

# Privatization Profligate in the African Continent: An Impediment of Political, Economic and Social Progress towards 2030<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

*The paper raises the argument that the privatization of the continent that was meant to promote development because of its assumed efficiency, will instead hamper the efforts by the continent to realize the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The continent cannot end poverty, hunger, achieve good health and well-being, quality education, gender equality, clean water and sanitation, affordable and clean energy and decent work and economic growth because of its re-colonialization by the corporations; most of which have no interest in the betterment of Africa economically, politically, socially and technologically. The continent has realized unprecedented levels of poverty, poor health services and poor education sector. This can partly be attributed to the fact that the continent has surrendered its political and economic power to the external forces. There is a clear indication that the privatization process has given power back to the colonial imperialist forces after what was believed to be the independence of the continent. Evidently, the continent has experienced the capturing of the ruling elite by foreign forces that have imposed privatization in Africa, which has made the impecunious governments to be forced to abdicate their responsibilities by surrendering their powers to exotic forces. The paper further argues that in some instances the state apparatus are used as conduits through which resources that could be expended to fulfil the SDGs are channeled to foreign forces, leaving Africa without the necessary resources to meet the exigencies of its people. The important resources that could be expended to ameliorate the living conditions of the African people are instead exported from the continent through private entities such as commercial foreign banks.*

**Key words:** Africa, Privatization, Poverty, Economic, Social, Political, Development, Westernization and Re-colonization.

## Introduction

It has to be stated that privatization emerged in the 1980s in Europe and United States of America where government owned enterprises were sold to the private sector, which was viewed as more efficient and productive. As noted by Harvard Business Publishing (2023) the most notable example of privatization was in the United Kingdom where by 1987, the Thatcher government had shed more than US \$20 billion in state assets, including British Airways, British Telecom, and British Gas. Sales also ran into the billions of dollars in France and Italy. In the United States of America as noted by Commission on Government Forecasting and Accounting (2006) privatization of public services did occur at all levels of government within the United States. Some examples of services that were privatized include airport operation, data processing, vehicle maintenance, corrections, water and waste-water utilities, and waste collection and disposal. There was new found faith in privatization that got spread and became a global phenomenon of the 1990s.

The paper is meant to present the narrative that privatization, coupled with corruption, has impoverished Africans, resulting in high mortalities due to lack of medical experts, poor health facilities, under resourced education sector, exploitation of the human capital, and the de-indigenization of the medical sector. It is evident that through de-indigenization, the traditional methods of curing diseases is demonized, ridiculed and disallowed from the modern privatized entities like private hospitals. The African countries as a result of privatization are struggling to fulfil the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), leaving the continent with little hope of making any achievement by 2030, which is less than five years from now. It is worthy to note that Africa will still be characterized by poverty, hunger, inequalities, poor health and well-being, education of poor quality, lack of clean water and sanitation, very expensive energy, unemployment and dwindling economic growth, lack of Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure, unsustainable cities and communities, irresponsible consumption and lack of productivity, no action against climate change, depleted land and water resources, lack of Peace and Justice, poorly constructed Institutions and lack of camaraderie and quid pro quo in the continent and globally.

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<sup>1</sup> The paper further points to corruption as responsible for the siphoning of resources by the private sector.

### ***Privatization and poverty in Africa***

When the African continent fell into the trap of privatization with its own incapacitated and unscrupulous private sector, the foreign companies took advantage of the situation. It is important to indicate that the foreign private sector that is well resourced, got attracted to the continent because of its natural resources and the human capital that can be easily exploited, which happens because of lack of laws that are designed by African governments to protect its people. The continent lacks legislations that can protect Africans from exploitation by foreign private companies. Therefore, the foreign entities are not obliged to eradicate poverty as they often avoid tax and export the proceeds to rich countries. It has to be noted that most African countries do not forbid foreign traders from exporting the proceeds that they generate in the continent to foreign banks. For example, in the case of Botswana, no laws exist that prescribe the amount of proceeds that the foreign companies can export, which means the money that is generated from the country can be exported to foreign countries. This is the main reason why Botswana is always glorified by foreigners for its quixotic democracy and not by the ordinary citizens that live in abject poverty and shabbiness. As noted by Economics (2021) we have seen large Chinese investments in Africa and hundreds of thousands of Chinese are now living and working in Africa – this is now major source of remittance back to domestic Chinese economy. So, it can be summed up that the Chinese companies come to Africa to exploit Africans and export what they generate back to their country, the way companies from the other parts of the world do.

The privatization of Africa has also brought about influence by external forces, which has made it difficult if not impossible for the continent to develop the laws that favor its citizenry, leading not only to their exploitation but to their unemployment as well. The unemployment of Africans means in majority of instances they remain without an income, which plummet them into abject poverty. According to Agengá (2012) Newly-privatized firms cut employment, usually reducing the roll of white and blue-collar workers by nearly half. The African countries such as Botswana, have experienced retrenchments of workers by private companies even those that are given government tenders amounting to billions of US Dollars. It is worth noting that those who are retrenched suffer hunger, lack social care, cannot provide for the basic needs of their families and depend on benevolent relatives and friends (McCourt, 2001 and Gribble, 2009). The imported capitalist mode of production is responsible for the disintegration of the extended family system, which has reduced the gesture of altruism that was often given to members of the extended family such as uncles, aunts, mothers, fathers and grandfathers and grandmothers.

The other noticeable problem is the tendency in the continent to give foreign investors preference over the locals, such as prompt responses to foreign applications for investing in the continent than it is the case with citizens. It is important to note that in Botswana, the country does not have stipulates to allow only wealthy investors into the country, which has allowed very poor foreigners to come into the country masquerading as investors. The privatization has also led to the exorbitant prices getting charged for commodities that are sold to locals, which make it difficult for the citizens to afford the basic necessities. As noted by Kikeri and Nellis as cited by Bjorvatn and Soreide (2005) privatization is successful due to higher profits, the measure of success is often very narrow, typically only dealing with the profitability of the privatized company. If improved profits are due to higher prices to consumers, the net welfare effect is not necessarily positive.

Despite privatization having been embraced with the hope that it will reduce levels of poverty, it has failed to rescue the continent from economic deprivation of the African population. There is also nothing suggesting that the eradication of poverty can happen in the continent before 2030 as per Sustainable Development Goals. According to Aikins and Mclechlan (2022) about 30 million more Africans fell into extreme poverty (living on less than US\$1.90 a day) when COVID-19 broke out in 2020. Before the pandemic struck, over 445 million people – equivalent to 34% of Africa's population – lived below the poverty datum line. Africa has the largest share of extreme poverty rates globally, with 23 of the world's poorest 28 countries at extreme poverty rates found in the continent. It is important to indicate that the Western countries that prescribed privatization for Africa as the best model for economic prosperity, did not get wealthy because they privatized. They were already wealthy and having a strong private sector when the concept was prescribed as an economic model that can deliver required economic results for the poverty stricken Africa. Notably, Africa performed better before privatization besieged the continent, bringing its devastating effects.

The reliant of African countries in the private sector for its economic development has over the years proven to be a mirage, which has instead made the continent to fall into the neo-colonial trap. The continent has in some instances attracted the so called foreign investors that are penniless or those that have little financial resources and the will to create employment, which through remunerations can reduce poverty. In Botswana for instance, the ruling Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) funded foreign companies some from developed countries, through Financial Assistance Policy (FAP), which got resources from state coffers. The financial resources that were given came in form of grants from an African country, which then had over forty percent (40%) of its people living below the

poverty datum line. Botswana in abdicating its responsibility of eradicating poverty squandered the financial resources in giving grants to the private sector with little measures employed to monitor and make it account. Some of the companies arrived in the country to receive the grants only to disappear without trace. Botswana as other African countries, continues to allow the private sector to siphon and plunder resources through overpriced services and products, some of which are of lower quality. For example, in a village called *Dibete*, which is a little over one hundred kilometers from the capital city of Gaborone, a police station could not be occupied because it is feared that it has defects and can collapse anytime. There is nothing suggesting that those responsible were arrested and made to atone for their failure.

The squandering of resources in the manner mentioned above cannot eradicate poverty in Botswana and in Africa, but can instead impoverish the country and the continent. It is worthy to note that the private sector is not obliged to eradicate poverty in the continent because it does not get voted by the ordinary people on account of ameliorating their living conditions.

The private sector has over the years demonstrated its unwavering motive towards profiteering for wealth accumulation by a few individuals, disregarding the suffering that the poor people are subjected to. The employment that is generated by the private sector is often exploitative and promotes corruption because the legislators avoid making laws that can disadvantage them through fighting corruption and paying workers decent salaries. The private sector stakeholders do have fringe benefits that drawn a lot of resources from the coffers of the companies that they own or control. They pay themselves colossal remunerations and in addition to that get various allowances such as, car allowance, housing allowance, and servant allowance. Some private companies do pay health and education charges for the spouses and children of the owners and top officials of the entities.

The private sector has different priorities from those of African governments, such as spending of resources in paying salaries to sportsmen/women for entertainment, whilst the majority of Africans languish in poverty. It is diabolical that poor people continue to spend their hard earned resources to pay for entertainment, such as watching football and basketball games played by foreigners in the Europe and United States of America. The arrangement that prioritize Eurocentric and Americentric forms of entertainment has led to the obliteration of Indigenous games that Africans used for their entertainment.

The private companies do not expend their financial resources that they get from government tenders to create employment for the citizens, but instead spend whatever they get on luxurious goods that are imported from other continents. As noted by Onyeani (2006) Africans drive the best cars- BMWs, Mercedes Benzs, Jaguars, they wear the nicest and most exclusive and costly clothes; they wear brand names; they spend a lot of money on shoes. Evidently, most traders in Africa do not reinvest the proceeds to create employment in the continent, hence the ever skyrocketing levels of unemployment and underemployment in the continent.

In countries like Botswana, the tax payers are paying heavily as the government is spending substantial amounts in indirectly funding the private sector. For instance, the police and military vehicles are used to escort private security vehicles to Automated Teller Machines (ATMs) to deposit money for some of the commercial banks.

### ***African health and education catastrophe***

The health and education sectors are important for the development of any continent and should therefore be freed from the shackles of foreign funding and control. If the African continent remains under the control of foreign private pharmaceutical companies, it will undermine its indigenous medical interventions. The foreign influenced education curricula that are imposed on the African continent are meant to promote the westernization of Africans by foreign forces. As recorded by Holtz (2021), Africa relies heavily on imported pharmaceutical goods to support its health care needs. As of 2019, as much as 70 to 90 percent of the drugs consumed in Sub-Saharan Africa, which were of the estimated value of \$14 billion, were imported. Moreover, Africa represents nearly 25 percent of global demand for vaccines but produces only 0.1 percent of the vaccines. Within Africa, 99 percent of vaccine doses are imported and of the 1 percent (12 million doses) produced domestically, most are relegated to the final fill-and-finish steps. As noted by Holt, Lahrichi and Santos Da Silva (2015) Africa may be the only pharmaceutical market where genuinely high growth is still achievable. The pharmaceutical companies are able to attract much money from Africa because the continent is made to believe that the use of indigenous knowledge in the medical sector is risky. The use of African plants to cure diseases is regarded as dangerous as it is often blamed for chronic renal diseases. The African educational sector serves to promote the narrative that indigenous plants that are organic possess more danger than processed western medicine.

The acquisition of drugs from foreign pharmaceutical companies has undermined the growth and modernization of the African indigenous expertise to cure diseases and conduct research through universities, which could strength the sector. It is lack of political will and inadequate funding that is responsible for the dearth of African efforts to allow for the indigenization of the health sectors in the continent.

Evidently, when the political leaders in the continent are unwell, they prefer to travel abroad for medical attention leaving behind under resourced facilities. This provides evidence that they do not have confidence in the African health systems to provide the services that they are designed for. According to Mmotla (2019) Nigeria's President Muhammad Buhari has routinely travelled to London to get medical assistance for his undisclosed illness since 2016. At some point, as his flight was leaving for London, health practitioners in public hospitals started a protest over conditions in public health facilities and low wages. The African continent has no regard for those who as a result of their economic deprivation cannot afford to get medical attention in privately owned health facilities both locally and abroad. It is as a result of privatization that the government health care systems in Africa are underfunded because African leaders who make decisions eschew continental facilities and prefer foreign facilities. In some cases the African leaders run or are shareholders in private hospitals and clinics and therefore deliberately paralyze government health facilities so as to push patients to where the leaders directly benefit.

It is worthy to also note that African health sector is negatively affected by brain drain. As noted by Naicker, Plange-Rhule and Eastwood (2009) the already inadequate health system of Africa, especially Sub-Saharan Africa, is badly damaged by the migration of their health professionals. There are 57 countries with a critical shortage of healthcare workers, a deficit of 2.4 million doctors and nurses. This is partly the reason why leaders in a number of African countries have left their crumbling health systems to go abroad to receive outstanding medical treatment (Mmotla, 2019).

The African countries have also failed to provide better education through the government run schools. The education system that espouse African values that can transform Africans to attach importance in themselves, such as through African Renaissance is undermined and is not accommodated in the curricula of the schools in the continent. The arrangement has allowed the privately owned and run education institutions such as pre-schools, primary, secondary and tertiary institutions to promote their agendas through Westernization of African education to make it more Eurocentric and American-centric. The curricula in the private schools and tertiary institutions are meant to promote western culture, such as the use of languages of the former colonizers and to blindly follow their model of development. The private schools prefer their instructions to be in English, French, Portuguese, Spanish and Mandarin. The Africans through Western education are made to value whatever is non-African and despise their own identities. As averred by Milanovic (2021) the poorer countries lack resources to maintain the intellectual class, which could promote 'their' (domestic) issues and they thus become mere consumers of the ideas produced in the rich countries. The stained education starts from the day an African enters school and is confronted with the first nemesis of cultural annihilation: the language of his culture is repressed in favor of the English language (Onyeani, 2000).

The continent has witnessed the same influence as in the health sector, where the wealthy Africans including political leaders, prefer to send their children to schools in Europe, Asia and United States of America for their education. This is partly because education in most African countries is not adequately funded, leading to dilapidated infrastructure and exploited human capital. As noted by Chukuvemeka (2023), the primary means of funding education have shifted from taxes to out-of-pocket payments and charitable donations, the costs that each family is required to pay in order for their children to receive an education have increased as a direct result of budget cuts that the governments have implemented. The budget cuts are in some instances a result of the impecuniousness or economic underdevelopment of the African countries. As noted by Unions International Associations (UIA) (2022) economic underdevelopment not only means that the health of the people is affected, but also that local education and training and the importation of technologies for increased productivity cannot be paid for. The decision makers are in the middle class continuum and allocate less financial resources to government schools in full knowledge that their children attend better resourced private schools in Africa and abroad. As noted by John (2022) the socioeconomic status of a person has a wide range of implications. It can influence their ability to go to certain schools, their health, the occupations that are available to them, who they can marry and how the police and the courts treat them.

Even in the area of research, as noted by Milanovic (2021), Africa does not autonomously generate topics to be studied, it is often used as a 'research field' for themes defined by the North. These topics may or may not have any real effect on the ground in Africa. African poverty alleviation strategists should foster development through the incorporation of indigenous approaches that served the continent for years before its contemporary westernization. In Botswana for instance, the traditional schools promoted regimentation of cohorts that engaged in the eradication of poverty amongst communities through community projects. According to Adeyemi and Adeyinka (2003) In Nigeria, Ghana, Tanzania and Malawi traditional education of youngsters involves intellectual, physical and attitudinal training in order for them to develop fully into acceptable adults in their communities. They also learnt games, including wrestling and running, training for healthy living, cooking, dressing, hunting, and farming, carpentry, training to become a smith, critical thinking, drumming, dancing and marriage counselling. Africa is also Christianized and Islamized and these religions have undermined the indigenous African religions that inculcated values of industriousness, respect for the elders and the families in the young men and women.

The African schools do not make the learners study African religions and philosophy, which would constitute the systematic studies of the attitudes of mind and belief that have evolved in the many societies of Africa (Mbiti, 1999). The African countries are besieged with felonies because of discontinuing of traditional schools.

### **The gender and economic equality mirage**

The Sustainable Development Goals that advocate for gender and economic equality are not easy to fulfil in the African continent. It is clear that there is no commitment by some continental leaders to bridge the gap between the rich and the poor because this means taking some resources from the middle class to empower those that are submerged in poverty. Even in those countries such as Botswana, which are said to be economically advanced, the gap between the rich and the poor is staggeringly high. As noted by UNDP (2020) Botswana is currently one of the most unequal countries globally, having the 9th highest Gini coefficient, indicating the degree of inequality of incomes. In South Africa, Clercq (2020) states that the population lives in poverty, high unemployment levels (27% is the formal rate, but it is more likely to be around 40%), and high levels of inequality (with a Gini coefficient of 0.66, which has remained consistent). In Eswatini according to International Monetary Fund (2023), an estimated 59 percent of the population is below the poverty line, with 29 percent of the population living in extreme poverty. Eswatini also ranks among countries with the highest income inequalities, with gender inequalities widespread and unemployment is high, particularly among youth (58.2 percent) and food insecurity is a chronic problem.

The African continent is characterized by economic inequalities, with some aggravated by the misconception that the middle class women can advocate for the rights of poor women and ameliorate their living conditions. Notably, there is evidence that many Africans continue to experience their lives as impoverished, despite high levels of recorded economic growth in their countries. There is continued poverty and lack of improvement in the economic conditions of poorer families (Lofchie, 2015). It is important to note that the wealthy middle class women are snobbish and cannot therefore care about the poor women who live below the poverty datum line. The women and men who advocate for the empowerment of women through corporate and senior civil service positions are biased towards the middle class, since those women who are submerged in poverty do not qualify for those positions due to their lower levels of education.

In Botswana, middle class women who have through the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) advocated for and got positions of corporate and ministerial responsibilities fail to advocate for legislations that are meant to better the living conditions of the poverty stricken women. This explains why Botswana despite its spurious economic prosperity, does not have unemployment benefits and yet majority of the people who are unemployed are women. It also does not have child support grants, which could benefit women who are left to fend for themselves and their illegitimate children by their male partners. As noted by Acker (1973), indeed sex has rarely been analyzed as a factor in stratification processes of structures, although it is probably one of the most obvious criteria of social differentiation and one of the most obvious bases of economic, political and social inequalities. To further qualify the point, Collins (2022) notes that when more than half the population is marginalized, development becomes an unreachable goal. When that percentage consists of women and girls who in Africa are the ones responsible for the health and welfare of families, it is an acute problem.

The discourses on marginalization of women have often either deliberately or accidentally presented women as a homogenous or egalitarian entity, than as a group that is heterogeneous, consisting of poverty stricken women and the female snobs that want economic empowerment for themselves and their immediate families. The feminist perspective for instance, ignores the reality that exist in the African continent because of the failure by its ideologues to make the concept acknowledge that women hold different socio-economic and political status. It is disingenuous to ignore the reality that Africa has women who are literate and those that are illiterate, those that are down trodden and those that oppress, those that are poor and those that are wealthy. It is worthy to note that the women who advocate for their empowerment through positions of influence in the political parties, private sector, parastatals and the civil service do not have the same experiences as those who are unemployed, poverty stricken and exploited.

The empowerment of middle class women is what is advocated for by most countries including some in Africa. It is this development that has led Milber (2022) to observe that policymakers pay greater attention to the emerging middle class, more importantly to the 'floating middle class' that is vulnerable to falling back into poverty. The focus in the empowerment of middle class women has disadvantaged the poor women who do not have jobs and are languishing in poverty. In Botswana for instance, some women have gained higher decision making positions such as serving as ministers and permanent secretaries. Evidently, the development has not benefitted poor voiceless women who serve as maids and sex workers. The economic, social and political benefits have failed over the years to accrue to the desolated rural women and girls whose only hope for transformation is in the coming of the Lord.

It is important to note that whether female or male, the middle class people do not care about the poor people because if they really cared, they could have rescued them from poverty. The conspicuous reason why middle class people cannot rescue anybody from poverty is because of their naked arrogance and gargantuan ardent desire to accumulate filthily. As stated by De Silva (2022), the middle-class people feel they should prove their worth to the upper class. After all, they did not grow up with the same advantages those in the upper class had. As a result, they may act arrogantly to try and fit in or impress those who are in the upper class.

To expect the middle class to save the poor people from their economic, social, political and technological hardships is in defiance of the law of propinquity, which dictates that proximity is important in how people relate. The middle class women are in some cases the worst oppressors of poor women who they exploit as domestic workers, making them work longer hours, denying them the opportunity to visit their partners and refusing them to bring their children to their hostile work places. They are usually confined to the servant quarters that are located away from the main houses, so that the economic, political, social and technological distant can be noticeably maintained. The situation for servants in the former British colonies has not changed since the Victorian England because a servant is normally kept under constant scrutiny and constantly reminded of their inferiority. Some of the middle class women literally “own” servants and feel they have the power to go through their belongings whenever they want, to make sure they haven’t got anything which they object to. The middle class women often abuse their servants emotionally and in some cases even physically. This observation is not unique to the British because it is mimicked even in Africa where it is aggravated by lack of legislations against it.

The problem that should be addressed has to do with discrimination that is influenced by social class because men and women of the lower class receive the same form of atrocious treatment from middle class men and women. Notably, social class affects the life of individuals through poverty, classism, and other forms of economic inequality (Liu and Ali, 2008). According to Chancel, Cogneau, Gethin, and Myczkowski (2019), despite strong economic growth in many African countries, human development and poverty indicators have not progressed as expected. To some degree, it has to be admitted that foreign forces still influence the horrendous economic conditions of the African continent by supporting unscrupulous leaders who they easily control. This situation explains why as noted by Kingsburg, Remenyi, McKay and Hunt (2004) foreign political intervention has been used to maintain in power governments that serve elite interests, rather than the masses of the people. Africa is undeniably adulterated with comprador bourgeoisie.

### ***Provision of water and sanitation tantalisation***

The provision of water and proper sanitation has proven to be empty promises in most African countries, which denies poor people water despite its indispensability. In Botswana, failure to pay for water at the Water Utilities Corporation (WUC), which is a corporation that is responsible for the sale of water can result in water disconnection. This cruel action by the government aided organisation often leaves the poor families without water to drink, which violates their fundamental right to exist.

In some instances, water scarcity is as a result of natural disasters such as droughts. However, it can be argued that lack of planning by African countries that are prone to natural disasters often aggravates the situation. For instance, floods often kill more people who live in mud huts than those who live in well-constructed mansions. As stated by UNICEF (2022) in the horn of Africa, the protracted drought has led to a water crisis, with more than 8.5 million people facing dire water shortages across the region. Water scarcity is killing livestock, drying up crops and driving families from their homes. It is worthy to note that even when disasters strike, the African leaders and their children do not often get directly affected. The State houses that they occupy are the safest places in the continent. When people languish in poverty the leaders are enjoying the ill-gotten opulence. According to Chancel, Cogneau, Gethin, and Myczkowski (2019) Africa has the highest gap between average incomes of the top 10% and incomes of the bottom 50%. Average incomes of the top 10% are about 30 times higher than those of the bottom 50%.

In a continent that has people who are homeless, the provision of water and sanitation in such instances is not always possible. As observed by Rabian-Mohammed and Oudshoorn (2021) while the right to housing is a fundamental right per article 25 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, ‘homelessness’ is still not comprehensively recognized or addressed as a social issue in many countries, including many within North Africa. However, the problem is not only confined to North Africa as noted by Tenai and Mbewu (2020), who indicated that an estimated number of homeless people in South Africa varied between 100 000 and 200 000 in 2020. It is important to state that South Africa is amongst the countries that have better economies in the continent. The provision of water and sanitation is obviously still a pipedream in the continent and cannot be realized by 2030 as per the dictates of Sustainable Development Goals.

It is disturbing to learn that as indicated by UNICEF (2023), more than 70 per cent of the population in Eastern and Southern Africa (340 million people) have no access to basic sanitation services. Among these, 98 million people practice open defecation. It is easy to conclude that the continent of Africa should do much to meet the exigencies of its population. This requires deliberate efforts in ascertaining that programs are put in place for citizens of the continent, than to live under the illusion that foreign forces can rescue the continent from the economic, social, political and technological deprivation through boomerang foreign aid. It is important to indicate that Asian Development Bank (2006) had this to say about lack of water and poverty; water and poverty are inextricably linked.

Poor access to water and insufficient sanitation affect the health of the poor, their food security, and their prospects for making a living. Nakagiri et.al (2015) notes that access to improved sanitation in urban poor areas of developing countries is low. Urban poor areas, commonly referred to as slums, are heavily populated areas that characterized by substandard and unplanned infrastructure, poverty, and lack basic services like water and sanitation. According to United Nations (2019), on a global scale, half of the people who drink water from unsafe sources live in Africa. In Sub-Saharan Africa, only 24% of the population have access to safe drinking water and 28% have basic sanitation facilities that are not shared with other households. The problem of lack of water and sanitation facilities in Africa is compounded by the use of pit latrines, which contaminates underground water where it is available. The contamination of underground water often leads to water borne diseases that attack mostly rural populations and compromise their productivity levels when unwell. As stated by Lahue and Alexander (2018), among the many gastrointestinal diseases of importance in developing countries, waterborne and foodborne protozoan diseases that involve fecal-oral transmission, such as giardia and cryptosporidium, are a growing concern due to their association with poor sanitation and inadequate water treatment facilities.

It is indicated by UNICEF (2022), achieving the SDGs targets in Africa will require a 12-fold increase in current rates of progress on safely managed drinking water, a 20-fold increase for safely managed sanitation and a 42-fold increase for basic hygiene services. It is evident that Africa is highly likely not to overcome the impediments to provision of water and sanitation facilities before 2030. Even in countries such as Botswana, which are believed to be doing relatively well, Lahue and Alexander (2018) notes that as with the rest of Africa, a large population in certain regions of the country still use simple or vented pit latrines.

### ***Corruption and African underdevelopment***

The main economic, political and social problems of the African continent can be attributed to corruption. It is through corruption that the resources that could ameliorate the living conditions of the continental citizens are siphoned by African leaders who are inured to political, social and economic evil. Most often such resources are exported to western countries where they get stashed in private accounts in commercial banks. The main problem in Africa is that there is social acceptance of corruption even amongst the ordinary citizens, who glorify the continental leaders who cannot account for their ill-gotten wealth. The political leaders take advantage of the situation and allow corruption to permeate economic, political and social continental structures. According to Transparency International (2023) corruption creates and increases poverty and exclusion. While corrupt individuals with political power enjoy lavish lives, millions of Africans are deprived of their basic needs like food, health, education, housing, access to clean water and sanitation. Sarassoro (1979) pointed out in the seventies that official corruption has been widespread in African countries in the postcolonial period and has contributed considerably to political instability, public distrust of the governments and economic reverses and failure to attract foreign capital.

It is important to note that if Africa cannot embark on an exercise to enforce wealth declaration by the political leaders, corruption at a grant scale will remain institutionalized, making it difficult for the continent to rescue its people from abject poverty by 2030. A lot of African resources that could be expended to uplift the economic conditions of the poor leave the continent through corruption. As pointed out by CAAT and The Corner House (2009):

*Multilateral Development Banks estimate that some \$400 billion has been looted from African states and stashed in foreign bank accounts, around \$140 billion from Nigeria alone. The African Union estimates that \$148 billion a year leaves the continent because of corruption, and 80-90 per cent of the illicit overflows never return to the continent. Between \$20-40 billion of corrupt money is estimated to flow from transition and developing countries into Western banks annually.*

The amount of both financial and natural resources that are plundered from the economies of African countries happen because the continent is littered with gaucherie corrupt leaders who serve the Western powers. The African governments ascertain that financial resources that are looted from Western countries do not get into commercial institutions in the continent. The western governments do not reciprocate, but instead continue to allow the inflow of money looted from the African continent, some of which come to the continent in form of loans that are obtained from the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF).

This situation means Africans get denied jobs, better facilities such as schools, clinics and water, which condemn them to illiteracy and shorten their lives. As observed by José Ugaz, who is the chairperson of Transparency International, as cited by Veselinovic (2016), corruption creates and increases poverty.

In some instances, corruption has resulted in disgruntled African professionals who are trained with resources from the continent, such as medical doctors and engineers, leaving the continent to serve in developed countries. The brain drain has resulted in Africans not receiving the services that could be availed to them had it not been because of corruption.

The professionals such as medical doctors are underpaid as financial resources that could go towards their remunerations are plundered from the state coffers by some African politicians. As indicative of the problem of brain drain that African countries face, Okey (2016) points out that medical brain drain remains a major challenge for African countries. The other problem is that the employment and promotion of professionals in Africa is often influenced by nepotism, tribalism and favoritism, which drive even patriotic professionals from the continent to migrate to developed countries, where they enjoy the recognition of the meaningful professional contributions that they make. The recognition that they cannot find in their continent where meritocracy counts for nothing. Where birth most often entitles men and women to offices where no punishment exists for office romance (Corporate incest).

The schools, hospitals and roads for example, do not receive the funding that could motivate the African professionals to remain and serve their continent. It is surprising that even South Africa, which is economically admired by most African countries is not immune to the emigration of its citizens to Europe and North America. According to Business tech (2022) South Africans told the BBC that the two main reasons for leaving the country is for economic reasons (44%), such as pursuing a job opportunity, and educational opportunities (41%), such as going to university. It is worthy to note that South Africa has high unemployment rate, mostly of the youth. On the other hand, South Africa has universities that could attract its citizens if they were properly resourced and run.

As a result of institutionalization of corruption, the infrastructural development in Africa is too expensive for countries because projects are fraudulently overpriced. What aggravates the situation is also that the construction materials that are in some cases used are of lower quality. The culprits are both African local companies and their foreign counterparts. The situation is compounded by the fact that a low level of capital investment is required to set up construction companies, which in turn allows easy entry into the industry by new and sometimes unscrupulous players (Zou, 2006). In most countries in Africa they are no legislations that prevent politicians and their relatives from running companies that receive tenders from the governments. The immediate family members of state Presidents and Premier Ministers can be awarded tenders by officials who in some cases are appointed corruptly into positions that they do not qualify for.

Africa has a problem of bad planning and squandering of resources by its leaders, where in some cases massive resources are expended on projects that are not meant to ameliorate the living conditions of the people. Where instead of building hospitals, clinics, schools, roads, police stations and houses for the workers, the money is spent in the construction of underutilized facilities, such as stadia, expensive religious places and purchasing of expensive vehicles and unnecessary travels to western countries by the political leaders. An appropriate example is that of Ivory Coast, which under the Late Houphuet-Boigny spent US \$1 billion in building the biggest Cathedral in the remote village of Yamousoukoro, which is currently not utilized, denying poor people essential services (Onyeani, 2000). According to World Bank (2018), in Eswatini, an estimated 63 percent of the population lives below the poverty datum line, and about 29 percent lives below the extreme poverty line, but during his 50<sup>th</sup> birthday bash, King Mswati III wore a watch worth US\$ 1.6 million (about R20 million) and a suit beaded with diamonds. According to the Forbes 2009 list of the World's 15 Richest Royals, King Mswati III is worth a reported US\$200 million. In January 2004 the Times of Swaziland reported that the king asked his government to spend about US \$15-million to redecorate three main palaces and build others for each of his eleven wives.

It is worth noting that in some cases the conspicuous consumption is realized through loans that should have been expended by African governments on infrastructural development. As noted by Onyeani (2000), Africa's debt to the world stood at US\$375 billion. This is the money that the Western world has irresponsibly lent to Africa and there is no evidence of how that money was spent. The money did not go into infrastructural development, building roads, better health care and provision of better drinking water.

### ***Continental instability***

The continent of Africa is characterized by civil strifes and ever displaced populations, often resulting from civil wars that get triggered by dictatorship, rigging of elections and western influence that undermine local values.

For instance, in Botswana prisoners are not allowed to vote during national elections, which includes those that are not sentenced and people who during national elections are hospitalized. This disfranchisement has systematically led to Botswana Democratic Party, which ruled the country since its independence in 1966, remaining in power despite its blatant disregard of the needs of the people. The country does not have political party funding despite continued appeal by the opposition parties to avail such for the strengthening of democracy. In view of the fact that the ruling party does in some instances expend state resources in its campaigns, some of which are obtained through government overpriced tenders that are given to the private sector demagogues and dirty politicians, this arrangement can lead to civil strife in the long run.

The foreign forces, some of which are trading in arms, benefit from civil wars in the continent through the procurement of military weapons by both the governments and rebels. As a meanings to exemplify the African unrest, The Economist (2023) states that, the toppling of Mr. Bazoum, who assumed office in 2021 in Niger's first ever democratic transfer of power, has triggered an unprecedented crisis. The immediate worry is that it may ignite a regional war. Even if that danger is averted in the next few days, the putsch will almost certainly deal a crushing blow to efforts to fight the world's most dangerous jihadist insurgency, which has claimed tens of thousands of lives in the three core countries in the Sahel: Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger.

The other form of violence in the continent of Africa is instigated by insurgents against governments and through that form of violence innocent people get killed and maimed, infrastructure gets destroyed and environmental resources get denuded. The living conditions of the citizens of the continent often deteriorate. According to Wisevoter (2023) one of the most common types of conflict currently taking place is terrorist insurgency. Countries such as Algeria, Burkina Faso, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Mauritania, Mozambique, Niger, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia and Uganda are currently experiencing some form of terrorist insurgency. It is important to state that as a result of unrest in the continent development gets negatively affected, with no hope on site that the Sustainable Development Goals will be achieved.

The conflicts in Africa are not always by irrational groups that do not value peace, but in some instances violence gets presented as the only option to realize justice and democracy. Some of the governments in Africa are contumacious and abuse power through the use of state apparatus to terrorize innocent people and to rig elections. As noted by Murshed (2002), disputes that arise may be organized around social class, ethnicity, religion, region or the combination of the mentioned factors. The struggle can be over economic opportunities, as well as political and civil rights among other contestable factors.

Some African governments are led by politicians who are singularly corrupt and also rig elections to remain in power, which undermines democratic values. This is not to mean that democracy is always important for the African countries that have people who are submerged in abject poverty even in those African countries that are democratic. What is clear to the ordinary African people is that they cannot feed on democracy and therefore instead insist on having their social welfare prioritized. The political formations that claim to be opposed to corruption and violation of human rights, often take advantage of the desperation of the ordinary people due to poverty. This results in the ordinary people accepting arms to fight governments that neglect and impoverish them. In some instances the boys in the dusty villages of Africa gallivant without any work or schooling and some roam the streets of towns and cities. This situation often motivates their recruitment into the rebel movements.

It is often a situation where the boys feel desolate that they accept to serve in rebel movements to fight some African governments that deny them education and render them unemployable. It may not be judicious for the rebel movements to recruit boys into their fighting groups, but in some cases the governments are equally brutalizing them by subjecting them to wretchedness. It is important to note that it is dehumanizing to be subjected to conditions that undermine the human dignity of individuals whether by governments or the rebels. The rebellion that is common in most African countries is due to connivance of the continental leaders with foreigners who rapaciously take the important resources from the local communities. In countries such as Botswana, foreigners are allowed to purchase as much land as they wish and yet citizens are only allocated one plot under the tribal law. The enforcement of different legislations for the land is an indication of the entanglement of African countries on inherited laws. According to White (1999) Botswana has land tenure namely: tribal land, state land (crown land before independence) and freehold land. This arrangement has led to foreigners buying land in Botswana, which should instead be reserved for local posterity. It is imperative to state that the sale of land to foreigners by African countries has often bred disgruntlement of locals who may resort to violence if no laws are designed to restrict the transfer of land from locals to foreigners.

The African countries are still under the control of the former colonialists and are now even captured by corporate gangs that corrupt them. It is important to point out that corruption would not be as prevalent as it is, if it was not sponsored by the corporate mafia that infiltrated and continue to infiltrate the continent. It is the level of corruption and contumacious behavior by the leaders that abuse power that Africa is experiencing civil wars. Manifestly, the situation has rendered the future of the continent bleak, which distances it from realizing the SDGs by 2030.

Africa has its children serving in wars in the continent and cannot therefore realize social, political, economic and technological development. As noted by UN report as quoted by Tarver (2021), 8,521 children were used as soldiers in 2020, while another 2,674 children were killed and 5,748 injured in various conflicts. It is estimated that up to 40% of child soldiers are in Africa. It is important to come to an informed position that Africa cannot realize any meaningful economic, social, political and technological development when peace is illusive for the continent. It is a foregone conclusion that the continent of Africa cannot meet the exigencies of its people by 2030, to at least satisfy the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).

### **Conclusion**

The paper has presented the appalling state of the continent of Africa, making a case that the continent cannot realize its economic, political, social and technological development before 2030, which is a year in which the Sustainable Development Goals should be achieved. The privatization has without any grain of doubt brought about endemic poverty in the continent. The state of affairs can be attributed to the reality that corporate entities through privatization have taken control in a manner tantamount to re-colonization. The education and health sectors in most countries in the continent are under resourced, which is evidenced by political leaders travelling to European and Asian countries for medical attention. They also send their kith and kin to the best schools in other continents because of lack of confidence in the continental education systems.

The gender and economic equality is also just a mirage because the continent does not have any programs that are designed for the achievement of the proposed empowerment of those who are marginalized by 2030. The situation as it stands cannot take the continent to the envisaged political, economic, social and technological development. The continent should formulate clear approaches for the realization of equality through the empowerment of those who are currently downtrodden.

The continent is still failing to provide the indispensable utilities such as water and is wanting in the provision of sanitation facilities. Some African countries have condemned the people to live in squalor, which shortens their life expectancy. The paper has also demonstrated that as a result of institutionalized corruption in the continent, resources that could be used to fight abject poverty are looted by the leaders to fulfil their gargantuan and axiomatic desire for sumptuousness. The conclusion that can be drawn is that the continent cannot attain the level of political, social, technological and economic development prescribed through Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), if it remains submerged on external influence and led by corrupt leaders.

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