Achieving sustainable development in Africa: Progress, challenges and prospects

Albert Ahenkan *, Alex Osei-Kojo

Department of Public Administration and Health Services Management University of Ghana Business School, Post Box, LG 78, Legon, Accra

Abstract

For the past three decades, the global community has recognized the need to shift the pursuit of development to sustainable development. This recognition was based on the fact that earlier approaches to development were deemed unsustainable. While African governments have implemented several policies towards Sustainable Development (SD), there appears to be deep skepticism about whether Africa can achieve SD. The study therefore assessed the achievement of SD in Africa using the qualitative paradigm. It employed the desk top instrument in data collection by critically reviewing literature pertaining to the progress, challenges and prospects of Sustainable Development in Africa. The study utilized only secondary data contained in relevant journal articles, books, reports and periodicals. The narrative analysis method was used for data analysis. The study reveals that the progress of SD in Africa is mixed across indicators. Whereas most African countries have significantly made progress, over the past decade, in building strong economies, strengthening democratic institutions, improving agriculture and reducing poverty, pressing challenges such as climate change, population growth, and inadequate employment opportunities continue to undermine efforts towards SD. The study recommends that African governments must deepen their commitment to designing and implementing innovative policies to create jobs, tackle climate change and improve agriculture in order to achieve SD.

Keywords: sustainable development; Africa; economy; poverty; environment; good governance

* Corresponding author. *E-mail address:* aahenkan@ug.edu.gh; oseikojo.alex@gmail.com

1. Introduction

At the heart of pursuing development in Africa is to expand infrastructure, build resilient public institutions, reduce poverty, develop new technology, create more employment, reduce maternal and child mortality and develop and implement climate change adaptation strategies. The meaning of the concept of development has undergone a series of change both in theoretical and practical terms, in attempts to coin a universally acceptable definition (Thomas, 2004). These changes in defining development manifest in the deep contest among scholars and practitioners over what exactly should constitute the definition of the term. Despite this contest, some definitions are worth considering. Todaro and Smith (2009) defines development as the process of improving the quality of all human lives, which focuses on three important aspects: raising people's level of living, creating conditions conducive to the growth of people's self-esteem, and increasing people's freedom. Bellu (2011, p.2) defines development as "the improvement, either in the general situation of the system, or in some of its constituent elements, which may occur due to some deliberate action carried out by single agents or by some authority pre-ordered to achieve improvement, to favorable circumstances or both."

In recent times, there has been a paradigm shift in defining development and the way it is approached. This paradigm shift resulted in the adoption of Sustainable Development (SD), a concept which was highlighted in the Brunt land Report of 1987 and at the Stockholm Conference of 1972 (UNECA, 2012). The shift was borne out of the global links between environmental problems and socio-economic concerns (Hopwood *et al.*, 2005), and also as a result of the fact that earlier conceptions and approaches to development appeared to focus largely on economics and physical wealth despite the multi-dimensional and complex nature of development (Bellu, 2011). Focusing on economics and physical wealth in the pursuit of development has proven to be unsustainable not only from the environmental perspective but also from the economic, social and employment perspectives because it is resource-intensive, hence the need to pursue SD (ILO, 2012).

According to Adams (2006), the idea of Sustainable Development (SD) dates back more than 30 years ago, and it was coined by the World Conservation Union (Association of African Universities, 2009).

The Bruntland Report defines Sustainable Development (SD) as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs." The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2001) also defines SD as the development path along which the maximization of human well-being for today's generation does not lead to the decline in the well-being of the future generation. These definitions suggest that SD considersthe needs of the future and currentgenerations in tandem, and it is rooted in the pursuit of the welfare and well-being of the people. SD is motivated by the negative externalities that are responsible for natural resource depletion and degradation; it requires screening public goods that are essential for economic developement, and it also stresses the importance of retaining the flexibility of the environment to respond to shock (OECD, 2001).

In order to achieve SD, African governments have launched several strategies. In Ghana for instance, the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS I and II) and the National Environmental Policy (NEP) were designed. In Tanzania, the National Development Vision (NDV) 2025 was desinged. In Egypt, there was the

National Strategy for Solid Waste Management (NSSWM). Across the entire continent, there has been an increased number of SD initiatives being implemented in some 28 countries; these initiatives manifested in the transformation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) to the African Union (AU) in 2001, the establishment of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the establishment of Regional Economic Councils (RECs) in the sub-region (UNECA, 2012).

In spite of these attempts by African governments towards SD, there is a growing perception that Africa could fail in achieving SD. This perception is fueled partly by the evidence that while the world is undergoing rapid change, which is driven prominently by technology and globalization, Africa remains unprotected and at risk of being exploited without due recognition of, and remuneration for, its resources (Association of African Universities, 2009). Additionally, there is the continued escalating trend in poverty and the diminishing strength of the environment to meet current and future needs of African countries (UNDP, 2003).

Given the fact that SD appears to be contradicting in between the opposing imperatives of growth and development on one hand, and ecological sustainability on the other (Robinson, 2004), the trend in SD on the African continent has generated some skepticism about whether SD is achievable in Africa. The paucity of a coherent literature that documents the achievements, challenges and prospects of SD on the continent reinforces the skepticism of achieveing SD in Africa. The purpose of this study is therefore to discuss Africa's achievements in the pursuit of SD. The study also examines the current challenges of SD in Africa, and suggests policy measures that can be adopted to ensure the achievement of SD in Africa.

The paper is divided intofive sections. The first section discusses some key conceptual issues that underpin the discourse on SD in Africa. The second section explains the methology for conducting the study. The third section discusses the achievements and challengesof SD in Africa. The fourth section assesses the prospects of SD in Africa. The fifth section is the conclusion of the study.

1.1. SD: Conceptual issues

According to Pezzey (1989) there are about sixty definitions for SD, and the sheer number of definitions for SD is suggestive of the chronic debate over its definition since its coinage in the 1980s (Jepson, 2004). Hopwood et al. (2005) add that the many different interpretations of SD are confusing, and the literature is rife with several attempts to define the term (Mebratu, 1998; Pezzoli, 1997). The debates have erupted between those who prefer the Three Pillars Approach- emphasizing the social, ecological, and economic dimensions of sustainable development or a more dualistic typology-emphasizing the relationship between nature and humanity (Gibson, 2001). Holmen (2001) contends that pursuing both ends of what is 'sustainable' and 'development' are difficult to pin down, and so it is a wonderhow we can avoid compromising future generations' needs when we cannot forsee what these needs will be.

Given these difficulties, it is not surprising that the conceptual constraints tend to rather reflect the political and philosophical position of those proposing the definition more than any scientific view (Mebratu, 1998), which may influence policy options towards the implementation of SD programs. Such difficulties in defining the term lead to the phenomenon of cosmetic environmentalism where the tag of sustainability is

sticked on what may be unsustainable, and hence gives way to questions of determining what is environmentally benign (Gibson, 2001).

Irrespective of these conceptual constraints, the international community appears to embrace the idea that SD is an imperative. This belief finds expression in the words of Annan (2002, cited in Domfeh et al., 2012) that, "the world cannot continue to act, produce and consume unsustainably, this is the time to act especially on water, energy, human health, agriculture and biodiversity (WEHAB)", if SD is to be achieved.

2. Methodology

The objective of this paper is to critically explore SD in Africa in the context of the progress made, the current barriers that need to be removed, and the prospects that should be pursued. Based on this the study is situated in the qualitative paradigm of social research which is relevant for conducting exploratory studies (Babbie, 2004). A comprehensive review of relevant literature on SD policies in Africa was conducted including major policies and programs in economic growth, poverty reduction, environment and sanitation, democracy and governance, and population characteristics.

The desktop research instrument was used for data collection. The source of data for the study is secondary data. This was collected from books, journal articles, magazines, and conference reports. The data collected were subjected to narativeanalysis in order to arrive at the relevant conclusions.

3. Achievements and challenges of SD in Africa

3.1. Economic growth and poverty reduction

Economic sustainability requires countries to be on a broad-based quality economic growth which focuses on reducing poverty and inequality, supporting investment,and building an efficient social services system towards SD (United Nations Economic Commission for Africa-UNECA, 2012). By 2012, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) estimated that "with a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rate of 35%, Sierra Leone was the fastest growing economy in the world and that over the ten years, six of the world's fastest growing economies were in sub-Saharan Africa" (Boateng, 2013, p. 8). These six African countries include: Angola, 11.1%; Nigeria, 8.9%; Ethiopia, 8.4%; Chad, 7.9; Mozambique, 7.9%; and Rwanda, 7.6% (UNECA, 2012). Additonally, forecasts by the IMF also suggests that seven African countries are likely to be among the top ten over the next half decade, 2011-2015 (Ethiopia, 8.1%; Mozambique,7.7%; Tanzania, 7.2%; Republic of Congo, 7.0%; Ghana, 7.0%; Zambia, 6.9%; and Nigeria, 6.9%). Given the current prospects, there is a strong likelihood that Africa will surpass Asia in growth in the next decade (Boateng, 2013; UNECA, 2012).

This is further supported by evidence that from 1990-2002, the average real GDPin Africagrew by 3.3% and from 2003-2004, the average real GDP growth was 3.8%. Central Africa had the highest growth rate (4.2%); North Africa (3.9%); East Africa (2.9%); and West Africa (2.4%). After the initial slump in growth

from 1991-1992, Africa's growth began to improve peaking in 1996. (UN, 2010). Available data suggest that "government debt in sub-Saharan Africa was around 70-80% of GDP ten years ago but that has been halved to about 45-40% of GDP currently; Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in sub-Saharan Africa, which is now a diversified portfoloio of investment in the banking, tourism, textiles, communication and other sectors has improved since the late 1990s translating into 2.4% of GDP" (New African, May 2013, p.14).

At the turn of the Millenium, "Africa's GDP was $600 billion; today, it is $2.2 trillion- adjusted for inflation, Africa's GDP has doubled in 10 years" (Williams, 2013, p.50). It has been argued that "currently, many African economies are strongly growing in comparision to the industrialized world, with a continental economic growth of 6% in 2012; sub-Saharan Africa is now in a position to compete with other energy markets in some labor-intensive areas" (New African, November 2012, pp. 58). In Cote D'Ivoire, for instance, "the service sector accounts for about 50% and rising; this is expected to grow by 13.7% in 2013, and in June 2011 the country was restored to eligibility status of the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) after it was suspended in 2005; beyond 10.5% in 2012, economic growth is expected at 9% in 2013 and 10% in 2014 and beyond" (The Africa Report, April 2013, pp. 39-42). It can be deduced from these statistics that African countries are making great strides towards building robust economies for the current generation, but more importantly for future generations.

Even though the statistical figures putAfrica in a positive light, how has such efforts directly translated into poverty reduction, infrastructural development, and improved sanitaton? These are critical questions that demand immediate answers if the percieved economic growth on the continent will have any meaning.These questions appear difficult to answer given the fact that only 10% of Africa's trade is within the continent (Boateng, 2013). Africa exports only 18% of manufactured goods and imports 65% (New African, April 2013).

The level of private sector investment currently stands at 5-8%, but that needs to be drastically increased (New African, November 2012). Africa's share in the $130 trillion global trade has remained a minimal 3% over the years and intra-trade is a meager 10% (Dogbevi, 2012). On the global platform, of the 1.2 billion livingin extreme poverty, 25% are from sub-Saharan Africa (Moyo, 2006).

The World Commission on Environment and Development identified that one of the issues that is fundamental to overcoming the challenge of SD is the overriding state of poverty on the African continent (South African HDR, 2003). The Millenium Assessment suggests that not only does the level of poverty remain high, but inequality is growing (Adams, 2006). Consequently, the UNECA (2010) concludes that the overarching SD challenge in Africa is poverty eradication. This is a barrier that African government must remove if the pursuit of SD is to be achieved.

3.2. Demographic characteristics and education

How to manage the demographic dynamics of Africa's population is critical to the achievement of the SD in Africa.Populations in the region have been growing steadily over the past decade compared to the world average. For instance, between 1994 and 1995 alone, population growth in Africa was around 3%, twice the world average. Growth rates in individual countries varied from 2.6% in Senegal to 3.4% in Niger (Heaps et

al., 1999). The pattern with regard to biodiversity shows escalating use of natural resources, rising pollution levels and climate change, and it must be borne in mind that these feedback can trigger aggravation of the initial problems (ILO, 2012).

Some aspects of Africa's current demographic characteristics will put the continent in an advantageous positionif managed properly. For example, Africa has the world's fastest growing population- and the youngest, with more than half under 20 years old, compared to 28% in China, and with 40% of its population living in cities; by 2016, more than 500 million Africans will live in urban centers, and the number of cities with more than one million people is expected to reach 65, which is an increment from 52 in 2011 (New African, 2013).

While population growth might be positive, there is a corresponding challenge with the nature of the population growth dynamic. Several reports highlight the problem of youth unemployment on the continent; with a rapid growth in population in the past 50 years, each generation is much larger than its predecessors and there are twice many people under the age of 28 as over it; this implies that employment must grow at a faster rate, but it is estimatedthat about 71% of sub-Saharan Africa's working age population lacks full timeemployment (New African, November 2012). Additionally, Africa's population is largely rural-based and therefore heavily dependent on agriculture for their livelihood; rural areas are home to some 80% of the total population, which includes 70% of the continent's extreme poor and undernourished (Moyo, 2006).

The UNECA (2012) report argues that progress towards universal primary education has been a steady success in some African countries. Such countries include: Burundi, Ghana, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mozambique, and Tanzania. However, progress is still needed in related aspects like infrastructure, quality of education, completion rates, enrollment in secondary and tertiary education and teaching capacity. The necessity of education is to transform and improve the conditions of both the learner and the community towards SD (Association of African Universities, 2009).

3.3. Environment, health and sanitation

For SD to be attained, there must be concious efforts towards friendly environmental practices. This must be practiced in tandem with improved health and sanitation. The race to reducing infant and maternal mortality by 2015 is being won in the region. For instance, Mozambique has achieved a reduction of over 70%; Malawi, 68%; and Niger, 64%; maternal mortality rates have also fallen and the fight against malaria has also improved significantly through thedistribution of insecticide-treated mosquito nets in sub-Sahran Africa (UNECA, 2010).

By the year 2000, malaria was killing over twenty-nine thousand people in Ethiopia and as part of efforts to meet the Millenium Development Goals (MDGs), the government introduced a prorgam to deliver two mosquito nets to every familiy at risk, alongside a reduction in the cost of malarial drugs by half; within 3 years of implementation, deaths from malaria were cut in half (Annan, 2012). In Rwanda in 2003, access to healthcare stood at just 7% of the population; but when a health insurance scheme was established, with the small scheme susbsidized by foreign aid for those who could not afford it, the scheme saw access to healthcare rise to 85% by 2009 (Annan, 2012).

Progress is being made to halving the proportion of Africa's population without sustainable access to clean drinking water. At present, 26 countries are on track to meeting this MDG while 9 others are on track to meeting the goal of halving the proportion of the population without sustainable access to sanitation by 2015. These countries include: Algeria, Morrocco, Tunisia, Libya, Rwanda, Botswana, Angola, South Africa and Egypt (UNECA, 2010).

There are however some harsh environmental conditions that tend to affect livelihoods. One such condition is climate change, which has been identified as one of the leading human and environmental crisis in the 21st century (Institute for Security Studies, 2010). The institute suggests that Africa is already facing considerable water stress as a result of insufficient and unreliable rainfall that changes pattern and causes flooding. Climate change also negatively impactson agriculture on which three-quarters of Africa's population depend for their livelihood. The effect is seen in the reduction in arable land for farming, prolonged droughts, and crop failure (UNESCO, 2003).

It is also argued that in some African countries like Egypt, deteriorating air quality is linked to industrial emissions and traffic density, and suspended dust is the major air pollution problem in the country; In Zambia, sulphur dioxide is particularly a problem in Kitwe due to the smelting of copper and roasting of cobalt among other industrial activities; In Uganda, most of the imported cars are second-hand; In 1971, it was 44, 510 cars, and by 1999 the number increased to 186, 244, a four-fold increase in less than 30 years (APINA/SEI, 2004).

While Nigeria has seen a steady economic rate of approximately 7% every year for the last decade, it is also faced with other discouraging statistics. For instance, it still has some of the worst human development indicators in the world; nor is it on track to meet most of the health and education MDGs (New African, April 2013). The reason for the high impact of climate change could be that as a continent, Africa has probably benefited least from industrial development and exploitation of fossil fuels, leading to the crisis of human-induced climate change and variability (Owusu, 2012).

3.4. Agriculture

Available evidence suggests that Africa's SD agenda cannot be achieved without Agriculture taking its rightful place in this process. Programs such as the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP) and the declaration of 2014 as a year of Agriculture by the AU all point to placing agriculture in the hub of achieving SD in Africa. Moyo (2006) argues that agriculture contributes a significant share to the continent's GDP and the majority of Africa's labor force is employed in Agriculture.

In Nigeria for instance, there has been a boost in access to fertilizer with a privatized company Notore,where farmers currently receiving subsidized fertilizer have increased from 20% to 94%. Doreo Partners gives farmers training, credit, seed and fertilizer and helps them to market the product (The Africa Report, April 2013). Farmers in Osun State receive a new strain of Cassava as part of the government's push for the crop; hence, there is growth in Nigeria's Cassava industry after a decade effort resulting in flour makers including 10% Cassava in bread and government offers 12% tax rebate to companies that comply

(ibid, 2013). Again, agriculture provides employment for some 70% of Africa's labor force and contributes 50% of export earnings and 35% of GDP in most countries (Ngongi, 2013).

Even though Agriculture is believed to be one of the mainstays of Africa's achievement of the SD, there are enormous challenges that have to be overcome if Africa can fully tap into agriculture's potential. Food prices have risen in Africa mainly because Africa imports most of its food and so global price changes affect food prices in Africa (African Agenda, November, 2012). The problem of hunger in Africa is rooted in an inability to produce enough food to feed its growing population (Moyo, 2006). Perhaps the reason for Africa's inability to produce more to feed itself is that the rudimentary and labor-intensive tools, equipment and low level of inputs used in African agriculture results in low productivity, making the sector unattractive, especially to youth; African agriculture is still largely subsistence, and receives less than 4% of all commercial credit (Ngongi, 2013).

Currently, "there are a lot of talk about agriculture being a strategic element in Africa's growth, but how many financial institutions are willing to give loans to farmers to embark on expansion; in Uganda for instance, only 4% of the total loans given by banks goes to Agriculture, while 64% of the population in Africa is engaged in Agriculture, contributing to 34% of GDP" (New African, April 2013, p.56).

In a study by the African Studies Center (ASC), Leiden University, it was found that grain production in Africa has remained static since 1961, and that total domestic cereal production has dropped from 83% to just 67%; while 5 out of 12 countries selected for the study had a positive trade balance, in terms of agricultural commodities in 1961, however none do so now (Norman, 2012). Other constraints identified regarding the poor performance of African agriculture include: inadequate infrastructure, unstable markets opportunities, small markets and lack of current market information, uncertain policy environment and poor competitiveness of African products on the international market (Moyo, 2006). It has been argued that the continent is the most food-insecure place on the planet, and this is compounded by escalating food prices, which could trigger social and political unrest (UNECA, 2012). It is worth mentioning thtat the phenomenon of food insecurity is partly blamable on foreign land purchase for agriculture (United Nations, 2010).

The evidence suggests that most of such land aquisitions are not for growing crops for domestic markets, but rather part of food and energy security goals for the home state of the investor. For example, African countries that lease large tracts of land to foreign investors have some of the highest undernourished people in the world including Democratic Republic of Congo (76%), Ethiopia (46%), Kenya (32%), Madagascar (37%), Mozambique (38%), Sundan (21%), and Tanzania (35%). As a result of this, some of these countries imposed restrictions on food exports in response to the massive spike in agricultural prices and the internal food security issues created (United Nations, 2010).

3.5. Democracy and good governance

There appears to be a general agreement that good governance is positively correlated to SD. In the light of this assertion, many African governments have made significant strides towards building strong institutions and enhancing participation in governance towards SD. The need for good governance finds expression in the claimbyOkereke (2010), that the quality of life of any given society depends not just on the availability of

resources but the management of such resources; thus, to achieve SD in Africa, there is the need to invest in the promotion of good governance.

In Cote D'Ivoire, for instance, the government adopted a 10-point ethics charter that lists the cardinal values against which ministers' actions and behavior will be assessed regularly; the list ranges from the sense of State to love of country, civility, courtesy, moderation, respect for the dignity of human life, integrity, probity and the primacy accorded to the public interest (The Africa Report, 2013).

In Ghana, the decision by the opposition New Patriotic Party (NPP) to seek redress in Ghana's Supreme Court in the wake of alleged electoral malpractices and irregularities during the 2012 December general elections has been lauded globally, as it strengthens the good governance agenda of the country. The National Chief Imam, Sheikh Usman Nuhu Sharubutu, described Nana Akuffo-Addo's swift decision to accept the judgement of the Supreme Court and congratulating President Dramani Mahama as "a herioc achievement"(Daily Graphic, 3rd September, 2013, p. 18). A similar praise for Ghana's democratic achievement came from the former UN Secretary General, Mr Kofi Annan when he said, "that we were able to resolve this contested electoral result peacefully through our justice system is an illustration of the progress we have made as a soicety over the past two decades. Indeed, this transparent and impartial audit of an election by a court sets a precedent in Africa as a whole, of which we can be proud of"(Daily Graphic, 31st August, 2013, p.3). Kenya also used the court system to resolve an electoral dispute in their last elections in 2013.

But these democratic feats do not mean that African countries have arrived in the pursuit of good governance. In Ghana for instance, many are calling for massive electoral reforms in the wake of the Supreme Court verdict. One of such calls came from Mr Kofi Annan who reiterated that, "this success must not blind us to the flaws in our elctoral system that the judicial review has brought to light. All concerned need to work energetically to ensure that these flaws are addressed through the necessary institutional reforms" (Daily Graphic, 2013, p.3).

In Nigeria, there is a weak link in government-driven reforms; the dichotomy between state and federal ownership is a big challenge for road projects (The Africa Report, 2013).

Annan (2012) argues that the problems of Africa have stemmed from a lack of the institutional resources necessary to deal with the complex political, social, and economic problems faced by the continent and that the hub of the African problem is African leadership and African institutions, which are the direct result of choices by African leaders.

4. Prospects of SD in Africa

This aspect of the paper is dedicated to discussing the prospects of achieving SD in Africa. On the issue of economic growth and poverty reduction, current trends point to assiduous efforts on the part of African governments to make progress.Annan (2012) suggests that for any hope of achieving some form of economic development, communities need several different types of capital, including human, physical and natural

capital-investment; prospects for economic development demand a cyclical accumulation of such forms of capital. This requires that households be of sufficient size to leave ample money/income for savings and contribute towards public budget through taxation.

Currently,several African countries are among the fastest growing economies in the world. In this regard, Sub-Saharan Africa's regional debt-to-GDP ratio is extremely low, and Africa is blessed with abundant natural resources and a young vibrant population to propel the SD agenda of the continent. Additionally, Africa and Asia were the only regions that continued to grow at rates of 5 to 7% in the face of the global financial crisis (New African, April 2013). Based on IMF forcasts, Africa will grab seven of the top 10 places over the next 5 years- Ethiopia, Mozambique, Tanzania, Congo, Ghana, and Nigeria (New African, May 2013).

More so, if the current trends of job creation on the continent continue, Africa will create 54 million new, stable jobs over the next 10 years, but this will not be enough to absorb the 122 million new entrants into the labor force expected over the same period (New African, November 2012). With the adoiption of the AU-approved Program for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA), requiring $68 billion dollar investment (New African, 2013), It is estimated that PIDA will enable African countries to increase access to electricity from 39% in 2009 to nearly 70% in 2040, thereby providing power access to an additional 800 million people; the plan will boost transport efficences of at least $172 billion; it will boost broadband connectivity by 20%- every increase in broadband penetration increases GDP by 1%. Growth patterns are not the result of linear interaction but rather the product of innumerable connections of all seemingly infinite variable opportunities (Boateng, 2013).

With regard to population, Africa presently has 3% of the world market, but with 15% of the world's population, 60% of the world's uncultivated arable land and a fast-growing proportion of the world's discovered valuable resources, its potential for growth over the next ten years is greater than China's over the same period (New African, 2013). Also, improving the employability of young people, establishing pro-employment macroeconomic policies, providing finance and venture capital and public work schemes, as well as investing in quality jobs are the key to transforming Africa's growth story into shared opporunities for present and future generations (ILO, 2012).

In relation to environment, health and sanitation, African countries are encouraged to ensure that decent work and social inlcusion as well as acceptable environmental practices are part of SD strategies. In order to leverage the opportunites for labour, governments would have to place emphasis on skills and education that facilitate job transition and improve employability; there must also be equal employment opportunities for all irrespective of gender.For the environment to be sustained, developing countries must adopt and implement policy options to improve energy efficiency, temporarily reduce fish catch to allow for recovery, and protect forests and drastically reduce atmosphric pollution (ILO, 2012).

In order to enhance the prospects towards food safety, Africa needs a radical shift in its agricultural system that answers it food needs (African Agenda, 2012). This is consistent with the AU's declaration of 2014 as the year of Agriculture. There is therefore the need for African governments to invest more in Agriculture and food security (Ngongi, 2013).

There is need for financial and technological assistance to Africa to accelerate the rate of development. This is not to say that the lack of money and cutting-edge technology is the root of the lack of SD; however, emphasis must be put on governance if sustainable development can be achieved (Okereke, 2010). To further strengthen democracy towards the attainment of SD in Ghana, President Dramani Mahama, after the Supreme Court announced its verdict on the election pertition indicated that, "I know that in the last eight months, we have had several hurdles to overcome- issues of governance, labor, energy, economy and education. I know, too, that because the world does not stand still when a goal is met or a mandate is delievered, over the coming years, from time to time, we will continue to face our fair share of challenges. There are various reforms the must take place, and bold decisions that must be made. I assure you that I am prepared to make those decisions and ensure that those reforms are implemented" (Daily Graphic, 31st August, 2013, p.12). The statement by President Mahama suggests the intentions of the Government of Ghana to continue to bulid the strength of democratic institutions and embark upon the necessary reforms needed to keep the country of the path of SD.

5. Conclusion

In concluion, SD can be achieved in Africa. However, there is need for major policy shifts and implementation ofpolicies some of which have been suggested above. Further, it is noteworthy to state that SD is strongly interlinked and this has far-reaching implicationsfor policies and processes (UNECA, 2012). SD must be viewed as an integrative concept across fields, sectors and scales, and governments must move from concepts to action (Robinson, 2004). It is therefore imperative for African government to look beyond narrow policy impelementation process and rather focus on implementing programs and projects that have strong linkages that will ensure the attainment of SD in Africa. This must be backed by the needed political will, since too often, the problem is not the difficulty to design 'good' policies but the needed will to translate policy intentions into reality.

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