

# **Eradicating Poverty for Sustainable Development in Africa**

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**Kariuki Muigua**

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## **Eradicating Poverty for Sustainable Development in Africa**

**Kariuki Muigua\***

### **Abstract**

*Poverty is a major problem in Africa especially in the Sub Saharan region. Africa contains the largest remaining share of global extreme poverty with approximately 400 million Africans still living in extreme poverty. Poverty in Africa results in hunger, epidemics of disease such as malaria, cholera, AIDS and high infant death rates, and a lowering of the overall living standards in the African countries. Despite efforts being made towards tackling poverty in Africa, high levels of poverty are still present in many African countries especially in the Sub Saharan region. The paper argues a case for eradicating poverty in Africa. It posits that poverty is a major hindrance towards the achievement of Sustainable Development in Africa. It examines the causes and effects of poverty in Africa. The paper further examines the efficacy of some of the measures adopted towards eradicating poverty in Africa. It also offers suggestions towards eradicating poverty for Sustainable Development in Africa.*

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## **1.0 Introduction**

Poverty is commonly understood as the state of lack of income or productive resources to sustain livelihoods<sup>1</sup>. It has also been defined as a human condition where people do not have adequate access to their fundamental needs such as income, food, clothing, shelter, health care, security, education<sup>2</sup>. It has been asserted that the term poverty entails several clusters of meanings including *income poverty* which measures and compares the levels of income between individuals; *material lack or want* which includes lack of or little wealth and lack or low quality of other assets such as shelter, clothing, furniture, personal means of transport, radios or television and poor access to services; and *capability deprivation* which includes but goes beyond material lack or want to include human capabilities, for example skills and physical abilities, and also self-respect in society<sup>3</sup>. According to the World Bank, extreme poverty is measured as the number of people living on less than \$1.90 per day<sup>4</sup>.

It has rightly been argued that poverty is not merely an economic issue<sup>5</sup>. Rather, it is a multifaceted phenomenon that comprises a lack of both income opportunities and basic capabilities to live in dignity<sup>6</sup>. According to the United Nations, poverty entails more than the lack of income and productive resources to ensure sustainable livelihoods<sup>7</sup>. It points out that the manifestations of poverty include hunger and malnutrition, limited access to education and other basic services, social discrimination and exclusion as well

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<sup>1</sup> Regmi. M., 'Preventing Poverty is a Legal Obligation.' Available at <https://apolitical.co/solution-articles/en/poverty-is-a-human-rights-violation> (Accessed on 24/11/2023)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> United Nations Development Programme., 'What is Poverty? Concepts and Measures.' Available at <https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/bitstream/handle/20.500.12413/120/rc145.pdf?s> (Accessed on 24/11/2023)

<sup>4</sup> The World Bank Group., 'Understanding Poverty.' Available at <https://www.worldbank.org/en/understanding-poverty> (Accessed on 24/11/2023)

<sup>5</sup> Regmi. M., 'Preventing Poverty is a Legal Obligation.' Op Cit

<sup>6</sup> Ibid

<sup>7</sup> United Nations., 'Poverty Eradication.' Available at <https://www.un.org/development/desa/socialperspectiveondevelopment/issues/poverty-eradication.html#:~:text=The%20World%20Social%20Summit%20identified,resources%2C%20including%20credit%2C%20education%20and> (Accessed on 24/11/2023)

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as the lack of participation in decision-making<sup>8</sup>. The United Nations further observes that various social groups bear disproportionate burden and levels of poverty<sup>9</sup>. It has been asserted that for those living in poverty, many human rights are out of reach<sup>10</sup>. Among many other deprivations, they often lack access to education, health services, safe drinking water and basic sanitation<sup>11</sup>. They are often excluded from participating meaningfully in the political process and prevented from seeking justice for violations of their human rights<sup>12</sup>. As a result, it has been argued that the view that poverty is a shortage of income should be discarded in favour of an approach that perceives poverty as ‘unfreedoms’ of various sorts: the lack of freedom to achieve even minimally satisfactory living conditions<sup>13</sup>. This is because while low income can contribute to poverty, lack of schooling facilities, absence of health facilities, unavailability of medicines, the suppression of women, hazardous environmental features and lack of jobs do also play a major role in poverty<sup>14</sup>. Therefore as long as these factors exist, then poverty cannot be said to have been eliminated despite increase in levels of income<sup>15</sup>. Poverty can therefore be viewed as a socio-economic phenomenon<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid

<sup>9</sup> Ibid

<sup>10</sup> United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights., ‘About Extreme Poverty and Human Rights.’ Available at <https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-poverty/about-extreme-poverty-and-human-rights> (Accessed on 24/11/2023)

<sup>11</sup> Ibid

<sup>12</sup> Ibid

<sup>13</sup> Green, D., ‘From Poverty to Power: How active citizens and effective states can change the world.’ (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 2012), p. IX (Foreword by Amartya Sen), Rugby, UK: Practical Action Publishing and Oxford: Oxfam International Available at [http://www.oxfamamerica.org/static/media/files/From\\_Poverty\\_to\\_Power\\_2nd\\_Edition.pdf](http://www.oxfamamerica.org/static/media/files/From_Poverty_to_Power_2nd_Edition.pdf) (Accessed on 24/11/2023)

<sup>14</sup> Muigua, K., ‘Nurturing Our Environment for Sustainable Development.’, Glenwood Publishers, Nairobi, 2016.

<sup>15</sup> Muigua, K., ‘Eradicating Poverty for Inclusive Development in Kenya.’ Available at <https://kmco.co.ke/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Eradicating-Poverty-for-Inclusive-Development-in-Kenya-25th-December-2020-Kariuki-Muigua.pdf> (Accessed on 24/11/2023)

<sup>16</sup> Ibid

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It has been rightly observed that the eradication of extreme poverty should not be seen as a question of charity, but as a pressing human rights issue<sup>17</sup>. The persistence of poverty in countries that can afford to eliminate it amounts to a clear violation of fundamental human rights<sup>18</sup>. The United Nations identifies poverty eradication as an ethical, social, political and economic imperative of mankind and calls upon governments to address the root causes of poverty, provide for basic needs for all and ensure that the poor have access to productive resources, including credit, education and training<sup>19</sup>. According to the United Nations, a social perspective on development requires addressing poverty in all its dimensions<sup>20</sup>.

Eradicating poverty is at the heart of Sustainable Development. The concept of Sustainable Development has been defined as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs<sup>21</sup>. It seeks to strike a balance between environmental protection, economic development and social progress<sup>22</sup>. It has rightly been pointed out that at the heart of the concept of Sustainable Development is the fulfillment of the basic needs of the world's poor without compromising the capacity of the environment to provide similar benefits for future generations<sup>23</sup>. Sustainable development therefore as defined in the *Brundtland Commission Report*, includes human development<sup>24</sup>. It has been argued that one of the

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<sup>17</sup> United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights., 'About Extreme Poverty and Human Rights.' Op Cit

<sup>18</sup> Ibid

<sup>19</sup> United Nations., 'Poverty Eradication.' Op Cit

<sup>20</sup> Ibid

<sup>21</sup> World Commission on Environment and Development., 'Our Common Future.' Oxford, (Oxford University Press, 1987)

<sup>22</sup> Fitzmaurice. M., 'The Principle of Sustainable Development in International Development Law.' *International Sustainable Development Law.*, Vol 1

<sup>23</sup> Mbote. P.K., 'Environmental Justice and Sustainable Development: Integrating Local Communities in Environmental Management.' Available at <http://erepository.uonbi.ac.ke/handle/11295/41149> (Accessed on 24/11/2023)

<sup>24</sup> Costantini, V. & Monni, S., 'Measuring Human and Sustainable Development: an integrated approach for European Countries.' Available at [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/24125340\\_Measuring\\_human\\_and\\_Sustainable\\_Development\\_An\\_Integrated\\_Approach\\_for\\_European\\_Countries](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/24125340_Measuring_human_and_Sustainable_Development_An_Integrated_Approach_for_European_Countries) (Accessed on 24/11/2023)

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ways of achieving human development which empowers people, both men and women, is addressing poverty in order to empower people to contribute positively towards national development with dignity, without solely relying on the Government to do so<sup>25</sup>.

The *United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*<sup>26</sup> acknowledges that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for Sustainable Development. The 2030 Agenda sets out the global determination to end poverty in all its forms and dimensions and ensure that all human beings can fulfill their potential in dignity and equality and in a healthy environment<sup>27</sup>. Sustainable Development Goal 1 aims to end poverty in all its forms everywhere in the world<sup>28</sup>. SDG 1 sets out several targets towards eradicating poverty by 2030 which include reducing at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions; implementing nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable; ensuring that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services, including microfinance; building the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations and reducing their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters; ensuring significant mobilization of resources from a variety of sources, including through enhanced development cooperation, in order to provide adequate and predictable means for developing countries, in particular

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<sup>25</sup> Muigua, K., 'Nurturing Our Environment for Sustainable Development.' Op Cit

<sup>26</sup> United Nations., 'Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.' Available at

<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/21252030%20Agenda%20for%20Sustainable%20Development%20web.pdf> (Accessed on 24/11/2023)

<sup>27</sup> Ibid

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, Sustainable Development Goal 1

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least developed countries, to implement programmes and policies to end poverty in all its dimensions; and creating sound policy frameworks at the national, regional and international levels, based on pro-poor and gender-sensitive development strategies, to support accelerated investment in poverty eradication actions<sup>29</sup>. Poverty eradication is therefore a pertinent global concern.

The paper argues a case for eradicating poverty in Africa. It posits that poverty is a major hindrance towards the achievement of Sustainable Development in Africa. It examines the causes and effects of poverty in Africa. The paper further examines the efficacy of some of the measures adopted towards eradicating poverty in Africa. It also offers suggestions towards eradicating poverty for Sustainable Development in Africa.

### **2.0 Poverty in Africa: Causes and Effects**

Poverty is a major problem in Africa. It has been pointed out that Africa contains the largest remaining share of global extreme poverty with approximately 400 million Africans still living in extreme poverty<sup>30</sup>. The World Bank further estimates that about 462 million people in Africa are still living in extreme poverty in 2023<sup>31</sup>. It has also been estimated that Africa has the largest share of extreme poverty rates globally, and contains 23 of the world's poorest 28 countries at extreme poverty rates above 30%<sup>32</sup>. According to the 2023 Global Multidimensional Poverty Index Report, 10 million of the 12 million

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid

<sup>30</sup> Institute for Security Studies., 'Reducing Poverty in Africa: Huge Potential, But More Realistic Goals Needed.' Available at <https://issafrica.org/about-us/press-releases/reducing-poverty-in-africa-huge-potential-but-more-realistic-goals-needed#:~:text=Policies%20that%20may%20boost%20poverty,and%20promote%20progressive%20social%20change> (Accessed on 24/11/2023)

<sup>31</sup> The World Bank Group., 'The World Bank in Africa.' Available at <https://www.worldbank.org/en/region/afr/overview#:~:text=About%20462%20million%20people%20in,has%20expedited%20this%20debt%20surge>. (Accessed on 24/11/2023)

<sup>32</sup> Institute for Security Studies., 'Africa is Losing the Battle Against Extreme Poverty.' Available at <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/africa-is-losing-the-battle-against-extreme-poverty> (Accessed on 24/11/2023)



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poor people with the highest deprivation scores (90–100%) live in Sub Saharan Africa<sup>33</sup>. The report further points out that in Sub-Saharan Africa, poverty affects an average of 49.5 % of the population, but incidences vary widely across countries<sup>34</sup>. It has been observed that Malawi, Niger, and Tanzania have Africa's highest extreme poverty rates based on the \$ 2.15 per day extreme poverty indicator (updated from \$ 1.90 in September 2022)<sup>35</sup>. Although the levels of poverty on the continent are predicted to decrease in the coming years, Africa would remain the poorest region compared to the rest of the world<sup>36</sup>.

Within Africa, most poverty is concentrated in the Sub-Saharan Africa region<sup>37</sup>. It has been pointed out that Central Africa has the highest extreme poverty rate in Africa followed by Southern Africa with rates in Western and Eastern Africa also being significantly high<sup>38</sup>. According to the United Nations Development Programme, in Sub-Saharan Africa the intensity of poverty is particularly serious<sup>39</sup>. The region is home not only to the highest number of poor people but also to the poorest of the poor<sup>40</sup>. On a positive note, it has been pointed out that North Africa met the SDG 1 target of a poverty rate of below 3% in 2019<sup>41</sup>. Further, it has been observed that for many African countries, economic inequality - the unequal distribution of income and opportunity between different groups in society - is most concerning<sup>42</sup>. Even the African countries with the

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<sup>33</sup> United Nations Development Programme., 'Global Multidimensional Poverty Index 2023.' Available at <https://hdr.undp.org/system/files/documents/hdp-document/2023mpireportpdf.pdf> (Accessed on 24/11/2023)

<sup>34</sup> Ibid

<sup>35</sup> Statista., 'African Countries with the Highest Share of Global Population Living Below the Extreme Poverty Line in 2023.' Available at <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1228553/extreme-poverty-as-share-of-global-population-in-africa-by-country/> (Accessed on 24/11/2023)

<sup>36</sup> Ibid

<sup>37</sup> Institute for Security Studies., 'Africa is Losing the Battle Against Extreme Poverty.' Op Cit

<sup>38</sup> Ibid

<sup>39</sup> United Nations Development Programme., 'Global Multidimensional Poverty Index 2023.' Op Cit

<sup>40</sup> Ibid

<sup>41</sup> Institute for Security Studies., 'Africa is Losing the Battle Against Extreme Poverty.' Op Cit

<sup>42</sup> Miyandazi. L., 'Challenges to Reducing Poverty and Inequalities in Africa.' Available at <https://globaldialogue.isa-sociology.org/articles/challenges-to-reducing-poverty-and-inequalities-in-africa> (Accessed on 24/11/2023)

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highest Gross Domestic Product (GDP), such as Nigeria, South Africa, Egypt, Algeria, Morocco, and Angola, record some of the highest levels of poverty and inequality<sup>43</sup>.

Poverty in Africa and other regions of the world has been attributed to multiple factors. It has been observed that regions with critical situations of employment, education, health, nutrition, war, and conflict usually have larger poor populations<sup>44</sup>. As a result, poverty tends to be more prevalent in least-developed and developing countries worldwide<sup>45</sup>. Poverty in Africa has therefore been attributed to causes such as rapid population growth, war and crises, climate change, illnesses, inadequate agricultural infrastructure, and unjust trade structures<sup>46</sup>. It has been pointed out that the problem of poverty in Africa is interrelated to other social, economic and political problems facing the continent<sup>47</sup>. For example, one of the regional trends that can be observed in Africa is that the top 10 poorest countries in the Continent are mainly those that have suffered from political instability, conflicts, and a lack of economic development<sup>48</sup>. These factors often lead to high poverty rates, low life expectancy, and poor education outcomes<sup>49</sup>.

Poverty is a major threat to Sustainable Development in Africa. Poverty in Africa results in hunger, epidemics of disease such as malaria, cholera, AIDS and high infant death rates, and a lowering of the overall living standards in the African countries<sup>50</sup>. The effects of poverty in Africa have been identified to be hunger with more than a quarter of the hungry in the world living on the African continent; physical and mental underdevelopment in children due to growth disorders such as stunting as a result of

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid

<sup>44</sup> Statista., 'African Countries with the Highest Share of Global Population Living Below the Extreme Poverty Line in 2023.' Op Cit

<sup>45</sup> Ibid

<sup>46</sup> Muigua. K., 'Eradicating Poverty for Inclusive Development in Kenya.' Op Cit

<sup>47</sup> Black Economics., 'The Effects of Poverty in Africa.' Available at <https://blackeconomics.co.uk/2013/08/15/the-effects-of-poverty-in-africa/#:~:text=Poverty%20in%20Africa%20results%20in,standards%20in%20the%20African%20countries> (Accessed on 24/11/2023)

<sup>48</sup> Wisevoter., 'Poorest Countries in Africa.' Available at <https://wisevoter.com/country-rankings/poorest-countries-in-africa/> (Accessed on 24/11/2023)

<sup>49</sup> Ibid

<sup>50</sup> Black Economics., 'The Effects of Poverty in Africa.' Op Cit

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chronic malnutrition; high infant mortality rates; child labour; inadequate access to health, education and clean water; and prevalence of illnesses and diseases including malaria and AIDS<sup>51</sup>. Poverty is therefore a major problem in Africa which threatens the achievement of Sustainable Development. This is despite the fact that Africa as a continent is endowed with immense natural and human resources as well as great cultural, ecological and economic diversity<sup>52</sup>. Eradicating poverty is therefore an urgent concern in Africa.

### **3.0 Eradicating Poverty in Africa: Promises and Challenges**

There has been some progress towards eradicating poverty in Africa. Africa Union's *Agenda 2063*<sup>53</sup> acknowledges that millions of Africans have escaped absolute poverty and there are improvements in all spheres of human development including health, education, gender, youth and access to services and basic necessities of life which are key indicators in poverty eradication<sup>54</sup>. It points out that poverty levels in Africa are falling, incomes are rising and there are improvements in both health and education outcomes<sup>55</sup>. Agenda 2063 seeks to achieve the ideal of a prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and Sustainable Development by ending poverty, tackling inequalities of income and opportunity; fostering job creation; addressing the challenges of rapid urbanization, improvement of habitats and access to basic necessities of life; providing social security and protection; developing Africa's human and social capital (through an education and skills revolution emphasizing science and technology and expanding access to quality health care services, particularly for women and girls<sup>56</sup>. It recognizes that poverty,

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<sup>51</sup> Muigua. K., 'Eradicating Poverty for Inclusive Development in Kenya.' Op Cit

<sup>52</sup> Muigua. K., 'Utilizing Africa's Natural Resources to Fight Poverty.' Available at <https://kmco.co.ke/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Utilizing-Africas-Natural-Resources-to-Fight-Poverty-26th-March2014.pdf> (Accessed on 24/11/2023)

<sup>53</sup> Africa Union., 'Agenda 2063: The Africa we Want.' Available at [https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/33126-doc-framework\\_document\\_book.pdf](https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/33126-doc-framework_document_book.pdf) (Accessed on 24/11/2023)

<sup>54</sup> Ibid

<sup>55</sup> Ibid

<sup>56</sup> Ibid

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inequality and hunger are priority areas towards achieving this goal<sup>57</sup>. According to Agenda 2063, ending all forms of poverty will be the highest priority of African governments in the next decades<sup>58</sup>. It has been asserted that African Union's Agenda 2063 process offers an important opportunity for Africa to take charge of its own development trajectory by eradicating poverty and tackling other economic, social and environmental challenges in the Continent<sup>59</sup>. Agenda 2063 has been described as a solid launching pad to materialize the aspirations of the continent<sup>60</sup>. It is therefore imperative to actualize the aspirations of Agenda 2063 in order to eradicate poverty in Africa.

In addition, the *Africa Union Draft Declaration on Employment, Poverty Eradication and Inclusive Development in Africa*<sup>61</sup> notes that progress has been made on the policy development front, labour market governance and budget allocation by Member States, Regional Economic Communities in the fight against high levels of unemployment, underemployment and poverty in Africa<sup>62</sup>. Under the Declaration, African countries commit to address the link between poverty eradication, decent work, social protection and inclusive growth<sup>63</sup>. The Declaration seeks to eradicate poverty in Africa through initiatives such as employment creation, social protection extension and social inclusion<sup>64</sup>. According to the Declaration, efforts geared towards poverty eradication and productive employment creation, particularly in the fields of infrastructure, agriculture and rural development, environmental conservation, cultural enterprises, fisheries,

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid

<sup>58</sup> Ibid

<sup>59</sup> Institute for Security Studies., 'Reducing Poverty in Africa: Huge Potential, But More Realistic Goals Needed.' Op Cit

<sup>60</sup> United Nations., 'Despite Gains in Reducing Poverty, Fuelling Growth, Africa Still Needs International Funding, Training to Overcome Development Challenges, Speakers Tell General Assembly.' Available at <https://press.un.org/en/2019/ga12205.doc.htm> (Accessed on 24/11/2023)

<sup>61</sup> Africa Union., 'Draft Declaration on Employment, Poverty Eradication and Inclusive Development in Africa.' Available at <https://www.tralac.org/images/docs/5987/au-draft-declaration-on-employment-poverty-eradication-and-inclusive-development-in-africa-2014.pdf> (Accessed on 24/11/2023)

<sup>62</sup> Ibid

<sup>63</sup> Ibid

<sup>64</sup> Ibid

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forestry, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) industry, trade and tourism have a high potential for job creation and reducing poverty in Africa<sup>65</sup>.

In addition, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) was adopted by African Heads of State and Government in 2001 and was ratified by the African Union in 2002 to address Africa's development problems within a new paradigm<sup>66</sup>. NEPAD's main objectives are to reduce poverty, put Africa on a Sustainable Development path, halt the marginalization of Africa, and empower women<sup>67</sup>. It addresses critical challenges facing the continent including poverty, development and Africa's marginalization internationally and provides unique opportunities for African countries to take full control of their development agenda, to work more closely together, and to cooperate more effectively with international partners<sup>68</sup>. Towards eradicating poverty in Africa, NEPAD manages several programmes and projects in key thematic areas which include agriculture and food security, climate change and natural resource management, regional integration and infrastructure, human development, economic and corporate governance, and cross cutting areas such as gender, capacity development and ICT<sup>69</sup>. The implementation of NEPAD is expected to bring about economic growth and development, increased employment, a reduction in poverty and inequity, the diversification of productive activities, enhanced international competitiveness and increased exports, and finally an increased integration of the African continent<sup>70</sup>.

It has also been argued that the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Agreement will strengthen efforts towards eradicating poverty in

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid

<sup>66</sup> United Nations., 'New Partnership for Africa's Development – NEPAD.' Available at <https://www.un.org/development/desa/socialperspectiveondevelopment/issues/new-partnership-for-africas-development-nepad.html> (Accessed on 24/11/2023)

<sup>67</sup> Ibid

<sup>68</sup> Ibid

<sup>69</sup> Ibid

<sup>70</sup> African Development Bank Group., 'New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).' Available at <https://www.afdb.org/en/topics-and-sectors/initiatives-partnerships/nepad> (Accessed on 24/11/2023)

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Africa<sup>71</sup>. The opportunities created by the AfCFTA have the ability to stimulate increased trade and investment, promote value addition, foster innovation and productivity growth, both at national and regional levels, and consequently contribute to the reduction of poverty, vulnerability, and inequality<sup>72</sup>. Agenda 2063 notes that the establishment of the AfCFTA and its fast tracking will lead to a significant growth of Intra-Africa trade and assist Africa to use trade more effectively as an engine of growth, job creation, reducing poverty and Sustainable Development<sup>73</sup>. According to the World Bank, the AfCFTA could help lift up to 50 million Africans from extreme poverty by bringing significant economic and social gains for the region, leading to higher incomes, lower poverty, and faster economic growth<sup>74</sup>. It further posits that AfCFTA has the potential to encourage greater Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) required for Africa to diversify into new industries, such as agribusiness, manufacturing, and services, and reduce the region's vulnerability to commodity boom-bust cycles<sup>75</sup>. It is therefore imperative for Africa to make the most out of the AfCFTA in order to unlock the potential gains in trade, investment, job creation and poverty reduction<sup>76</sup>.

Due to the foregoing among other initiatives, it has been observed that poverty levels have declined in most African countries with the proportion of African households with a consumption level below the \$ 1.9 per day poverty line significantly reducing<sup>77</sup>.

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<sup>71</sup> United Nations Economic Commission for Africa., 'Boosting Intra-Africa Trade through Implementation of the AfCFTA Agreement Key to Eliminating Poverty and Inequality in Southern Africa.' Available at <https://www.uneca.org/stories/boosting-intra-africa-trade-through-implementation-of-the-afcfta-agreement-key-to#:~:text=%E2%80%9CThe%20opportunities%20created%20by%20the,and%20inequality%2C%E2%80%9D%20said%20Ms.> (Accessed on 24/11/2023)

<sup>72</sup> Ibid

<sup>73</sup> Africa Union., 'Agenda 2063: The Africa we Want.' Op Cit

<sup>74</sup> The World Bank Group., 'Free Trade Pact Could Help Lift Up to 50 Million Africans from Extreme Poverty.' Available at <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2022/06/30/free-trade-pact-could-help-lift-up-to-50-million-africans-from-extreme-poverty> (Accessed on 24/11/2023)

<sup>75</sup> Ibid

<sup>76</sup> Ibid

<sup>77</sup> United Nations Conference on Trade and Development., 'Economic Development in Africa Report 2021: Reaping the Potential Benefits of the African Continental Free Trade Area for Inclusive Growth.' Available at <https://unctad.org/press-material/facts-and-figures-7> (Accessed on 24/11/2023)

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However, despite the gains made in reducing poverty, the problem is still persistent in Africa and more needs to be done in order to effectively deal with the issue. Agenda 2063 notes that the poverty situation has worsened in several other countries and overall gains remain fragile and reversible due to rising inequalities and exposure to shocks (economic, political, social and environmental)<sup>78</sup>. Despite the progress, Africa remains the continent with the highest concentration of poverty<sup>79</sup>. Africa contains the largest remaining share of global extreme poverty with an estimated number of over 400 million Africans living in extreme poverty<sup>80</sup>. The rapid economic growth witnessed in some African countries in recent years has failed to translate into corresponding and significant poverty reduction or improved living conditions for many Africans<sup>81</sup>. As a result, it has been argued that Africa will probably miss the SDG 1 poverty targets, but the right policies could deliver significant reductions<sup>82</sup>. Eradicating poverty is therefore an urgent concern in Africa. It has been argued that there is huge potential in Africa to make significant strides to reduce extreme poverty in coming decades, but more realistic targets are needed<sup>83</sup>. It is crucial for African countries to focus on improving the lives of the poorest and most marginalized through creating a sustainable, just, and equitable society in all aspects of life<sup>84</sup>.

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<sup>78</sup> Africa Union., 'Agenda 2063: The Africa we Want.' Op Cit

<sup>79</sup> Ibid

<sup>80</sup> Institute for Security Studies., 'Reducing Poverty in Africa: Huge Potential, But More Realistic Goals Needed.' Op Cit

<sup>81</sup> Africa Union., 'Agenda 2063: The Africa we Want.' Op Cit

<sup>82</sup> Institute for Security Studies., 'Africa is Losing the Battle Against Extreme Poverty.' Op Cit

<sup>83</sup> Institute for Security Studies., 'Reducing Poverty in Africa: Huge Potential, But More Realistic Goals Needed.' Op Cit

<sup>84</sup> Miyandazi. L., 'Challenges to Reducing Poverty and Inequalities in Africa.' Op Cit



#### **4.0 Way Forward**

It has been rightly observed that for Africa to effectively address the problem of poverty, governments must mainstream poverty eradication into national development policies, programs and actions<sup>85</sup>. Governments have an obligation to address the root causes of poverty, provide for basic needs for all and ensure that the poor have access to productive resources, including credit, education and training<sup>86</sup>. It is therefore imperative for African governments to implement policies and programs aimed at creating decent jobs and extending vital support to people experiencing poverty through measures such as social protection<sup>87</sup>. It has been observed that employment can be a tool to lift people out of poverty in Africa but this can only be achieved if job quality is sufficient, including adequate earnings, job security and safe working environments<sup>88</sup>. Universal social protection is also urgently needed in Africa in order to guarantee income security for everyone, prioritizing society's most vulnerable members<sup>89</sup>. It is also imperative for Governments to enhance access to vital and basic services including health care, clean water, education in order to effectively address poverty<sup>90</sup>.

It is also vital to foster gender equity and equality in order to eradicate poverty especially among women. It has been observed that women's poverty arises from unequal access to

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<sup>85</sup> United Nations., 'Poverty Eradication.' Op Cit

<sup>86</sup> Ibid

<sup>87</sup> Steiner. A., 'International Day for the Eradication of Poverty - 17 October 2023.' Available at <https://www.undp.org/speeches/international-day-eradication-poverty-17-october-2023#:~:text=That%20is%20an%20approach%20rooted,take%20more%20precedence%20over%20profit.&text=The%20theme%20of%20this%20year's,UNDP%20feature%20story%20on%20poverty%20> (Accessed on 25/11/2023)

<sup>88</sup> Ibid

<sup>89</sup> United Nations., 'International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, 17 October: 2023 theme, 'Decent Work and Social Protection: *Putting dignity in practice for all*,' Available at <https://www.un.org/en/observances/day-for-eradicating-poverty> (Accessed on 25/11/2023)

<sup>90</sup> World Vision., '8 World-Changing Solutions to Poverty.' Available at <https://www.worldvision.ca/stories/advocacy/solutions-to-poverty> (Accessed on 25/11/2023)



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economic resources<sup>91</sup>. Discriminatory norms may keep women in certain occupations, working for wages less than those of men<sup>92</sup>. In addition, certain laws and customary practices may restrict their ability of women to inherit land or seek credit<sup>93</sup>. It has further been pointed out that women left financially dependent on men are more vulnerable to poverty, and less equipped to manage risks such as economic downturns<sup>94</sup>. It therefore vital for African countries to embrace gender equity and equality in order to eradicate poverty.

In addition, there is need to prioritize food security in Africa. According to the World Bank, at least one in five Africans goes to bed hungry and an estimated 140 million people in Africa face acute food insecurity<sup>95</sup>. It has been pointed out that the Horn of Africa is suffering from persistent drought and African Countries that depend on Russia and Ukraine for wheat and sunflower oil imports have seen prices skyrocket out of reach of ordinary people due to the ongoing war between the two countries<sup>96</sup>. Such factors threaten to worsen the food security situation in Africa. Food insecurity can worsen the poverty situation in Africa since it leads to malnutrition and the inability of the poor to afford food supplies as a result of high prices<sup>97</sup>. African countries should therefore foster food security through measures such as investments in climate resilient agriculture, embracing the 'green' revolution in the agricultural sector, enhancing Intra-African food

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<sup>91</sup> United Nations Women., 'SDG 1: End Poverty in all its Forms Everywhere.' Available at <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/women-and-the-sdgs/sdg-1-no-poverty> (Accessed on 25/11/2023)

<sup>92</sup> Ibid

<sup>93</sup> Ibid

<sup>94</sup> Ibid

<sup>95</sup> The World Bank., 'Putting Africans at the Heart of Food Security and Climate Resilience.' Available at <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/immersive-story/2022/10/17/putting-africans-at-the-heart-of-food-security-and-climate-resilience> (Accessed on 25/11/2023)

<sup>96</sup> Ibid

<sup>97</sup> Kemoe. L et al., 'How Africa Can Escape Chronic Food Insecurity Amid Climate Change' Available at <https://www.imf.org/en/Blogs/Articles/2022/09/14/how-africa-can-escape-chronic-food-insecurity-amid-climate-change> (Accessed on 25/11/2023)

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trade, ensuring the affordability of food commodities, embracing agri-business, and investing in research and technology in order to increase food production<sup>98</sup>.

Another key measure towards eradicating poverty in Africa is managing the Continent's debt crisis. It has been observed that Africa faces an imminent financial crisis caused by rising debt problems due to borrowing from both public and private external creditors<sup>99</sup>. The soaring cost of borrowing and debt distress have strained public finance in most African countries with severe consequences on social spending<sup>100</sup>. According to the International Monetary Fund, the external debt in many African countries has reached unsustainable levels<sup>101</sup>. It further posits that the burden of adjustment, when it comes, will inevitably fall on the most vulnerable especially women, children, and the poor<sup>102</sup>. While debt serves a critical function for development, the rate at which debt is rising has constrained growth and limited many African countries' ability to cope with future crises or invest for development<sup>103</sup>. It has rightly been asserted that every dollar Africa spends on debt servicing is one less dollar available for development spending in key priority areas including poverty eradication, education and healthcare<sup>104</sup>. It has been observed that more than half of Africa's population lives in countries that spend more on interest payments than education or health<sup>105</sup>. Managing the debt situation in Africa is therefore essential in strengthening efforts towards poverty eradication. Reforms covering both multilateral as well as private creditors are key to allow Africa to develop sustainably and lift some of the world's most vulnerable out of poverty. Addressing Africa's debt sustainability issues will not only help make Africa more financially sound,

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<sup>98</sup> The World Bank., 'Putting Africans at the Heart of Food Security and Climate Resilience.' Op Cit

<sup>99</sup> Miyandazi. L., 'Challenges to Reducing Poverty and Inequalities in Africa.' Op Cit

<sup>100</sup> Ibid

<sup>101</sup> Bokosi. F., 'The Low-Income Trap.' Available at

<https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/fandd/issues/2018/03/point1> (Accessed on 25/11/2023)

<sup>102</sup> Ibid

<sup>103</sup> United Nations Conference on Trade and Development., 'A World of Debt.' Available at

<https://unctad.org/publication/world-of-debt/regional-stories> (Accessed on 25/11/2023)

<sup>104</sup> Ibid

<sup>105</sup> Ibid

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but it will contribute toward the continent achieving sustainability and meeting the SDGs<sup>106</sup>.

There is also need to control population growth in Africa. Fueled by a combination of falling mortality and some of the highest birth rates in the world, Africa's total population has increased tenfold and now stands at over 1.4 billion<sup>107</sup>. The United Nations projects that by 2050, Africa's population will reach close to 2.5 billion which will mean that than 25 percent of the world's population will be African<sup>108</sup>. Five of eight countries expected to account for over half of global population growth to 2050 are in Africa, with Nigeria predicted to become the world's third-most-populous country<sup>109</sup>. Such figures could stretch the continent's resources and hinder efforts towards poverty eradication. It has been highlighted that one of the major causes of poverty in Africa is high population growth which comes with extra expenditure and stretched out incomes thus undoing all the gains made in eradication of poverty<sup>110</sup>. It is therefore imperative for African countries to embrace population control through measures such as educating and encouraging citizens on the need of birth control in order to ease economic and other strains on households and national economies<sup>111</sup>.

Regional cooperation has also been advocated as a key strategy in eradicating poverty in Africa<sup>112</sup>. It has been asserted that regional cooperation and integration are effective tools in alleviating poverty within nations and reducing their dependency on foreign or development aid<sup>113</sup>. For example, the East African Community (EAC) has been hailed as

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid

<sup>107</sup> International Monetary Fund., 'A Demographic Transformation in Africa has the Potential to Alter the World Order.' Available at <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/fandd/issues/2023/09/PT-african-century#:~:text=Fueled%20by%20a%20combination%20of,reach%20close%20to%202.5%20billion.> (Accessed on 25/11/2023)

<sup>108</sup> Ibid

<sup>109</sup> Ibid

<sup>110</sup> Muigua. K., 'Eradicating Poverty for Inclusive Development in Kenya.' Op Cit

<sup>111</sup> Ibid

<sup>112</sup> Nhongo. W., 'The Role of Regional Cooperation in Eradicating Poverty and Aid Dependency in East Africa.' Available at <https://www.diplomacy.edu/resource/the-role-of-regional-cooperation-in-eradicating-poverty-and-aid-dependency-in-east-africa/> (Accessed on 25/11/2023)

<sup>113</sup> Ibid

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a successful developing country regional economic integration process with evidence pointing to rising trade, and declining monetary and multi-dimensional poverty over the period of EAC integration for countries such as Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda<sup>114</sup>. According to the African Union, Regional Economic Communities in Africa are at the forefront of the implementation of Agenda 2063<sup>115</sup>. It posits that the pace of regional integration needs to be accelerated to allow Africans to take their destiny in their own hands<sup>116</sup>. It is therefore necessary to embrace and accelerate regional economic integration in Africa in order to strengthen efforts towards eradicating poverty. There is also need to fast track the implementation of the Continent's development agenda including Agenda 2063 and NEPAD in order to effectively combat poverty.

It is also imperative to foster good governance in Africa. It has been asserted that one of the causes of poverty in the continent is poor governance characterized by corruption, embezzlement and mismanagement of funds<sup>117</sup>. This often results in loss funds that could be channeled into poverty eradication programmes<sup>118</sup>. In addition, it has been pointed out that for the poorest and most vulnerable, the difference that good, or particularly bad, governance, makes to their lives is profound: the inability of government institutions to prevent conflict, provide basic security, or basic services can have life-or-death consequences; lack of opportunity can prevent generations of poor families from lifting themselves out of poverty; and the inability to grow economically and collect taxes can keep countries trapped in a cycle of aid-dependency<sup>119</sup>. Good governance is therefore

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<sup>114</sup> Gasiorok, M., 'Regional Integration, Poverty and the East African Community: What do We Know and What Have We Learnt?.' Available at <https://www.gov.uk/research-for-development-outputs/regional-integration-poverty-and-the-east-african-community-what-do-we-know-and-what-have-we-learnt> (Accessed on 25/11/2023)

<sup>115</sup> Africa Union., 'Agenda 2063: The Africa we Want.' Op Cit

<sup>116</sup> Ibid

<sup>117</sup> Black Economics., 'The Effects of Poverty in Africa.' Op Cit

<sup>118</sup> Ibid

<sup>119</sup> The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development., 'The Politics of Poverty: Elites, Citizens and States.' Available at <https://www.oecd.org/derec/unitedkingdom/48688822.pdf> (Accessed on 25/11/2023)

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central to eradicating poverty in Africa by achieving development and ending conflict<sup>120</sup>. It has rightly been pointed out that the governments and people of Africa especially Sub-Saharan Africa must foster good governance by instituting corruption-free progressive governments led by capable, competent, qualified, progressive leaders, chosen through free and fair elections if the problem of poverty in Africa would ever be effectively addressed<sup>121</sup>.

There is also need to utilize Africa's natural resources to fight poverty<sup>122</sup>. It has rightly been observed that Africa as a continent is endowed with immense natural and human resources as well as great cultural, ecological and economic diversity<sup>123</sup>. The continent is generously endowed with productive land and with valuable natural resources, which include renewable resources such as water, forestry, and fisheries and non-renewable resources including minerals, coal, gas, and oil<sup>124</sup>. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) states that Africa is rich in natural resources ranging from arable land, water, oil, natural gas, minerals, forests and wildlife<sup>125</sup>. UNEP further points out that the continent holds a huge proportion of the world's natural resources, both renewables and non-renewables<sup>126</sup>. However, African countries have over the years failed to effectively utilize their abundant natural resources to eradicate poverty and foster economic development a situation that has been referred to as the resource curse phenomenon<sup>127</sup>. The Continent and especially, the Sub-Saharan Africa region has become

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid

<sup>121</sup> Black Economics., 'The Effects of Poverty in Africa.' Op Cit

<sup>122</sup> Muigua. K., 'Utilizing Africa's Natural Resources to Fight Poverty.' Op Cit

<sup>123</sup> Ibid

<sup>124</sup> African Development Bank Group., 'Africa's Natural Resources: The Paradox of Plenty.' Available at <https://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Publications/%28E%29%20AfricanBank%202007%20Ch4.pdf> (Accessed on 25/11/2023)

<sup>125</sup> United Nations Environment Programme., 'Our Work in Africa.' Available at <https://www.unep.org/regions/africa/our-work/africa#:~:text=The%20continent%20has%2040%20percent,internal%20renewable%20fresh%20water%20so%20urce> (Accessed on 25/11/2023)

<sup>126</sup> Ibid

<sup>127</sup> Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative., 'The Natural Resource Curse in Sub-Saharan Africa: Transparency and International Initiatives.' Available at <https://eiti.org/documents/natural-resourcecurse-sub-saharan-africa-transparency-and-international-initiatives> (Accessed on 25/11/2023)

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a classic case of the resource-curse phenomenon characterized by the abundance of natural resources poverty, low economic development, misuse of natural resources and prevalence of conflicts<sup>128</sup>. The resource curse in Africa has been attributed to factors such as poor governance, mismanagement of natural resources, corporate dominance by foreign multinational corporations, unfair and inequitable economic policies, use of poor technology and climate change<sup>129</sup>. It is therefore important for African countries to conquer the resource curse in order to effectively utilize their natural resources to eradicate poverty<sup>130</sup>. This can be achieved through fostering sound management of natural resources, promoting good governance and transparency, enhancing the principle of equitable benefit sharing, embracing sound, fair and equitable globalization policies, value addition, use of modern technology in natural resources management and combating climate change<sup>131</sup>.

The foregoing among other initiatives are vital in eradicating poverty in Africa.

### **5.0 Conclusion**

Poverty is a major problem in Africa. Africa contains the largest remaining share of global extreme poverty with approximately 400 million Africans still living in extreme poverty<sup>132</sup>. Poverty in Africa has been attributed to causes such as rapid population growth, war and crises, climate change, illnesses, inadequate agricultural infrastructure, and unjust trade structures<sup>133</sup>. Poverty is a major threat to Sustainable Development in Africa since it results in hunger, epidemics of disease such as malaria, cholera, AIDS and high infant death rates, and a lowering of the overall living standards in the African countries<sup>134</sup>. Despite efforts made towards fighting poverty, the problem is still

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid

<sup>129</sup> Muigua. K., 'Utilizing Africa's Natural Resources to Fight Poverty.' Op Cit

<sup>130</sup> Muigua. K., 'Conquering the Resource Curse in Africa.' Available at <https://kmco.co.ke/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Conquering-the-Resource-Curse-in-Africa.pdf> (Accessed on 25/11/2023)

<sup>131</sup> Ibid

<sup>132</sup> Institute for Security Studies., 'Reducing Poverty in Africa: Huge Potential, But More Realistic Goals Needed.' Op Cit

<sup>133</sup> Muigua. K., 'Eradicating Poverty for Inclusive Development in Kenya.' Op Cit

<sup>134</sup> Black Economics., 'The Effects of Poverty in Africa.' Op Cit

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widespread in Africa. Eradicating poverty is therefore an urgent concern in Africa. Poverty in Africa can be eradicated through measures such as mainstreaming poverty eradication into national development policies, programs and actions; implementing policies and programs aimed at creating decent jobs and extending vital support to people experiencing poverty through measures such as social protection; enhancing access to basic services including health, education and clean water; fostering gender equity and equality; prioritizing food security; managing Africa's debt crisis; controlling population growth in Africa; accelerating regional economic integration; fostering good governance; and utilizing Africa's natural resources to fight poverty<sup>135</sup>. Eradicating poverty for Sustainable Development in Africa needs to be a priority agenda in the continent.

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<sup>135</sup> United Nations., 'Poverty Eradication.' Op Cit; See also The World Bank., 'Putting Africans at the Heart of Food Security and Climate Resilience.' Op Cit; United Nations Conference on Trade and Development., 'A World of Debt.' Op Cit ; Nhongo. W., 'The Role of Regional Cooperation in Eradicating Poverty and Aid Dependency in East Africa.' Op Cit ; and Muigua. K., 'Utilizing Africa's Natural Resources to Fight Poverty.' Op Cit

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