

Harnessing Agenda 2063 in socio-economic development in African countries. A Panel Discussion

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ABSTRACT

The article aims to examine the applicability of Agenda 2063 to socio-economic development in African countries, drawing both Afro-centric and Eurocentric perspectives. Given the pressing development challenges faced by many African countries, the applicability and feasibility of this ambitious framework has been the subject of extensive debate and analysis. This article seeks to unravel the applicability of Agenda 2063 in prioritizing development at micro, macro and meso level. The objectives are to examine the relevance of Agenda 2063 as a long-term strategic framework in achieving development and to examine the nexus between Agenda 2063 as a comprehensive plan of action and African countries neo-liberal economic policies. Besides this, The article seeks to analyse the efficacy of Agenda 2063 First Ten-year plan in African countries. Against the backdrop of financial constraints in African countries, the paper analysis a wide range of socio-economic goals attested by the Agenda 2063 aimed at transforming Africa into a prosperous, integrated and globally competitive region by the year 2063. The chapter aims to use systematic literature review research methodology as it enables pragmatic literature review. Findings from the study show that the Agenda 2063 applies to the development of African countries as it is aligned with the developing goals such as economic transformation and poverty reduction. The chapter contends that, the Agenda 2063 aims for sustainable development in education, health and economic growth. Conclusions from the study show that, many African countries face obstacles in implementing the agenda 2063 due to limited resources, governance issues, and lack of political will. The study concluded that the Agenda 2063 can be explained by social cooperation, indigenous control, poverty alleviation and egalitarianism. Findings on implementation challenges show that financing and governance are obstacles in the implementation of Agenda 2063. The study showed that, only 10 countries achieved 50% of the goals articulated in the Agenda 2063. The seven moonshots from the Second Ten year plan of Agenda 2063 has been embedded in National Development Plans of African member states. Recommendations from the study advocates for sustainable policies that can be implemented to attain the Agenda 2063, African countries should adopt good governance so as to effectively apply the Agenda 2063. The study proposed the need for bilateral and multilateral development strategies that aims to address socio-economic challenges faced by African countries.

Key Words: Development, economic growth, foreign direct investment, economic development, sustainable development,

INTRODUCTION

The applicability of Agenda 2063 to African countries is particularly evident in its focus on economic transformation and poverty reduction, both of which are essential for sustainable development. The seven core aspirations of Agenda 2063 specify that every AU member state should attain middle-income status, integration of Africa as a global market, the role of public institutions in achieving agenda 2063, conflict resolution, the promotion of African values, empowerment of African citizens and the influence of Africa as a strong and influential global market. On that same note, The Agenda 2063 is a paradigm shift from the OAU'S liberation focus to the AU'S socio-economic development mandate .The African Union therefore stands at the centre of the coordinating mechanism for the overall implementation of Agenda 2063 alongside its strategic direction and ensuring that all African countries are committed to the goals and aspirations of the Agenda. (Guthui, 2025). In addition to that, Kumba (2024) argues that promoting industrialization and economic diversification, the agenda encourages countries to shift from reliance on raw materials to developing manufacturing sectors. For instance,

Ethiopia has successfully invested in textile and leather industries, which not only enhance value addition but also create jobs, thereby reducing poverty levels. Similarly, Rwanda's emphasis on technology and innovation has spurred growth in the ICT sector, providing employment opportunities and driving economic resilience. According to Dube (2021), the agenda's specific targets for poverty eradication push nations to implement social protection programs. Botswana, for example, has utilized its diamond revenue to fund social welfare initiatives that uplift marginalized communities. These examples illustrate how aligning national strategies with Agenda 2063 can effectively address socio-economic challenges and foster inclusive growth across the continent.

Moreover, the applicability of Agenda 2063 to the socio-economic development of African countries is significantly enhanced by its integration with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly in the realms of environmental sustainability, health, and education. Nhamo (2020), states that embedding sustainable development principles into its framework, the agenda addresses the crucial balance between economic growth and environmental health. For instance, Kenya has made strides in promoting renewable energy, such as geothermal and wind power, which not only supports economic activities but also minimizes environmental degradation. On that same note, While the recently established African Continental Free Trade Area has the potential to lift 30 million people out of poverty by 2030 and increase intra-African trade from 18% of total trade to 50% by 2030, this will require significant policy reforms, trade facilitation measures and infrastructure investment (Mlambo, Thusi and Ndlovhu, 2022 page 67). In addition economic growth and prosperity are associated with inclusive economic and political institutions, but the reverse is true extractive institutions enrich a few at the expense of many (Ndizera and Muzee, 2018). Also, Ndizera (2018), states that Agenda 2063 emphasizes improving access to education and healthcare, foundational elements for societal advancement. Ghana's initiatives to enhance educational infrastructure and accessibility have led to improved literacy rates, empowering the youth and fostering a more skilled workforce. Again, investments in healthcare, as seen in South Africa's efforts to expand access to primary health services, address public health challenges while contributing to a more productive economy as well. These examples underscore how aligning national policies with Agenda 2063 can drive sustainable socio-economic development across the continent.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 The Applicability of Agenda 2063 in African countries economic growth

The applicability of Agenda 2063 to the socio-economic development of African countries is strongly reflected in its focus on regional integration and trade, particularly through the Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) and infrastructure development. Odeku and Rikhotso (2023) state that the CFTA aims to enhance intra-African trade by reducing tariffs and other barriers, and fostering economic collaboration among member states. Agenda 2063 highlights the importance of regional integration and cooperation among African countries which can facilitate the pooling of resources and creation of larger markets. For example, the CFTA has the potential to significantly benefit countries like Nigeria and Ghana, enabling them to trade goods more freely and expand their markets, thus boosting local industries. Additionally, the agenda underscores the importance of infrastructure development as a backbone for economic integration. Investments in transport networks, such as the Trans-African Highway project, are crucial for connecting landlocked countries like Uganda to larger markets, reducing costs, and facilitating trade (Vhumbunu et al., 2023).

More so, the applicability of Agenda 2063 to the socio-economic development of African countries is significantly enhanced by its focus on governance and stability. Murombo (2016) suggests that by promoting good governance, transparency, and accountable leadership, the agenda seeks to strengthen institutions that are vital for fostering an environment conducive to economic progress. For instance, Botswana, renowned for its stable political climate and effective governance, demonstrates how robust institutions can lead to sustainable economic growth and social stability. The agenda also emphasizes the importance of peace and security as foundational for development. Initiatives aimed at conflict resolution and the prevention of violence are critical, particularly in regions like the Sahel, where instability can disrupt economic activities and displace communities (Union 2020). Countries like Ethiopia have shown progress through dialogue and peace agreements, which can enhance economic performance and investment. By addressing governance and security issues, Agenda 2063 paves the way for a more stable and prosperous socio-economic landscape across Africa.

2.2 The demographic dividend in the context of Agenda 2063

The demographic dividend has long been as an important explanation for the high economic growth of developing countries, developing countries have a high birth rate and a large young and middle aged population, which leads to lower labour costs and makes their manufacturing industries more competitive in the international trade (Zhou, Deng, Li and Wang, 2023). On that same note, the demographic dividend calls for a multi-sector approach through industrial development and forming collaborative institutional structures. Accordingly, Omorayi (2019) has it that strengthening institutions, improving infrastructure and investing in education, health and technological readiness are priorities of African nations to enable local market development to attract foreign investment and create the employment that will unleash the potential of African demographic dividend.

2.3 Implementation Hurdles of Agenda 2063

The implementation of Agenda 2063 faces many challenges including weak domestication. According to Nakiwala et.al (2025) The African Union's Agenda 2063 represents a transformative framework that fosters socio-economic development, political stability and regional integration across the continent. However the effective domestication of this ambitious agenda encounters several challenges rooted in governance, institutional capacity, resource constraints, stakeholder engagement and data management (Nakiwala et.al,2025). The major challenge of implementing the Agenda 2063 rely on external funding dependency amongst African countries. Funding challenges compound infrastructure deficits, while large scale infrastructure development is prioritized in Agenda 2063 many governments on the continent are hamstrung by lack of funds for those projects. (Guthui,2025). However it can be argued that African countries face the challenge of debt, Mlambo et.al (2022) observed that although Agenda 2063 has been in effect for six years, several African nations are still dependent on external sources of funding which are notorious for driving them deeper into debt due to ineffective public financial management policies on loan contraction and other things. International partnerships are also fundamental to funding Agenda 2063, these include multilateral financing institutions like the World Bank, African Development Bank and other development partners who can offer grants or loans along with technical assistance toward specific projects locked in Agenda 2063. The Agenda puts forward a financing strategy that is articulated into domestic resource mobilization, intermediation of resources into investment and access to finance. But AU has inadequate resources to execute Agenda 2063 programs (Ndizera and Muzee, 2018).

The Agenda 2063 furthermore envisions enhanced regional integration through instruments like the AfCFTA, which seeks to forge a bigger and more unified market and facilitate cross-boarder trade. (Guthui,2025). These initiatives not only improve trade routes but also enhance access to essential services and resources, promoting overall socio-economic growth across the continent. Thus, aligning national objectives with Agenda 2063 can lead to a more interconnected and prosperous Africa. Accordingly, AfCFTA'S hurdles include lack of an appropriate governance system that is based on the rule of law and a lack of a solid institutional architecture in order to promote, as requested by the Africa Development Bank, harmonization, consistency and predictability goals (Cofelice , 2018). On that same note, one of the major obstacle of AfCFTA'S Instrument is Article 18 and 19 on overlapping of membership and higher integrity. This weakens the AfCTA because these are agreements which are already in higher level and this can make states feel the forum as an optional in terms of trade in goods and service (Ahmed, 2024)

METHODOLOGY

The study used a detailed desk review qualitative methodological protocol in harnessing the efficacy of Agenda 2063 to economic growth. The study applied document analysis interviews with key primary research participants to have an understanding of Agenda 2063. The research data bases include African journals and books.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Agenda 2063 First Ten year implementation plan

Findings from the study show that the impact of the AfCFTA is attributed to the consideration of human rights and trade liberalization in African countries. The Agenda 2063 seeks to strengthen the relationship between human rights and liberalization. (Cofelice, 2018) notes that assessing the distribution impact of the AfCFTA agreement is crucial to ensure the relationship between human rights promotion and trade liberalization. However it can be argued that the AfCFTA is a rigid westernized instrument which applied a European model to address human rights issues and economic growth. The AfCFTA is similar western model but to be successful it needs to adopt a model which will be balance of western model and African model (Ahmed, 2024).

Finding of the study show that, harnessing the demographic dividend through investment in youth and education connects with Agenda 2063 in addressing African development. The demographic divided as highlighted by the Agenda 2063 as it provides a road map of harnessing sustainable development in African countries. Findings from the study show that there is a relationship between the demographic dividend and education. If knowledge and skill is promoted in African states the labour force quality is improved contributing to economic development and growth. (Zhou et.al, 2023) has it that the level of education also has a crucial impact on the realization of the demographic divided, countries with higher levels of education benefit more from the demographic dividend. For example the Agenda 2063 First Ten Year implementation plan provides for the establishment of an AFRICAN Virtual and E-University increasing access to tertiary and continuing education in Africa by reaching large numbers of students and professionals in multiple sites, simultaneously and developing relevant high quality Open, Distance and e-Learning resources (Ndizera and Mzee, 2018)

Findings from the study show that the applicability of Agenda 2063 to socio-economic development in Africa is significantly hampered by governance issues, particularly widespread corruption, lack of transparency, and weak institutions. These challenges obstruct effective implementation of the policies and programs designed to drive economic growth and social progress. For instance, Ronceray and Sergejeff (2023), states that in countries where corruption is prevalent, funds intended for infrastructure development or social services often fail to reach their intended purposes, resulting in stalled projects and unmet needs. To address these issues, African nations must prioritize the strengthening of governance frameworks by promoting accountability, enhancing institutional capacity, and fostering civic engagement. Implementing robust anti-corruption measures and ensuring transparency in public spending are crucial steps toward building trust and enabling effective policy execution. According to Alden (2024), encouraging regional cooperation to share best practices and resources can help create a more conducive environment for the realization of Agenda 2063's objectives, ultimately driving sustainable socio-economic development on the continent.

Moreover, inadequate infrastructure poses a significant barrier to the applicability of Agenda 2063 in advancing socio-economic development across African countries. Sulemani (2019), suggests that poor transport, energy, and communication systems severely limit connectivity and trade, essential components for fostering economic integration and collaboration. For instance, countries with underdeveloped road networks often struggle to access markets, resulting in increased costs and inefficiencies that hinder local businesses. Also, unreliable energy supplies can stifle industrial growth and deter foreign investment, further perpetuating economic stagnation. Hence Fofack (2020), argues that without substantial improvements in infrastructure, the ambitious goals outlined in Agenda 2063 such as enhancing intra-African trade and supporting sustainable industrialization are unlikely to be realized. To overcome this challenge, African nations must prioritize infrastructure investments, leveraging both public and private resources to build and maintain essential facilities, thereby creating a more integrated and economically vibrant continent.

To add on, conflict and instability significantly limit the applicability of Agenda 2063 to socio-economic development in African countries by disrupting economic activities and displacing populations. According to Cerf (2018), Ongoing violence and political unrest deter investment and cripple essential services, making it challenging to implement the ambitious objectives outlined in the agenda. For instance, in South Sudan, years of conflict have not only led to widespread displacement but have also devastated infrastructure and local economies, leaving communities without access to basic services like education and healthcare. To address this

challenge, it is crucial for African nations and regional organizations to prioritize conflict resolution strategies and promote inclusive governance (Sugh and Ikwuba, 2017). Establishing dialogue platforms that bring together conflicting parties and civil society can foster understanding and peace. Additionally, investing in post-conflict recovery programs, such as those aimed at rebuilding food security and restoring livelihoods, is essential for creating a stable environment conducive to the successful implementation of Agenda 2063's aspirations.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the Agenda 2063 has a strong potential to contribute to the socio-economic development of African countries, particularly if it is embraced and driven by African nations themselves. The frameworks alignment with African priorities, its comprehensive approach and emphasis on African ownership and leadership make it a promising initiative for transforming the continent. Agenda 2063 provides a comprehensive holistic approach to development one that is tailored to the African context and empowers African countries to chart their own course towards prosperity. By embracing the principles of Agenda 2063 African nations can assert their agency and overcome the legacies of colonialism and external interface. The Agenda 2063's relevance can be attributed to comprehensive nature, social cooperation, indigenous control and elimination of discriminatory gaps. However its successful implementation will depend on overcoming various challenges and ensuring sustained commitment and coordination among African countries and their partners. There is still debate on the degree to which globalization, the political economic nexus, democracy human rights considerations undermine the validity of Agenda 2063.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Proposing the creation of an annual Agenda 2063 Index that rank member states and link progress to results.
- Technological Development and incorporating Artificial intelligence in promoting the Agenda 2063.
- Collective development amongst African countries through conducting Agenda 2063 Annual Summits to ensure that countries share experiences and challenges faced in ensuring the Agenda 2063 goals are upheld.
- African governments should initiate training programs for Veto playes who are involved in Agenda 2063 implementation through prioritization and active engagement.

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