The role of the state in ensuring sustainable development in the sub-Saharan African region

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INTRODUCTION

A strong state apparatus based on a Weberian-type of public administration has historically proved to be the best guarantee for turning policy aspirations into social and economic development. Forming an integral part of modernisation the rise of such type of public administration in Western Europe and North America occurred simultaneously with industrialisation, urbanisation and the institutionalisation of a capitalist economy in the late nineteenth century. This is the time when they abandoned a patronage-based system of administering public affairs in favour of one in which merit, compliance with formal rules and accountability to publicly elected officials become key components. African countries were exposed to this system in colonial times but it was never institutionalised in a manner that survived political independence (Olowu, 2012:609). For example, recent day Nigeria consisted of three colonial territories i.e. the Colony of Lagos, the Northern and the Southern protectorates. In 1906, the Southern Protectorate and the Colony of Lagos were amalgamated and subsequently in 1914, all three (Lagos, Southern and Northern Nigeria) were amalgamated to form the Protectorate of Nigeria, all of which were administered by one administrator. Although supposedly a political fusion, the British like most colonial powers, did not carefully craft or attend to the form of administration that would best suit the people in the territories. Thus the former colonies of Northern and Southern Nigeria, were administered separately within the machinery of government. The first opportunity for a central legislature to become engaged in national deliberation was only accorded in 1946 with the introduction of the Richard's Constitution in 1946. This provided for three regions; the north, east and west, a move that would have led to the devolution of powers for the regions. However, it scarcely achieved this, as political power was concentrated in the hands of a governor. Hence the nationalists resisted the Richard's Constitution on the following grounds: the imposition of the constitution without due consultation with the Nigerian people; the ambiguous roles of the chiefs as they had become agents of the states and antinationalist; and the number of political units, which did not reflect Nigeria's ethnic nature (Elaigwu 1994:226-227; Ile 2004:610-611). The concept of sustainable development suggests a potentially positive relationship between socioeconomic development and environmental sustainability (Lele, 1991). Sustainable environmental management can only occur where active local level support and participation exist. Particularly in less developed countries, community participation is believed to be the most effective strategy because people depend directly on their local physical environment and thus have a genuine interest in protecting it (Ghai & Vivian 1992; Veron 2001: 604).

This paper intends to investigate the role of the state in ensuring sustainable development with a particular focus on the sub-Saharan African region. Theoretical considerations are highlighted before one examines specific global and regional developmental priorities of government along with the concomitant protocols and instruments that support sustainable development. The paper also outlines some cases of how African states have been able to promote the developmental agenda before it could identify the challenges most African countries are faced with and which hinder them to ensure a sustainable development despite the availability of abundant resources across regions on the continent. The paper concludes with recommendations.

THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The traditional role of a state

Max Weber defined a state as a human community that successfully claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory. The Weberian approach conceptualises the state as an institution or set of institutions that exercises supreme political authority within a geographically defined territory. This supreme political authority implies a monopoly of "legitimate" coercion, administration over a given territory, and the capacity to capture revenues for the support of state activities (Max Weber, 1946; Hamilton, 1982). From a slightly different vantage point, Greenberg (1990:13) notes that the state may be understood as constituted by the civil and military bureaucracy (or state apparatus); the government, or those having formal control over the state apparatus (usually organised in branches of one sort or another); and the formal and informal rules of the game that structure the form and operation of both apparatus and government. The traditional role of the state is briefly outlined by Anderson (1989:19-22) when he lists the seven basic functions of government, which he claims are generally applicable: providing economic infrastructure; provision of various collective goods and services; the resolution and adjustment of group conflicts; the maintenance of competition; protection of natural resources; minimum access by individuals to the goods and services of the economy; and stabilisation of the economy. To this end, the World Bank (1997:42) concludes that five fundamental tasks are at the core of every government's mission. Every government is concerned with: (i) establishing a foundation of law; (ii) maintaining a non-distortionary policy environment, including macroeconomic stability; (iii) investing in basic social services and infrastructure; (iv) protecting the vulnerable; and (v) protecting the environment.

The state and sustainable development

The 1987 report *Our Common Future* from the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) set forth the most widely used definition of the concept. It defines "sustainable development" as a development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (WCED, 1987:43). The central goal of sustainable development is intergenerational equity, which implies fairness to coming generations. To help nations achieve this goal, the Commission attempted to weave together multiple societal values to confront the challenges of reducing over consumption and grinding poverty.

Achieving sustainable development entails a continuous process of decision-making in which certain questions are asked and whereby the 'right' choices and decisions are made. Thus there is never an 'end-state' of sustainable development, since the equilibrium between development and environmental protection must constantly be readjusted. The means to sustainable development is decision-making that: is guided by a set of principles (such as those contained in the Rio Declaration of principles and others); is integrated in nature, following an integrated management approach; and has the capacity to craft sustainable development (e.g., has sufficient technological know-how, sufficient natural resources, appropriate human resources) (Cicin-Sain, 1993:15-17). However, the development theory has commonly acknowledged that economic and social development are interrelated. Economic growth is desirable because it makes poverty alleviation easier. Growth is key in providing the means to meet basic needs, to ease poverty, and to generate employment. It nearly always reduces absolute poverty, but it can have varied impact on inequality and not everybody benefits from it. Economic sustainability in terms of sustained macroeconomic growth is thus a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for sustainable development in developing countries. An even distribution of growth and of access to resources is equally important. If, on the contrary, there are strong economic inequalities, growth without development as well as social and political unrest are likely to occur, signifying unsustainable development (Joshi, 1996; Fields, 1999 cited in Veron, 2001:602).

The developmental role of the state

The 'developmental state' has two components: one ideological, one structural. It is this ideology-structure nexus that distinguishes developmental states from other forms of states. In terms of ideology, a developmental state is essentially one whose ideological underpinning is 'developmentalist' in that it conceives its mission as that of ensuring economic development, usually interpreted to mean high rates of accumulation and industrialisation. Such a state establishes as its principle of legitimacy its ability to promote sustained development, understanding by development the steady high rates of economic growth and structural change in the productive system, both domestically and in its relationship to international economy (Castells, 1992:55). At the ideational level, the *élite* must be able to establish an ideological hegemony, so that its developmental project becomes, in a Gramscian sense, a 'hegemonic' project to which key actors in the nation adhere voluntarily. The state-structure side of the definition of the developmental state emphasises capacity to implement economic policies sagaciously and effectively. Such a capacity is determined by various factors – institutional, technical, administrative and political. Undergirding all these is the autonomy of the state from social forces so that it can use these capacities to devise long-term economic policies unencumbered by the claims of myopic private interests. It is usually assumed that such a state should be a 'strong state', in contrast to what Gunnar Myrdal (1968) referred to as the 'soft state' that had neither the administrative capacity nor the political wherewithal to push through its developmental project. And, finally, the state must have some social anchoring that prevents it from using its autonomy in a predatory manner and enables it to gain adhesion of key social actors (Mkandawire, 2001:290).

The changing role of the state - from government to governance

The state is an institution or set of institutions that exercises supreme political authority within a geographically defined territory (Tshiyoyo, 2014). The term ‘government’ can be defined as a set of instruments through which people living in a state, believing and sharing a common core of values, govern themselves by the means of laws, rules, and regulations enforced by the state apparatus (World Bank, 1992). ‘Governance’ can be described as a system of values, policies, and institutions by which a society manages its economic, political, and social affairs through interaction within and among the state, civil society, and private sector (Olowu and Sako, 2002:37).

The words ‘government’ and ‘governance’ have the same root but they need not, and indeed should not, be taken to mean the same thing. The role that government plays in governance is a variable and not a constant, and there are models of governance that are state-centric and some that are more society-centric. Rather than as a sharp dichotomy, however, it makes more sense to conceptualise the role of government and the state in governance as continuum. Different governments and different policy areas are located at different points along this continuum, with a major analytic issue being understanding why those differences exist and what impact they have on the effectiveness of governance. The governance perspective highlights not just the institutional interactions usually associated with public policymaking, it also points to the relationship of society to governing. Society performs complementary, and occasionally competitive, functions in the process of governance. The obvious role of members of society is to present their ‘wants and demands’ to government and to press for the adoption of their own agendas through the political process. This blending of societal demands and internal agency priorities and perspectives helps to shape the agenda for government and for governance (Jones, 1984; Pierre and Peters, 2000:29). Whether it is in democracies or non-democracies, governance imperatives require citizen electoral participation, government stability, and political order which determine in turn, the success and/or the performance of a government (Kuye, 2007:597).

Pierre and Peters (2000:32-33) note that society also has other roles to play in the process of governance. Society can be a major implementer, just as is government itself. Governments use organisations in society to implement programmes for a variety of reasons, not least being that if these groups do the implementation it will save government money and also make the public sector appear less intrusive. Further, implementation through social groups enables governments to utilise the expertise of those groups to make better decisions. Last, but not least, the use of groups to implement also co-opts those groups so that they and their members are less likely to oppose the policy.

GLOBAL AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENTAL PRIORITIES FOR THE PROMOTION OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Global developmental priorities have allowed regional governments to follow suit into the protocols and instruments established at international level. In this section, it is essential that one examines some of the most important protocols and instruments related to sustainable development. This section briefly outlines protocols and instruments that are seeking to support sustainable development at the global and regional levels.

Global protocols and instruments

The international community has adopted various protocols and instruments under the leadership of the United Nations and its various agencies. For the sake of this paper emphasis is placed only Agenda 21, Structural Adjustment Programmes or policies (SAPs), Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Agenda 21

Agenda 21 is a comprehensive plan of action that reflects a global consensus and political commitment at the highest level on development and environment cooperation. Agenda 21 is a comprehensive plan of action to be taken globally, nationally and locally by organisations of the United Nations system, governments, and major groups in every area in which human impacts on the environment. Agenda 21, the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, and the Statement of principles for the Sustainable Management of Forests were adopted by more than 178 Governments at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 3 to 14 June 1992. The full implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for further implementation of Agenda 21 and the commitments to the Rio principles, were strongly reaffirmed at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) held in Johannesburg, South Africa from 26 August to 4 September 2002 (United Nations, 2004). The MDGs are the consequence of Agenda 21 which has changed the way different countries particularly those aligned with the UN objectives are considering issues related to sustainable development.

Agenda 21 consists of 40 chapters that cover almost everything about the planet and how humans interact with it. Many of the chapters overlap and a number of the issues are reinforced by repetition and are elaborated throughout the document. As such, it is a comprehensive strategy for global action on sustainable development, dealing with current problems and trying to set the framework within which the problems of the future can also be addressed (Dodds, 1997:4, 11).

Structural Adjustment Programmes or policies (SAPs)

Structural Adjustment Programmes or policies (SAPs) may be defined as policy responses to internal and external shocks, carried out with the objective of regaining the pre-shock growth path of the national economy.

The Structural Adjustment Programme has its genesis in Africa. The concept was first born in response to the economic crisis in sub-Saharan Africa during the 1970s. The growing debt crisis in developing countries hit the continent during that decade, provoking acute financial distress. The situation was aggravated by declines in export earnings due to the fall in commodity prices, and by the OPEC oil curtail that led to the global crisis in 1974. After growing at an average of 2.6 percent a year between 1965 and 1974, the GDP per capital stagnated thereafter in most sub-Saharan countries (World Bank, 1994). Africa's average per capita growth between 1965 and 1985 was the lowest among all developing regions. The grim picture of the continent led Elliot Berg in his famous 1981 report for the World Bank to attribute 'structural' factors as the root cause of the economic stagnation in Africa during the 1960s and 1970s. His report points out that 'the internal structural problems and the external factors impeding African economic growth have been exacerbated by domestic policy inadequacies' and recommends the introduction of a new approach for development in Africa (Lopes 1994; Lopes, 1999:511).

One of the most important purposes of structural adjustment is to make the economy less vulnerable to future shocks. This can be done by increasing flexibility and adaptability. The success of a structural adjustment programme depends largely on the absence of rigidities. But it may also be its aim to reduce such rigidities. Unless they can be removed, structural adjustment can be very costly, or altogether out of reach. Growing flexibility is therefore both a condition for and an objective of adjustment policy. Flexibility can be applied to the market for products or for factors of production. If it is confined to products, but factors remain inflexible, large rents will arise which have no economic function. There are more fundamental objectives, such as the elimination of hunger and malnutrition, or the alleviation of poverty, or cultural autonomy or self-reliance or greater national strength and military power (Streeten, 1987:1470).

According to Adedeji (1999:522), the SAP began as a disjointed combination of quick-fix solution to Africa's economic crisis and the stabilisation programme of the IMF, which had long been applied to industrialised market economies in distress with balance of payments difficulties. Such programmes focus on the achievement of balance of payments equilibrium, balanced budget, price stability and the elimination of temporary distortions in the economy. In other words, orthodox SAP accepted the existing structures of the African political economy as given and sought to adjust them within prevailing production paths. By so doing it failed to recognise the pervasive supply inelasticities, particularly endogenous factor input inelasticities, a mono-cultural production, and the lack of internal factors capable of autonomously generating self-sustaining processes of development. It also failed to acknowledge the reality of the fundamental features of the African economies – a predominance of subsistence and commercial activities; vicious interaction of abysmally low levels of productivity; a narrow, disarticulated production base with ill adapted technology, deficient basic and social infrastructures and undeveloped human resources. The fragmentation of the African economy, its weak institutional capabilities, its lack of competitiveness and excessive dependence on external factor inputs, all appear to have been ignored. Faced by the lack of success of this overly simplistic model, all manners of adjustments have been added on – poverty alleviation, human investment, environmental sustainability, capacitation, civil service reform, etc.

Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

Millennium Development Goals (a number of eight specific targets agreed to by the United Nations in September 2000 with the objective of halving world poverty by 2015). How can a country that has accepted the sustainability challenge determine if it is making progress toward sustainable development? Measurements are needed. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are the expression of the strong commitment to universal development and poverty eradication made by the International Community in the UN Millennium Declaration in September 2000. They offer a set of concrete targets that can be used to assess the integrity of the political commitment made through the Declaration (Bourguignon *et al.*, 2008:4). During the United Nations (UN) Millennium Summit in 2000, 147 heads of state gathered and adopted the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs, Panel 1) to address extreme poverty in its many dimensions – income poverty, hunger, disease, lack of adequate shelter, and exclusion – while promoting education, gender equality, and environmental sustainability, with quantitative targets set for the year 2015 (Sachs and McArthur, 2005:347).

Panel 1: **Millennium Development Goals**

1. Reduce extreme poverty and hunger by half relative to 1990;
2. Achieve universal primary education;
3. Promote gender equality and empowerment of women;
4. Reduce child mortality by two-thirds relative to 1990;
5. Improve maternal health, including reducing maternal mortality by three-quarters relative to 1990;
6. Prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases;
7. Ensure environmental sustainability; and
8. Develop a global partnership for development.

Source: Sachs and McArthur, 2005:347.

The UN Millennium Project's core operational recommendation is that every developing country with extreme poverty should adopt and implement a national development strategy that is ambitious enough to achieve the MDGs (Sachs and McArthur, 2005:349-50). The year 2015 coincides with the deadline for the MDGs. There are successes and failures in terms of achieving the MDGs and each country, particularly, in the sub-Saharan region has its set of reasons why it met or not met the MDGs. As it is the case with any policy objective, when state apparatus are malfunctioning, it is difficult for a country to meet its targets. Most of African countries are plagued by political and social instabilities which lead to economic difficulties. To this struggle one can add civil wars, rebellions and aggressions not forgetting natural disasters such as diseases, earthquakes, volcanoes eruptions, floods, drought, erosion, fires, etc. In this context, it was difficult for many countries in the region to commit themselves to achieving the MDGS and engage themselves on the path of a sustainable development. These results are not different from many scored with regards to SAPs. Now SAPs were replaced by MDGs and the MDGs are being replaced by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In this context, one would like to ask what are the really issues here? Are these policies and instruments inadequate or state lack means to implementing them? Before answering these questions, one would like to outline the SDGs.

From MDGs to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

According to Sachs (2012:2206), the MDGs marked a historic and effective method of global mobilisation to achieve a set of important social priorities worldwide. They expressed widespread public concern about poverty, hunger, disease, unmet schooling, gender inequality, and environmental degradation. By packaging these priorities into an easily understandable set of eight goals, and by establishing measurable and time-bound objectives, the MDGs helped to promote global awareness, political accountability, improved metrics, social feedback, and public pressures. Sachs continues by saying that by 2015, most countries will have made meaningful progress towards most of the goals. Moreover, for more than a decade, the MDGs have remained a focus of global policy debates and national policy planning. They have become incorporated into the work of non-governmental organisations and civil society more generally, and are taught to students at all levels of education. The probable shortfall in achievement of the MDGs is indeed serious, regrettable, and deeply painful for people with low income. The shortfall represents a set of operational failures that implicate many stakeholders, in both poor and rich countries. Promises of official development assistance by rich countries, for example, have not been kept. Nonetheless, there is widespread feeling among policy makers and civil society that progress against poverty, hunger, and disease is notable; that the MDGs have played an important part in securing that progress; and that globally agreed goals to fight poverty should continue beyond 2015. Therefore, the world's governments seem poised to adopt a new round of global goals to follow the 15 year MDG period. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon's high-level global sustainability panel, appointed in the lead-up to the Rio+20 Summit in June, 2012, issued a report recommending that the world adopt a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Voices around the world are demanding leadership on poverty, inequality and climate change. To turn these demands into actions, world leaders gathered on 25 September 2015, at the United Nations in New York to adopt the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The 2030 Agenda comprises 17 new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), otherwise known as Global Goals, which will guide policy and funding for the next 15 years, beginning with a historic pledge to end poverty. Hence, SDGs build on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), eight anti-poverty targets that the world committed to achieving by 2015. As already stressed in the previous section, the MDGs, adopted in 2000, aimed at an array of issues that included slashing poverty, hunger, disease, gender inequality, and access to water and sanitation. Enormous progress has been made on the MDGs, showing the value of a unifying agenda underpinned by goals and targets. Despite this success, the indignity of poverty has not been ended for all. The new SDGs, and the broader sustainability agenda, go much further than the MDGs, addressing the root causes of poverty and the universal need for development that works for all people (UNDP 2015 [online]). Table 1 outlines the goals as well as the targets the international community is striving to achieve by 2030.

Table 1: Sustainable Development Goals and Targets

Goals	Targets
SDG 1: No poverty	End poverty in all its forms everywhere
SDG 2: Zero hunger	End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
SDG 3: Good health and well-being	Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all
SDG 4: Quality education	Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
SDG 5: Gender equality	Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
SDG 6: Clean water and sanitation	Ensure access to water and sanitation for all
SDG 7: Affordable and clean energy	Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth	Promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all
SDG 9: Industry, innovation, infrastructure	Build resilient infrastructure, promote sustainable industrialization and foster innovation
SDG 10: Reduced inequalities	Reduce inequality within and among countries
SDG 11: Sustainable cities and communities	Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
SDG 12: Responsible consumption, production	Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
SDG 13: Climate action	Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts
SDG 14: Life below water	Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources
SDG 15: Life on land	Sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation, halt biodiversity loss
SDG 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions	Promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies
SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals	Revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

(Adapted from the UNDP 2015 Sustainable Development Goals - http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/mdgoverview/post-2015-development-agenda.html)

Regional and national commitments to sustainable development in the sub-Saharan African region

The African Union (AU)

The Organisation of African Unity (OAU) initiatives paved the way for the establishment of the African Union (AU). The advent of AU can be described as an event of great magnitude in the institutional evolution of the continent. On 9 September 1999, the Heads of State and Government of the Organisation of African Unity issued a Declaration (the Sirte Declaration) calling for the establishment of an African Union, with a view, inter alia, to accelerate the process of integration in the continent to enable it to play its rightful role in the global economy. Simultaneously it addresses multifaceted social, economic and political problems compounded as they are by definition negative aspects of globalisation. The vision of the African Union is that of: 'An integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in global arena' (*The African Union 2013* [online]).

The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)

The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), an African Union strategic framework for pan-African socio-economic development, is both a vision and a policy framework for Africa in the twenty-first century. NEPAD is a radically new intervention, spearheaded by African leaders to address critical challenges facing the continent: poverty, development and Africa's marginalisation internationally. NEPAD provides unique opportunities for African countries to take full control of their developmental agenda, to work more closely together, and to cooperate more effectively with international partners. NEPAD manages a number of programmes and projects in six theme areas. These themes are:

1. Agriculture and food security.
2. Climate change and national resource management.
3. Regional integration and infrastructure.
4. Human development.
5. Economic and corporate governance, and
6. Cross-cutting issues, including gender, capacity development and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) (NEPAD 2013[online]).

NEPAD constitutes an instrument that lays the foundation for Africa to move toward a new age of peace, security, economic growth, sustainable development and prosperity. The NEPAD programme is critical for the successful economic development of Africa and the achievement of a continent characterised by high standards of living, thriving private sectors, and accountable and democratic states. Currently, there is an urgent need for African leaders to revive the objectives and goals of NEPAD. Since regimes change that took place in South Africa and Nigeria and the death of President Muammar Gaddafi NEPAD has not received much attention. Presidents Mbeki, Gaddafi and Obasanjo were at the forefront of this initiative.

The African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM)

Given the international experience with peer reviews, the APRM as a mechanism for measuring and monitoring progress toward good governance and sustainable development in Africa has the potential to provide a number of benefits to those African countries that subject themselves to it and, through multiplier effects, to the continent as a whole. Peer reviews have been demonstrated to have a number of beneficial effects as applied across the world. As African countries endeavour to improve their governance and march toward sustainable development, peer reviews can provide the basis for policy changes to meet commitments and to observe the agreed standards and codes. Indeed, peer reviews will facilitate the monitoring of compliance with the agreements entered into upon accession to the APRM. States are much more inclined to comply when they know their implementation is monitored, and when the implementation of their peers is being monitored as well (Henning, 2003). Given the history and resultant disastrous effects of bad governance in Africa, with a lack of openness and rampant corruption, acceding to peer review represents a sea change in the approach of African leaders and a major milestone in the political development and history of the continent.

The APRM is the most innovative and critically significant aspect of the NEPAD. It constitutes a bold and imaginative attempt to launch a total war on the endemic problems of bad governance, unsustainable development and overwhelming poverty that have been confronting Africa for several decades. The APRM will be used as a means for openly and honestly assessing strengths and weaknesses; for monitoring progress toward building capable states, with strong institutions, for sustainable development and improved governance structures; for peer learning; and for the sharing of best practices. It utilises a strong comparative advantage of NEPAD, its democratic roots and aspirations, to provide a forum that presents arguments with an African voice to African nations (Kanbur, 2004).

New Growth Path

The New Growth Path (NGP) can be defined as a policy document central to government's vision for economic development and job creation. It is characterised by a set of policies and mechanisms that propose a series of interventions aimed at growing the economy and halting the decline in the productive sectors and increasing levels of employment. The New Growth Path recognises the role of an effective, developmental state in achieving broad-based employment growth. This perspective raises at least three critical institutional issues: the role of the state, the market and key market players, and social mobilisation and dialogue. The growth path, while state-led, has to articulate well with market institutions. The challenge for the developmental state is to minimise costs for business except as required to support transformation toward a more equitable, decent work-generating and green economy. The main institutional drivers outside the state are business, organised labour and other civil society actors. Key to the implementation of the New Growth Path is the development of more constructive and collaborative relations between the state and business, where:

- Government commits to minimise unnecessary economic costs, such as unnecessary regulatory requirements and delays, inadequate infrastructure, weak education and training, and
- Business responds by supporting critical and innovative initiatives for a more inclusive and equitable economy, especially projects that can generate employment on a much larger scale, through investment, technical support and mentoring, and appropriate pricing policies (RSA, 2010:27-28).

However, the New Growth Path Framework (RSA, 2010:6) stipulates that in order to achieve profound changes in the structure of savings, investment and production, the government must steadily and consistently pursue key policies and programmes over at least a decade. Moreover, the state must coordinate its efforts around core priorities rather than dispersing them across numerous efforts, however worthwhile, that do not contribute to a sustained expansion in economic opportunities for the people. These are the core characteristics of a developmental state.

Local Economic Development

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) defines the Local Economic Development (LED) as a participatory process that encourages partnership arrangements between the main private and public stakeholders of a defined territory, enabling the joint design and implementation of a common development strategy, by making use of the local resources and competitive advantage in a global context, with the final objective of creating decent jobs and stimulating economic activity (Rodríguez-Pose, 2001). LED is defined as a process in which partnerships between local governments, community and civic groups and the private sector are established to manage existing resources to create jobs and stimulate the economy of a well-defined area. It emphasises local control, using the potentials of human, institutional and physical and area natural resources. LED initiatives mobilise actors, organisations and resources, develop new institutions and local systems through dialogue and strategic actions (Helmsing, 2003:69). For instance, LED involves identifying and using primary local resources, ideas and skills to stimulate economic growth and development (Mabuyakhulu, 2012). The aim of LED is to explore the cooperation of municipalities, private sector and civil society to ensure growth that will create jobs, alleviate poverty and redistribute resources and opportunities to the benefit of all local residents. Its purpose is to build the economic capacity of a local area to improve its economic future and the quality of life for all. It is a process by which public, business and non-governmental sector partners work collectively to create better conditions for economic growth and employment generation.

PROMOTION OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE SUB-SAHARAN REGION

An action plan for sustainable development, called Agenda 21, was launched in 1992 at Rio's Earth Summit (World Summit on Environment and Development), and more recently, the UN Millennium Development Goals, adopted in 2000, called on all countries to integrate the principles of sustainable development into national policies and programs. How can a country that has accepted the sustainability challenge determine if it is making progress toward sustainable development? (Moran, Wackernagel, Kitzes, Goldfinger and Boutaud, 2007:470-471).

The UNDP Human Development Index (HDI) is a widely used measure of national development, captures how conducive conditions are for residents of a country to enjoy long, healthy, and creative lives. The HDI is a widely referenced and globally available proxy metric for progress toward human development goals, as reflected for example in the Millennium Development Goals. A country's HDI is a composite of four sub-indicators: life expectancy at birth, adult literacy rate, gross school enrolment ratio, and GDP per capita (UNDP, 2004). In order to measure the progress made by the selected countries (South Africa etc), the HDI of the past five years will be considered. HDI classifications are relative – based on quartiles of HDI distribution across countries and denoted very high, high, medium and low HDI. Table 2 outlines the progress made by few selected countries which somehow represent various regions in the sub-Saharan Africa.

Table 2: Human Development Indexes of Selected Countries

	2010	**2011**	**2012**	**2013**
Botswana	0.633	0.633	0.634	0.683
South Africa	0.597	0.619	0.629	0.658
Ghana	0.467	0.541	0.558	0.573
Kenya	0.470	0.509	0.519	0.535
Uganda	0.422	0.446	0.456	0.414
Angola	0.403	0.486	0.508	0.526
Nigeria	0.423	0.459	0.471	0.504
Malawi	0.385	0.400	0.418	0.484

(Adapted from the UNDP’s Human Development Reports)

Although the HDI has four levels most countries in the sub-Saharan region are found in the two lower groups, namely: medium and low categories of human development. The positive progression is encouraging but not to the level of what can really be achieved looking at the potential available in the region. There are many factors that affect human development and they will be examined in the next section. One can comment table 2 using the examples of two countries that are tremendously striving to promote a sustainable development.

South Africa

South Africa has succeeded in integrating the principles of sustainable development into the country's policies and programmes. Environmental rights are enshrined in the Constitution and a sophisticated array of environmental legislation and policies. This legislative framework further tends to emphasise the social dimensions of natural resource management, such as fair and equitable access to resources and participation in decision-making. However, there is scope for giving clearer expression to a human rights approach in the environmental policy framework by focusing more on the plight of vulnerable and marginal groups.

Responsibilities for implementation are clearly outlined though responsibilities are distributed between different departments and different spheres of government. This creates opportunities for adapting overhead frameworks to local conditions, but also substantial challenges for coordinated implementation. The consolidation of the Department of Environmental Affairs with the Department of Water Affairs will contribute towards improved coordination between these closely linked institutions, although there is still much uncertainty as to whether these merged departments will exist as separate structures. Most of the departments concerned with executing environmental policies have fairly sophisticated strategic and implementation plans. Nonetheless, the failure of effective planning in the energy sector and the lack of accountability, monitoring and the evaluation of legislation and policy in the environmental and energy sectors are cause for concern. Furthermore, there is a need for the setting of concrete goals and targets, particularly at a provincial level.

The integration of environmental planning frameworks in the provincial sphere, and the inconsistency in planning often existing between local and provincial government, is another weakness. Municipalities have very limited responsibility for the implementation of environmental functions, such as pollution monitoring, and claim the responsibility of wider environmental protection as an unfunded mandate. These factors create scope for inappropriate decision-making that impacts directly on environmental rights, and exposes the environmental decision-making process to unnecessary complexity. Lastly, effective planning depends on the availability of reliable information. In this respect, the lack of statistics in particular sectors, such as the energy sector, is indicative of insufficient monitoring and poor information systems (South African Human Rights Commission, 2010: 31-32).

Malawi

A landlocked country with a population of 13 million, a GDP per capita of $600, and a history of recurring famines, Malawi is the first country to implement a green revolution strategy at the national scale in response to Kofi Annan's (Former Secretary-General of the United Nations) call (Denning *et al.*, 2009). Maize is the staple food crop, grown by virtually all 2,4 million farm families. Rainfall iserratic, often resulting in catastrophic drought spells during the rainy season at critical stages of maize growth. Even in years with good rainfall, the nitrogen-depleted soils cannot produce sufficient maize to feed the country, a condition common in much of sub-Saharan Africa (Sanchez, 2002). Malawi's agricultural policy history is characterised by u-turns and drastic changes, often prompted by influential donors shifting their approaches and leading to a sense of despair that all policy options have been exhausted. In April 2005, the country's maize harvest reached only 57% of the country's requirement (Denning *et al*., 2009). As a result, approximately 5 million Malawians required food aid. Despite strong opposition from major donors, the government instituted a *smart* input subsidy programme for the October 2005 planting, by which farm households were given a voucher that entitled them to two 50kg bags of fertilizer and 3-5 kg of improved maize seed, available at about 37% of the market price. The inputs provided through the scheme are sufficient for a 0,4-ha (1 acre) farm, but are not intended to distort the fertilizer market for larger purchases. Whether that will happen or not will depend on future market prices (Staatz and Dembele, 2008) and other actions such as the training and development of a private agro-dealer network. The April 2006 harvest greatly surpassed previous years. Maize production more than doubled nationwide, from 1,2 to 2,6 million tons, exceeding the national food requirement of 2,1 million tons and resulting in an 18% surplus Buoyed by this success, the government continued the subsidy policy for the next planting season. Again, rainfall distribution was good, and the 2007 harvest reached a record 3,4 million tons, generating a 53% surplus above basic food needs. Malawi exported about 400,000 tons of maize to Zimbabwe from the 2007 harvest, generating foreign exchange, to the amazement of food-deficient neighbours. Malawi actually became a food aid donor to neighboring Lesotho and Swaziland (Sanchez, Denning & Nziguheba 2009:41-42).

The analysis of above-mentioned few countries demonstrates that there is a commitment to engage the continent on the path of sustainable development but many challenges hinder the attainment of that objective. The next section outlines some of the constraints or challenges faced by most countries on the African continent.

CHALLENGES FACED BY MOST COUNTRIES IN THE REGION

Although Africa is well endowed with natural and human resources, it suffers from extreme poverty and deprivation. The scourge of HIV/Aids and other chronic diseases compounds this situation. African countries aspire to build strong states that have significant social depth and are anchored on the virtues of just and equitable societies. However, the painful reality is that most of these states are elitist and divorced from the people and are often characterised by repression and lack of accountability and political legitimacy. Africa is also the home of endemic state collapse and societal fragmentation resulting in violent armed conflicts, which lead to loss of life and destruction of property and social bonds. This situation has a direct bearing on sustainable economic development and security (Molomo, 2009:136). Many factors that facilitate the growth of a Weberian-type of public administration are still missing in African countries. The conditions in which public services can grow and become more service-oriented are not in place to the same extent that they are elsewhere where public sectors reforms have been attempted with a view to improving efficiency, effectiveness and service delivery. This is also true when checking the political conditions that tend to affect development (Olowu, 2012:612). The following are some of the main constraints and challenges impeding Africa's development: political mind-sets which remain colonial, fragmented and slow; institutional co-ordination mechanisms are ineffective; legislative and policy co-ordination and alignments are lacking; capital markets are underdeveloped; and infrastructure development is slow and sluggish (Abedian, 2012). To this end, one can conclude that most of the challenges faced by the African continent are politically related and they have damaging repercussions on the functioning of state apparatus.

A prevalent attribute of the state in developing and transitional societies is the discretionary power that is associated with occupying public positions. This may be most apparent at the top level where heads of state or cabinet ministers use their position of authority to make decisions that are often against even the faintest sense of public good. A similar type of discretion is also evident at lower echelons in the government hierarchy. Members of the public often find it difficult to obtain services or decisions from 'street-level' bureaucrats without first paying them a bribe. This kind of behaviour is not just incidental but part of a system that is 'patrimonial' or 'neo-patrimonial'. It is a significant feature of public administration in Africa. Hence, the absence of a state tradition on the African continent translates into not only patrimonialism but also immobilism, or inadequate executive capacity (Olowu, 2012:604). Therefore, Gyimah-Boadi (1996:126-127) insists that without a strong private economic sector, it is difficult to see how civil society and democracy can prevail. Given state dominance in so much of the formal sector of African economies – especially in the areas of investment and employment – key social groups and their organisations are ultimately dependent on government. The next section proposes some recommendations for the promotion of the role of the state in ensuring sustainable development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to promote a development that is sustainable, African countries must strive to establish the following:

Political will

A successful democratic developmental state requires political will, long-term vision and a determination by the country's political elite to drive a broad-based and inclusive industrialisation and development project. It is high time for African leaders to take the fate of the continent into their hands by engaging in the democratization process and paving a way for capacity building and institutional development. It is only when the state structures are well-functioning that development in all sectors can become sustainable. This requires a certain level of political will which encourages leaders to unite nations and adopt policies that will enhance development prospects on the continent.

Strengthening structural and institutional arrangements

The recognition of the importance of democratic developmental state in addressing the economic, social and institutional deficits is not enough. The litmus test is the desire and ability on the part of the government to create a competent administrative apparatus within the state, and political leaders having the political will to ensure that the necessary resources are deployed, and that policy and programmes are developed and implemented. These are in addition to the political will to forge programmatic and reciprocal relationships with trade unions, business, community organisations and so on. In effect, democratic deliberations, including at the local level, will be central to enhancing the state capacity in addressing the country's developmental challenges (Edigheji 2010:3). Many African countries are considered to be either weak or failed states. Hence, in order to ensure the stability and the continuity of the administrative machinery there is a need for a certain political maturity. Politicians must avoid a situation whereby there is conflict and tension every elections are scheduled. This will require that politicians abide to democratic principles that sustain strong states.

Effective decision-making

Kuye (2005:6) argues that although the crisis of the developmental state in African countries poses a critical problem, it should be noted that the central role of the state in public administration, development planning and economic management should have a strong resonance in the activities of most African countries calling for change and reforms. Targeting constructive policies for implementation purposes must be seen as a major precursor for reforms. Furthermore, Kuye (2005:9) notes that targeted policies should be designed as part of comprehensive national development strategies for both poverty alleviation and other human development issues. Subsequently, he argues that such reforms must uphold the principles of good governance and democracy.

Promote a sustainable environmental management

The promotion of a sustainable environmental management will require the creation of an environment that enables a shared responsibility of representatives from the state, the market and civil society dealing with societal problems, ensures an active local-level support and participation, supports community participation in the addressing development challenges. This can be achieved if each country in the region will consider adopting the many aspects of Local Economic Development. It is only through successful partnerships between the public and private sectors, the civil society and the communities at large that a sustainable development can be achieved. According to the World Bank (2001), the focus in LED practice is generally now more geared towards investment in human capital development, public-private partnerships (PPPs), retention and expansion of existing local firms, support for SMMEs, workforce development and training and a general move to a more targeted inward investment focus.

CONCLUSION

The concept of sustainable development suggests a potentially positive relationship between socioeconomic development and environmental sustainability. The quality of a country's governance clearly affects its success in achieving growth and improving the quality of life for people. In this paper it was stressed that every government should be concerned with establishing a foundation of law, maintaining a non-distortionary policy environment and a macroeconomic stability, investing in basic social services and infrastructure, protecting the vulnerable, and protecting the environment. In doing so, no state can any longer continue to function as an island in this era of globalisation. There are guidelines provided at the global level which guide the action of every state be it in the developed world or the developing world. Hence, the role of the state has changed tremendously especially in the 21st century and this shifts attention from government to a governance perspective. For instance, the governance perspective highlights not just the institutional interactions usually associated with public policymaking but it emphasises the relationship of society to governing. As a result, governments currently use organisations in society to implement programmes in order to share responsibility with the aim of promoting a development that is sustainable.

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