in the 2030 Agenda and the 50-year development plan, Agenda 2063.² As for the individual targets of the Sustainable Development Goals, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)³ estimates that Africa requires \$210 billion to finance basic infrastructure, food security, health, education and climate change mitigation.

II. Key trends and progress towards achievement of selected targets of the given cluster of Sustainable Development Goals

A. Sustainable Development Goal 1: No poverty

7. According to the ECA publication, *Economic Report on Africa 2017: Urbanization and Industrialization for Africa's Transformation*,⁴ Africa has made considerable progress on reducing poverty since 2002, as the extreme poverty headcount ratio declined from 55.6 per cent in 2002 to 41 per cent in

² Economic Commission for Africa (2017a). *SDG Financing for Africa: Key Propositions and Areas of Engagement*. Discussion Paper for Development Finance Workshop. Kigali. 27 January 2017.

³ United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (2014). *World Investment Report 2014: Investing in the Sustainable Development Goals – An Action Plan* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.14. II.D.1). New York and Geneva.

⁴ United Nations publication, Sales No. E.17.II.K.1.

2013.⁵ The latest data from the World Bank show that, as of September 2019, Africa (excluding North Africa) had 416.4 million people living below the \$1.90 poverty line and a headcount ratio of 41.4 per cent. On the other hand, North Africa and the Middle East had 15.7 million people living below the poverty line and a headcount ratio of 4.2 per cent.

8. The pace of poverty reduction in Africa has been slower than anticipated due to structural challenges and lack of resilience to shocks, which makes it susceptible to many reversals. The reductions to date appear to have been attained on the back of relatively strong growth, averaging 5 per cent annually since the mid-2000s. Even with such efforts, the region managed to reduce poverty only by an average of 1.5 per cent annually from 2002 to 2012, compared with a 2.7 per cent reduction annually on average for developing regions combined. Further reductions would require substantial investment in inclusive growth in order to positively impact income and other dimensions of poverty.⁶

9. While it remains difficult for many African countries to provide unemployment benefits, efforts are being made to institutionalize policies that provide other social assistance programmes to people living in extreme poverty. The experience of other developing regions, such as Latin America, suggests that the provision of unemployment and other social protection benefits has a positive impact on poverty reduction. Africa (excluding North Africa) has been increasing its coverage over the years (an average of 19 per cent). Furthermore, African countries are reforming both their pension and health systems to reach individuals in the informal sector. African Union leaders adopted the Social Protection Plan for Informal Economy and Rural Workers to cover excluded workers and members of their families. But the challenge has always been the sustenance of such programmes by most Governments and development actors in the face of economic downturns or cutbacks.⁷

B. Sustainable Development Goal 2: Zero hunger

10. According to data revealed recently by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the prevalence of undernourishment in Africa had fallen from 24.5 per cent in 2000 to 18.2 per cent in 2014, but then started rising to 20 per cent of the continent's population, or 256 million people in 2018, with around 239 million, or 22.8 per cent, undernourished people in Africa excluding North Africa, up from 232 million in 2017. The Eastern Africa subregion continues to accommodate the highest prevalence of those undernourished, estimated at 30.8 per cent in 2018, followed by Central Africa (26.5 per cent), Western Africa (14.7 per cent); Southern Africa (8 per cent) and Northern Africa (7.1 per cent).

11. There is significant variation in the performance of the five subregions of Africa in respect of the prevalence of undernourishment. The rise in the prevalence of undernourishment was strongest in West Africa (3.4 percentage points) and Central Africa (1.9 percentage points). In terms of numbers of undernourished, the greatest deterioration between 2014 and 2018 occurred in East and West Africa, with the largest number by far of those undernourished living in East Africa.

⁵ The international poverty line is currently defined at \$1.90 or below per person per day using 2011 United States dollars purchasing power parity.

⁶ Economic Commission for Africa. *Economic Report on Africa 2017: Urbanization and Industrialization for Africa's Transformation*. Addis Ababa, 2017.

⁷ Ibid.

12. The number of stunted children under the age of five years has been estimated at 149 million world-wide. That number has fallen over time. In contrast, a steady increase has been experienced in Africa, reaching 58.8 million in 2018. Despite increasing in absolute number, the prevalence of stunting has fallen in Africa, though not significantly enough to be considered on track for meeting the target of the Sustainable Development Goal in respect of stunting. While some progress is being made, very few countries are on course to meet the target. In addition, for many countries, data gaps make it impossible to assess progress.

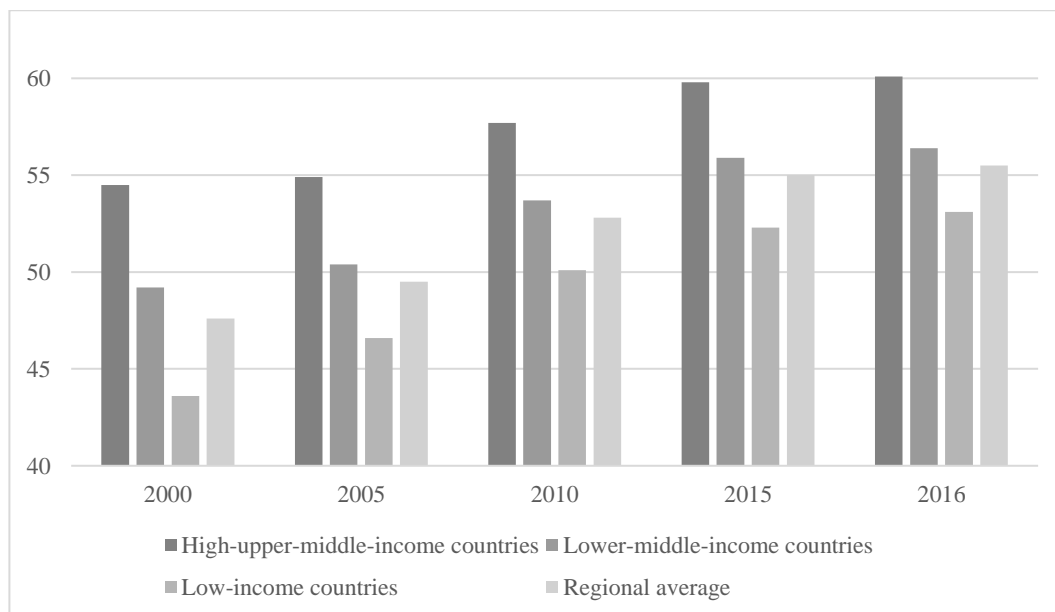
13. Worldwide, out of about 50 million children under the age of five years with moderate to severe wasting worldwide, 14 million are in Africa. Most of these children (9.2 million) were in Eastern and West Africa. The prevalence of wasting, 7.1 per cent, is just slightly lower in Africa compared with the world average, and it is highest in North Africa and West Africa.

C. Sustainable Development Goal 3: Good health and well-being

14. The overall indicator of Sustainable Development Goal 3 is the healthy life expectancy of the population. This captures not only the effect of premature death (life expectancy), but also the effects of time spent in illness and reduced well-being. The latest data from the WHO Global Health Observatory (www.who.int/gho/en/) show an improving trend, with the highest improvement seen in the low-income countries of the African region (figure I). These saw an improvement in healthy life of 9.6 years, as compared with the high-upper-middle-income countries (5.6 years).

Figure I

Trend of healthy life expectancy in the African Region, 2000–2017



Source: World Health Organization (www.who.int/gho/en/).

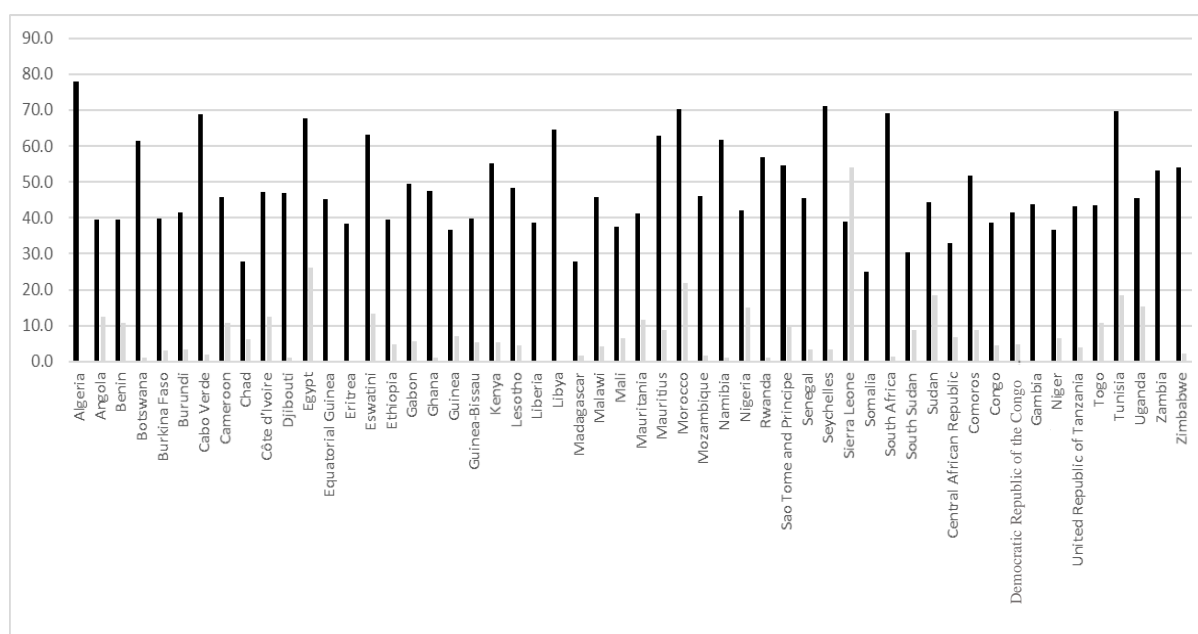
15. While the other Sustainable Development Goal targets contribute to these trends, the primary driver is the state of the health systems and services in countries. This is measured by the trends of universal health coverage (Sustainable Development Goal 8, target 3.8), the overarching target for Sustainable Development Goal 3. With universal health coverage, all people have access to the health services they need, when and where they need them, without financial hardship.

16. Member States in the region are at different points in their respective paths towards achieving the overarching target 3.8 on universal health coverage. A comparison of the two indicators for the target (universal health coverage service coverage index,⁸ households facing catastrophic health spending) shows that most countries closest to achieving universal health coverage (high service coverage index, low percentage of households facing catastrophic spending) are high-/upper-income. Figure II illustrates the trends abovementioned with a comparison of universal health coverage indicators in selected low-income, lower-middle-income and high-/upper-income African countries.

17. However, several lower-middle-income countries (Cabo Verde, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Mozambique, Senegal, Zambia and Zimbabwe) and one low-income country (Rwanda) also have a service coverage index and household catastrophic spending on health below the regional median value. Sierra Leone is an outlier with very high catastrophic spending on health.

Figure II

Comparison of country status with universal health coverage indicators, 2017



Source: World Health Organization. 2019 Global Monitoring Report. Geneva, 2019. Available from www.who.int/healthinfo/universal_health_coverage/report/2019/en/. Accessed on 16 January 2020.

18. Health services cover the domains of reproductive, maternal, newborn, child, and adolescent health; infectious diseases; non-communicable diseases; and service capacity and access. The non-communicable diseases services contribute most to the universal health coverage service coverage index, a reflection of the investment in clinical services. The main bottlenecks to achieving universal health coverage are driven by the level of development in high-upper-middle-income countries, where infectious diseases are the main bottlenecks, and in low-income countries, where service capacity and access remain the main bottlenecks.⁹

⁸ The 14 universal health coverage service coverage index tracer indicators, which span essential health service domains from reproductive and child health to non-communicable diseases and service capacity, signal how health service coverage is improving or stalling throughout the world.

⁹ World Health Organization (2019). 2019 Global Monitoring Report. Geneva.

D. Sustainable Development Goal 4: Quality education

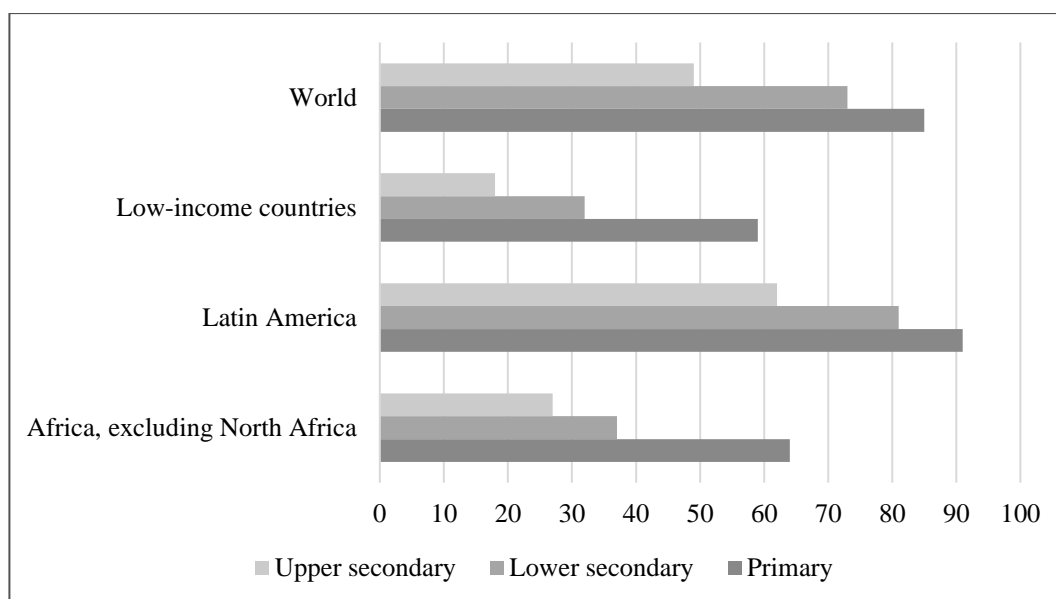
19. Several countries have taken important initiatives to enhance access to a number of areas including early childhood education, technical and vocational education, and higher education – for example, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mauritius, Rwanda and Seychelles; and improving access for children with disabilities in French-speaking countries such as Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, the Niger, Senegal and Togo. And yet, the overall education landscape in sub-Saharan Africa is showing signs of being off-track in achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4 by 2030.

20. Although access to good quality early childhood care and education is crucial for cognitive and emotional development, including for greater school-life expectancy, sub-Saharan Africa has the lowest participation rate across the world in pre-primary education (42 per cent).

21. In primary education, from the 263 million children out of school across the world, half of them live in Africa, according to a 2016 report by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Since 2000, sub-Saharan Africa has accounted for an increasing number of children worldwide who are of primary school age but who are out of school, growing from 41 per cent in 2000 to 54 per cent in 2017, based on the latest data available. Almost one third of the world's 67.2 million refugees and internally displaced persons live in Africa. Additionally, fewer than 40 per cent of girls in Africa complete secondary school (figure III).

22. Africa is also home to almost half of the 102 million non-literate young people (around 48 million) and one third of non-literate adults (approximately 200 million). Africa appears to be following the global trend of lower primary and secondary school completion rates at higher levels of education (figure III). In all subregions of Africa except North Africa, the trend appears to be that of lower completion rates relative to other regions of the world. Furthermore, aggregate primary completion rates also reflect country differences, both in terms of progress made from the low initial status in the 1990s and the distance from the current target. Primary school completion has broadly improved in some African countries, with Algeria, Botswana, Egypt, Ghana, Mauritius, Morocco, Sao Tome and Principe, Seychelles and Tunisia, and achieving the target of full completion at the primary level in 2013. At the same time, two thirds of African countries have yet to reach this target, with 12 per cent of these countries at an intermediate level (more than 80 per cent completion), and the remaining countries far from the target.

Figure III

Completion rates across global regions, 2013–2017

Source: UNESCO Institute of Statistics database (2019).

23. The initial situation variations in achievements are observed. For example, Benin, Malawi, Mauritania, Morocco and Togo made impressive progress in achieving an increase of at least 40 per cent since 1990. Others – such as the Central African Republic, Chad, Mozambique and the Niger – registered primary education completion rates of below 50 per cent in 2013, almost equal to the average completion rate of Africa, excluding North Africa, in 2000.¹⁰ The mixed progress towards completion rates across Africa, excluding North Africa, can be partly driven by, for example, the availability of textbooks, an essential input to the improvement of quality of education.

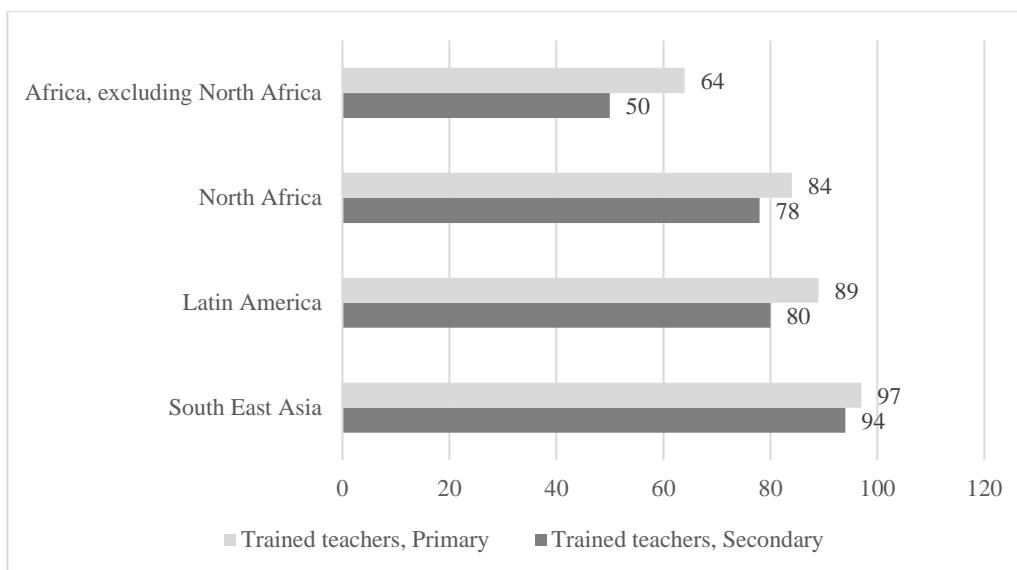
24. Africa has the lowest proportion of trained teachers globally, even though trained teachers are important for preparing students for the world of work (figure IV). This confirms the fact that the low supply of trained teachers at the primary and secondary levels of schooling is an important constraint to good quality education in Africa.

25. Data continue to remain scarce on the state of vocational education and training programmes, which are expected to supply Africa's economy with a much-needed diversified skilled workforce to boost further its emerging goods and services industries.

¹⁰ Economic Commission for Africa (2016). MDGs to Agenda 2063/SDGs Transition Report: Towards an integrated and coherent approach to sustainable development in Africa. Addis Ababa.

Figure IV

Trained teachers as a percentage of total teachers, 2017

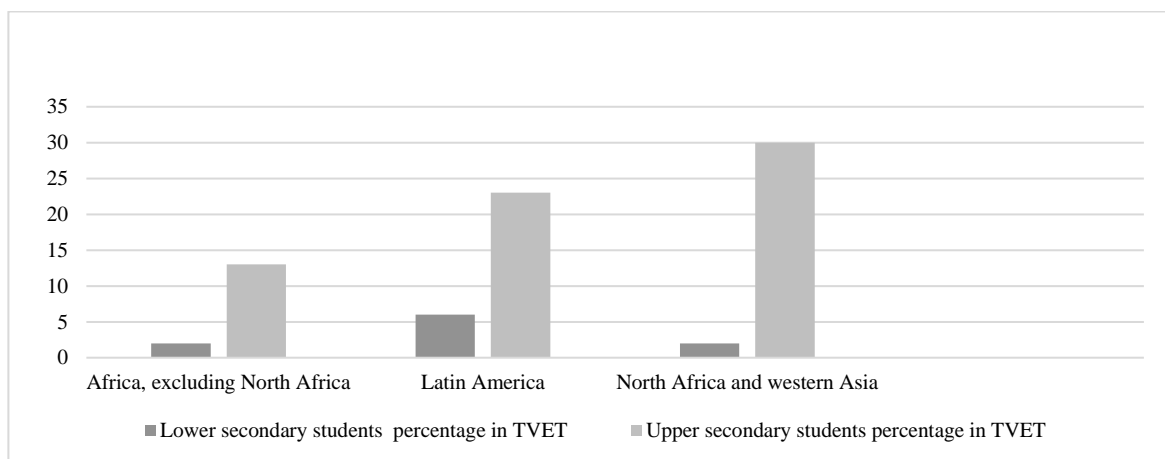


Source: UNESCO Institute of Statistics database (2019).

26. In Africa, excluding North Africa, entrance to enrolment in technical and vocational education training is in line with global trends, demonstrating that the percentage of participation increases at the upper secondary level (see figure V).

Figure V

Student participation in technical and vocational education training at lower and upper secondary levels in global regions



Source: UNESCO, *Global Education Monitoring Report 2019: Migration, Displacement and Education – Building Bridges, not Walls*. Paris, 2019.

27. In Africa, levels of participation are low. Social attitudes and education aspirations are a challenge to technical and vocational secondary education in some settings. It is often perceived as less academically oriented and, therefore, a hindrance to entering tertiary education. At the aggregate level, however, the evidence does not indicate that secondary students in technical and vocational-track education are excluded from tertiary enrolment.¹¹

¹¹ Clement, U. (2014). *Improving the image of technical and vocational education and training*. Bonn, Germany: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ).

28. Access to tertiary education is heavily constrained by its cost, where it exceeds 60 per cent of national per capita income in most countries, reaching almost 300 per cent in Guinea and Uganda. However, for the African Union and its Continental Education Strategy for Africa 2025, there has been a good initiative in introducing the pan-African universities, among other similar private sector initiatives to boost intake into higher education (for example, AIMS), in key priority areas of the Sustainable Development Goals. Besides access, completion rates in Africa are 64 per cent for primary school children and 27 per cent for secondary school children, in comparison with the world average for the same levels at 85 per cent and 49 per cent, respectively.

E. Sustainable Development Goal 5: Gender equality

29. A number of emerging priorities were noted from the 25-year review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action such as the elimination of violence against women and girls; eradication of poverty; agricultural productivity and food security; good quality education, training and lifelong learning for women and girls; access to health care, including sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights; and equality and non-discrimination before the law and in access to justice. The review also underlined that investment in women and girls could be a vehicle for promoting long-term growth and human well-being, particularly through providing women with access to savings and credit institutions.

30. In conformity with Sustainable Development Goal 5, target 5a, many Governments in Africa prioritized the provision of start-up capital (credit) and other financial services for women to start and grow their enterprises. In Burundi, for example, in relation to the improvement in financial inclusion and access to credit for women, including self-employed workers, Act No.1/010 of 12 August 2016 was passed, governing ordinary securities on assets in Burundi, to assist the poor but economically active population without mortgage guarantees. The Government has put in place a financial inclusion mechanism for women through the Rural Micro-Credit Fund (supported by the United Nations Development Programme), which provided 45,579 jobs in 2017, of which 32 per cent were for women.

31. Various initiatives in the region have been devised to ensure equal access to education, with mixed results. Increasingly, however, policy focus has gone beyond mere school enrolment rates to other considerations, including the quality of teaching and learning, school retention and academic results. For the education sector, relevant data to design the delivery of interventions prescribed by the 25-year review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063 aspirations are already available. Many countries have addressed issues affecting women's reproductive health rights. In line with Goal 3 on population health, and Goal 5, target 5.6 on ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights including family planning, Governments have prioritized the health and well-being of women, men and children, by pursuing policies that reduce the burden of disease and improve healthy lives.

32. Strides have been made on Goal 5, target 5a and its two indicators, which measure the proportion of total agricultural population with ownership or secure rights over agricultural land (agricultural holders), by sex; and the share of women among owners or rights-bearers of agricultural land, by type of tenure, respectively. Progress has been made on measuring the prevalence of people in the agricultural population with ownership or tenure rights over agricultural land, disaggregated by sex, and measuring the extent to which women are disadvantaged in ownership and tenure rights over agricultural land (gender parity in land ownership and tenure). This progress has been aided by data captured by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

(FAO) through its Gender and Land Rights Database and Indicators. The main challenge has been the different definitions of the term “ownership” among different stakeholders. Furthermore, none of the land indicators covered by the 2019 Africa Index and Dashboards proposed by the Inter-agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators meet the required criteria on global relevance and applicability, statistical adequacy, timeliness, data quality and coverage.¹²

III. Gaps, constraints and emerging issues

A. Sustainable Development Goal 1: No poverty

(a) The slow pace of poverty reduction in Africa presents a huge challenge for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals target of eliminating extreme poverty on the continent by 2030;

(b) The rapid growth of the labour force makes it harder to transform the structure of employment. On current trends, Africa has the fastest growing working age population;

(c) Young people are worse off in terms of access to employment opportunities. They constituted about 35 per cent of Africa’s working age population in 2015, but 60 per cent of the total are unemployed. In most countries, the youth unemployment rate is more than twice that for adults;

(d) The challenges of vulnerability and insecurity among a large number of Africans are key drivers of this policy agenda.

B. Sustainable Development Goal 2: Zero hunger

(a) The continuing deterioration of food security is influenced by three key drivers, conflict, climate extremes, and economic slowdowns and downturns.¹³ These drivers tend to overlap and are often interlinked through their negative impact on livelihoods, which is often exacerbated by dominant inequality;

(b) The rapid urbanization and, in particular, the migration from rural to urban areas are not only depriving the farming systems from much-needed labour but also exerting mounting pressure on the food systems in urban areas with far-reaching implications for the food security and nutrition;

(c) Agriculture is underperforming in many African countries partially because women face constraints that reduce their productivity, including lack of property rights.

C. Sustainable Development Goal 3: Good health and well-being

(a) Much of the focus remains on stand-alone programmes – such as HIV, tuberculosis and immunization – compared with the integrated person-focused approach needed to advance Sustainable Development Goal 3;

(b) Reporting and analysis are still driven by stand-alone indicator trends, with less use of indices or other analytical tools. As a result, efforts are

¹² SDG Center for Africa and Sustainable Development Solutions Network (2019). Africa SDG Index and Dashboards Report 2019. Kigali and New York: SDG Center for Africa and Sustainable Development Solutions Network.

¹³ Please see the 2017, 2018 and 2019 editions of the *State of Food Security and Nutrition* as well as 2017 and 2018 editions of *Africa Regional Overview for Food Security and Nutrition*.

focused on improving specific indicators, and not on improving access to the services;

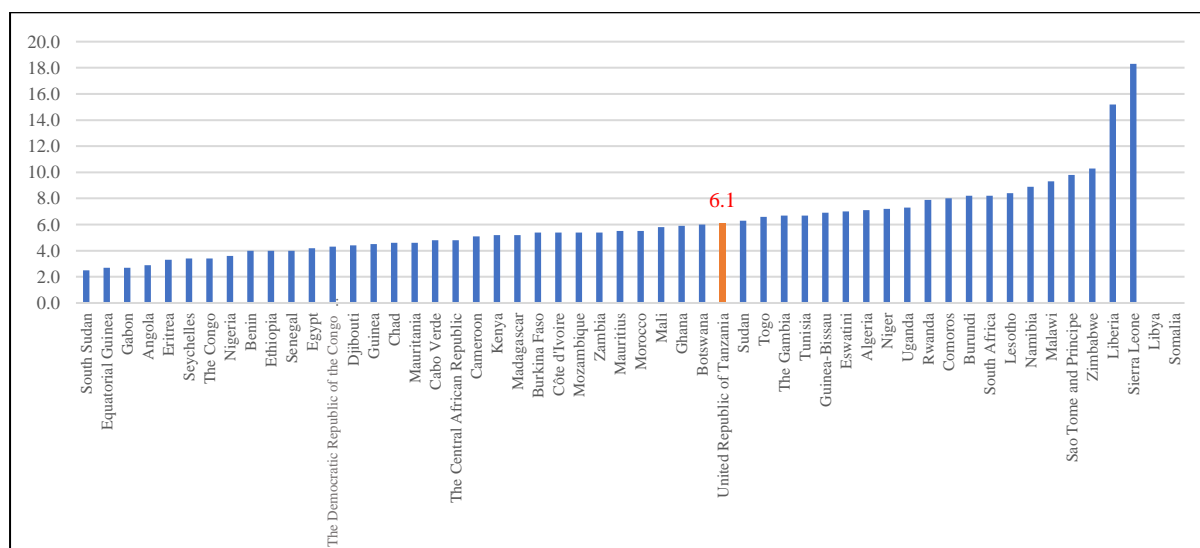
(c) The persistently low levels of investment in interventions crucial for achieving Goal 3 is seen across countries. Current health expenditures as a percentage of gross domestic product are still very low in Africa, compared with other areas of the world, suggesting that very low levels of economic output are invested in health and well-being (figure VI);

(d) There are frequent and high-impact health security threats, shifting significant levels of resources to outbreak and humanitarian responses at the expense of system building for universal health coverage;

(e) Few practical models exist for harnessing the potential of the private sector in a manner that maintains the core Sustainable Development Goal principles, particularly of equity and leaving no one behind.

Figure VI

Current health expenditure as a percentage of gross domestic product across African countries



Source: World Bank World Development Indicators database (<https://datatabank.worldbank.org/home.aspx>).

D. Sustainable Development Goal 4: Quality education

(a) Children and adolescents in Africa do not seem to acquire meaningful basic skills during their primary education. According to the latest estimates by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, while 387 million (equivalent to about 56 per cent) children of the world's primary school age did not reach the minimum proficiency level in reading, this proportion is 87 per cent in Africa (excluding North Africa) not mastering the required level in primary;

(b) Severe shortages of trained and qualified primary school teachers are still common, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, where pupil-trained teacher ratios are 43 students to 1 trained teacher. According to the UNESCO 2019 Global Education Monitoring Report, only 64 per cent of teachers in primary school and 50 per cent of teachers in secondary school are trained;

(c) Another challenge across Africa (excluding North Africa) continues to be the chronic shortages of subject-specific teachers. In addition, while globally many countries struggle to produce enough secondary mathematics, science and language teachers, across Africa there are the additional challenges of getting teachers to serve in rural areas;

(d) Funding for Sustainable Development Goal 4 continues to be a challenge for Africa with an annual financing gap of \$26.4 billion, representing two thirds of the estimated global yearly funding gap of \$39 billion needed to meet the collective commitments in education by 2030. So far, the only glimmer of hope in Africa is Ethiopia, which dedicates the second-highest proportion of its entire budget to education in the world (27 per cent). This is far more than the international suggested benchmark of 15–20 per cent set in the Incheon Declaration and the regional average of 16 per cent.

E. Sustainable Development Goal 5: Gender equality

33. Despite some progress, violence against women still remains deeply rooted and embedded in the patriarchal social practices. In line with global and regional commitments, the region needs to take drastic measures to eliminate trafficking in women, and assist victims of violence due to prostitution and trafficking as a matter of urgency in order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals in totality, but particularly Goal 5. The establishment of the council of African traditional leaders is one example of the measures taken to boost eradication of domestic violence. Women in Africa still face constraints, including lack of access to land and security of land tenure; lack of access to finance; and lack of access to factors of production and extension services, as well as opportunities to tackle the effects of climate change, which, unfortunately, impact women and children the most.

IV. Stepping up the pace and scale of implementation: opportunities and transformative levers, partnerships, commitments, actions and other measures to drastically accelerate implementation

A. Sustainable Development Goal 1: No poverty

(a) Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and ending poverty in Africa will require accelerated and inclusive structural transformation through economic diversification and accelerated industrialization through green initiatives;

(b) For Africa to enjoy the demographic dividend, growth needs to be sustainably high (7 per cent or more) to create sufficient jobs and absorb the growing working-age population;

(c) Expanding social protection programmes and targeting appropriate schemes to the poor and most vulnerable – along with developing appropriate skills through quality education, technical and vocational training and entrepreneurial development – can further reduce poverty in Africa;

(d) Africa should expand the domestic fiscal space through increased economic growth for broader and progressive taxation to allow increased public investment on employment promotion and social protection;

(e) In addition, Africa should strengthen partnerships within the framework of South–South cooperation to leverage resources for financing.

B. Sustainable Development Goal 2: Zero hunger

(a) Given its scope and ambitious targets, the achievement in Africa of Goal 2 requires the establishment of efficient, socially inclusive and environmentally sustainable food systems. For this to occur, effective social protection regimes are

needed, as is the adoption of sustainable agricultural practices and the implementation of initiatives that focus on the conservation of biodiversity;

(b) Building resilience to conflict and sustaining peace is a complex challenge that must include livelihood support to address the root causes of conflicts and conflict stressors and to promote re-engagement in productive economic activities;

(c) The Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area is an important initiative with considerable potential in not only boosting trade but also to promote diversification with positive effects on food availability and accessibility. Promoting regional agricultural value chains and enhancing business environment are, therefore, key actions.

C. Sustainable Development Goal 3: Good health and well-being

(a) There is high political commitment towards achieving Goal 3, as exemplified by the Global Action Plan endorsed at the United Nations General Assembly in September 2019. This represents an unprecedented commitment among the major international agencies and member States to work together towards a more harmonized approach to attaining Goal 3;

(b) Furthermore, the health sector stakeholders endorsed a global declaration in October 2018 to prioritize the use of a primary health-care approach in facilitating movement towards universal health coverage and Sustainable Development Goal 3.

D. Sustainable Development Goal 4: Quality education

34. Six steps are proposed, in order to accelerate progress on Goal 4:

(a) *Beyond averages*: Sharpen the focus on equity to ensure that nobody is left behind;

(b) *Beyond access*: Focus on learning and its monitoring, not just on the number of children in classrooms;

(c) *Beyond basics*: Expand the content of education beyond reading, writing and mathematics, to embed the learning needed for healthy and prosperous societies;

(d) *Beyond schooling*: Expand the focus to include adults;

(e) *Beyond education*: Improve cross-sectoral cooperation;

(f) *Beyond countries*: Enhance regional and international coordination.

V. Key messages

A. Sustainable Development Goal 1: No poverty

(a) Even though Africa has made remarkable progress in reducing extreme poverty, the majority of the world's poorest people still reside in Africa;

(b) The pace of progress on poverty reduction in Africa has been hampered by high levels of income inequality within countries;

(c) Social protection – which includes social assistance, such as cash transfers, school feeding and targeted food assistance, as well as social

insurance and labour market programmes – is an important tool for reducing extreme poverty in Africa;

(d) Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and ending poverty in Africa will require accelerated and inclusive structural transformation through economic diversification and accelerated industrialization.

B. Sustainable Development Goal 2: Zero hunger

(a) The continent must address the three main contributors to food insecurity, conflict, climate extremes, and economic slowdowns and downturns. In addition, there is a need to direct attention to the effects of rapid population growth and urbanization, which pose additional challenges for future food security;

(b) African countries need to harness the potential of the African Continental Free Trade Area through promoting regional agricultural value chains and creating an enabling business environment. There is, therefore, a dire need that African countries implement the Guidelines for the Development of Regional Agricultural Value Chains;¹⁴

(c) It is imperative that member States collect both sex-disaggregated data and specific data on women's land tenure security to better understand variables that have an impact on the matter, and inform policies, laws and strategies for strengthening women's land tenure security.

C. Sustainable Development Goal 3: Good health and well-being

(a) There is an unprecedented political commitment at national and global levels to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 3 that can be translated into actionable interventions;

(b) Intersectoral structures coordinated at the highest level of government are needed to ensure that health-related targets across all Sustainable Development Goals are being monitored and supported;

(c) Innovative financing approaches to boost domestic resource capacities are needed in countries, to finance the requirements for attaining Goal 3.

D. Sustainable Development Goal 4: Quality education

(a) Focus should be on learning and its monitoring, not just on the number of children in classrooms;

(b) There is need to expand the content of education beyond reading, writing and mathematics to embed the learning needed for healthy and prosperous societies.

¹⁴ The Guidelines, developed by ECA in close partnership with the African Union Commission, were endorsed by that body's Scientific Technical Committee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Water and Environment that was held in Addis Ababa, on 21 and 22 October 2019. The Guidelines serve to turn into action the recently endorsed Continental Framework for Boosting Intra-African trade (BIAT) in Agricultural Commodities and Services.

E. Sustainable Development Goal 5: Gender equality

(a) Countries should accelerate transformative actions in favour of equality and non-discrimination before the law, and access to justice of women, through transformative actions such as removal of discriminatory laws against women and girls, and enforcement of progressive laws;

(b) There is a need to establish multidisciplinary pools of gender experts, and implement national capacity-building programmes to strengthen their skill sets, especially in gender thematic areas, where countries are lagging behind;

(c) The continent should incorporate gender issues in public financing, and accord gender issues priority in national budgets;

(d) Member States should undertake comprehensive land reforms that make available equal opportunities for women to exercise and enforce their rights.
