Chapter 3
Sustainable Development Goals and Their Implication on Economic Growth:
An East African Perspective

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ABSTRACT

The MDGs have been criticised for being too narrow and leaving out many people and their needs, like mental health. Likewise, not all MDGs were implemented successfully in all countries. Some countries implemented one or two MDGs of their choice and left others untouched, others partially implemented all MDGs. It was on this basis that the UN member states met in Rio to frame the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). However, in order for the SDGs to address systemic challenges across economic, social, and ecological dimensions of sustainable development they require appropriate institutional support to effectively integrate them into institutions and practices, to coordinate activities, and to mobilize resources for implementation. Rising income inequality negatively impacts economic growth and is threatening sustainable development of East African Community (EAC) member states. Since, the SDGs are many, it is recommended that, East African Member states should adopt a targeted approach in implementing the SDGs and focus on the smallholder farming sector.

INTRODUCTION

The East African Community (EAC) is an organisation of six countries which include Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi and South Sudan. The organisation was founded originally in 1967, collapsed in 1977, and revived on 7 July 2000 (EAC, 2009). It is headquartered in Arusha, Tanzania. In 2008, after negotiations with the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the EAC agreed to an expanded free trade area including the member states of all three organisations. The EAC is an integral part of the African Economic Commu-

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-3247-7.ch003

nity. The EAC is a potential precursor to the establishment of the East African Federation, a proposed federation of its members into a single sovereign state. In 2010, the EAC launched its own common market for goods, labour, and capital within the region, with the goal of creating a common currency and eventually a full political federation (Reuters Africa, 2010). In 2013 a protocol was signed outlining their plans for launching a monetary union within 10 years.

In writing this article key literature in SDGs and economic growth were searched from various websites and then content analysed. They include articles produced by the international organisations including the UN, UN affiliate organisations (UNDP, World Health Organisation, FAO, UNICEF, Sustainable Development Goals Fund, UN Women, UN Forum on Business and Human Rights, etc.). Others are: the IMF, the Word Bank, Country specific SDGs articles, international NGOs (such as the Overseas Development Institute (ODI), Business Fights Poverty, Global Policy Forum (GPF), the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN), European Sustainable Development Network (ESDN), Stakeholder Forum, International Council for Science (ICSU), International Social Science Council (ISSC)) and research based papers.

This article contributes to a discussion on the linkages between SGDs and economic growth and outlines key strategies that may be applied by the Governments within East African Community member States to implement successfully the SDGs. In so doing the article addresses two key questions: "To what extent do the SDGs address issues of economic growth?" What are the strategies that could be used by the East African Countries to implement successfully the SGDs and avoid falling into the problem of unfinished business of the MDGs?

Background Information on Sustainable Development Goals

Prior to establishment of the SDGs all EAC member states were implementing the MDGs. Now that the SDGs have taken the place left by the MDGs the countries are required to implement the SDGs. The SDGs are universal set of goals, targets and indicators that UN member states will use to frame their agenda and political policies over the next 15 years (IMF, 2015). The SDGs follow and expand on the millennium development goals (MDGs), which were agreed by governments in 2001 and were implemented for 15 years until 2015 when they expired. The eight MDGs aimed to: (1) reduce poverty and hunger; (2) achieve universal education; (3) promote gender equality; (4) reduce child and maternal deaths; (5) combat HIV, (6) malaria and other diseases; (7) ensure environmental sustainability; and (8) develop global partnerships.

The world has made significant progress in achieving many of the Goals. Between 1990 and 2002 average overall incomes increased by approximately 21%. The number of people in extreme poverty declined by an estimated 130 million. Child mortality rates fell from 103 deaths per 1,000 live births a year to 88. Life expectancy rose from 63 years to nearly 65 years. An additional 8% of the developing world's people received access to water. And an additional 15% acquired access to improved sanitation services (Millennium Project, 2016). Despite this, progress has been far from uniform across the world-or across the Goals. There are huge disparities across and within countries. Within countries, poverty is greatest for rural areas, though urban poverty is also extensive, growing, and underreported by traditional indicators.

Furthermore, the MDGs failed to consider the root causes of poverty and overlooked gender inequality as well as the holistic nature of development (UN, 2015). The goals made no mention of human rights and did not specifically address economic development. While the MDGs, in theory, applied to