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Sub-Saharan Africa beyond 2015: Achieving sustainable development goals amidst poverty, environmental degradation and governance challenges

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Abstract

The post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals with 17 goals and 169 targets, which succeeded the Millennium Development Goals, are intended to drive global development policy till 2030. However, accomplishing the Sustainable Development Goals 1 to 3; 13 & 15 that substituted the Millennium Development Goals 1 and 7 on poverty and environment might be encumbered by diverse socio-economic, environmental and governance constraints in most Sub-Saharan African countries. This paper evaluates MDGs 1 & 7 and noteworthy Targets against the underlying limitations and provides a prognosis for post-2016 SDGs. Data on Poverty and Human Development Indices, Life Expectancy at Birth, Debt, Forests and Rural populations obtained from the websites of development/multilateral agencies were analysed using inferential statistics (ANOVA and Correlation analysis) and means separated ($p > 0.05$) with Duncan's Multiple Range Tests. Results revealed three island states (Seychelles, Mauritius and Cape Verde) led other countries in most development indices; the relic forests in SSA currently reside in eight countries; while corruption is widespread, particularly in Oil producing countries. With most SSA economies in parlous state, and nations bogged down by teething socio-economic and environmental challenges, meeting Sustainable Development Goals will be difficult without entrenching good governance and enlisting donor support from international multilateral/development agencies.

Keywords: Forests; Good Governance; Development Goals; Socio-Economic Crisis; Sub-Saharan Africa

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1. Introduction

Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) is the larger part of the African continent including near island states, with the exception of countries on the northern fringe, namely, Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Morocco, Western Sahara and other Portuguese and Spanish territories. The region is endowed with abundant human and natural resources where agriculture, mining, oil and gas are the major drivers of the economies of most states. Yet it is the world's most impoverished and underdeveloped region with poverty concentrated in the rural areas where 75% of the people reside (World Bank and IMF, 2013). In addition to occupying the bottom rung on the global Gross Domestic Products (GDP) ranking in 2013, and having the lowest Human Development Index (HDI) value (0.475) in 2012 which was far below the global average HDI value (0.694); most SSA countries also contend with a high incidence of diseases and malnutrition, decaying infrastructure, corruption, illiteracy, instability, state fragility and conflicts (UNDP, 2013).

SSA has the largest number of countries per surface area (Livingstone et al., 2011); the highest number of landlocked countries, 15 out of the total 43 in the world; and the greatest proportion of populations living in landlocked countries (World Bank, 2009a). The economies of countries are largely driven by natural resources, while the economic activities and livelihood systems of citizens who depend on rain-fed agriculture, forests, fishery and allied resources. As these resources are increasingly depleted, the livelihoods and value systems of millions of local, tribal and indigenous people become threatened (UNDP-GEF, 2008).

In 1992, at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, world leaders met and agreed to protect, use and equitably share the benefits arising from environmental sustainability (UNDP-GEF, 2008). Following a decadal trend, two summits – the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) held in South Africa in 2002 and the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development nicknamed Rio+20 that took place in Brazil in 2012 were intended to drum up worldwide support for nations to develop internal mechanisms geared towards reducing persistent poverty, environmental degradation and ecological scarcities in pursuance of sustainable growth and development.

In year 2000, leaders of 189 countries met and signed a Millennium Declaration in New York which ultimately culminated in the adoption of the eight Millennium Development Goals (Mery et al., 2005; International Parliamentary Conference on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, 2013). The goals constitute the most tangible commitment made by the international community and are interrelated: the first seven goals relate to human development and environmental wellbeing while the eighth is the *sine qua non* condition for achieving the other seven goals (UNECA, 2013). Fourteen years down the line, a significant number of SSA countries were still battling with the problem of reducing poverty despite the claim in the literature that the region had produced six out of the world's 10 fastest economies (The Economist, 2011). Only 19 out of 45 countries were at least partially on track to reducing extreme poverty by half in 2015; this suggests that growth in many countries, particularly some oil exporters (Gabon, the Republic of Congo, Chad) and fragile states (Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Zimbabwe), needed to be more inclusive and faster (IMF, 2013a).

As the MDGs drew to its terminus, the direction and nature of ongoing efforts to speed up progress became significant for charting an all-inclusive economic roadmap for post 2015 Sustainable Development agenda in SSA (UNECA & UNEP, 2012). On September 25, 2015, the United Nations General Assembly formally adopted

the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (World Bank, 2016). The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which followed the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), were laced with an ambitious global development agenda for the next 15 years; thus the 17 goals and 169 targets of the SDGs highlight the need for solutions to the world's urgent development issues, with 'all countries and all stakeholders, acting in collaborative partnership, [to] implement this plan' (United Nations, 2015). The SDGs were primarily focused on five themes: people, planet, prosperity, peace, and partnership. To this end "countries have resolved to end poverty and hunger and ensure that all people can fulfill their potential in dignity and equality and in a healthy environment; to protect the planet from degradation and take urgent action on climate change; to ensure that all people can enjoy prosperous and fulfilling lives and that progress takes place in harmony with nature; to foster peaceful, just, and inclusive societies free from fear and violence; and to mobilize the means to implement Agenda 2030, focused on the poorest and most vulnerable, through strong global partnership" (United Nations, 2015).

Climate Change is "an alteration in measured quantities (e.g. precipitation, temperature, radiation, wind, and cloudiness) within the climate system that departs significantly from previous average condition and is seen to endure, bringing about corresponding changes in ecosystems and socioeconomic activity" (Cote, 2003). With the declaration of 2015 as the hottest year on record globally by the World Meteorological Organization, Climate change has thus transformed into an intractable problem spreading unhindered to every country on every continent through changing seasons and weather patterns, rising sea levels, and more extreme weather events (World Bank, 2016). Of particular concern is the relationship between climate change, food production and food prices and extreme weather conditions, which collectively threaten food security and have the potential to produce serious famines across the region (Nakhooda et al., 2013)

Sub-Saharan Africa is the only region in the world where poverty, in terms of proportion of the poor, has been rising over time; and where the poor are not only relatively worse off with extremely low per capita GDPs and savings rates, but also where most countries of the region are in dire need of substantial public investments through external assistance to reverse current poverty trends (SESRTCIC, 2007). Many countries in the region, which are already neck deep in debt – and indeed rank highest among the world's league of heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC) (IMF, 2013b; World Bank, 2013) – but have difficulty mustering the basic resources to steer the ship of state out of the muddy waters, amidst debt servicing.

The 2008/2009 economic recessions that affected most developed economies in the north, invariably had an excruciating impact on most SSA countries. When the former stopped growing and the latter failed to carry on with progressive development, the world took notice (UNDP, 2013). By and large, the slow rate of recovery was negatively influenced by the decline in the Official Development Assistance (ODA) to poor nations whose economies largely depend on rain-fed, hand tools driven, and weather-adverse agriculture. But agriculture is extremely relevant to the economies of countries in SSA, owing to its importance in sustaining livelihoods, reducing poverty and contributing to economic growth and development – it accounts for 34% of the GDP of SSA countries and employs about 70% of the population (UNECA and UNEP, 2012). National economies in SSA countries are typically less diverse and for the most part dependent on fuel, minerals and agriculture to generate value addition (Livingston et al., 2011).

This paper examines SSA countries' performance in MDGs 1 (Targets 1A – 1C) and 7 (Targets 1A & 1B). Drawing on Human Development Index (HDI) and Life Expectancy at Birth (LEB), the paper assesses the impact of debt burden, accelerated decline in forest resources, climate change and related externalities and corruption against the backdrop of the fast diminishing Official Development Assistance (ODA), economic downturn and weak governance systems. It highlights the relevant SD Goals (1, 13, 15 and 17) and Targets and underscores areas that are likely to shore up progress and economic growth in most countries.

2. Methodology

2.1. Sources of data

Data for the study were obtained from journals, books, conference materials and largely from working papers/briefs/reports of most world development and multilateral organizations published on their websites. A full range of data on Life Expectancy at Birth (LEB) was obtained for 42 countries while time related data on Human Development Index (HDI) covering 1980, 1990, 2000, 2010 and 2013 were collected for 23 countries. Countries with the full complement of data were selected while those for which data were incomplete or unavailable were not considered in some of the analyses. Data for human population living on \geq \$1.25 / day and Real GDP for oil exporting and selected low income and fragile states (24 countries) were collected for 2010, 2011 and 2012 while HDI and LEB data for thirty one (31) Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) were obtained in respect of years 2006 and 2011. A set of data on 33 countries with Low LEB / HDI and those with 60% of population on less than \$1.25/day was collected in respect of 2010, 2011, and 2012. Data on ratio of forest area to land area as well as rural populations in 22 countries, SSA and The World were obtained and investigated for years 2000 and 2011.

2.2. Data analysis

Country data on Human Development Index (HDI) and Life Expectancy at Birth (LEB) were subjected to one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and means separated using Duncan's Multiple Range Test ($P > 0.05$ using SAS version 9.0 of 2000). The rural population and ratio of forest area to land area in 24 countries were subjected to pair-wise comparison and correlation analysis with results displayed in radar chart. The results of Real GDP for oil producing and low-income states are produced in line charts while data on Low LEB / HDI / Population on less than \$1.25/day are presented in bar charts.

3. Results and discussion

Much of this study offers insight into how poverty, environmental degradation and weak governance – implicitly reinforced by corruption and several cross-cutting issues of socio-economic deprivation – have turned SSA into a region of beggarly nations that overly depend on international creditors and donor assistance

to run their domestic affairs. The region is poor and disadvantaged and bogged down by poverty, corrupt governance systems and environmental degradation. Although the GDPs of most SSA countries were said to have grown at 4.9% a year between 2000 and 2011, and estimated 4.6% in 2012 (e.g. The Economist, 2011; UNECA & UNEP, 2012); yet in 2010, the region was the world's poorest and with the highest head count poverty rate (i.e. proportion of people living on < \$1.25 a day) of about 48% (UNSDSN, 2013; UNDP, 2013).

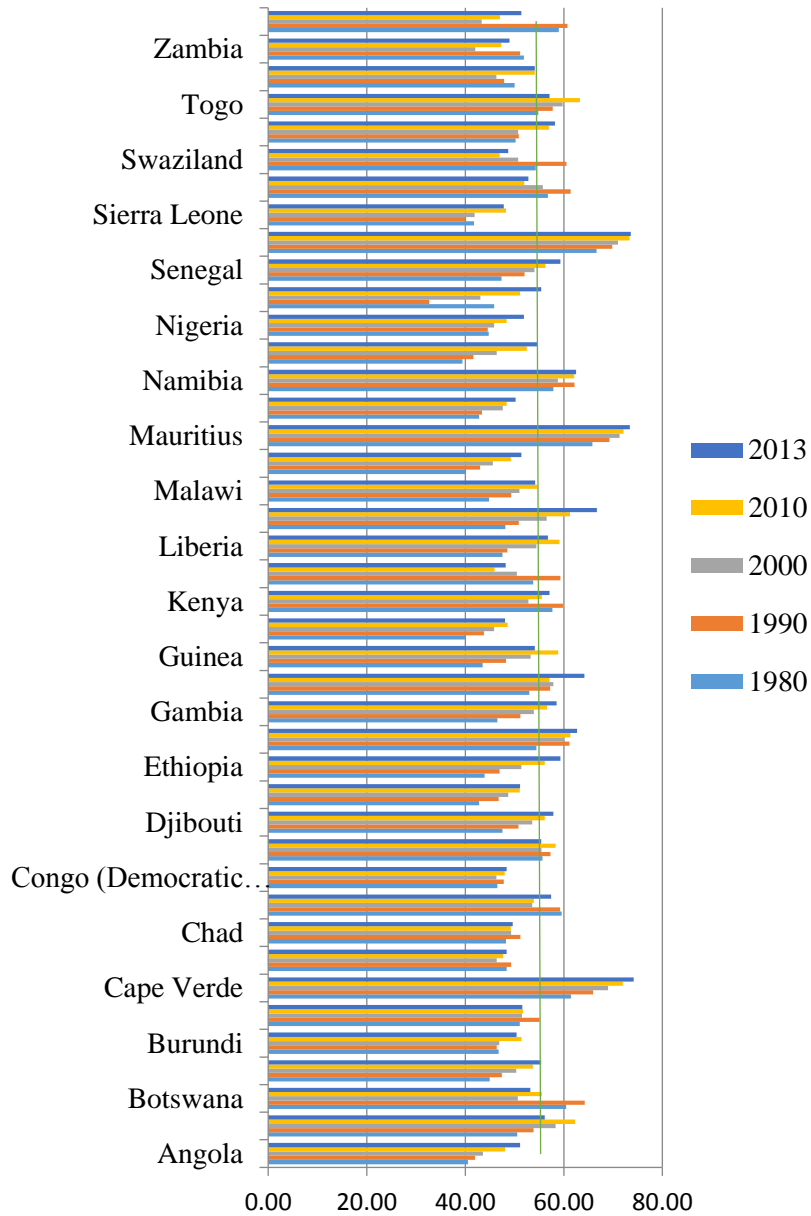


Figure 1. Life Expectancy at Birth for SSA Countries and selected years (Sources of data: UNDP, 2011; United Nations, 2009).

Means with same alphabet in superscript indicate no significant difference ($p > 0.05$). LEB: 2013^a; 2010^a; 2000^b; 1990^b; 1980^c.

3.1. Progress in SSA countries based on life expectancy at birth between 1980 and 2013

The results of analysis of Life Expectancy at Birth (LEB) for 42 countries revealed that three island states – Seychelles, Mauritius and Cape Verde – hold SSA's best records (Figure 1). However, while there were persistent increases between 1980 and 2013, the differences among countries were not significant ($P > 0.001$). Several countries in sub-Saharan Africa made progress toward achieving the MDGs; however, given that they started from a very low position, this progress had been inconsistent and inadequate in meeting most of those goals. Although income poverty declined across the subcontinent: from 57% in 1990 to 43% in 2012 (World Bank, 2016); this was considerably less than the MDG target set to be met in 2015 (Nicolai et al., 2016) (Table 1).

When data were ordered using 2010 trend line, 19 out of 42 countries (or 45%) made up of largely Low Income and Fragile States had low Life Expectancy at Birth between 1980 and 2013 (Figure 1).

Table 1. The Millennium Development Goals 1 and 7 and associated targets

Goal 1	Target 1A	Halve between 1990 and 2005 the proportion of people whose income is less than \$1.25 a day.
	1B	Achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people.
	1C	Halve between 1990 and 2015 the proportion of people who suffer from hunger.
Goal 7	Target 7A	Integrate the principle of SD into country policies and programmes, and reverse the loss of environmental resources.
	7B	Reduce biodiversity loss; achieve by 2010, a significant reduction in the rate of loss of plants and animals headed for extinction.
	7C	Halve by 2015, the proportion of the population without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation.
	7D	By 2020, to have achieved a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers.

(Source: United Nations, 2013a)

There was a positive correlation between HDI and LEB for base years. The results for countries revealed that the Island States of Mauritius, Cape Verde and Seychelles obtained the best results (they not significantly different from each other), while Sierra Leone recorded the least (Figures 1). The outcome of analysis using countries' Population on <\$1.25/day revealed that 16 (Equatorial Guinea, Seychelles, Gabon, Mauritius, Botswana, South Africa, Namibia, Angola, Cape Verde, Swaziland, Congo Rep., Djibouti, Sudan, Nigeria, Ghana and Cameroon) out of 47 countries recorded significant and consistent HDIs (Figure 2). These results buttress African Development Bank's (2012) report that these countries recorded higher Gross National Income (GNI) per capita than the average for SSA (\$1130) in 2011, while the GNI per capita of the richest SSA country was 83 times larger than that of the poorest. However, the gloomy performance of countries, like Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Mali, Guinea Bissau, Ivory Coast, Somalia, Central Africa Republic, etc. might not be unconnected with the protracted conflicts that tended to put a clog on democracy and good governance; and ultimately, the growth of the nations' economies (Musafiri, 2013).

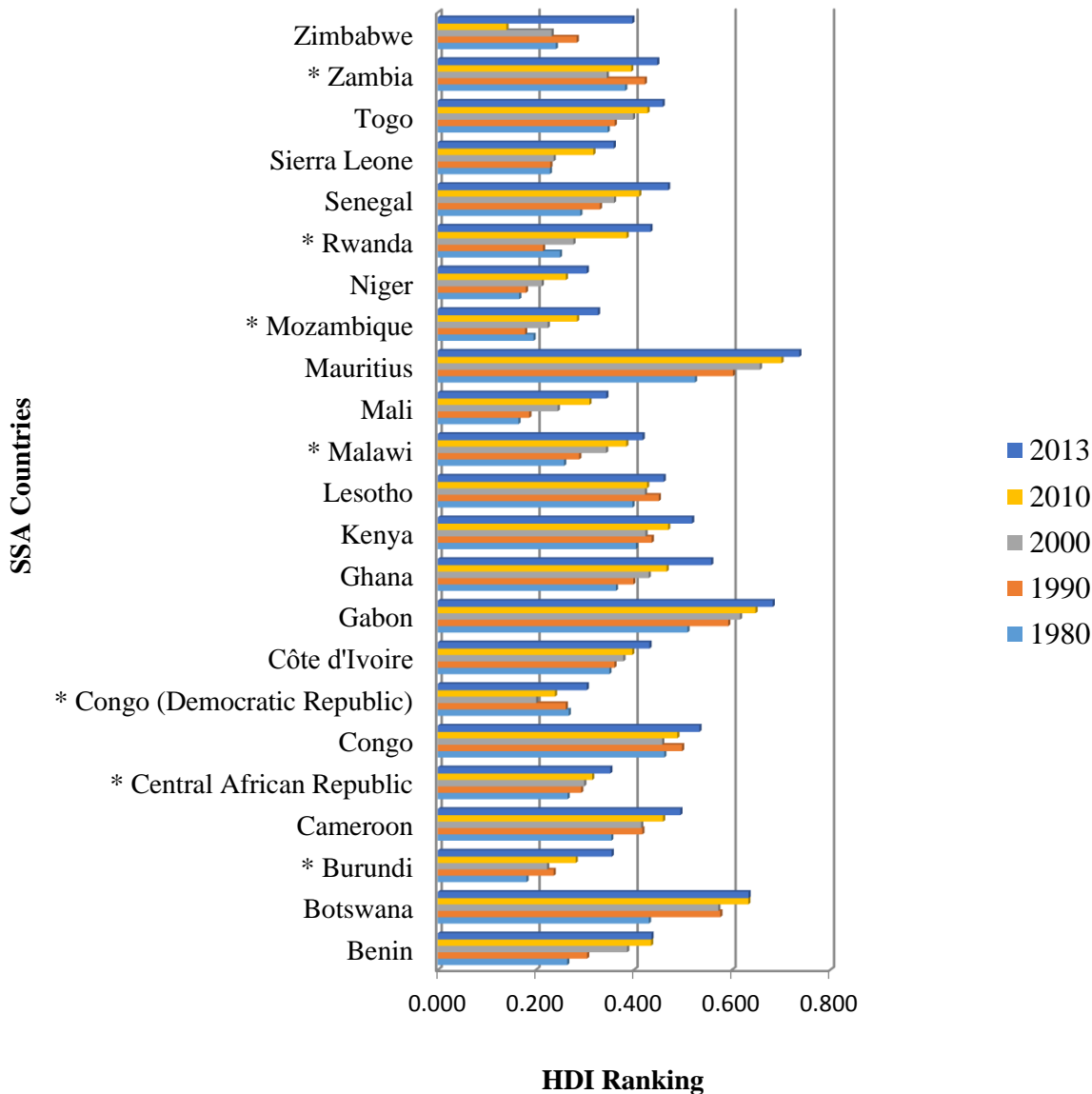


Figure 2. Countries’ HDI and Population on <\$1.25/day (Sources of data: World Bank, 2013; UNDP, 2011)
 Means with same alphabet indicate in superscript indicate no significant difference (p>0.05).
 Year: 2013^a; 2010^b; 2000^c; 1990^c; 1980^d.

3.2. Comparison performance of SSA countries on MDGs and projection for SDGS

Comparatively, the SSA population is poorer than other regions of the world; but while the latter have managed to scale down the absolute number of the poor despite population growth, the number of poor in SSA has grown steadily (Livingston et al., 2011). With poverty rates of about 55 percent in 1990, SSA and East Asia were at the same starting position for MDG 1a: “to halve the number of people in extreme poverty; by 2010”, but East Asia made spectacular progress and reduced extreme poverty to 12 percent compared to SSA which

still had a poverty rate of 48 percent (IMF, 2013b). The fate suffered by the MDGs in most SSA countries is attributable chiefly to the complete absence of inter-ministerial and inter-agency cooperation, weak information and poor data gathering systems.

But poor methodology and historical gaps in baseline data create serious problems toward assessing the rate of progress on each goal – the gaps being major source of drawback towards achieving MDGs 1 and 7 by most SSA countries. While Cape Verde, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Senegal, Seychelles, Sudan, Swaziland and Uganda were said to have met the MDGs, and Botswana, Cameroon, Mauritania, Namibia, South Africa, made sufficient progress before 2015 (World Bank and IMF, 2013), meeting the SDGs might be herculean for SSA countries. The SDGs comprise an integrated agenda across 17 goals and 169 targets; however, projections for all targets are not feasible for several reasons: not all targets are quantifiable, and for those that are, data are not always available (United Nations, 2018).

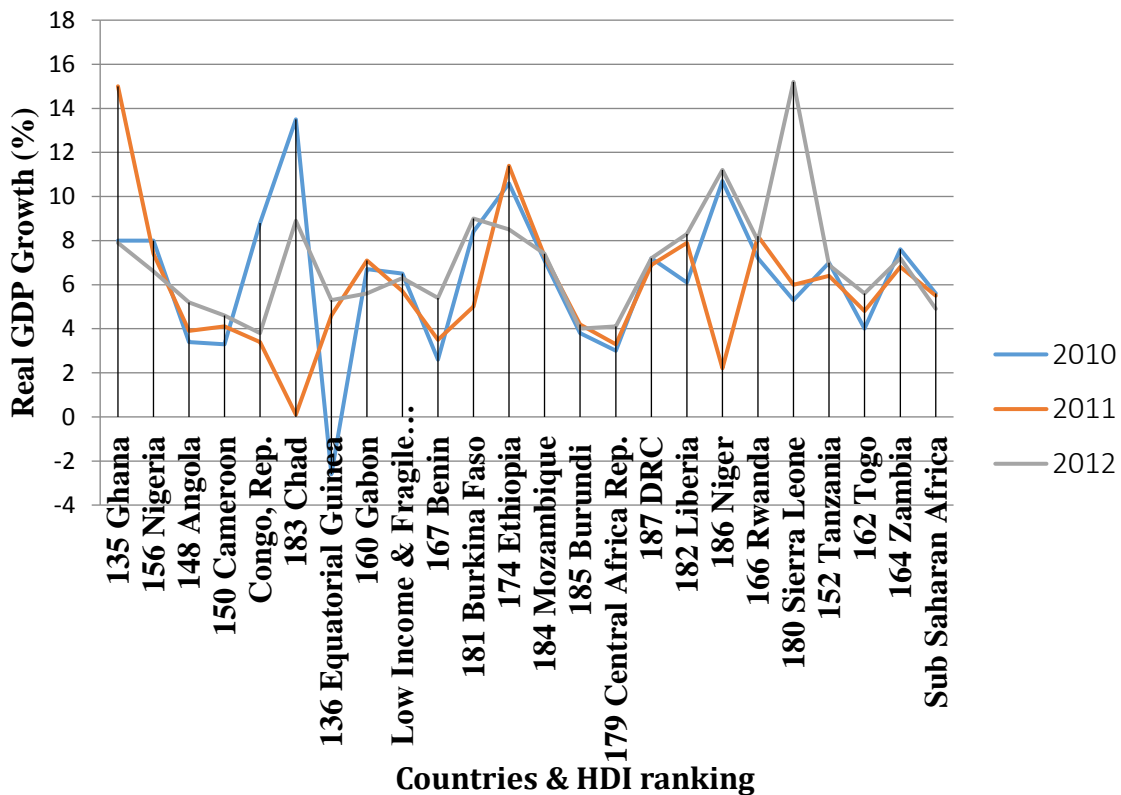


Figure 3. Real GDP Growth for Oil Exporting and few Low Income & Fragile States (Sources of data: IMF, 2013a; UNDP, 2011, 2013). HDI: Human Development Index

3.3. GDP growth for oil exporting and few low income & fragile states

Figure 3 shows Real GDP Growth (%) for Oil Exporting Countries and Low Income and Fragile States. While Ghana (HDI: 135) was ahead of other countries in 2011, Sierra Leone (HDI: 180) held the best in 2012. However, Oil Exporting countries, such as Angola, Cameroon, Congo, Chad and Niger as well as Burundi and

Central African Republic (which are among the Low & Fragile States) recorded Real GDP per capita lower than the SSA average in 2011 (IMF, 2013a). Despite its poor placement (LEB<50) among the league of HIPCs, Sierra Leone also had the best Real GDP Growth in 2012 while Burundi was least. The noticeable leap in Sierra Leone's Real GDP might not be unconnected with its recent offshore oil exploration / production activities which began in 2009/2010. In 2011, Ghana recorded best result against Chad's lowest while Chad and Equatorial Guinea had the best and least Real GDP respectively in 2010.

3.4. Highly indebted poor countries (HIPC) initiative assistance

The HIPC Initiative was launched primarily to cushion the impact of debt, thus ensuring that no poor country faces a debt burden it cannot manage (IMF, 2013b). According to the IMF, thirty-nine countries were eligible or potentially eligible globally for HIPC Initiative Assistance in 2012. Among the HIPC countries in SSA, six countries – Comoros, Ethiopia, Ghana, Sao Tome and Principe, Sudan and Senegal recorded LEB rates ≥ 60 between the period 2006 and 2011. Comoros, Madagascar, Ghana, Sao Tome & Principe and Sudan recorded the best LEB between 2011 and 2013. Comoros had the overall best record between 2006 and 2011 while Madagascar had the best LEB between 2011 and 2013 (Table 3).

Table 3. Countries Eligible/Potentially Eligible to Receive HIPC Initiative Assistance

Country	HDI rank 2006	Life Expectancy at birth 2006	HDI rank 2011	Life Expectancy at birth 2011	Countries on HIPC List, 2013
Benin	161	55.8	167	56.1	✓
Burkina Faso	173	51.7	181	55.4	✓
Burundi	172	48.9	50.4	48.4	✓
Cameroon	150	50.0	150	51.6	✓
Central Africa Rep.	178	48.6	179	48.4	✓
Chad	170	50.4	183	49.6	✓
Comoros	136	68.6	163	61.1	✓
Congo	130	54.5	137	57.4	✓
Cote d' Ivoire	166	47.7	170	55.4	✓
DRC	177	46.1	187	48.8	✓
Ethiopia	169	52.2	174	59.3	✓
Guinea-Bissau	171	46.0	176	48.1	✓
Gambia	160	59.0	167	58.5	✓
Ghana	142	59.4	135	64.2	✓
Guinea	167	55.3	178	54.1	✓
Liberia	176	45.1	182	56.8	✓
Madagascar	143	58.8	151	66.7	✓
Malawi	162	47.0	170	54.2	✓
Mali	168	53.7	175	51.4	✓
Mauritania	140	63.6	159	58.6	✓
Mozambique	175	42.2	184	50.2	✓
Niger	174	50.2	186	54.7	✓
Rwanda	165	45.8	167	55.4	✓
S/Tome & Principe	128	65.2	144	64.7	✓
Senegal	153	42.0	155	59.3	✓
Sierra Leone	179	42.1	180	48.7	✓

Sudan	146	57.8	169	61.5	✓
Tanzania	152	51.6	152	58.2	✓
Togo	159	58.0	162	57.1	✓
Uganda	156	50.5	161	54.1	✓
Zambia	164	41.2	164	49	✓

Sources: (IMF, 2009, 2013b; UNDP, 2008, 2012; World Bank, 2013)

3.5. Oil producing countries with low HDI (population < \$1.25/day) and systemic Corruption

Angola was the largest oil producing country in the region – accounting for about 44 percent of total production, followed by Nigeria (36 percent) in 2010 (Takebe and York, 2011). But systemic corruption is most pronounced in countries whose economies are chiefly dependent on Oil and Gas. For instance, Angola doubled as the most corrupt as well as the highest oil exporting nation in SSA in 2010 (The Jones Lang La Salle Transparency Index, 2012; Takebe and York, 2011). However, only Nigeria (an oil exporting country) and DRC (low income/fragile country), with over 60% of citizens living on less than \$1.25 dollars a day, were among the countries with low HDI and LEB (Figure 4).

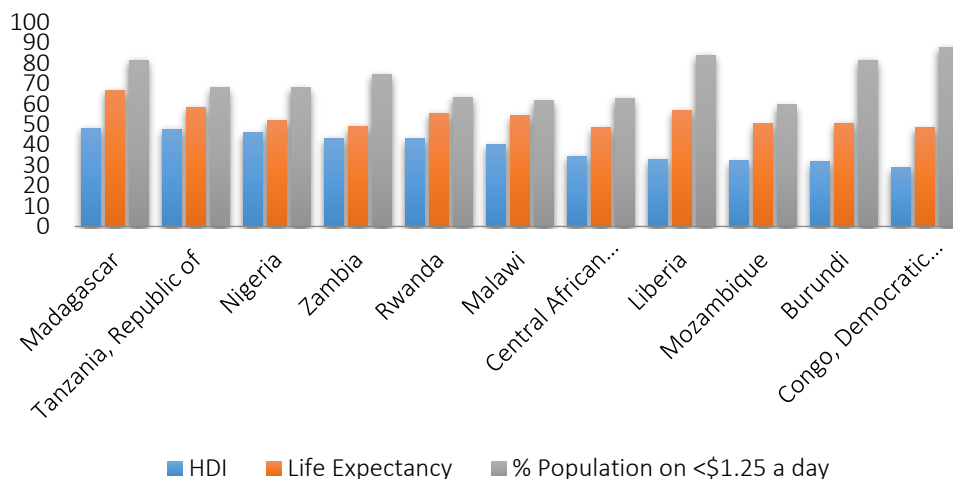


Figure 4. SSA Countries with low HDI and 60% of population on less than \$1.25/day (Source of data: UNDP, 2011). HDI: Human Development Index

The Jones Lang La Salle Transparency Index (2012) report ranked Lesotho least on the Global Competitiveness Index (2011 – 2012) while South Africa was best in Africa; however, Mauritius led on the Doing Business Report Ranking in 2012 with Angola maintaining the last position. Similarly, the Corruption Perception Index for 2012 for SSA ranked Botswana best while Angola was also the least (i.e. most corrupt country in SSA). According to the UNDP (2012), corruption stunts economic growth and carries devastating indirect costs: children drop out of primary school five times more in countries where high corruption is prevalent, and infant mortality rates are twice as high.

3.6. Rural population and ratio of Forest area to Land area in some SSA countries

Results of pair-wise comparisons revealed significant differences between rural populations as well as forest area to land area ratios in 2000 and 2011 respectively. The overall average rural population declined from 60.96% in 2000 to 56.04% in 2011, while the ratio of forest area to land area also recorded significant decrease. Conserving and enhancing the natural capital in the continent will be an important source of income, livelihoods and jobs for the majority of Africans and an excellent starting point for transition towards Green Economy (Klein et al., 2013; United Nations, 2011). While there appeared to be a close affinity between the rural population for all countries and forest area ratio to land area in 2000 and 2011; the rural population and forest area to land area ratios were however negatively correlated (Figure 5).

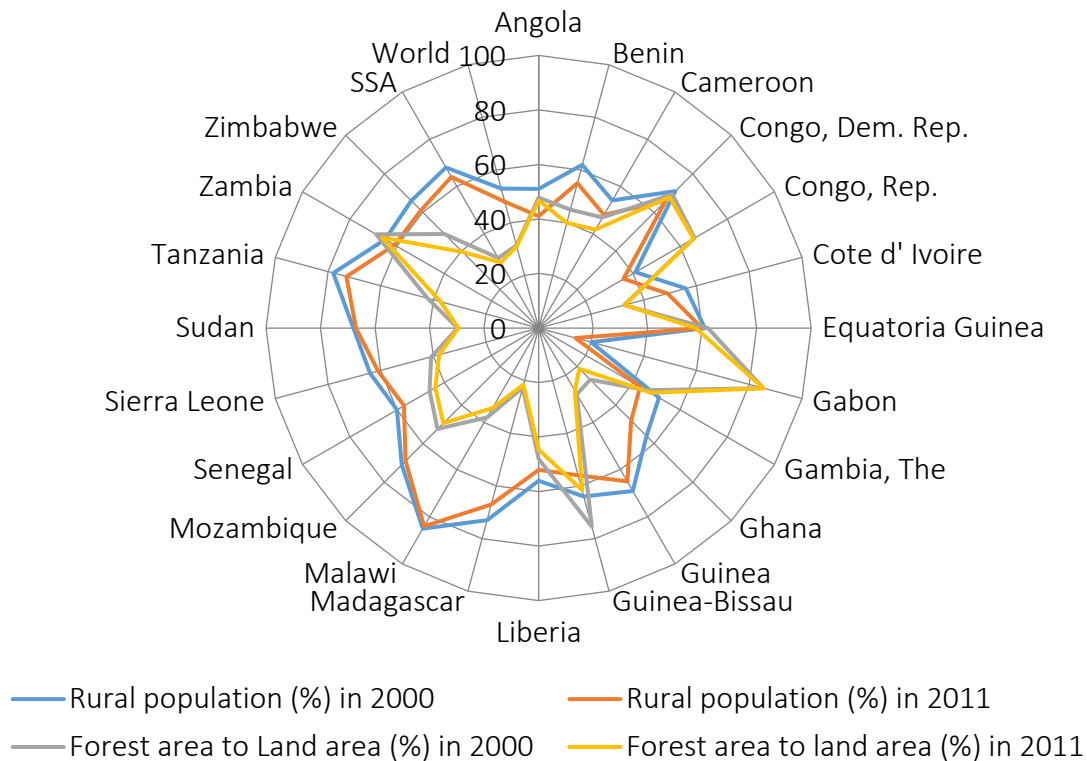


Figure 5. Rural population and ratio of Forest area to Land area in SSA (Source of data: World Bank, 2013)

Gueye’s (2011) classification of SSA forests on the basis of regions in 2010 revealed that Central Africa had the lion share (37%) followed by Southern Africa (29%) and East & West Africa (11%). According to FAO (2010), ‘more than 80% of the population in the region depends on forests and woodland for their fuel-wood and other energy needs;’ yet these forests are crucial for achieving the MDGs, and by extension the SDGs. Ironically, eight countries, namely, Angola, Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Mali, Mayotte, Niger and Zimbabwe did not have a national policy, while three (Ethiopia, Nigeria and Rwanda) had no related national forest laws by 2010 (FAO, 2010). Some countries in East, West and Central Africa are projected to have significant reductions in forest area as a share of total land area. For example, if current trends continue in Togo, Uganda and Nigeria, total forest area will shrink by more than 25% in less than a decade (Nicolai et al., 2016).

Three countries, namely, Tanzania, Malawi and Guinea recorded significant increases in rural population between 2000 and 2011, but without corresponding improvements in forest area. According to Franks et al. (2017) 'the area of land covered by natural forests or by woodlands classified as forests in Sub Saharan Africa (SSA) declined by nearly 10 per cent between 2000 and 2010; however, a significant percentage of this decline was caused by forest conversion for agriculture and related land uses.' The SSA countries with significant progress in terrestrial and marine areas protected as a share of total territory between 1990 and 2010 were Guinea-Bissau (81%), Gabon (71%) and Equatorial Guinea (64%) (UNDP, 2013). But among the countries investigated in this study, Gabon had the largest forest area while her rural population was lowest; suggesting that the latter has a relatively stable rural population. On the whole, the eight countries with the largest forest area in SSA pre-SDGs, include: Gabon, Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Zambia, Guinea-Bissau, Equatorial Guinea, Cameroon and Mozambique (Table 4).

Table 4. Territorial and Marine areas protected as a share of Total Territory

Country	Some Progress since 1990(% of protected)			No progress since 1990
	1990	2000	2010	
Botswana	30.3	30.9	30.9	Angola
Burkina Faso	13.7	13.9	14.2	Benin
Burundi	3.8	4.9	4.9	Cape Verde
Cameroon	6.9	8.5	9	CAR
Congo	5.4	8.1	9.7	Chad
Equatorial Guinea	5	14	14	Cote d' Ivoire
Eritrea	3.7	3.7	3.8	DRC
Ethiopia	17.7	17.7	18.4	Djibouti
Gabon	4.3	5.3	14.6	Ghana
Gambia	1.2	1.3	1.3	Guinea
Guinea-Bissau	5.8	26.9	26.9	Lesotho
Kenya	11.5	11.7	11.7	Malawi
Liberia	1.4	1.4	1.6	Mali
Madagascar	1.9	2.5	2.5	Mauritania
Mauritius	0.4	0.7	0.7	Niger
Mozambique	13.8	13.9	14.7	Seychelles
Namibia	13.9	13.9	14.7	Sierra Leone
Nigeria	11.3	12.6	12.6	Somalia
Rwanda	9.9	9.9	10	Sudan
Senegal	23.1	23.1	23.5	Swaziland
South Africa	6.2	6.7	6.9	Togo
Uganda	7.9	8.5	10.3	Zambia
Tanzania	25.7	26.4	26.9	
Zimbabwe	18	18.1	28	

Source: Source: UNDP, 2013

However, while 24 increased their forest areas or recorded progress between 1990 and 2010, 22 others made no progress. In a study conducted on 22 countries in SSA, Bailis et al. (2015) reported that Congo, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Guinea-Bissau and Zambia still have 66 – 72 percent forest cover while Chad, Kenya, Lesotho, Somalia, South Africa and Togo had the lowest forest cover which accounted for ≤ 11 percent (Bervoets et al., 2016). On average, countries in East as well as West and Central Africa will need to increase their current rate of progress between three- to four-fold if they are to reach the target of ending extreme poverty by 2030 (Nicolai et al., 2016). Deforestation is not only a serious threat to achieving sustainability, but also to progress towards hunger and poverty reduction and sustainable livelihoods, as forests provide food, water, wood, fuel and other services used by millions of the world's poorest people (United Nations, 2013b).

Forest resources are important export commodities, with timber products alone accounting for 60% of export earnings for Gabon and about 50% for the Central African Republic (Gumbo, 2010). In tropical developing countries – where biodiversity is richest and the threats to it are greatest – public development assistance provided by the developed countries through their bilateral agencies and the multilateral financial institutions must remain cornerstones if protected areas in those countries are to survive (Secretariat of the Convention on Biodiversity, 2004). But illicit poaching and trafficking of wildlife continues to thwart conservation efforts, with nearly 7,000 species of animals and plants reported in illegal trade. Yet financial inflows from international donor organizations are increasingly declining. In 2016 for example, bilateral ODA in support of biodiversity was \$7 billion, a decrease of 21 per cent in real terms over 2015 (United Nations, 2018).

3.7. Necessity of good governance and green economy as prerequisite for meeting SDGs

Good governance is hinged on 5 pillars: transparency, accountability and public participation; stability of institutions and conflict management; quality of government administration; coherence of legislation and rule of law; and economic efficiency, equity and incentives (World Bank, 2009b). When the MDGs drew to its terminus, the direction and nature of ongoing efforts to speed up progress were particularly significant for charting an all-inclusive green economy roadmap for post-2015 development priorities in SSA (UNECA and UNEP, 2012). A Green Economy (GE) can be defined as one that 'results in improved human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities' (UNEP, 2011). While GE has been instrumental towards fighting environmental damage and degradation across nations (UNEP, 2010), it strives for environmental sustainability through market-oriented policies and system regulations (Diechmann and Zhang, 2013). However, the fact that GE does improve water and food security by enhancing environmental and natural resource usage and management (Musafiri, 2013) might be pivotal to the quest of developing countries to promote GE by encouraging economic investments that enhance the Earth's natural capital and reducing ecological risks (Hillebrand, 2008).

The idea of 'green economy' came to prominence, when the repercussions of the global financial crisis in 2007/2008 necessitated financial stimulus packages around the world (Netzer and Althaus, 2012). In a green economy, natural capital – comprising the biosphere as a whole, including biodiversity and ecosystems – is an enabler of economic growth and human well-being (United Nations, 2011). According to UNEP (2011), a green

economy is expected to deliver three types of outcomes including new sources of income and jobs; low carbon emissions, through reduced use of resources and reduced generation of waste and pollution; and contributions to broader societal goals of sustainable development, social equity and poverty reduction. GE will turn out to be an invaluable instrument for driving environmental conservation in SSA, as it is enriched with economic opportunities and growth potentials for national economies which depend on forests and natural resources. Nevertheless, existing governance systems and institutions in most countries in the region do not appear to have bureaucratic imperatives to mainstream Sustainable Development Goals and Green Economy into implementable national development programmes.

The outcome of a study conducted on the relevant agencies shouldered with the mandate of coordinating and implementing SD and related issues in some SSA countries revealed that the focal governmental agency that handles most aspects is the Ministry of the Environment (Klein et al., 2013). According to Klein, “this is one of the major reasons why the focus of GE is generally on ecological aspects rather than on economic development; and also why Ministries of Environment are commonly weaker ministries and thus, frequently lacking in financial power and coordinating capacity to support the mainstreaming of GE into government policies” (See Box 1).

Box 1: Implementation of Sustainable Development Goals Agenda: Drawbacks

In Nigeria there are many Federal Ministries and Agencies of government handling the issues of sustainable development, none has the legal authority and mandate to coordinate the implementation agenda. Each of the Ministries and Agencies, as operational bodies, has the mandate to implement one aspect or the other of sustainable development but none has the mandate or the structure to coordinate national implementation of SD. In effect there is no national body coordinating SD in the three tiers (Local, State, and Federal) of governments. Nigeria’s marginal progress in the implementation of the Agenda 21 and other outcomes of the UN Conference and Summit as they relate to SD could be traced, in the main, to lack of national coordinating body for implementation of such decisions as well as inadequate and uncoordinated allocation of resources for implementation of SD agenda. The Federal Ministry of Environment – the focal point on environmental aspects of SD, and has tried to assume the role of coordinator, either by omission or default, was not structured or well-equipped financially to perform that role. Being the operational body on environmental issues, other Ministries and Agencies, e.g. Central Bank and Ministry of National Planning with certain mandate on development matters simply refused to submit to the FME and hardly attend any inter-ministerial meetings called the latter (Ogwu, 2008).

In order to achieve long-term sustainable growth, countries in Sub-Saharan Africa need to adapt their economies and growth models taking ‘Green Growth’ or ‘Green Economy’ concepts into account (Klein et al., 2013). With GE embedded in SDGs, the succeeding development approaches would be able to cushion or mitigate the harsh effects of weather elements and negative externalities associated with extreme climate events. For example, reducing poverty or achieving food security is unattainable without climate change

adaptation measures and practices that not only support farmers in producing enough food to meet people's nutritional needs, but that also preserve ecosystems from degradation (International Institute for Sustainable Development, 2013).

Although forests have a critical role to play in adapting to climate change, supporting food security and reducing emissions from agriculture and land use sectors, forest communities must endeavour to leverage their potential role in GHG emission reductions to make sure that their food security and adaptation needs are not compromised (Cattanco and Lipper, 2016). A new strategy framework for 2016-2020 was adopted in 2015 (UN-REDD, 2015), taking into consideration the progress made by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) negotiations and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) debate, leading to a broad overall development goal to reduce forest emissions and enhance carbon stocks in forests while contributing to national sustainable development (Sanz, 2016). Apart from helping to draw global and national attention to the importance of forests; the UNREDD has given previously marginalized populations a strong voice in relevant decision making areas; leading countries to engage in policy reforms, increase transparency and reduce risk of corruption; trigger the search for viable solutions to the problems associated with deforestation; support the valuation of forests and the services they provide (Frechette et al., 2014).

4. Conclusion

The study highlighted the diverse socio-economic and environmental problems that are likely to impede the attainment of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in most countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. The palpable clog that impeded the MDGs and critical Targets up to 2015 have not yet been resolved. Most countries on the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) list cannot set up machineries for attaining good governance rooted on green economy and SDGs. Besides, the dwindling Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) from international development/multilateral agencies constitute very serious drawback, particularly for corruption stricken poor countries. Given the parlous state of most national economies, it will be difficult for the largely low income countries of SSA to muster enough resources to shore up progress and meet SDGs without entrenching good governance underscored by green economy. However, the foregoing might be difficult to achieve if the support of donor multilateral/development agencies is not enlisted.

5. Recommendations

- 1- SSA nations should develop policies; build institutions and bureaucratic structures for good governance systems at all levels to provide the underpinning for SDGs;
- 2- It is imperative for all nations to internalize and address issues of climate change and negative externalities in pursuance of human and socio-economic growth and ecological wellbeing;
- 3- SSA countries on the HIPC list should develop internal mechanism and judiciously manage financial inflow, particularly from ODA while opportunities for foreign direct investments should be explored;

- 4- Attempts should be made to restore/rehabilitate degraded forests and lands across regional blocks in SSA, while forest conservation and biodiversity action plans should be accorded priority at the national and sub-national levels;
- 5- Concerted efforts must be made to institutionalize and internalize the SDGs; and hence redefine critical roles for Ministries, Departments, and Agencies in the handling of Sustainable Development issues at all levels, and
- 6- Goals should stretch beyond current trends, with ambitious targets that inspire action. Development efforts in sub-Saharan Africa clearly need to speed up progress in terms of human and social-capital investment to avoid falling further behind the rest of world by 2030 (Nicolai et al., 2016).

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