

# A review of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Targets for African Global Health

The impact of population growth on achieving the 2030 targets.



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## **T** HE AFRICAN GLOBAL HEALTH INITIATIVE originates from Morocco.

The objective is to address and share strategies that will transform health in sub-Saharan Africa. It is underpinned by the sustainable development goals (SDGs) adopted by the United Nations' 2030 agenda. The SDGs aim to globally transform, calling on all nations to end poverty, inequality, and protect the planet, while ensuring health, justice, prosperity, and leaving no one behind.

In 2015, all members of the United Nations adopted the 2030 agenda for sustainable development. It sets out 17 goals, which includes 169 targets.

The development of the global goals must balance social, economic and environmental sustainability. Countries have committed to prioritise progress to achieve the stated goals by 2030.

This is also an important discussion by the leaders in Africa to address: Africa Global Health, as well as the need to end harm to healthcare, to end poverty, hunger, AIDS, and discrimination against women and girls. The African Global Health initiative emphasises that saving the continent is a collective call to action, requiring the contribution of creativity, know-how, technology, and financial resources from all of society, making it everybody's business.

As we develop the African Global Health programme, it is important to review the SDGs and the 2030 agenda set by the members of the United Nations.

We review the 17 SDGs and their linkage to health, population growth, justice, equity, alleviation of poverty and how the goals impact each other.

### **GOAL 1: NO POVERTY**

The World Bank cautions that extreme poverty won't diminish by 2021 because population growth in the poorest nations is outpacing economic growth. Poverty often accompanies large family sizes, preventing adequate investment in children and their needs. It is necessary to ensure that everyone is empowered to choose small families.

### **GOAL 2: ZERO HUNGER**

"According to the World Resources Institute, the calorie requirements of a population of 10 billion are 56% higher than current total crop production. Agriculture is already a leading cause of environmental degradation and further conversion of land for farming purposes will have devastating consequences for biodiversity and our climate." [WHO]

The world population is projected to exceed 10 billion in the second half of the century. The key to achievement of zero hunger, especially in the poorest

communities, is to reduce fertility rates.

### **GOAL 3: GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING**

With the population growth, the present fragile healthcare systems due to insufficient and under-resourced funding can collapse. The number of women with unmet contraception needs is rising, driven by high population densities that can worsen disease transmission and strain already overwhelmed health services. SDG 3 calls for 'Good health and well-being' and to 'ensure healthy lives and to provide well-being for all ages'. Goal 3B calls for universal health coverage (UHC), so that all people have access to quality healthcare without financial hardship at the point of care.

### **GOAL 4: QUALITY EDUCATION**

Greater investment in quality education is key to alleviating poverty and ending population growth. Due to gender inequality, girls are disproportionately affected by lack of access to education. In sub-Saharan Africa, the number of girls out of secondary school has increased by seven million due to the region's population growth.

### **GOAL 5: GENDER EQUALITY**

Gender inequality is one of the main drivers of high fertility rates. Not a single country has yet achieved full equality and the worst gender-based inequalities and crimes continue to be widespread.

According to the UN, "ending gender-based violence, harmful practices (including child marriages), preventable maternal deaths and unmet family planning needs is affordable and within reach, but still suffers from a severe funding shortage.

"The number of women and girls subjected to female genital mutilation could grow from 4.1 million in 2020 to 4.6 million a year by 2030, since the cohort of girls in many high prevalence countries is growing." UNFPA 2020.

### **GOAL 6: CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION**

The combination of climate change and population growth is fuelling a global water crisis. As the numbers increase, aquifers get overdrawn, population increases, and the capacity to safely dispose wastewater is increasingly compromised.

Currently, 2.2 billion people around the world do not have safe drinking water, 4.2 billion lack safe sanitation services. It is estimated that by 2050, five billion people, more than half of the global population, will live in water stressed regions.

### **GOAL 7: AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY**

Global energy demand is expected to increase by 50% over the next 30 years because of population growth and economic development.

High income countries must lead the way in transitioning to clean fuels and support low-income countries to do the same. Ending population growth will make a global switch to affordable and clean energy a lot more achievable. The absolute number of people relying on polluting fuels and technologies for cooking has increased, reaching an estimated 3 billion people.

### **GOAL 8: DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH**

Due to population growth and rising number of young dependents makes economic prosperity impossible and is a recipe for social unrest. As a global community, we must strive towards a healthy environment and well-being for all, not endless growth.

To achieve the SDGs by 2030 is underpinned by economic growth and financial sustainability.

### **GOAL 9: INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE**

With population growth, especially in low-income countries and developing economies it becomes more difficult to provide access to modern infrastructure and technologies to everyone. Conversion of land to Human Infrastructure is a key driver of biodiversity loss and construction is a major source of greenhouse gases.

There is a need to conserve nature, conserve the environment to achieve Goal 9.

### **GOAL 10: REDUCED INEQUALITIES**

Vast disparities exist between the rich world and the Global South and within countries themselves. We need to achieve a more just global system, in which resources are distributed more equitably. We need to limit the size of our communities to distribute limited resources equitably and impact the survival of growing populations amongst the poorest of the poor.

### **GOAL 11: SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES**

More than half of the world's population live in urban areas today. By 2050, this proportion is expected to rise to 68%. This rapid urban population growth can outstrip the pace that clean water, sanitation, health, jobs and education can be offered.

Access to green spaces is important for physical and mental health. This is an imperative embedded in SDG 11.

### **GOAL 12: RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION**

Responsible consumption and production of food and goods must go hand in hand with measures to end our population growth. "We are already using resources 1.75 times faster than they can regenerate. Unless things change, we will require three earths to supply our needs by 2050."

### **GOAL 13: CLIMATE ACTION**

Unsustainable consumption patterns

in high-income countries are largely responsible for the climate crisis but every additional person on our planet adds more emissions. "The 2019, Scientists Warning of a Climate Emergency, endorsed by more than 11 000 scientists, call for ending and ultimately reversing human population growth, among other transformative actions, to avoid the worst effects of climate change.

### **GOAL 14: LIFE BELOW WATER**

The issues addressed by Goal 14 are pollution (plastic and run-off), overfishing, coral bleaching, and coastal ecosystem destruction are all exacerbated by population growth.

Two-thirds of the marine areas have been damaged by human activity. Tackling the loss of life under water must include a commitment to reducing population growth and runaway consumption.

### **GOAL 15: LIFE ON LAND**

A landmark 2019 UN assessment explicitly noted that human population growth is an indirect driver of biodiversity loss. To be truly effective in the long term, conservation efforts must incorporate population solutions.

### **GOAL 16: PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS**

In the absence of prosperity and strong institutions, population growth contributes to conflicts related to scarce resources. We need to support peace and stability goals by increasing the foundation for stability. We need to encourage communities to participate in civil society stability and peace building.

### **GOAL 17: PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS**

The key to a better future and the achievement of the SDGs by 2030 will need cross-sectoral partnerships that recognise crucial links between social and environmental issues.

Now is the time to strengthen partnerships, secure the next decade of collaboration for sustainable development, and promote empowering solutions through increased investment.

Intersectoral action by multiple stakeholders helps place health in all sectors of policymaking and combines the strengths of multiple stakeholders. The UN's 17 SDGs aim to achieve decent lives for all on a healthy planet by 2030. Given the current progress and challenges, it's likely that most of these goals will be missed because they haven't considered population growth. To achieve the SDGs, we must prioritise a population-focused solution. **MC**

The above are stated imperatives at the African Global Health programme.