

THE LIGHT

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Sustainable Development and the fight against poverty

(Part 2 of the 2-Part Series)



BY PROF. VINCE SININING

For over fifteen years that I have served as a special adviser to select Permanent Missions to the United Nations in New York, Sustainable Development and the Fight against Poverty are some of the most important issues that the World Body has successfully focused on.

This second part of the 2-part series article concludes my insight in helping to educate our young generation of leaders in Africa on the issue of Sustainable Development and the Fight against Poverty at the United Nations.

The world body challenged all member states to work together in achieving the SDGs by 2030. To encourage non-governmental actors to actively contribute to sustainable development, incentives were created for them. One noticeable issue emphasized in SDGs is the inclusion of Persons with Disabilities (DWP) especially in education, growth and employment, inequality, accessibility of human settlements, as well as data collection and the monitoring of SDGs. The SDGs apply to industrialised as well as developing and emerging countries. Agenda 2030 also aims to fight root

causes rather than just symptoms.

The Millennium Development Goal Report of 2015 stated that "Africa made great strides towards the eight MDGs. In many areas, especially related to health and education, the advance registered by Sub-Saharan Africa was the fastest among all developing regions. At the same time, the northern part of the continent met many targets, including

those on poverty and hunger reduction, universal primary education, children and mothers' health, as well as sanitation." Important observations to consider are:

- Child mortality rate in Sub-Saharan Africa declined five times faster during 2005-2013 than it was 1990-1995, but the region still retains the highest rate;
- 70% of its population

Africa is undergoing energy transformation. Reports have indicated that over 620 million people in Africa have no electricity which is very critical in tackling poverty



still suffers from lack of access to improved sanitation facility, 41% of its inhabitants still live, in 2015, with less than \$1.25 a day and out of the 57 million of global out-of-school children of primary school age in 2015, 33 million are in Sub-Saharan Africa;

- In recent years, Northern Africa has not registered any improvements in women's access to paid employment, with women still holding less than one out of five paid jobs in the non-agricultural sector.

The "Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" report acknowledges that "progress made in the last 15 years has been uneven, particularly in Africa where some MDGs remained out of track." Target 4.b of the Agenda highlighted the necessity "to substantially

expand at global level the number of scholarships available to developing countries, in particular least developed countries, Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and African countries, for enrolment in higher education, including vocational training and information and communications technology, technical, engineering and scientific programmes".

Target 9.a stated to "facilitate sustainable and resilient infrastructure development in developing countries through enhanced financial, technological and technical support to African countries, least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and SIDS. Target 10.b called to "encourage official development assistance and financial flows, including foreign direct investment, to States where the need is greatest, in particular least developed countries, African countries, SIDS

and landlocked developing countries, in accordance with their national plans and programmes".

In 2016, member states started the implementation of SDGs. Africa is undergoing energy transformation. Reports have indicated that over 620 million people in Africa have no electricity which is very critical in tackling poverty. Providing quality education, skills training and capacity-building programs among the youth are also critical in achieving sustainable development and in the fight against poverty. Current leaders have the moral obligations of limiting climate change, adopting renewable energy, and managing resources sustainably. Former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan's "Africa Progress Panel: Seizing Africa's energy and climate opportunities" said that catastrophic climate change can be prevented while energy systems are built to sustain growth, create jobs, and lift millions out of poverty.

Living in Africa, I have observed personally in my various visits to marginalized areas that people are forced to use biomass (firewood and charcoal). The use of biomass is economically inefficient and environmentally devastating but most of the communities lack access to clean energy

sources. Only the rich districts enjoy highly centralized energy systems while the poor and marginalized areas are underpowered. Researchers have indicated that chronic under-supply of secure and affordable electricity is a barrier to growth, job creation, and poverty reduction.

Surprisingly, the poorest people pay among the world's highest prices for energy. If this trend continues, sadly, Africa will not be able to achieve the 2030 goals. Although it is challenging, Africa has the potential to continue the transformation it is now experiencing.

Reports have shown that South Africa has emerged as a global leader in renewable energy. Ethiopia, Kenya, Morocco, and Rwanda are now attracting large investments in renewable energy. Indeed, effective international cooperation can transform the whole of Africa. Now, Africa is taking part of the global efforts in delivering multilateral solutions to shared global problems.

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