

Sustainable Development Goals and policy frameworks for development in Africa

– By Mulugeta F. Dinbabo and Perfect Mazani



The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) offer a comprehensive path for Africa to achieve its goals to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure prosperity for all by 2030. But first the continent has to address the challenges associated with institutional capacity gaps, lack of political will and the need to build international alliances. MULUGETA DINBABO and PERFECT MAZANI also emphasise the importance of effective monitoring and evaluation systems to track success, ensure accountability and promote adaptive policy approaches.



Sustainable Development Goals and policy frameworks for development in Africa

Mulugeta F. Dinbabo

• <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5556-9681>

University of the Western Cape, Institute for Social Development, Cape Town, South Africa

Perfect Mazani

• <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0342-6173?lang=en>

University of the Western Cape, Institute for Social Development, Cape Town, South Africa

<https://doi.org/10.14426/na.v96i1.2518>

Published in *New Agenda: South African Journal of Social and Economic Policy*, issue 96, 1st Quarter, March 2025.

Submitted 30 October 2024; Accepted 29 January 2025.

This is a peer reviewed article, published following a double blind peer review process.

Abstract

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a universal call to action adopted by all UN member states in 2015, aiming to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure prosperity for all by 2030. The SDGs promote inclusive development through sustainable economic growth, social inclusion and environmental protection. Using secondary data analysis, this paper investigates the opportunities and challenges associated with the SDGs, examining how national policies connect with them and evaluating the implementation of relevant treaties and conventions. Key findings highlight institutional capacity gaps, the impact of political will and the importance of international alliances in achieving the SDGs. The study also emphasises the need for effective monitoring and evaluation systems to track success, ensure accountability and promote adaptive policy approaches. These findings contribute to the discourse on sustainable development and offer a roadmap for policy-makers and organisations committed to advancing sustainable development across Africa.

Key words

Africa, development, goals, monitoring, sustainability.

Introduction

Africa faces unique opportunities and challenges in development, reflected in the transformative Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) policy framework aimed at supporting equitable and sustainable global development (Nhamo, Dube & Chikodzi, 2020; Phakathi, 2019; Ufomba, 2020; Vhumbunu, 2022; Dinbabo, 2024; Dinbabo, 2003; Adeniyi and Dinbabo, 2019). Endorsed by all UN member states in 2015, the 17 SDGs address issues such as gender equality, environmental sustainability, poverty and hunger by 2030 (Dinbabo & Badewa, 2020; Efretuei, 2007; Hegertun & Mæstad, 2023; Maluwa, 2020; Mangala, 2016; Dugarova & Gulasan, 2017). International treaties provide the legal framework for implementing the SDGs in Africa, facilitating collaboration, resource mobilisation and policy alignment. For instance, the Maputo Protocol advances Goal 5 (gender equality), while the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) agreement supports Goal 8 (decent work). Additionally, the Paris Agreement promotes Goal 13 (climate action) by encouraging sustainable environmental policies and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) directly supports Goal 15 (life on land) through sustainable land management (Byron-Cox, 2020).

Africa can tackle structural issues like hunger (Goal 1), access to quality education (Goal 4), clean water (Goal 6) and other essential needs through international accords (Mugagga & Nabaasa, 2016; Mballa, 2022). Goal 17 (partnerships for the goals) is reflected in the New Partnership for Africa's Development (Nepad), emphasising global and regional collaboration for sustainable development (Efretuei, 2007). The SDGs framework offers a comprehensive path for Africa to achieve its goals, backed by treaties ensuring inclusivity (Miriti, 2022). However, Africa's diverse socio-economic and political landscapes pose challenges (Mballa, 2022). This study evaluates the integration of SDGs into policies, their alignment with development plans such as Agenda 2063 and offers recommendations for improving SDG implementation, aiming for a sustainable and equitable future for Africa.

The following section outlines the study's methodology, followed by an explanation of its background and contextual information. Additionally, a review of relevant literature is presented. The results and analysis of findings related to the SDGs, policy frameworks, and treaties and conventions for development in Africa are then examined. The study concludes with key findings, along with conclusions and recommendations.

Methodological approach

The study utilised a secondary data analysis approach to examine the SDGs, including reports, policy documents, official publications and academic research sourced from reputable global and regional organisations. This method enabled a comprehensive understanding of existing initiatives, aligning global targets such as the SDGs with Africa-specific frameworks such as Agenda 2063 and the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP). The analysis also focused on synthesising data from diverse sources to explore how African countries integrate these frameworks into their national and regional policies. Treaties and conventions such as the Paris Agreement, African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and the Bamako Convention were critically examined for their role in guiding Africa's sustainable development. The study aimed to identify patterns, challenges and areas of synergy between global and continental goals. This methodological approach provided a holistic view of how African countries are navigating development challenges while contributing to global sustainability efforts, offering insights into policy integration and implementation across the continent.

Background and contextualisation

The comprehensive, global agenda known as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) policy framework, that aims to eradicate poverty, protect the environment, and guarantee peace and prosperity for all by the year 2030 (Arora & Mishra, 2022; Bali Swain & Yang-Wallentin, 2020; Colglazier, 2015; Fukuda-Parr, 2016; Hák, Janoušková & Moldan, 2016; Miriti, 2022), builds on the achievements of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (UN, 2015). In addition, it covers new areas such as climate change, economic inequality, innovation, sustainable consumption, peace and justice, and other crucial priorities.

The MDGs and their impact

The eight MDGs, established in 2000, aimed to ensure environmental sustainability, promote gender equality, reduce poverty and improve health and education by 2015 (Kabiru & Batsari, 2020). The MDGs were transformative, uniting global efforts around shared development goals and achieving significant successes, such as halving global poverty, increasing school attendance and reducing child mortality and diseases such as malaria and HIV/AIDS (UN, 2015). They also provided a framework for accountability and monitoring (Kumar, Kumar & Vivekadhish, 2016; Lomazzi, Borisch & Laaser, 2014). However, the MDGs had limitations, mainly focusing on issues pertinent to developed nations, and neglecting areas like sustainable production, climate change and economic inequality in poorer countries (Sachs, 2012). Critics highlighted their narrow scope, failure to address root causes of poverty and inequality, and lack of integration of environmental, social and economic development facets (Servaes, 2021). Additionally, human rights and governance issues, key to reducing inequality, were overlooked (Fukuda-Parr, 2016).

Transitioning from MDGs to SDGs

After 2015, recognising the limitations of the MDGs, the international community developed the more inclusive and comprehensive SDGs (Mabuza & Mabuza, 2020). Unlike the MDGs, the SDGs apply to all nations, addressing global challenges such as climate change, inequality and sustainable development through coordinated international actions (UN, 2015). The SDGs cover a broader range of topics, including resource management, innovation and climate action, integrating social, economic and environmental objectives (Bali Swain & Yang-Wallentin, 2020; Fukuda-Parr, 2016). However, implementing the SDGs is complicated by the need to integrate diverse policies across sectors and regions, requiring stakeholder engagement and adaptive governance (Bali Swain & Yang-Wallentin, 2020). By integrating these frameworks and focusing on inclusivity, the SDGs can support equitable and resilient development across regions (Bonsu, TyreeHageman & Kele, 2020). The table below provides a summary of the SDGs.

Table 1 Summary of the SDGs

<i>SDG Number</i>	<i>SDG Description</i>
Goal 1	No poverty
Goal 2	Zero hunger
Goal 3	Good health and well-being
Goal 4	Quality education
Goal 5	Gender equality
Goal 6	Clean water and sanitation
Goal 7	Affordable and clean energy
Goal 8	Decent work and economic growth
Goal 9	Industry, innovation and infrastructure
Goal 10	Reduced inequalities
Goal 11	Sustainable cities and communities
Goal 12	Responsible consumption and production
Goal 13	Climate action
Goal 14	Life below water
Goal 15	Life on land
Goal 16	Peace, justice and strong institutions
Goal 17	Partnerships for the goals

Source: Authors' compilation (2024)

Evolution of sustainable development

A vast body of literature exists on community-based organisations (CBOs) in both developed and developing countries, including research on the SDGs (Arora & Mishra, 2022; Bali Swain & Yang-Wallentin, 2020; Colglazier, 2015; Esquivel, 2016; Fukuda-Parr, 2016; Hák, Janoušková & Moldan, 2016; Miriti, 2022), policy frameworks (AUC, 2018; Bolarinwa, 2015; Dinbabo & Badewa, 2020; Mangala, 2016; Phakathi, 2019) and treaties and conventions for African development (De Feyter, 2022; Erinosh, 2013; Hajian & Kashani, 2021; Maluwa, 2020; Sáez de Cámara *et al.*, 2021; Xiang & Maïnkade, 2023). The concept of sustainable development has evolved significantly. Prior to 1972, it focused on conservation and responsible resource use (Kirkby, O'Keefe & Timberlake, 2023), with little international coordination. The 1972 Stockholm Conference marked a pivotal moment, leading to the Stockholm Declaration on environmental conservation and economic progress (Atapattu, 2022).

The evolution of sustainable development (see Table 2) underscores the interdependence of economic growth, environmental health and social equity (Hall, Gössling & Scott, 2015). Initially emphasised at the 1972 UN Conference on the Human Environment, it gained traction through the Brundtland Report of 1987, defining sustainable development as meeting present needs without compromising future generations (Grosbeck, Țiru & Bran, 2019). Global initiatives like the

SDGs address issues such as poverty and climate change (Popkova, Sergi & Bogoviz, 2023), with a shift toward a holistic approach that includes economic growth and social inclusion (Shi *et al.*, 2019). Table 2 shows the evolution of sustainable development initiatives.

Table 2: Evolution of sustainable development initiatives

<i>Period/Initiative</i>	<i>Key Global Event</i>	<i>Description</i>
The Embryonic Period (before 1972)	Early environmental awareness	Initial recognition of environmental issues and industrial impact but no global coordination.
The Molding Period (1972–1987)	1972: United Nations Conference on the Human Environment	Known as the Stockholm Conference, this event established the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and marked the beginning of global dialogue.
	1987: Publication of “Our Common Future”	The Brundtland Commission’s report introduced the term "sustainable development" and laid the foundation for global sustainability efforts.
The Developing Period (1987– present)	1992: United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Rio Earth Summit)	Focus on sustainable development with the adoption of Agenda 21, Rio Declaration and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.
	2000: United Nations Millennium Summit	Established the MDGs, which targeted poverty, education, gender equality and environmental sustainability.
	2015: United Nations Sustainable Development Summit	Introduced the SDGs, expanding the MDGs to 17 goals with a 2030 target, focusing on global sustainability and development.

Source: Authors’ compilation (2024)

Before 1972, sustainable development was not a recognised research or policy focus (Ruggerio, 2021). Global attention centred on economic growth with little concern for environmental sustainability or social equity. However, as the adverse effects of industrialisation became evident, the need for sustainable practices gained attention. The 1972 UN Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm was pivotal, resulting in the Stockholm Declaration, which called for balancing economic progress with environmental protection. The 1987 Brundtland Report laid the foundation for the 1992 Earth Summit, which produced Agenda 21 and the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD). The MDGs followed in 2000, addressing global issues like poverty and environmental sustainability. Sachs (2012) highlights the SDGs’ broader, more integrated approach compared to the MDGs, emphasising inclusive and sustainable development (Esquivel, 2016; Fukuda-Parr, 2016).

African continental-level initiatives

Africa's development agenda is increasingly shaped by a combination of continental initiatives and global frameworks such as the SDGs (DeGhetto, Gray & Kiggundu, 2016; Dinbabo & Badewa, 2020; Efretuei, 2007; Mugagga & Nabaasa, 2016). Agenda 2063, the African Union's (AU's) strategic framework, aims for political unity and sustainable growth by 2063. Supporting policies include the African Mining Vision (AMV) for sustainable resource use and the CAADP for food security. Treaties like the Paris Agreement and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights reinforce these efforts (Hegertun & Mæstad, 2023; Maluwa, 2020; Mangala, 2016; Mballa, 2022; Mugagga & Nabaasa, 2016; Phakathi, 2019; Ufomba, 2020; Vhumbunu, 2022)

Table 3: Major policy frameworks, treaties, conventions and programmes in Africa



Policy Frameworks (Africa-specific)	
Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want	The AU's 50-year development plan for inclusive growth and sustainable development.
Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP)	Africa's agriculture policy to promote food security, nutrition and wealth creation.
Malabo Declaration (2014)	Focuses on accelerated agricultural growth, transformation and climate resilience.
Africa Green Stimulus Programme	Focuses on green economic recovery post-Covid-19, renewable energy and biodiversity conservation.
Treaties and Conventions (Africa-specific and global)	
African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (1981)	Also known as the Banjul Charter, this ensures the promotion and protection of human rights across Africa.
Maputo Protocol (2003)	An extension of the African Charter, focused on women's rights and gender equality in Africa.
Lomé Convention (1975-2000)	A trade and development agreement between the European Union and African, Caribbean and Pacific countries.
Abuja Treaty (1991)	Established the African Economic Community (AEC), promoting economic integration and regional trade.
AU Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption (2003)	A legal framework designed to fight corruption across the African continent.
African Convention on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (revised 2003)	Aims to promote sustainable use of natural resources and address environmental challenges.
Bamako Convention (1991)	Prevents the import of hazardous waste into Africa, protecting the environment from industrial pollutants.
Paris Agreement (2015)	A global agreement to tackle climate change by limiting global warming to well below 2°C.
United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)	Targets desertification, land degradation and promotes sustainable land management in African countries.

Source: Authors' compilation (2024)

Reconciling African Agenda 2063, Global Agenda 2030 and SDGs

Africa's long-term development is guided by two frameworks: the United Nations' 2030 Global Agenda for SDGs and the AU's Agenda 2063 (Mugagga & Nabaasa, 2016). Although their timelines and goals differ, both frameworks aim to promote sustainable development. Agenda 2063 is a 50-year vision focusing on inclusive growth, political stability and regional integration, while the SDGs provide a global framework to be achieved by 2030. DeGhetto, Gray and Kiggundu (2016) highlight the ambitious goals of Agenda 2063 and the challenges of implementing such a broad framework across Africa's diverse geography, stressing the need for good governance and regional cooperation.

To ensure that achieving one set of goals does not hinder another, the AU has worked to align Agenda 2063 with the SDGs (Dinbabo & Badewa, 2020; Hegertun & Mæstad, 2023; Maluwa, 2020).

Recognising the overlaps between the two frameworks, the AU formulated other measures such as the Continental Results Framework for Women (African Union, 2024) and the Continental Framework for Youth (African Union, 2020) among other initiatives to integrate the SDGs with Agenda 2063. In order to mobilise resources, coordinate policies and form alliances necessary to accomplish both agendas, it is imperative that this framework be used to evaluate progress and ensure coherence in execution. This framework is essential for mobilising resources, coordinating policies and forming alliances necessary to achieve both agendas.

Bentley and Pugalís (2014) challenge conventional wisdom in regional development and make the case for more inclusive, people-focused tactics. In Africa, remittances are crucial for enhancing household income, alleviating poverty and bolstering sectors such as education, health and gender equality. These financial flows drive sustainable economic progress, promote entrepreneurship and improve financial inclusion, collectively supporting the achievement of numerous SDGs across the continent (Akanle, Kayode & Abolade, 2022).

According to Bentley and Pugalís (2014), development initiatives that are successful must have their roots in local contexts and be directed by the goals and requirements of the communities they affect. Agenda 2063's objectives, which highlight the value of community involvement and local ownership in the development process, align with this point of view.

A lack of funding, unstable political environments and weak institutional capacity are significant obstacles Africa must overcome to effectively align and implement Agenda 2063 and the SDGs. Swain (2018) notes that these political and practical issues also affect Agenda 2063's implementation. Overcoming these challenges will require creative thinking, strong collaborations and persistent dedication from all stakeholders (Mballa, 2022; Mugagga & Nabaasa, 2016; Phakathi, 2019). Additionally, Kumar, Kumar and Vivekadhis (2016) stress the importance of addressing unresolved issues from the MDGs and strengthening partnerships to ensure the SDGs lead to meaningful, lasting improvements in people's lives. This perspective is especially relevant in Africa, where achieving sustainable development remains a critical necessity.

Achieving Africa's long-term SDGs will require continued collaboration, innovation and resilience

...

Implementation of Agenda 2063

A number of strategic programmes and activities aimed at converting Agenda 2063's goals into concrete results have served as a roadmap for its execution (Chevallier and Chesterman, 2022). A 10-year implementation plan that covers important sectors such as infrastructure, education, health and industrialisation and includes specific goals and projects has been established by the AU (Chevallier and Chesterman, 2022; Ufomba, 2020; Vhumbunu, 2022). The implementation of the agenda at both national and local levels by various AU institutions and regional groups is essential for its success. For instance, the African Development Bank (AfDB) plays a key role in financing infrastructure projects that align with the goals of Agenda 2063. A notable example is the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA), which seeks to enhance regional integration and cross-border connectivity (Ufomba, 2020). Notwithstanding these initiatives, there are still difficulties in turning Agenda 2063's lofty objectives into reality. Effective implementation is frequently hampered by problems such as insufficient money, unstable political environments and institutional capacity limitations (Hegertun & Maestad, 2023; Mugagga & Nabaasa, 2016). In order to gather resources and technical know-how, the AU has worked to fortify its alliances with global organisations, businesses and civil society.

Efforts to further strengthen abilities to implement Agenda 2063

Several steps have been taken to increase the continent's capacity to support the execution of Agenda 2063. One noteworthy initiative to improve monitoring and evaluation systems to track progress and pinpoint implementation shortcomings is the creation of the AU's Continental Results Framework (Dinbabo & Badewa, 2020; Mballa, 2022; Ufomba, 2020; Vhumbunu, 2022). To further promote accountability and good governance among member states -- both essential for the effective implementation of Agenda 2063 -- the AU has also created the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) (Froehlich, Ringas & Wilson, 2020). Enhancing the administrative and technical capacities of national governments and regional organisations has been the focus of capacity-building projects. This comprises educational initiatives, venues for exchanging

expertise and mechanisms for regional cooperation created to improve the manpower and resources available to carry out the projects and policies of Agenda 2063.

Progress on the fast track/flagship programmes and projects (2063)

Agenda 2063 includes transformative initiatives such as the Great Inga Dam, the African Virtual and E-University and the African Integrated High-Speed Railway Network (Deel-Smith, 2022). Notable progress has been made, particularly with the ongoing design and construction of key rail corridors in the High-Speed Railway Network, aimed at enhancing trade and communication. Similarly, the Great Inga Dam project, which seeks to harness the Congo River's hydropower, has advanced through feasibility studies and initial construction stages (Eyita-Okon, 2020). However, these projects face challenges such as political instability, regulatory hurdles, funding shortages and environmental concerns.

Although Agenda 2063 and the SDGs offer strong frameworks for Africa's development, challenges in implementation, institutional capacity and alignment with global frameworks remain (Hegertun & Mæstad, 2023). Achieving Africa's long-term SDGs will require continued collaboration, innovation and resilience, as evidenced by progress in these flagship projects and their strategic alignment with the SDGs.



Monitoring of SDGs new trends, progress and challenges

Trends in SDG monitoring

Current trends in tracking the SDGs show how innovation and technology can transform data collection and analysis, improving both its accuracy and scope. A significant advancement in this field is the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) and big data into monitoring frameworks. AI-driven methods are now regularly used to analyze large datasets from various sources, offering real-time insights into multiple SDG metrics (Dinbabo & Badewa, 2020). This technological shift greatly enhances the ability to track SDG progress and make data-driven decisions.

Another key trend is the growing importance of disaggregated data to ensure inclusive and representative progress, especially for marginalised populations. This focus has led to advancements in data collection techniques that provide more granular insights based on gender, age, income and other socio-demographic factors. Disaggregated data helps identify disparities that aggregate statistics might overlook and informs targeted interventions to address these inequalities (UN, 2019; DeGhetto, Gray & Kiggundu, 2016; Phakathi, 2019; Vhumbunu, 2022). For example, new initiatives are gathering gender-specific data on health outcomes and education levels to ensure equitable progress across all sectors.

The rise of citizen-generated data is also reshaping SDG monitoring. With the growing use of digital platforms and mobile technologies, individuals and communities can now contribute data on local issues, fostering grassroots engagement and offering new insights into development outcomes. Crowd-sourced data platforms, for instance, are collecting information on healthcare access and water quality, complementing official statistics and providing a more comprehensive view of development challenges and successes (Elvidge *et al.*, 2020; Chevallier & Chesterman, 2022; Fukuda-Parr, 2016).

There is a movement toward integrating SDG monitoring into regional and national development frameworks. Many countries and regions are aligning the SDGs with their national budgets and policy frameworks, ensuring that local priorities correspond with global commitments. The AU, for example, has developed regional monitoring frameworks that emphasise localised approaches to achieving global goals (UNECA, 2014).

The use of big data and AI in SDG monitoring offers an additional benefit by creating a comprehensive framework that captures the full range of social, economic and environmental variables influencing the progress of the SDGs, as emphasised by Teh and Rana (2023). The comprehensive approach is vital for attaining objectives such as life on land (Goal 15) and climate action (Goal 13), with geospatial data and satellite imagery playing crucial roles as key sources of information. Additionally, AI can be utilised to analyse social media sentiment, providing valuable insights into public opinion on progress toward Goals 1, 4 and 5, which cover poverty, education and gender equality.

The private sector plays a crucial role in maintaining and achieving the SDGs. Businesses are increasingly leveraging technology to monitor their contributions to sustainable development and align their corporate social responsibility (CSR) efforts with the SDGs. For example, consumer goods companies are using blockchain technology to ensure sustainable sourcing and reduce their carbon footprints, while tech companies such as Google and Microsoft are developing AI-driven solutions for environmental sustainability. Despite these advancements, significant challenges remain in effectively tracking SDG progress. Data gaps, particularly in low-income countries, continue to hinder accurate monitoring. Many of these nations lack the infrastructure and technical capabilities to collect and process the data required for SDG indicators, particularly in critical areas such as health (Goal 3) and education (Goal 4), where reliable data is essential for informed decision-making.

A comprehensive approach must consider the trade-offs and synergies between different SDGs. Pradhan *et al.* (2017) highlight the challenges in achieving the SDGs and the importance of balancing environmental sustainability (Goals 13, 14 and 15) with economic growth (Goal 8) to avoid unintended consequences. Effective monitoring and implementation also require collaboration across local, national and international levels, as noted by Kanie *et al.* (2017), who emphasise the need for multi-level governance to ensure accountability and transparency. To tackle these challenges, the international community has emphasised capacity-building initiatives (Boakye & Dinbabo, 2021; Adeniyi & Dinbabo, 2019). Programmes like the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data (GPSDD) support developing nations in strengthening their data collection and analysis capabilities, facilitating more effective monitoring of SDG progress (Dinbabo, 2003; Dinbabo, 2024). Additionally, technology companies contribute expertise and resources to improve data quality and accessibility through public-private partnerships, which play a crucial role in bridging data gaps.

Progress in SDG monitoring

The creation of international structures has advanced SDG monitoring. The Global Indicator Framework, developed by the United Nations Statistical Commission with over 230 indicators, provides a standardised method for assessing development across nations (Dinbabo & Badewa, 2020; Chevallier & Chesterman, 2022; Fukuda-Parr, 2016; UNSD, 2021). This framework enhances reporting consistency and comparability, facilitating more accurate evaluations of both national and international progress. Policy-makers benefit from detailed reports on SDG progress. Moreover, some nations have established national SDG frameworks that adapt to local conditions while aligning with international norms. These frameworks often include national metrics that reflect local aims and concerns. For example, the EU has implemented a comprehensive monitoring system that integrates national statistics and EU-specific indicators to provide a view of regional progress (Eurostat, 2021). This approach ensures that SDG policies and actions are more relevant and effective.

Notable advancements have also been made in improving the quality and accessibility of data (Fukuda Parr, 2016; UNSD, 2021; Ufomba, 2020). Initiatives to upgrade statistical infrastructure and fund data collection methods have produced better and more thorough data on various SDG indicators. For example, enhanced data collection techniques and increased financing for national statistical offices have led to more timely and reliable reporting on indicators like educational attainment and poverty rates (UNSD, 2020). These advancements support more efficient policy-making and targeted interventions. Furthermore, SDG monitoring has advanced significantly due to multinational alliances and collaborations. Global partnerships, like the GPSDD, unite governments, NGOs and private sector players to enhance data infrastructures and exchange optimal methodologies (GPSDD, 2021). These partnerships foster innovative approaches to tracking and achieving the SDGs while strengthening capacity-building initiatives.

Challenges in SDG monitoring

The availability and quality of data remain significant obstacles in monitoring the SDGs (Dinbabo & Badewa, 2020). Low-income and developing nations struggle with accurate data collection due to limited resources, inadequate infrastructure and insufficient technical expertise. This data gap hampers effective progress monitoring and informed decision-making, particularly in health and education sectors in sub-Saharan Africa (UNSD, 2020). Addressing these challenges requires substantial investments in capacity-building and statistical systems. Additionally, measuring success concerning the interrelated SDGs is complicated. The broad focus of the goals on social, economic and environmental issues makes tracking overall progress difficult. For instance, while income data can monitor progress toward Goal 1 (reducing poverty), evaluating its effects on education (Goal 4) and climate action (Goal 13) poses challenges (Sachs *et al.*, 2019). Thus, integrated monitoring strategies are essential. The Covid-19 pandemic worsened these monitoring difficulties by disrupting

data collection and diverting resources from sustainable development initiatives. Delays in surveys and censuses have hindered progress tracking and assessments of the pandemic's impact on various SDGs (UN, 2021). This highlights the need for resilient data systems capable of withstanding international crises. Concerns exist regarding current monitoring systems' ability to adapt to new challenges. Thus, continuous improvements are required for monitoring frameworks to remain relevant and effective in tracking SDG progress (Dinbabo & Badewa, 2020; Efreteui, 2007; Hegertun & Mæstad, 2023; UN, 2021).

Conclusion and recommendations

The SDGs and various policy frameworks play a crucial role in guiding Africa's sustainable development (Chevallier & Chesterman, 2022; DeGhetto, Gray & Kiggundu, 2016; Dinbabo & Badewa, 2020; Efreteui, 2007; Hegertun & Mæstad, 2023; Phakathi, 2019; Ufomba, 2020; Vhumbunu, 2022). The integration of SDGs into frameworks such as Agenda 2063 reflects the continent's commitment to addressing poverty, inequality and environmental degradation. Treaties such as the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and the Paris Agreement provide legal frameworks that enhance human rights and environmental protections (Mballa, 2022; Ufomba, 2020; Chevallier & Chesterman, 2022; Fukuda-Parr, 2016), fostering cooperation to tackle climate change and resource management. This synergy between the SDGs and African initiatives emphasises partnerships, innovation and sustainable practices, crucial for long-term resilience and prosperity. Recent technical advancements and improved data availability have facilitated progress in monitoring the SDGs, but challenges like data gaps, interrelated objectives and disruptions from crises such as Covid-19 limit effectiveness. Addressing these issues is vital to ensure SDG fulfilment as the world approaches 2030. The following recommendations aim to enhance policy implementation in Africa.

- *Strengthen data infrastructure and capacity:* Enhancing data availability, quality and collection requires investments in statistical infrastructure, especially in developing and low-income nations. Improving technical proficiency, updating data-gathering methods and guaranteeing national statistical offices have the means to generate precise and timely reports are all part of this. Building these capacities can be greatly aided by partnerships and support from international organisations (UNSD, 2020).
- *Develop integrated monitoring approaches:* It is critical to create comprehensive monitoring frameworks that consider the inherent interconnectivity of the SDGs in order to meet the challenge of gauging progress towards them. To facilitate a more thorough understanding of how progress in one area affects others, this entails developing tools that can track and analyse the interdependencies across various goals (Sachs *et al.*, 2019). Using integrated methods will aid in the creation of interventions and policies that are more successful.
- *Enhance resilience of monitoring systems:* Resilient monitoring systems that can resist disturbances from around the world are essential, as demonstrated by the Covid-19 pandemic. Building adaptable data-gathering systems that can keep up with changing circumstances and guarantee the continuation of monitoring operations should be a priority. This entails using technology to facilitate data collecting from a distance and continuing data collection efforts in the face of major obstacles (UN, 2021).
- *Promote greater inclusivity and participation:* Extensive stakeholder engagement in the monitoring process can improve data relevance and accuracy, including civil society, local communities and the commercial sector. According to Elvidge *et al.* (2020), monitoring initiatives can be made more inclusive and representative of all population segments by utilising participatory methodologies and citizen-generated data, which can offer extra insights into local conditions and requirements. Enhancing responsibility and ownership of sustainable development projects is another benefit of this involvement.

Conclusively, despite notable advancements in the SDG monitoring domain, sustained endeavours are imperative to surmount current obstacles and adjust to a dynamic worldwide terrain. Stakeholders may assist the accomplishment of global sustainability goals and increase the efficacy of SDG monitoring by fostering inclusivity, building integrated monitoring methodologies, fortifying data infrastructure and improving system resilience.

REFERENCES

- Ackah, I. & Graham, E. 2021. Meeting the targets of the Paris Agreement: an analysis of renewable energy (RE) governance systems in West Africa (WA). *Clean Technologies and Environmental Policy*, 23, pp. 501-507.
- Adeniyi, D. & Dinbabo, M.F. 2019. Factors influencing household food security among irrigation smallholders in North West Nigeria, *Journal of Reviews on Global Economics*, 8(1), pp. 291-304.
- African Union Commission (AUC). 2018. Migration Policy Framework for Africa (MPFA) and Plan of Action (2018–2030). Available at https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/35956-doc-2018_mdfa_english_version.pdf (accessed April 22, 2022).
- African Union, 2020. *Continental Framework for Youth, Peace, and Security*. Available at: <https://www.au.int/en/documents/20200105/continental-framework-youth-peace-and-security> (Accessed January 4, 2025).

- African Union, 2024. *Continental Results Framework: Monitoring and Reporting on the Implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in Africa (2018-2028)*. Addis Ababa. Available at: <https://www.au.int/en/documents/20240105/continental-results-framework>. (Accessed January 4, 2025)
- Akanle, O., Kayode, D. & Abolade, I. 2022. Sustainable development goals (SDGs) and remittances in Africa. *Cogent Social Sciences*, 8(1). Available at <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2022.2037811>
- Akhtar-Schuster, M., Stringer, L.C., Metternicht, G., Barger, N.N., Chotte, J.L. & Kust, G. 2022. Assessing the impact of science in the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. *Land*, 11(4), p. 568.
- Arora, N.K. & Mishra, I. 2022. Current scenario and future directions for sustainable development goal 2: A roadmap to zero hunger. *Environmental Sustainability*, 5(2), pp. 129-133.
- Atapattu, S. 2022. Emergence of International Environmental Law: A Brief History from the Stockholm Conference to Agenda 2030. In *The Environment Through the Lens of International Courts and Tribunals*, pp.1-33. The Hague: TMC Asser Press.
- Bali Swain, R. & Yang-Wallentin, F. 2020. Achieving sustainable development goals: predicaments and strategies. *International Journal of Sustainable Development & World Ecology*, 27(2), pp. 96-106.
- Bentley, G. & Pugalis, L. 2014. Shifting paradigms: People-centred models, active regional development, space-blind policies, and place-based approaches. *Local Economy*, 29(4-5), pp. 283-294.
- Boakye, A. & Dinbabo, M.F. 2021. Alleviating poverty and achieving inclusive growth through digital innovations. Evidence from South Africa. *Journal for Creativity, Innovation and Social Entrepreneurship*, 5(2), pp. 20-28.
- Bolarinwa, J. O. 2015. The ECOWAS free movement protocol: Obstacle or driver of regional integration? *Insight on Africa*, 7(2), pp. 154-168.
- Bonsu, N.O., TyreeHageman, J. & Kele, J. 2020. Beyond Agenda 2030: Future-oriented mechanisms in localizing the sustainable development goals (SDGs). *Sustainability*, 12(23), 9797. Available at <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12239797>
- Byron-Cox, R. 2020. From Desertification to Land Degradation Neutrality: The UNCCD and the Development of Legal Instruments for Protection of Soils. In *Legal Instruments for Sustainable Soil Management in Africa*, pp.1-13. Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- Chevallier, R. & Chesterman, S. 2022. Enhancing the operationalization of the African Union's climate change and resilient development strategy and action plan (2022-2032).
- Colglazier, W. 2015. Sustainable development agenda: 2030. *Science*, 349(6252), pp. 1048-1050.
- Deel-Smith, K.K. 2022. *Development of a strategic planning framework for the African integrated high-speed railway network in Southern Africa*. Doctoral dissertation, Stellenbosch University.
- De Feyter, K. 2022. The Convention on the Right to Development: Drafting a New Global Human Rights Treaty. *Comunità internazionale: rivista trimestrale della Società Italiana per l'Organizzazione Internazionale*: LXXVII, 3, pp. 413-440.
- DeGhetto, K., Gray, J.R. & Kiggundu, M.N. 2016. The African Union's Agenda 2063: Aspirations, challenges, and opportunities for management research. *Africa Journal of Management*, 2(1), pp. 93-116.
- Dinbabo, M. F. 2003. *Development theories, participatory approaches and community development*. Bellville: Institute for Social Development, University of the Western Cape.
- Dinbabo, M.F. 2011. Social welfare policies and child poverty in South Africa: a microsimulation model on the Child Support Grant. Doctoral dissertation, University of the Western Cape.
- Dinbabo, M.F. 2024. Contractual relationships between indigenous CBOs and the community: empirical evidence from Ethiopia. *Journal of Social Sciences*. 38(3), pp. 231-240.
- Dinbabo, M. F. & Badewa, A. 2020. Monitoring migration policy frameworks, treaties and conventions for development in Africa. *Journal of African Union Studies*, 9(1), pp. 23-49.
- Dobrescu, E.M. 2017. Agenda 2030. New perspectives. *Journal of Defense Resources Management (JoDRM)*, 8(1), pp. 165-180.
- Dugarova, E. & Gulasan. 2017. *Global Trends: Challenges and Opportunities in the Implementation of the SDGs*. UNDP-UNRISD Joint Report.
- Efretuei, O.E. 2007. *The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD): emerging conditions impacting on the implementation process*. Doctoral dissertation, University of Pretoria.
- Elvidge, C.D., Ghosh, T., Hsu, F.C., Zhizhin, M. & Bazilian, M. 2020. The dimming of lights in China during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Remote Sensing*, 12(17), 2851. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rs12172851>
- Erinosho, B.T. 2013. The revised African convention on the conservation of nature and natural resources: prospects for a comprehensive treaty for the management of Africa's natural resources. *African Journal of International and Comparative Law*, 21(3), pp. 378-397.
- Esquivel, V. 2016. Power and the Sustainable Development Goals: a feminist analysis. *Gender & Development*, 24(1), pp. 9-23.
- Eurostat, 2021. Key figures on Europe – 2021 Edition. Available at <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-keyfigures/w/KS-EI-24-001> (accessed 22 September 2024).
- Eyita-Onkon, E. 2020. *The political economy of regional hydropower investments in Africa*. Doctoral dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand.
- Froehlich, A., Ringas, N. & Wilson, J. 2020. A Look at Governance Throughout Africa. *Space Supporting Africa: Volume 3: Security, Peace, and Development through Efficient Governance Supported by Space Applications*, pp. 1-51.

- Fukuda-Parr, S. 2016. From the Millennium Development Goals to the Sustainable Development Goals: shifts in purpose, concept, and politics of global goal setting for development. *Gender & Development*, 24(1), 43-52.
- Fuso Nerini, F., Sovacool, B., Hughes, N., Cozzi, L., Cosgrave, E., Howells, M., Tavoni, M., Tomei, J., Zerriffi, H. & Milligan, B. 2019. Connecting climate action with other Sustainable Development Goals. *Nature Sustainability*, 2(8), pp.674-680.
- GPSDD, Community Systems Foundation 2021. Sustainable Development Data. Available at <https://www.communitysystemsfoundation.org/stories/global-partnership-for-sustainable-development-data> (accessed 17 October 2024).
- Grosseck, G., Tîru, L.G. & Bran, R.A. 2019. Education for sustainable development: Evolution and perspectives: A bibliometric review of research, 1992–2018. *Sustainability*, 11(21), p.6136.
- Hajian, M. & Kashani, S.J. 2021. Evolution of the concept of sustainability. From Brundtland Report to sustainable development goals. *Sustainable resource management*, pp. 1-24. Elsevier.
- Hák, T., Janoušková, S. & Moldan, B. 2016. Sustainable Development Goals: A need for relevant indicators. *Ecological indicators*, 60, pp.565-573.
- Halkos, G. & Gkampoura, E.C. 2021. Where do we stand on the 17 Sustainable Development Goals? An overview on progress. *Economic Analysis and Policy*, 70, pp.94-122.
- Hall, C.M., Gössling, S. & Scott, D. 2015. The evolution of sustainable development and sustainable tourism. In *The Routledge handbook of tourism and sustainability*, pp. 15-35. Routledge.
- Hegertun, N. & Mæstad, O. 2023. Old Problems and New Realities in Africa-and the role of Development Cooperation. CMI Chr Michelsen Institute.
- Kabiru, S.A. & Batsari, L.M. 2020. Assessment of The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). *KIU Journal of Social Sciences*, 6(3), 25-31.
- Kanie, N., Bernstein, S., Biermann, F. & Haas, P.M. 2017. Introduction: Global governance through goal setting. In *Governing through goals: Sustainable development goals as governance innovation*, pp.1-28, MIT Press.
- Kirkby, J., O'Keefe, P. & Timberlake, L. (eds.). 2023. *The Earthscan reader in sustainable development*. Taylor & Francis.
- Kuhlmann, K. 2021. Resetting the Rules on Trade and Gender? A Comparative Assessment of Gender Approaches in Regional Trade Agreements in the Context of a Possible Gender Protocol Under the African Continental Free Trade Area. *The Scholarly Commons*, Georgetown Law Faculty.
- Kumar, S., Kumar, N. & Vivekadhis, S. 2016. Millennium development goals (MDGS) to sustainable development goals (SDGs): Addressing unfinished agenda and strengthening sustainable development and partnership. *Indian Journal of Community Medicine: official publication of Indian Association of Preventive & Social Medicine*, 41(1), p.1.
- Lomazzi, M., Borisch, B. & Laaser, U. 2014. *The Millennium Development Goals: experiences, achievements and what is next*. *Global health action*, 7:23695.
- Mabuza, M.P. & Mabuza, M.P. 2020. The UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). *Evaluating International Public Health Issues: Critical Reflections on Diseases and Disasters, Policies and Practices*, pp.77-103.
- Mahlatsi, K. 2021. Achieving sustainable development goals (SDGs) in Africa: Challenges and prospects. *The Thinker*, 87(2), pp.61-69.
- Maluwa, T. 2020. Reassessing aspects of the contribution of African states to the development of international law through African regional multilateral treaties. *Michigan Journal of International Law* 41, p.327.
- Mangala, J. R. 2016. The African Union's diaspora diplomacy and policymaking: Operationalizing the migration-development nexus. *Journal of the Middle East and Africa*, 7(2), pp. 175-206.
- Mballa, M.O., 2022. Achieving Integration through the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA): Between Promises and Challenges. Available at: <https://theses.univie.ac.at/detail/63924>. (Accessed January 4, 2025).
- Miriti, K.B. 2022. Leaving no one behind A critical discussion with regards to Sustainable Development Goals, specific health risks, and international responses through strategic actions.
- Mugagga, F. & Nabaasa, B.B. 2016. The centrality of water resources to the realization of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). A review of potentials and constraints on the African continent. *International Soil and Water Conservation Research*, 4(3), pp.215-223.
- Mwaniki, J. & Dinbabo, M.F. 2019. The impact of social enterprise on labour market structure: a case study of social enterprises in Nairobi, Kenya. *Journal of Social Development in Africa*, 34(2), pp.139-172.
- Nhamo, G., Dube, K. & Chikodzi, D. 2020. Sustainable development goals: Concept and challenges of global development goal setting. *Handbook of global health*, pp.1-40.
- Okoko, C.O. & Mgbowaji, B.R. 2023. The New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD), Profits and Poverty: Historicizing A Persisting Dilemma. *British Journal of Multidisciplinary and Advanced Studies*, 4(6), pp.1-24.
- Paglia, E. 2021. The Swedish initiative and the 1972 Stockholm Conference: the decisive role of science diplomacy in the emergence of global environmental governance. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 8(1), pp.1-10.
- Pathania, S.K. 2017. Sustainable development goal: Gender equality for women empowerment and human rights. *International Journal of Research*, 5(4), pp.1-15.
- Peng, S. & Sun, X. 2015. Global sustainable development report: background, progress, and recommendations. *Chinese Journal of Population Resources and Environment*, 13(1), pp.61-66.



- Phakathi, M. 2019. African Union Migration Policies: A Route to African Unity? *Journal of African Union Studies*, 8(2), pp. 25–44.
- Popkova, E.G., Sergi, B.S. & Bogoviz, A.V. 2023. Evolution of environmental economics and management in the age of artificial intelligence for sustainable development. *Frontiers in Environmental Science*, 11, .1176612.
- Pradhan, P., Costa, L., Rybski, D., Lucht, W. & Kropp, J.P. 2017. A Systematic Study of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Interactions. *Earth's Future*, 5: 1169-1179. Available at <https://doi.org/10.1002/2017EF000632>
- Ruggerio, C.A. 2021. Sustainability and sustainable development: A review of principles and definitions. *Science of the Total Environment*, 786, p.147481.
- Sachs, J.D. 2012. From millennium development goals to sustainable development goals. *The Lancet*, 379(9832), pp.2206-2211.
- Sachs, J.D., Schmidt-Traub, G., Mazzucato, M., Messner, D., Nakicenovic, N. & Rockström, J. 2019. Six transformations to achieve the sustainable development goals. *Nature sustainability*, 2(9), pp.805-814. Available at <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41893-019-0352-9>
- Sáez de Cámara, E., Fernández, I. and Castillo-Eguskita, N. 2021. A holistic approach to integrate and evaluate sustainable development in higher education. The case study of the University of the Basque Country. *Sustainability*, 13(1), p.392.
- Sajna-Kunowsky, R. 2021. *Global Communication and Sustainable Development: From the Earth Summit in Rio 1992 to the Olympic Games in Rio 2016*, pp.487-505), Springer International Publishing.
- Servaes, J. 2021. The sustainable development goals: A major reboot or just another acronym? In *The Palgrave handbook of international communication and sustainable development*, pp. 31-51, Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- Shi, L., Han, L., Yang, F. & Gao, L. 2019. The evolution of sustainable development theory: Types, goals, and research prospects. *Sustainability*, 11(24), p.7158.
- Shulla, K., Filho, W.L., Lardjane, S., Sommer, J.H. & Borgemeister, C. 2020. Sustainable development education in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. *International Journal of Sustainable Development & World Ecology*, 27(5), pp.458-468.
- Swain, R.B. 2018. A critical analysis of the sustainable development goals. *Handbook of sustainability science and research*, pp.341-355.
- Teh, D. and Rana, T. 2023. The use of Internet of Things, Big Data analytics and artificial intelligence for attaining UN's SDGs. In *Handbook of big data and analytics in accounting and auditing*, pp. 235-253). Singapore: Springer Nature Singapore. Available at https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-19-4460-4_11
- Ufomba, H.U., 2020. The African Union Development Agenda 2063: can Africa get it right? *Brazilian Journal of Development*, 6(8), Available at: <https://doi.org/10.34117/bjdv6n8-627> (Accessed January 4, 2025).
- Ukaeje, O. 2022. Political Instability and Insecurity in Africa: Implications for African Union Agenda 2063. *Journal of Contemporary International Relations and Diplomacy*, 3(1), pp.443-466.
- UN. 2015. Transforming our world: The 2030 agenda for sustainable development. United Nations General Assembly (A/RES/70/1), New York.
- UN. 2021. *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2021*. Available at <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2021/The-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Report-2021.pdf> (accessed 10 October, 2024).
- UNECA. 2014. African agenda on land (media statement), 7 July. Available at: <https://archive.uneca.org/stories/monitoring-and-evaluation-framework-support-african-agenda-land> (Accessed September 12, 2024).
- United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD). 2020. Report of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators.
- United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD). 2021. 52nd Session (2021) Documents. Available at <https://unstats.un.org/UNSDWebsite/statcom/documents/52>, (accessed 12 September 2024).
- Vhumbunu, C.H. 2022. Promoting Gender Equality and Women Empowerment in the African Continental Free Trade Area: Lessons from SADC. *Alternation*, 29(2).
- Xiang, M.J. & Maïnkade, B.F. 2023. The human rights-based approach to sustainable development: Lessons from recent African investment treaty practice. *Heliyon*, 9(8).

This research was sponsored by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC): Research and Innovation at the University of the Western Cape (UWC).

Professor Mulugeta F. Dinbabo is a Professor of Development Studies at the [Institute for Social Development](#), University of the Western Cape (UWC). He obtained his Ph D degree in Development Studies from UWC and has two MA degrees in Development Management and Development Studies, from the Ruhr University, Germany and UWC. His research has focused on development and migration and he is also the founder and Chief Editor of the [African Human Mobility Review \(AHMR\)](#), which is accredited by the South African Department of Higher Education and Training.

Perfect Mazani is a Ph D candidate at UWC. Her research interests are migration, food security and economic development.