



## Delivering SDGs in Africa Amidst COVID-19 (Part 1 of 4)

### Policy Recommendations

- 1** African governments and their development partners must create an environment that promotes the industry to engender employment opportunities and job creation.
- 2** African stakeholders must address the root causes of ethno-religious violence and insurgency.
- 3** African governments need to implement the African Continental Free Trade Agreement vigorously.
- 4** African government and their development partners need to invest massively in health-care.

Nextier SPD Policy Weekly provides an analysis of topical conflict, security, and development issues and proposes recommendations to address them. It is a publication of Nextier SPD.

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### Background

Confronted by a bleak future as a result of escalating poverty, hunger, inequality, conflicts, diseases and other debilitating conditions, the 193 countries of the world came up with an action plan known as the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs) in 2015. The SDGs consist of 17 goals that aim to address the key human challenges within fifteen years (2015-2030). Considering the heightened security threat faced by several millions of people in the world, the SDGs are a laudable project. However, the project seems overly ambitious, considering the severity of the challenges it seeks to address within a short time-frame.

The poor performance profile of the predecessor [Millennium Development Goals](#) (MDGs); and the fragile nature of institutions across a number of the low-income countries where the SDGs are being implemented. Against this backdrop, this edition of **Nextier SPD Policy Weekly** examines the challenges of how to 'End Extreme Poverty in All Forms by 2030' in Africa.

### COVID-19 Scenarios

The first case of COVID-19 on the African continent was reported on 14 February 2020. As of 13 May 2020, the deadly disease had been reported in all 54 countries of the continent. However, the [infection rate](#) in Africa is not as high as the rates in Europe and other parts of the world. Countries with the highest average number of new cases per capita on the continent include Morocco, Libya, Tunisia, Cape Verde, and Botswana. After a lull since mid-July, the number of daily new cases has been rising gradually in recent weeks. In October, there was an average increase of [8% in new cases each](#) week. The infection rate has increased by 13% in the week up to 8 November, according to the Africa [Centre for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC) and the World Health Organisation (WHO).

Ten countries - South Africa, Morocco, Ethiopia, Egypt, Kenya, Nigeria, Cameroon, Rwanda, Uganda and Ghana - account for about [75%](#) of the total tests conducted on the

continent. As at 8 November, South Africa had done just over 84 tests per 1,000 persons, while Nigeria had carried out only three tests per 1,000 as of 7 November. In contrast, more than 450 tests had been done in the UK and 475 in the US by 5 November. The mortality rate of COVID-19 pandemic has been low in Africa despite its fragile health infrastructure compared with other parts of the world. The WHO traces this low death rate to the relatively young population in Africa where more than [60% of persons are below the age of 25](#). Indeed, COVID-19 is known to have a higher mortality rate among older persons and those afflicted by such health problems as obesity and type 2 diabetes which is also uncommon in Africa. It is also believed that expertise in epidemic control and low travel and outdoor living also account for Africa's coping better with COVID-19.

## A Looming Food Crisis

The COVID-19 pandemic has come at a time when most African societies are already facing enormous challenges of insecurity, inequality, poverty, unemployment, and environmental catastrophes such as drought. Thus, the cost of the crisis will immeasurably undermine the realisation of the SDG of ending extreme poverty on the continent in 2030. It has been estimated that Africa's economy will be between [US\\$349 billion and US\\$643 billion](#) smaller in 2030 compared to the pre-COVID-19 forecast. This situation translates to poverty rates of between [35% and 37%](#) of Africa's total population. Thus, the COVID-19 pandemic is largely going to knock Africa off the 2030 SDG targets, with additional 63.7 million people suffering severe food insecurity. Already, 34 African states are in dire need of food assistance.

There is a likelihood for the situation to be exacerbated by Islamic fundamentalism and insurgency, which is ravaging several parts of the continent (Agbibo, 2017; Agheyisi, 2016). These factors will further reduce government revenues, health expenditure, and undermine African states' debt sustainability capacity. Several African countries are faced with the uprising. For example, in October, Nigeria's economic woes were exacerbated by the "End SARS" protest which swept across most of the cities of Africa's most populous country and largest economy. After nearly a two-week peaceful demonstration, the youth revolt against police brutality was hijacked

by hoodlums who looted and destroyed over five trillion naira worth of private businesses according to [Nigeria Employers' Consultative Association](#).

## Managing the Double Tragedy

Africa needs to explore several policy options to help her realise the sustainable development goal of ending extreme poverty by 2030. Some of the options include:

1. African governments and their development partners must create an environment that promotes the industry to engender employment opportunities and job creation for restive youth and other people. One way of doing this is through the acceleration of digitisation of their economies to improve resilience and productivity.
2. African stakeholders must address the root causes of ethno-religious violence and insurgency to mitigate the wanton destruction of lives and investments, which further exacerbate poverty, inequality and conflicts.
3. African governments need to implement the African Continental Free Trade Agreement vigorously. This situation will not only lead to the diversification of their economies but will also promote trade within the African region.
4. African government and their development partners need to invest massively in health-care to ensure speedy diagnosis and treatment of diseases including Malaria, Ebola, HIV/Aids and COVID-19 pandemic. One way of ensuring this is through medical research collaboration among African states.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, extreme poverty remains a massive threat to many Africans despite the ongoing implementation of the SDGs. To effectively alleviate poverty on the African continent, some Africa-specific challenges need to be addressed. These mechanisms include de-risking business, promotion of economic diversification, and deployment of early warning action against insurgent violence. Also, investment in health-care to withstand outbreaks of epidemics and effective implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement are very important.

## References

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- Agheyisi, E. J. (2016). Terrorised Places and Spaces: The Geographical Dimensions of African Terrorism. African Geographical Review. 36(3):305-319