

*Full Length Research Paper*

# **Greater horn of Africa's dilemma in achieving sustainable development goals**

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This study assessed the performance of the Greater Horn of Africa (GHA) regional states regarding their respective implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It examines the successes, challenges, and alignments to national policies and development plan to meet the 2030 agenda and suggested recommendations for accelerating the implementation of the SDGs. This study is a pursuit against the background of the negative impacts of COVID-19. The region is trying its best, but many gaps and limitations to their efforts still stand in their way. This study proposed concrete recommendations to inform policy design and strengthen partnerships between the governments and donors in ensuring that the GHA gets back on track regarding meeting the 2030 Global Agenda. The region's countries fall among the world's poorest countries, save for Kenya, which is becoming a middle-income country. The Greater Horn of Africa is home to eight countries: Kenya, Ethiopia, Uganda, Djibouti, Somalia, Sudan, Eritrea, and South Sudan. They are pursuing implementing their country's development plans, 2030 Visions, IGAD strategic regional objectives, and the A.U. Agenda 2063, in line with their commitment to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. This study analyzed the voluntary national reviews of five countries and their national development plans and other reports produced by independent agencies, institutions, and scholars to assess the level of progress, challenges, and breakthroughs as far as the global goals of the 2030 agenda are concerned. GHA is lagging and off-track as far as poverty and hunger eradication is concerned. To make it worse, most of its population still lives below the poverty line, struggling daily to make ends meet. This is because of many underlying causes, including leadership deficiency, the absence of strong institutions, and low production levels. However, job creation is failing to raise the living standards due to low family disposable incomes due to unemployment.

**Key words:** Sustainable development, off-track, agenda 2030, A.U agenda 2063, low-income countries, lower-middle-income countries.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Global Agenda 2030, known Sustainable development Goals, were adopted by global leaders in 2015. These goals were a universal call to end poverty, protect Earth's planet, and ensure that all people enjoy

peace and prosperity by the end of 2030 (UNDP, 2022). This world's ambitious agenda came up with 17 SDGs afterward; most less developed countries could not achieve the 8 Millennium development goals. Goal 1:

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End poverty in all its forms everywhere. While the number of people living in extreme poverty dropped by more than half between 1990 and 2015 from 1.9 billion to 731 million, too many are still struggling for the most basic human needs. Eradicating poverty in all its forms remains one of humanity's most significant challenges, but its fundamental once achieved. The progress made for four years was erased by Covid-19 and further derailed by the war in Ukraine (UN, 2022). Goal 2: Zero hunger; that is, end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture. Ending all forms of hunger and malnutrition by 2030 will ensure that all people – especially children – have sufficient and nutritious food all year round and will require promoting sustainable agricultural practices such as supporting small-scale farmers and equal land access, technology, and markets. The number of people that goes hungry and suffer from food insecurity gradually rose between 2014 on the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The war in Ukraine is further disrupting global food supply chains and creating the most significant global food crisis since the Second World War.

The Greater Horn of Africa (GHA) is home to eight countries: Kenya, Ethiopia, Uganda, Djibouti, Somalia, Sudan, Eritrea, and South Sudan. Geographically, GHA covers about 5.2 million square kilometers, 30% of which is arable land, and 70% is arid and semi-arid land. It also has about 69,602 km of coastline along the Gulf of Eden, Tadjoura, the Indian Ocean, and the Red Sea. This has endowed it with sea transport and fishery development potential. As far as socio-economic status is concerned, the region has approximately 271 million people. It occupies 21% of Africa's land mass (Schmidt-Traub, 2015). Agriculture, pastoral and agro-pastoral activities form the region's economic bedrock, susceptible to drought and environmental degradation (Eve Mothe, 2018).

Many of these nations are pursuing the implementation of their country development plans, 2030 Visions, IGAD strategic regional objectives, and the A.U. Agenda 2063, in line with the commitment to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. They hope to achieve the latter by aligning their pursuits to these development frameworks and other sector-specific regional, continental, and global development frameworks.

This paper mainly discusses five countries (Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Somalia, and Djibouti) out of eight that make Greater Horn Africa (GHA). These countries have aligned their national development plans to the 2030 global agenda.

Three of them have presented their National Voluntary Reviews (NVRs) reports more than once. In contrast, Somalia and Djibouti presented their VNR reports this year (2022) at the United Nations High-Level Political Forum (HPLF). As a result, each country has shown some significant improvement though still far off track.

Peace, diplomacy, and international cooperation are

fundamental conditions for the world to progress on the SDGs as we move toward 2030 and beyond. The protracted wars and conflicts such as the Ukraine war and other military conflicts are humanitarian tragedies that impact negatively on prosperity and social outcomes throughout the rest of the world, including exacerbating poverty, food insecurity, and access to affordable energy as the climate and biodiversity crises amplify the impact of these crises (Jeffrey et al., 2022). Various programs have been initiated under the auspices of the IGAD Strategy 2022 to 2025. They include Drought Resilience and Sustainable Initiative (IDRSI); Regional Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) Compact; Institutional Strengthening Action Program (ISAP); Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries, and Food Security; Natural Resources and Environment; Peace and Security; Gender Affairs; and other strategies and policy papers (Population, n.d.).

In the last decade, the region registered over a 5% increase in economic growth against an increasingly young population, of which 70% are under 35. The achievement was effectively nullified by the high pressures exerted on the economy by the large percentage of young people. Most youth graduating from training and education institutions come to the labor market, which is already saturated; hence with no job opportunities, they find themselves unemployed. This has caused unemployment, food insecurity, and environmental stress resulting in environmental degradation. Climate variability has rendered the region vulnerable, as a large proportion of the population has been food insecure (Schmidt-Traub, 2015).

Serious challenges are causing most GHA countries to perform poorly. None of them has scored convincingly on the 17 Sustainable Development Goals because they struggle to tackle internal challenges and inequalities. Out of the 17 SDGs in general, SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), SDG 9 (Infrastructure), and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) face the most significant challenges. Most of the countries in the GHA are off-track as far as SDG 1 (No Poverty), whose headcount ratio at \$1.90 /day was about 15% in 2020. Concerning SDG 2 (Zero hunger), the prevalence of undernourishment was about 30%, on average, in 2017. There are some promising signs regarding SDG 13 (Climate Action) and SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) (Nations, 2019). The signs are evident as countries are making environmental protection mandatory. This progress is being achieved through established National Environment Management Authorities (NEMA) in respective countries working on policy and enacting laws governing the environment and natural resource utilization. Such policies are responsible for natural resource consumption and utilization to achieve sustainability for the sake of future generations. The onset of the global COVID-19 pandemic in 2019 brought about stagnation in progress. It has precipitated

a humanitarian and economic crisis and poses risks for SDGs that have, in essence, compromised the Decade of Action. Therefore, this analysis shows that countries in the GHA are off-track to achieving the SDGs by the end of 2030.

GHA governments have committed to meeting the 2030 SDGs, but the COVID-19 pandemic has held them back. The continued crisis has seriously affected the progress made at the local and national levels (Bank, Poverty, and Shared Prosperity, 2018).

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study employed behind-desk design; several documents were subjected to academic assessment and reflection drawn. Most of the documents were reports; especially conference reports and research are done before the development and adoption of the 17-SDGs in 2016. Thus various meetings at the U.N. level formed the basis of this paper. Individual country development plans, especially those developed in 2016 and afterward, were instrumental since they captured and were aligned with the 2030 World Agenda. Also, reports by the private sector and civil societies at national and international levels were considered in this paper. The five countries selected for this study were sampled purposively because they had presented their Voluntary National Review Reports on implementing the 2030 Agenda For Sustainable Development to the U.N. high-level political forum.

## RESULTS

The GHA countries are off-track as the entire world is also struggling to progress on the SDGs. The average SDG Index score slightly declined in 2021, partly due to slow or non-existent recovery in poor and vulnerable countries. Multiple and overlapping health and security crises have led to a reversal in SDG progress. Performance on SDG 1 (No poverty) and SDG8 (Decent Work and Economic growth) remain below pre-pandemic levels in many low-income countries (LICs) and lower-middle-income countries (LMICs) (Jeffrey et al., 2022). Here, per country status is discussed:

### Kenya

Compared to other GHA countries, Kenya is doing better though still off-track in meeting the 2030 agenda. According to *Sustainable Development Report 2022*, it ranks 118 out of 163 countries. This is because of reforms and concerted efforts from various sectors of the economy (Jeffrey et al., 2022).

On SDG 1 (No Poverty), Kenya's headcount ratio at \$1.90/day was 15.9% in 2020. The population living below the national poverty line was 36.1% in 2015, while the proportion covered by social protection was 34.7% in 2015. On SDG 2 (Zero hunger), the prevalence of undernourishment was 29.4% in 2017, while cereal yield (tonnes per hectare of harvested land) was 1.5 in 2017,

and fertilizer consumption (kg per hectare of arable land) was 38.2 in 2016.

On SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), the maternal mortality rate was 342 per 100,000 live births in 2017. On SDG 4 (Quality Education), the net primary enrollment rate was 80.0% in 2012, and the mean duration of schooling (in years) was 6.5 in 2017. Also, the literacy rate (percentage of the population aged 15 to 24 that can read and write) was 87.8% in 2018 (Eve Mothe, 2018).

On SDG 5 (Gender Equity), 21.8% of seats in national parliaments were held by women in 2020, and 25.0% of ministerial positions were held by women in 2017. The ratio of female-to-male mean years of education received was 83.3% in 2018. The ratio of female-to-male labor force participation rate was 92.0% in 2019. Regarding SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), 58.9% of the population used essential drinking water services in 2017, while 29.1% used at least essential sanitation services in 2017. On SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy), the proportion of the population with access to electricity was 63.8% in 2017, and the proportion of the population with access to clean fuels and technology for cooking was 13.4% in 2016. Renewable energy consumption was 71.8% in 2017, while consumer electricity affordability (on a scale of 0 to 100, with the worst being 0 and the best being 100) was rated 67 in 2017 (Bank, The Human Capital Project, 2018).

Regarding SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), the urban population living in slums was 46.5% in 2016, and the percentage of those with access to an improved water source (piped) was 61.7% in 2017. On SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), the natural resource value realization score (on a scale of 0 to 100, with the worst being 0 and the best being 100) for production-based SO<sub>2</sub> emissions (kg/capita) was 7.4 in 2012. On SDG 13 (Climate Action), the number of people affected by climate-related disasters (per 100,000 populations) was 2466.4 in 2019.

In conclusion, the fight against poverty (SDG 1) and Hunger (SDG 2) needs congregate strategies and practical plans. Attaining high standards of health (SDG 3), ensuring access to affordable and quality education (SDG 4), addressing gender parity (SDG 5), mitigating climate change (SDG 13), and ensuring decent work and living conditions (SDG 8) has to be given priority. The above are critical in the Kenyan context because they are yet to be attained. For instance, the healthcare sector suffers from a shortage of workers and defective drugs, especially in rural areas (CSOs, VNR Report, 2020).

In addition to the above, there is still a need for more financing for achieving and streamlining the data sources to monitor the goals. This also extends to localizing SDGs by mainstreaming program indicators and adopting local languages. Kenya needs some form of an SDG tracker that would help monitor how the country is progressing on its goals. Hence it might be a better place to know the country's progress (CSOs, VNR Report, 2020). The government has prioritized the "Big 4 Agenda"

focusing on Food and Nutrition, Security, Healthcare, Manufacturing, and Affordable Housing, accelerating SDGs 2,3,8, and 11 (Kenya, Voluntary National Review, 2020).

## Ethiopia

Six SDGs are under discussion (1, 2, 3, 5, 9 and 14) in analyzing Ethiopia's progress in its voluntary national review. These are critical pillars of other SDGs because when they are aligned appropriately, they will trigger the achievement of the rest. When it comes to promulgating the principles of 'Leaving No One Behind' when implementing the SDGs, Ethiopia ensures that the population is aware of the SDGs and participates in the planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation stages (Ethiopia, 2018).

On SDG 1 (No Poverty), the \$1.90 /day poverty headcount ratio was 25.3% by 2020. The population living below the national poverty line was 23.5% by 2015, while the population covered by social protection was 16.2% by 2010. There is a continuous effort to end poverty in all its forms everywhere, to ensure the development of the agriculture sector, which remains the principal source of economic growth, and to bring about the expansion of the manufacturing industry through encouraging private investments and coordinating investment. Secondly, the government is expanding small and medium enterprises. There are increasing efforts to conserve and develop natural resources and strengthen government development programs' implementation. Lastly, efforts are paving the way for smaller companies to grow into larger ones. This to succeed requires concerted efforts to be put in place to fast-track all federal government strategic development plans geared toward realizing the 2030 Agenda (Ethiopia, 2018).

On SDG 2 (Zero hunger), the prevalence of undernourishment was 20.6% by 2017. This goal aims to end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture. The government has set principal directions such as developing and utilizing the knowledge and skills of the country's human capital, effectively exploiting land resources, and preparing and implementing environment and ecosystem-compatible rural development packages. Market-led agricultural development is also promoted, improving the rural financial systems and encouraging the private sector to invest in agricultural development. Finally, policies seek to strengthen other non-agricultural, rural-based economic activities.

On SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), the maternal mortality rate (per 100,000 live births) was 401 by 2017. Goal 3 is to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all ages. The neonatal mortality rate (per 1,000 live births) had dropped to 27 by 2020 (Jeffrey et al., 2022). The government has worked hard to provide all

Ethiopians access to public health and education, clean water, housing, food, and social security. Although no independent reports, such as civil society or institutions, critique or validate the government reports, the health sector has faced severe challenges for four years.

On SDG 5 (Gender Equality), women's seats in the national parliament are 195 out of the 470 members, which is 35.65%. At the same time, women were 47.6% of those in ministerial positions in 2019. To achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, the main objective of the women's policy is to create an environment that enables women to participate at all levels in economic, social, and political activities. The national and sectoral policies, strategies, plans, and programs provide for the promotion of the rights and benefits of women. Fostering the participation of women and youth is of utmost importance. The national and sectoral policies, strategies, plans, and programs have provisions for promoting the rights and benefits of women.

SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure), the score (on a scale of 0 to 100, with 0 being the worst and 100 being the best) was 46.8 by 2017. They build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation. For example, the length of all-weather roads has increased to 113,067 km. In contrast, railway infrastructure development is being expedited following policy directions to expand passenger freight transport.

Goal 14 is to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development; however, Ethiopia is landlocked and has no territorial link with oceans, seas, and marine resources. It has water bodies like lakes and rivers. Therefore, the government has continued to implement Goal 14 in its context as the highest capacity, but against this background, it is still off-track in meeting the 2030 Global Agenda (Banerjee, 2022).

Like most GHA countries, Ethiopia is making progress on the SDG on quality education, where it has over 80% of school enrollment. The above SDGs require special attention if Ethiopia hopes to meet the 2030 Global Agenda. Given the above data, Ethiopia is ranked 128 out of 163 countries in the world as far as meeting the 2030 agenda is concerned, according to the *Sustainable Development Report 2022* (Jeffrey et al., 2022).

## Uganda

In line with the post-2015 development agenda, the Ugandan Parliamentary Forum on Millennium Development Goals was changed to Uganda Parliamentary Forum on Sustainable Development Goals to fast-track the achievement of the 2030 World Agenda. The seventeen Sustainable Development Goals are new to the majority of Ugandans. Members of the 10th

Parliament passed a resolution to reaffirm the role of parliament in implementing Sustainable Development Goals.

Having mainstreamed the SDGs in their development plan draft as early as the beginning of 2015, the implementation of the second National Development Plan: 2015/16–2019/20) started in July 2015, 2 months ahead of the official adoption of the 2030 Agenda. The NDPII is part of the comprehensive National Development Planning Framework and is being implemented through the National Vision 2040 and 5-year National Development plan. By implication, Uganda began implementing the 2030 Agenda ahead of the rest of the world (UNDP, 2018). By 2016, the NDPII was aligned with 76% of the SDGs, fully integrating these nine SDGs 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, and 13 (Ibrahim, 2019).

Through its national development plan incorporation with Agendas 2030 and A.U. 2063, Uganda has submitted its second VNR in the HLPF 2020. Government mechanisms have been institutionalized at the national level to promote awareness and improve the bureaucracy's capacities in their implementation (Uganda, UGANDA VISION 2040, 2017). Despite the political sensitivity and difficult measurability, Uganda has data on SDG 16. There are best practices of inclusive measures by Uganda, such as sharing the data on government expenditures as a proportion of the original approved budget by sector from 2005 to 2016. These are captured in the VNR reports and the U.N. SDGs database (UGANDA, 2020). Uganda has developed indicators to offer a space for citizens to express their opinions on public services, such as education, health, and other services. About 66% of the population is satisfied with local government services. Uganda ranks highly in the Open Budget Index as one of the most transparent budgets in Africa (ISDC, 2020).

Uganda showed its early adoption and commitment to implementing the Rio Declaration, known as 'Agenda 21', and its outcomes, such as the Rio-environmental conventions. Uganda adopted at the early stage of the Millennium Development Goals. Uganda relocated its development approaches toward its achievements. Commitment to sustainable development (S.D.) strategies is further proven by Uganda's operation and continued participation in international and regional progressions on sustainable development. These include the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), the Commission for Sustainable Development (CSD), Rio Conventions, and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) Environment Action Plan, and the Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP).

The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for the fiscal year 2009/10 was about US\$17 billion, with agriculture (crops, livestock, forestry, and fishing) accounting for nearly 24% of the total GDP. In 2009, it was estimated that nearly 25% of Ugandans lived below the national poverty line,

with rural poverty currently at about 34% and urban poverty at 14% (UBOS, 2011). Beyond the localization agenda, it is common knowledge that the SDG "war" will be won or lost in the leadership arena. Therefore, the SDGs will be achieved, and the countries will thrive with decisive, citizen-based, and inclusive leadership (Uganda, Voluntary National Review Report). On the implementation of the 2030 Agenda For (Sustainable Development, (CSPDD) 2021). Therefore, the SDG Index and Dashboards are concerned; Uganda is ranked 136 out of 163 world countries to meet the 2030 Global Agenda according to the 2022 world report. This shows that it is off-track, and therefore, there is a need for the government to fast-track socio-economic and political reforms (Jeffrey et al., 2022).

## Djibouti

Djibouti Vision 2035 aims to make the country a trade hub, such as logistics and finance in the Greater Horn of Africa. A diversified economy and growing acceleration result in sustainable economic development and poverty reduction in a peaceful environment. The first development plan of the "Accelerated Growth and Employment Promotion Strategy," implemented from 2015 to 2019, was not produced as a comprehensive achievement report. However, the VNR report mentioned that it was achieved and created more jobs and long-term development programs. They were followed by the "Inclusion, Connectivity, and Institutions (ICI) plan" from 2020-2024, which seems to be fully aligned with the sustainable development goals (Djibouti, 2022).

Regarding SDG 1 (No Poverty), Djibouti's headcount ratio at \$1.9 per day was 13.9% by 2020. The population living below the national poverty line was 21.1% by 2017. Moreover, the population covered by social protection was 35.7% by 2012. Concerning SDG 2 (Zero hunger), the prevalence of undernourishment was 18.9% by 2017. On SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), the maternal mortality rate, for example, was 248 (per 100,000 live births) by 2017. On SDG 4 (Quality Education), the net primary enrollment rate was 66.5% by 2019 (Aheisibwe, 2020).

Concerning SDG 5 (Gender Equality), 26.2% of seats in the national parliament were held by women by 2020, and women held 10.0% of ministerial positions by 2019. On SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), 75.6% of the population was using at least essential drinking water services by 2017, 63.6% was using at least vital sanitation services by 2017, while 0.0% was anthropogenic wastewater was receiving treatment by 2018. Regarding SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy), 60.2% of the population had access to electricity by 2017, while the 11.55% of the population had access to clean fuels and technology for cooking by 2016, and renewable energy consumption was 14.5% of total energy consumption by

2017 (Benin, 2016).

The above statistics clearly show that Djibouti is far from showing signs of meeting the 2030 Agenda. However, there are strategies put in place through its National Development Plans that touch on the alignment to the A.U. 2063, Vision 2030, and, subsequently, the SDGs. Achievement of these goals will require resources and concerted effort from the government, civil society organizations, the private sector, and donors, as well as formidable and feasible strategies to bring the country back on the SDGs track. Djibouti is ranked 155 out of 163 world countries as far as meeting the 2030 agenda is concerned, according to the *Sustainable Development Report in 2022*. This position is not promising, hence pulling up the socks for the country (Jeffrey et al., 2022).

### Somalia

Somalia is ranked poorly according to the *Sustainable Development Report 2022*. It is ranked 160 out of 163 countries as far as meeting the 2030 global agenda is concerned (Jeffrey et al., 2022). Somalia has made minimal progress on SDG 1 (No Poverty); the poverty headcount ratio at \$ 1.90/day was 69% in 2017. VNR report 2022, Somalia mentioned only one intervention project named "Social Protection and disaster risk management" funded by external donors, also not show how this project improved the lives of the poor. On SDG 2 (Zero hunger), the rate of undernourishment was 2% in 2009, and cereal yield (tonnes per hectare of harvested land) was 0.5 in 2017. On SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), the maternal mortality rate (per 100,000 live births) was 829 in 2017. There is no data on SDG 4 (Quality Education). On SDG 5 (Gender Equity), 24% of seats in the national parliament were held by women in 2020, while 14.8% of ministerial positions were held by women in 2019. On SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), the proportion of the population using at least essential drinking water services was 52.4% in 2017, while the proportion of the population using at least essential sanitation services was 38.3% in 2017 (ANDP, 2020).

On SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy) 32.9% of the population had access to electricity in 2017 and 2.3% had access to clean fuels and technology for cooking in 2016. Renewable energy consumption was 94.9% in 2017. There is no data on SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) or the GDP growth per capita 5-year average. SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure), the infrastructure score (on a scale of 0 to 100, with 0 being the worst and 100 being the best) was 9.9 in 2017. The score for the quality of trade and transport-related infrastructure (on a scale of 1 to 5, with one being the worst and five being the best) was 1.8 in 2018 (Eve Mothe, 2018).

Regarding SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and

Communities), the proportion of the urban population living in slums was 73.6% in 2016, and the proportion with access to the improved piped water source was 75.4% in 2017. Considering the above statistics, Somalia, given its perennial conflict, will not be able to meet the 2030 Agenda. This is evidenced by the lack of VNR submitted to the U.N. for progress assessment.

### DISCUSSION

This study confirmed mild progress registered in the GHA region regarding socio-development, peace and security, and agriculture. For example, concerning SDG 4 (Quality Education), Kenya is on track, with a net primary enrollment rate of 80.0% in 2012 and a mean duration of schooling (in years) of 6.5 in 2017. Ethiopia recorded a net primary enrollment rate of 84.6% in 2015, and Djibouti recorded a net primary enrollment rate of 66.5% in 2019. Djibouti has made an effort to progress toward SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation); 75.6% of the population was using at least essential drinking water services by 2017, and 63.6% of the population was using at least essential sanitation services in 2017. Regarding Kenya's progress on SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy), 63% of the population had access to electricity in 2017, and 13.4% had access to clean fuels and technology for cooking in 2016. Renewable energy consumption was 71.8% in 2017, while consumer electricity affordability (*on a scale of 0 to 100, with 0 being the worst and 100 being the best*) was 67 in 2017. Ethiopia's percentage of renewable energy consumption in total final energy consumption was 89.8% by 2017. Consumer electricity affordability (*with one being the worst and 100 being the best*) was rated 97 in 2017.

Development, therefore, is built on the essential foundation of peace and integration. By pursuing the development plans, these countries are generally on the A.U. Agenda 2063 and SDGs 2030, despite facing challenges and being far behind in achieving the latter. Climate change has negated achievements gained from 2016 to 2019, but more significantly, the COVID-19 pandemic devastated GHA, with the situation made worse by the Russia-Ukraine war. This disaster led to the diversion of development funds to mitigate health challenges caused by the pandemic and its aftermath (Group, 2018). Despite the regional challenges, social indicators show some positive development in line with the SDGs, but such development is minimal. For instance, the region's countries have declined in infant mortality, gender inequality, and poverty. Also, between 2012 and 2019, malnutrition declined from 32 to 29%, respectively (Homi, 2019).

The poverty rate is still high, despite the marginal decline from 32% in 2012 to 29% in 2017, as illustrated in the IGAD State of the Region Report (IGAD, 2020). In this region, 30% of vulnerable urban populations have



been covered by IGAD support through socio-protection programs. The number of people exposed to food insecurity has declined, though not significantly, to about 10% in 2019 (Daniel, 2020).

In conclusion, some countries have tried to remain on track to accomplish one or two of the SDGs, but it remains a tall order for them to have achieved all seventeen SDGs by the end of 2030. The negative impacts of COVID-19, locust infestations, and excessive flooding in 2020, followed by the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine, have overturned progress in food security. The region fails to remain on track regarding achieving the SDGs because the natural resources are underutilized, and its dependence on agriculture is environmentally vulnerable. Any trade is in the form of exporting raw materials with minimal value addition, fetching the region less foreign exchange. This is seen in the underutilization of fisheries, minerals, and other environmental resources, and any utilization witnessed is not sustainable. As a result, trade, jobs, and wealth creation have deteriorated considerably (GUSTAFSON, 2019).

Regional and continental constraints also exist on the domestication of the A.U. agenda and SDG strategies and frameworks. Whatever individual countries envisaged in achieving the SDGs remains unimplemented because of inadequate national capacities and leadership deficiency. Most countries that lack capacities are still reeling or emerging from internal conflict. Agricultural production and economic growth in the region depend on the land and the environment (UNDP, 2020). Therefore, land degradation and food insecurity have adversely contributed to food insecurity, famine, and poverty, cumulatively taking these countries off track. Without sustainable management of natural resources and environmental protection, it will be a pipe dream for the region to achieve the SDGs by the end of 2030. The region will be challenged to realize peace and security and eradicate poverty if proper leadership is on desks that envisage beyond the minor division.

Achieving gender equality is still far from being realized. Tenure insecurity for women and youth, pastoralists, and other vulnerable groups has stifled sustainable development. Inequality in access to education, information, credit, land, employment, policy inputs, and decision-making power are behind pervasive gender disparities in the region. There is a disparity in the status of women relative to men in terms of sociopolitical and economic aspects. Because of gender-based inequalities in access to and ownership of economic factors of production, women are not fully participating in economic development. Therefore, some cultures discourage women and youth from investing entirely in land and natural resources (WHO, 2020).

Regarding SDGs touching on climate, the countries generally are off-track because of climate variability and changes that are characterized by the region. This region

is vulnerable to dry spells, floods, and droughts that occur and recur, contributing to land degradation and food insecurity. This leads to human, crop, and livestock diseases that usher in deaths; land degradation lowers productivity.

The transport costs between and within regional countries are very high because of the highly fragmented markets and poor infrastructure. Market-based policies in most countries are minimally implemented, leading to a paltry 5% of intra-regional trade. The COVID-19 pandemic weight clearly shows that this region will not have achieved the 17 SDGs by the end of 2030. This is because SDG 1 (End Extreme Poverty), for instance, will not be achieved, given that before the pandemic, the 2030 poverty forecast was 26%, far from achieving the 2030 objective. The new forecast after the pandemic shows over 480 million impoverished people in 2030. The pandemic has disrupted SDG 2 (Zero hunger), affecting the entire agri-food supply chain. Movement restrictions and lockdowns across borders have contributed to and even worsened food insecurity in the GHA.

Another SDG that has become a victim of the pandemic is SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being). Health has been affected viciously. By the end of 2020, the entire continent had recorded 4,000 deaths. SDG 4 (Quality Education for All) has been very much affected in that closure of learning institutions has changed the academic calendar where there is pressure on the institutions for double intake because of delays. It will be a long time before the impact of these interruptions in learning is rectified (Bernick et al., 2021). According to UNESCO, an estimated 1.2 million learners worldwide (68.5% of total enrolled learners) are out of school due to measures enacted to stop the spread of the pandemic. Some students have lost the family breadwinners who would have paid for their education. SDG 5 (Gender Equality) suffered the wrath of the pandemic in a way that left women and girls significantly more affected than men. This crisis is pushing the global economy into a recession that will take a while to normalize (Bennett, 2016).

During the pandemic, washing hands frequently with soap under running water was the main precaution to counter the spread of COVID-19; hence SDG 6 (Water and Sanitation) was affected adversely. The inadequate primary access to clean water has been a formidable challenge for GHA. In Sub-Saharan Africa, about 63% of the people face challenges accessing essential water. Therefore, there are deepening inequalities around this goal as we head toward 2030.

Economic growth was not good even before the pandemic, remaining below the SDG 8 (Decent Work) target; hence, with the recession, there has been a further move away from the target. With the closure of many businesses in industries such as tourism, travel, services, and manufacturing, job security is in jeopardy. About 250 million Africans in informal urban employment have been affected, making the situation worse than

before the COVID-19 pandemic. As stated by UNECA, firms and businesses in African cities are at high risk of COVID-19-related effects, the small and medium enterprises (SMEs) account for 80% of employment in Africa and could face bankruptcy (UNECA, 2020).

GHA is performing dismally on SDG 10 (Reduce Inequality) due to economic shocks from COVID-19 that have exacerbated inequalities in all countries, as we have seen above, especially concerning SDGs 2, 4, 5, and 6. Refugees and migrants, as vulnerable groups, face and will continue to face disproportionate adverse health and economic impacts. This is because the social safety nets for those in the lower-income brackets are missing; they are not even on the agenda of respective governments (Forje, 2020).

Despite the assistance from the UN-led humanitarian response, the IMF and World Bank financial support, and even debt service suspension by the G20 for the poorest countries, the financial gap is still around \$44 billion out of the estimated \$114 billion that is required to fight against COVID-19. Therefore, it has drastically affected the achievement of SDG 17 (Global Partnerships) (Gregosz, 2020).

Additional to the above challenges, there are specific factors that this paper brings out as to why GHA is lagging in achieving the 2030 Global Agenda. GHA countries are characterized by poor leadership and governance, as regional leaders failed to draw common grounds for development orientations. Even though the forum of heads of state at IGAD region failed to orientate their respective populations and set common regional core values with common aspirations to fast-track development aspects, this is happening because member states do not autonomously empower IGAD to invest correctly in the regional organization. Therefore, even with enormous resources, if there is poor leadership and less investment in human capital, then resources are not prudently allocated. Inter and intra-conflict in the GHA, there is very little in terms of development in the specific SDGs. It is proven that no investors are willing to risk investing where there is conflict. Most countries, such as Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan, and Uganda, are embroiled in intrastate or interstate conflicts.

IGAD's initial mandate was to reduce drought in the GHA through environmental disciplines in various GHA countries. The recurrence of drought every four years threatens food security and directly or indirectly affects several SDGs. This is because there is a lack of common drought prevention and mitigation strategies and resilience programs characterized by coping mechanisms, leaving the GHA vulnerable to climatic changes.

Locust invasion has been witnessed in the last four years, as this has left a devastating effect on the crops and vegetation. Because of this, the crop yield has been low, leading to severe food insecurity and general development. This is since revenue that would have been channeled to development projects is diverted and redeployed to food importation, characterized by high

prices creating an imbalance of payments. Evidence shows that rich countries generate international spillovers, notably through unsustainable consumption. There is a generation of negative socio-economic and environmental spillovers, including through unsustainable trade and supply chains. For example, European Union has called for "zero tolerance" of child labor and has proposed using trade to export European values worldwide (Jeffrey et al., 2022).

## Conclusion

The Greater Horn of Africa region is off-track on most of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals for internal and external details. The region will only be able to get back on track to achieving the SDGs if they wisely adhere to their national plans by fully aligning them with the 2030 global agenda. They lack the goodwill to fast-track the move toward the SDGs.

They also lack resources to pump into the noble and robust sessional papers and socio-economic and political plans they have put in place.

These countries need external support from resources to experts to guide and help them on this journey. Without such support, the region may not be able to meet the targets of the sustainable development goals by 2030, which calls for a concerted effort by individual countries and the regional block under the auspices of IGAD. The accurate picture is that given the devastating and ongoing negative impacts of COVID-19 and now Russia-Ukraine, most of the region's economies are not on the path of growth; instead, they are on a path of decline. Since most countries allocated a large number to address health which would otherwise have been used for development, it will take a while before the region recovers from the aftermath of the COVID-19 effect. Therefore, given the myriad of setbacks, the region would require external and internal goodwill and collaborative leadership to spring up again.

The A.U. Agenda 2063 and SDGs are mutually supportive and coherent. There are some differences, but they do not affect how either entity implements its agenda. Both agendas can be made to work together, so there is no reason to worry about their complementarity. This is because when negotiations started on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, Africa developed a common African position on the issue. This specific position is accommodated mainly in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, except for certain aspects, which the A.U. has now included in Agenda 2063. The health systems have been made worse with the onset of COVID-19, which weighed down the already unstable healthcare systems. Thus, death rates are higher for women of children bearing age and children under five, who face the same menace.

However, despite the underperformance detailed above, there is hope given that countries' respective National



Development Plans and Vision 2030 are on course. Yes, there are chronic challenges, but the region is hopeful that by 2030, it will be very much on track to meet the 2030 Global Agenda. Examining the above statistics, it is evident that GHA is lagging and is off-track in terms of poverty and hunger eradication. Most of its population still lives below the poverty line, struggling daily to make ends meet. This is because the production level is below average; as a result, job creation is deficient, resulting in lower living standards due to low family disposable incomes.

### Recommendations

- 1) The region can overcome all the existing challenges by building practical cooperation and collaboration between the states, such as building a robust regional coordination and integration mechanism with regional core values that can unite the minds of the mass society into common good aspirations. This will minimize the difference between the states and societies by creating a synergy of unity and collective prosperity.
- 2) The environment and natural resources are the bedrock of building sustainable development. Sustainable natural resources management and environmental protection are critical pillars in realizing security, peace, and poverty eradication.
- 3) The region needs to exploit transboundary natural resources, such as forests, and tap mineral resource potential by value addition before export to earn substantial foreign exchange; part of those earnings can then be used in financing development projects in respective countries.
- 4) Achievement of the sustainable development goals remains a mirage, given the high population growth rates, which put pressure on the available resources, strain the carrying capacity, and contribute to youth unemployment. The increased youthful population is not optimally utilized, exacerbating youth unemployment in the long run, nor is it effectively harnessed for development. The drastic effects of poverty, climate change, gender inequalities, insecurity, and weak economic bases in respective countries further aggravate unemployment.
- 5) In addition, the private sector and the youth have low access to financial services, which could be used to finance investments, bringing about high production and job creation that could foster economic growth. Therefore, the government and private sector involvement in funding youth-related programs is meager.
- 6) The coming into effect of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), which will rationalize and harmonize trade and investment protocols and agreements, is likely to contribute significantly not only to Africa's economic development as a whole but also to, more importantly, to the GHA. This would motivate and trigger the development impetus needed for sustainable development. This will turn around trade and,

subsequently, the economies of the African countries since AfCFTA emphasizes the reduction of tariffs and non-tariff barriers and facilitates the free movement of people and labor, right of residence, right of establishment, and investment. Despite its extensive promotion by the A.U. leadership, some experts have cautioned against going forward with AfCFTA, yet expectations remain high. There are several challenges on the road ahead.

### CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

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