

# **CHALLENGES (AND OPPORTUNITIES) TO A HUMAN RIGHTS AND STATE BUILDING AGENDA IN AFRICA**

## **INTRODUCTION**

- **Facts on poverty in Africa (Source: Aggregated UN sources)**
- **• 315 million people: one in two of people in Sub Saharan Africa survive on less than one dollar per day**
- **• 184 million people: 33% of the African population – suffer from malnutrition**
- **• During the 1990s the average income per capita decreased in 20 African countries**
- **• Less than 50% of Africa's population has access to hospitals or doctors**

- **Three quarters of the 42 million people living with HIV/AIDS worldwide live in Africa.**
- **• In 2000, 300 million Africans did not have access to safe water**
- **• The average life expectancy in Africa is 41 years**
- **• Only 57% of African children are enrolled in primary education, and only one of three children complete school**

- **• One in six children dies before the age of 5. This number is 25 times higher in sub-Saharan Africa than in the OECD countries**
- **• Children account for half of all civilian casualties in wars in Africa**

- • **The African continent lost more than 5.3 million hectares of forest during the decade of the 1990s**
- • **Less than one person out of five has electricity.**
- • **Out of 1,000 inhabitants 15 have a telephone line, and 7.8 out of 1,000 people surf on Internet.**

# Africa's Main Challenges

The facts and figures on Africa represent a number of crises that states in the continent are grappling with, including:

(1) An identity crisis: Groups within a number of African states are not able to identify with their statehood and are seeking to break away: Eastern DRC, Oromo in Ethiopia.<sup>66</sup>

- (2) Legitimacy crisis- Various insurgency groups have through the use of force severely challenged the legitimacy of the state e.g. LRA in Uganda, various groups in Somalia, MEND in Nigeria.
- (3) Crisis of participation: women, youth, and minorities are most affected. Programmes for participation of these groups appropriated by already dominant groups.

- (4) Crisis of access- many factors contribute to the remoteness of the African state including harsh terrain, poor infrastructure, conflict, banditry. The state remains close to those in the peripheries. The question is: how far does government need to go in providing services?
- (5) Intergration crisis: Those in the fringes of society acutely experience challenges of integration.

- (6) Production crisis- populations are growing faster than the resources are being produced. Technology is the new driving force in wealth creation. Africa has failed to join the force.<sup>9</sup>
- (7). Distribution crisis- After Latin America, Africa has the largest gap between the rich and the poor. Even if African states wanted to embark on redistributive justice, corruption would stand in the way.

# What opportunities Exist in Africa

- Despite the fact that much needs to be done in many respects, some progress has been made in the attainment of democracy in Africa.
- There is more accountability on the part of the political leadership although room for improvement exists.

- “Better access to education would allow less-skilled and lower-income groups to capitalize on the opportunities from both technological progress and the ongoing process of globalization.” IMF.
- Africa has a chance to take part in global technological advances through investing in education.

- Civil society is playing an increasingly important role in the politics of African countries e.g. a story appearing on the Mail and Guardian of south Africa, “How civil Society Saved Kenya” reflects the increasingly important role of civil society in the management of conflict.

- Support for civil society will go some way in achieving the objectives of state building and human rights protection.

- Thank You

- “The positive role played by agricultural exports in terms of improving income distribution in developing countries suggests that policymakers should support growth in this sector.” IMF.
- Supporting the growth of agriculture on the continent would go towards poverty reduction and addressing income disparities in Africa.

- Broadening access to finance, for instance by improving institutions that promote pro-poor lending, could help improve the overall distribution of income even as financial development broadly continues to support overall growth.

- Overall, technological progress and FDI are associated with higher growth, and their disequalizing effect reflects an increase in the returns from acquiring higher skills.

# Addressing the crises of the State

- Democracy will go along way towards addressing the crises facing the African state.
- A genuine national discussion of the issues surrounding each country will stem political violence and conflict.
- Inclusion of women youth and marginalized groups in the political process will also stabilize the political process. Adopting electoral systems friendly to broad-based participation will help.

- Adoption of freedom of information standards will also improve overall accountability. Only Uganda and South Africa have FOI regimes in the whole continent.
- Diplomatic pressure from outside of the continent if carefully coordinated helps to keep stability.