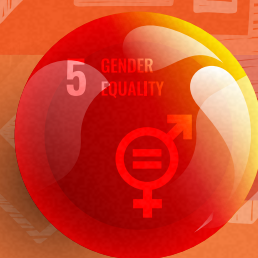


2025 AFRICA SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT REPORT

Advancing sustainable, inclusive, science-and evidence-based solutions for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals for leaving no one behind, and the African Union's Agenda 2063

Executive Summary



Executive summary

The 2025 ASDR reviews the status of the implementation of the two Agendas in Africa and offers policy recommendations to facilitate their attainment. As in previous years, the 2025 report aligns with the theme and corresponding Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) selected by the High-Level Political Forum on sustainable development (HLPF) for any particular year.

In this context, the SDGs under review by the 2025 HLPF focus on good health and well-being (Goal 3); gender equality (Goal 5); decent work and economic growth (Goal 8); life below water (Goal 14) and strengthening global partnerships (Goal 17). Each SDG is analysed in relation to the corresponding goal of the African Union Agenda 2063.

The findings of the report highlight the need for Africa to accelerate progress on all five SDGs and strengthen statistical systems to track performance. Africa is making progress in 12 of the 17 SDGs, however the current pace of progress is insufficient to achieve the SDGs by 2030. Overall, data gaps prevent a full picture of the continent's performance.

Key findings

Opportunities remain amid multifaceted challenges

Africa was estimated to be home to 12 of the 20 fastest-growing economies in 2025, up from ten in 2024 and is projected to outpace global economic growth. Substantial opportunities exist despite the multifaceted challenges emanating from the debt burden, a worrying trend of jobless growth and rising global uncertainties. Making use of the demographic dividend, natural resources, digital technology, private sector investment and strong institutions will facilitate the

transformative change needed for sustainable and inclusive development.

Africa needs to bridge a substantial financing gap to attain SDGs

According to an upcoming AfDB-ECA publication, Africa faces an astounding annual financing gap of between US\$ 670 and US\$ 762 billion by 2030, with over 80 percent of the gap concentrated in the LDCs. As such, Africa needs to bridge the substantial financing gap in order to achieve the SDGs.

1. Ensuring good health and well-being

Africa has made significant progress in health outcomes with some areas of improvement

Africa has made significant progress in health outcomes since 2015, including in terms of life expectancy, which has increased by three years, maternal mortality, which has dropped by 7.4 percent, reduced child mortality, increased incidence of skilled birth attendance to 75.7 percent from 61.8 percent in 2015, and notable strides in combating infectious diseases such as HIV, tuberculosis, and malaria. Despite these gains, the continent continues to lag behind global averages in several health indicators. Notably, maternal mortality rates in Africa are still alarmingly high, and neonatal and under-5 mortality rates exceeding global targets. Though coverage of vaccination increased, disparities remain, especially for diseases such as human papillomavirus (HPV) and measles.

Many African countries are unlikely to attain SDG 3 by 2030, acceleration is warranted

It is unlikely for most African countries to achieve the full scope of SDG 3 by 2030. Factors contributing to this include disparities in health service access, inadequate infrastructure, healthcare worker shortages, high out-of-pocket expenditures, uneven

implementation of health policies, access to essential medicines and diagnostics, income disparities, conflicts, and limited public health expenditure. Indeed, socioeconomic inequalities and inequities contribute towards disparities in health outcomes. Current public spending on health amounts to approximately 7 percent, well below the target of 15 percent of the national budget. However, increasing the efficiency of health sector spending will also be effective improving public health outcomes. Climate change and other emerging threats present new risks to health systems across the continent, compromising progress towards the 2030 target.

2. Achieving gender equality and empowerment for all women and girls

A holistic approach to gender equality is warranted

Despite the importance of Goal 5 as an enabler of overall sustainable and inclusive development, substantial gaps exist in the implementation of the Goal. Discriminatory laws and societal norms continue to pose significant barriers for women when it comes to accessing economic resources, property ownership, and financial services, limiting their opportunities and impeding job creation and economic growth in Africa. Only 15 countries have established strong legal frameworks that promote gender equality, while nearly 60 percent lack adequate data on these issues. In 2022, Africa was 20.3 percentage points below the world level for the implementation of legal frameworks that promote, enforce and monitor gender equality in employment and economic benefits.

Women's economic empowerment is low owing to discriminatory practices and lack of legal framework.

Despite establishing several mechanisms to ensure women's involvement in economic decision-making bodies, substantial gaps prevail. In 2022, 68 percent of women were in vulnerable employment, compared to 57 percent of men. The gender wage gap persisted, with women earning 21 percent less than men in highly skilled positions in 2023. Although women's access to education has improved, they continue to be underrepresented in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields and vocational training due to entrenched societal norms and discriminatory practices.

Addressing Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) remains key

Violence against women continues to pose challenges to attaining Goal 5 in Africa. As of 2023, the proportion of women and girls subjected to sexual and physical violence remained at 24 percent, indicating a stagnating level. As many as one in five women and girls aged 15-49 in Africa and one in seven in North Africa have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner in the past year. Sexual violence by non-partners also remains a significant issue, with many cases going unreported due to stigma and fear of retaliation. African countries have made significant strides in combating VAWG by implementing various strategies. Thirty-six countries enhanced survivor support services such as shelters and legal aid, while 35 strengthened laws to prevent violence.

Harmful practices and care work remain a barrier to effective participation

Child marriage remains widespread, with 130 million women and girls in Africa being married before the age of 18 as of 2023. African countries make up 80 percent of the top 20 nations with the highest rates of child marriage, with the first seven from the continent. Female genital mutilation remains rife, with 34.6 percent of girls aged 15-49 years undergoing the practice in 2022. In addition to these harmful practices, women across Africa still shoulder a significantly higher burden of unpaid work than men. On average, women spend 249 minutes per day on unpaid care work compared to just 87 minutes for men, compromising their opportunities for labour-force participation.

Significant progress made in achieving gender parity in leadership and managerial positions

Achieving gender parity in leadership and managerial positions is crucial for empowering women. In 2023, women held 26 percent of parliamentary seats in Africa, up from 19 percent in 2015, and occupied only 43 percent of managerial positions, despite making up 53.5 percent of the workforce. Twenty-five countries in the Beijing+30 review have adopted temporary special measures such as gender quotas, such as the Sierra Leone 2023 law mandating a 30 percent female

candidate quota for all jobs. By 2023, women held 34 percent of these seats in Sierra Leone, surpassing the 30 percent target of the First Ten-Year Implementation Plan of Agenda 2063.

Gender disparities continue to prevail in asset ownership with substantial country and regional variations

Women in Africa continue to encounter significant obstacles in owning immovable assets, land and property owing to the existing cultural and legal barriers, with rates as low as 1 percent in Mali and as high as 73 percent in Ethiopia. Substantial gender disparities exist in digital technologies. The average gender gap in mobile phone ownership and Internet usage has narrowed by 8 percent, from 24 percent and 28 percent in 2020 to 16 percent and 19 percent in 2023, respectively, but remain at a low level.

3. Promoting decent work and economic growth

Progress towards achieving SDG 8 is slowing in Africa, owing to multifarious challenges

Despite the complementarity impact of decent work and economic growth in accelerating the progress of all SDGs and the African Union's Agenda 2063, Africa is slowly making progress towards achieving SDG 8, particularly in the

Related Strategic Objectives of Agenda 2063

Table a.1: ASDR 2025 SDG Focus and related Strategic Objectives of Agenda 2063

SDG	Agenda 2063 STYIP Strategic Objectives
SDG 3 – Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages	6.2: Increase access to affordable and quality health care
SDG 5 – Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls	6.3: Achieve gender parity in all spheres

SDG	Agenda 2063 STYIP Strategic Objectives
SDG 8 – Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all	1.1: Enhance inclusive, equitable and sustainable economic growth 1.2: Increase economic resilience 1.3: Increase agriculture production and productivity
SDG 14 – Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development	1.4: Increase investment in blue economy
SDG 17 – Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development	2.2: Establish and make functional Continental Financial and Monetary Institutions 2.3: Increase connectivity infrastructures that crisscross countries 7.2: Enhance Africa’s capacity for financing her development

areas of economic growth, young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) and the tourism sector as a share of GDP. Africa’s average annual GDP growth rate per capita was 2.7 percent in 2021 but fell to 0.7 percent in 2023. As high as over 23 percent of African youth are NEET, with significant gender disparities. Despite its huge potential, the tourism sector contributed to only 6.8 percent of Africa’s GDP in 2023, albeit with significant post-pandemic growth. The multifarious challenges emanating from recent economic shocks, climate change, and geopolitical instability continue to hinder growth and decent job opportunities in the continent.

Quality of employment remains a concern in Africa

Labour productivity remains a concern in Africa, with output per worker dropping to 2.89 percent in 2024 from 4.2 percent in 2022. This figure is projected to be 3.5 percent for 2025, below the global average of 3.8 percent. Informality is high, with 83.1 percent of workers in informal employment compared to the global average of 57.9 percent, compounded by substantial gender disparities. Youth employment continues to be concentrated in the unsecured sectors, with

71.7 percent of workers holding “insecure” jobs in 2023. Skills mismatches limit job opportunities despite rising education levels, with an alarmingly low participation rate of 2 percent in technical and vocational training. People with disabilities face systemic constraints with an employment rate of only 39 percent compared to 56 percent for those without a disability. Child labour remains a major concern, and over 92 million children are involved in child labour, 41.4 million of them in hazardous conditions. Of the five subregions, East Africa has 44.5 million children in child labour, amounting to 30 percent of its child population.

Africa needs to ensure resource efficiency, diversification, innovation, and support for MSMEs to address the productivity challenge

Africa needs to ensure resource efficiency, diversification, innovation, and support for micro-, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs). Despite success stories from several countries, broader structural challenges persist, such as weak industrialization, infrastructure constraints, poor access to finance, poor economic governance, gender gaps, and capacity constraints. Public-private partnerships

should also be leveraged to promote sustainable development.

African countries need to support decent job and economic growth through structural reforms

Digital transformation, being vital for SDGs and Agenda 2063, can facilitate e-governance, financial inclusion, trade facilitation, and credit access while boosting economic growth. Furthermore, AfCFTA should be leveraged to boost regional and global trade and ensure economic integration. Financial inclusion can also be encouraged by deliberate payment policies requiring accounts for disbursements. Overall, to realize SDG 8, Africa must prioritize youth employment, accelerate formalization and inclusive growth, end child labour and promote gender equality, drive digital and financial inclusion and leverage regional collaboration and integration.

4. Promoting conservation and sustainable use of oceans, seas and marine resources

Africa is progressing albeit slowly in attaining Goal 14

Africa's extensive coastal and inland water systems support millions of people's livelihoods, yet they are under significant threat from overfishing, pollution, urbanization, and climate change. Over two million tonnes of litter polluted African beaches in 2022, up from 1.7 million tonnes in 2017. Globally, the figure increased from 10.5 million tonnes to 12.4 million tonnes over the same period. In Central and West Africa, more than 95 percent of beach litter originated from land-based sources in 2021 and 2022. In 2023, the Average Ocean Health Index for African countries score stood at 52.8, lagging the global average of 70.

Multiple and interrelated issues compromising sustainable ocean and marine ecosystems

Overfishing continues due to insufficient monitoring and weak regulatory enforcement. Africa saw a slight increase in the share of sustainable fisheries in its GDP, increasing from 0.27 percent in 2011 to 0.42 percent in 2021. A total of 15.9 percent of marine areas are designated as Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), exceeding the 10 percent target set for 2020 in SDG 14. By 2023, Africa had protected 46.7 percent of key biodiversity areas, slightly above the global average. However, inadequate data on fish stock sustainability, pollution levels and the implementation of international regulations limit effective planning and action. Rapid urbanization in coastal cities puts further strains on marine ecosystems, highlighting the need for integrated environmental and urban policies.

A holistic approach, robust partnerships and collaboration is warranted to achieve sustainable ocean and marine ecosystems

Addressing various challenges of a sustainable ocean is vital for the continent's food security, economic growth, and climate resilience. African countries should foster an environment that integrates ecological health with socioeconomic growth, improving governance, and ensuring effective community participation to transform its ocean resources from a source of vulnerability to a driver of inclusive growth and resilience. Greater emphasis on ecosystem-based approaches, investment in research and technology, effective governance, regional collaboration and adherence to international agreements will be essential in addressing the threats to marine and freshwater resources.

5. Strengthening partnerships for sustainable development

Huge financing challenges must be overcome to attain sustainable and inclusive development

Africa faces massive financial challenges to attaining sustainable development and Agenda 2063 amid declining ODA, falling foreign direct investment (FDI), growing debt burdens, and weak domestic resource mobilization. Government revenues as a percentage of GDP have shown improvement since 2020 yet remain below the global average. Inflows of foreign direct investment to Africa dropped by 3.4 percent to US\$ 52.6 billion in 2023, representing only 6 percent of the total FDI to developing economies. Debt sustainability remains a key concern with debt servicing in Africa increasing from 8 percent in 2015 to 9.6 percent in 2022 in Africa. The issue of debt sustainability continues to be a growing concern in many countries due to repeated shocks, tight financial conditions in the global capital markets and currency depreciation.

Africa made progress towards SDG 17 with some areas in need of acceleration

Africa made significant progress in digital transformation, trade and science, technology, and innovation (STI). Improved Internet connectivity, digital skill-building initiatives such as the Meltwater Entrepreneurial School of Technology (MEST) and regional infrastructure projects support economic growth. Despite this progress, challenges remain in terms of affordability and rural access gaps. Notably, the AfCFTA holds the potential to boost intra-African trade and reduce dependency on external markets, but non-tariff barriers and limited productive capacity are persistent barriers, particularly in a context of global tariffs and geopolitical

uncertainties. Expanding capacity-building through digital platforms and targeted programmes for young people and women is central to leveraging the demographic dividends of the continent.

Robust statistical systems for monitoring and accountability are warranted for sustainable and inclusive development

While Africa has made progress in terms of data infrastructure and open data initiatives, significant gaps remain in data availability, quality, and disaggregation. Modernization through digital technologies and geospatial tools is improving efficiency, but many countries still depend heavily on donor support for censuses and surveys. Strengthening national statistical systems and regional cooperation is vital for evidence-based policymaking.

A “whole of system” approach to implementing SDG 17

Overall, achieving SDG 17 in Africa requires an integrated strategy involving domestic reform, regional integration, digital innovation, global partnerships, and inclusive financing mechanisms. African countries should diversify their financing sources, prioritizing domestic revenue and partnerships with the private sector, diaspora and philanthropy. A reform of the global financial architecture is warranted to reduce borrowing costs and enhance access to affordable, long-term, and climate-related financing. Tackling trade barriers, improving infrastructure, and building productive capacities will boost competitiveness, industrialization, and regional value chains. Strengthening regional integration, particularly through AfCFTA, requires collaboration among regulators and policymakers. Finally, investment in capacity-building, science, technology, innovation,

and data systems is vital for effective implementation of SDG 17.

Key recommendations

African countries are unlikely to attain the five SDGs presented here by 2030. Accelerating the progress towards the SDGs and Agenda 2063 will require a holistic approach and mutually reinforcing initiatives. African countries are advised to:

Leverage solidarity through South-South cooperation

In the context of recent geopolitical uncertainties, South-South cooperation is more important than ever. African countries should leverage a common platform to advocate for unique solutions and opportunities for Africa and tap into the opportunities of regional collaboration to attain the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. Countries should also capitalize on upcoming international conferences, including the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development, the 2025 HLPF and the Second World Summit for Social Development to advance a unified African position on priorities for the implementation of the two Agendas.

Invest in skills and education at all levels

Investment in skills and education at all levels is essential to tap into the demographic dividend and ensure inclusive development in Africa. An integrated approach to developing skills and education for the workforce will facilitate job creation and social cohesion. Countries need to ensure continued investment in early childhood, primary, secondary, and higher education to enhance critical thinking and specialized expertise. Investing in skills and education at all levels will act as a catalyst to attaining sustainable and inclusive development.

Invest in youth

Countries should support engagement with young people as strategic partners, with investments in education systems and skills development, to equip learners with digital literacy, entrepreneurial skills and the capabilities needed for decent work while also promoting the proposed global youth platform as an important avenue for ensuring youth representation in decision-making process. A holistic strategy involving all stakeholders, including governments, organizations and investors, will help to support a dynamic youth force leading the growth and development trajectory in Africa.

Mobilize finance and strengthen partnerships

Countries should mobilize finance to accelerate progress towards the SDGs through domestic resource mobilization, innovative financing sources, debt sustainability and a reform of the global financial architecture to better reflect the unique needs of the African countries. Countries should strengthen partnerships to foster sustainable consumption and production methods. In addition, countries should rigorously review plans and programmes in areas with transformational effects on the attainment of several SDGs, such as infrastructure, STI, digitalization, food systems, renewable energy systems, value added manufacturing and climate action.

Strengthen institutions for sound economic governance

Countries should develop and implement systems for evidence-based mutual accountability at the local, national, regional and international levels. Establishing mechanisms for improving accountability and reducing corruption would be critical. Strong institutions incorporating increased accountability and transparency will facilitate

the creation of a mutually reinforcing mechanism for attaining sustainable and inclusive development.

Invest in data infrastructure

Strengthening data collection and data use to design and implement interventions and track progress towards attainment of the SDGs, including through the following measures, is crucial: (i) Enhancement of data integration,

data infrastructure and interoperability in all countries, private sector collaboration and data governance; (ii) Capacity-building in relation to data analytics; and (iii) Use of emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence. Countries should invest in improving the collection, dissemination, and analysis of data related to national development plans, SDGs and Agenda 2063.

