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Fact Sheet

Africa's Progress and Challenges

June 2010

As the 2010 World Cup games shine a spotlight on Africa, it is important to reflect on the continent-wide progress that has enabled Africa to host the world's biggest sporting event. Overall, Africa is rebounding from the economic crisis faster than most of the world, largely due to its isolation in the global economy. Several countries have recently experienced successful democratic transitions, such as Liberia's first post-conflict elections in 2005. Ghana, the first British colony in Africa to gain its independence, is considered one of the continent's most successful and steady democracies.

African countries will continue to thrive only within a supportive and coherent international policy environment, working with global partners to build on these recent gains.



Celia Escudero Espadas

Hunger

While hunger is widespread in sub-Saharan Africa (265 million people suffer from hunger, about 30 percent of the population), there have been promising gains:

- Ghana cut hunger by half from 1991 to 2004.
- In 2008, agricultural productivity in Rwanda increased by 16 percent, resulting in a sharp improvement in food security. The average Rwandan now gets 2,176 calories a day, which exceeds the global recommendation of 2,100 and Rwanda's former subsistence diet of less than 1,000 calories a day.
- Malawi has made tremendous gains in feeding its people. A government-led strategy helped turn Malawi from a food-deficit country to a food-exporting country, with a 53 percent food surplus in 2007 and excess production four years in a row.
- Eight African countries that spent more than 10 percent of their budgets on agriculture from 2004 to 2007 have reduced the proportion of hungry people over the past decade—among them Ethiopia (which reduced the proportion from 63 percent to 46 percent between 1995 and 2005) and Malawi (45 percent to 29 percent).

Health

Several sub-Saharan African countries have made promising advances in health interventions—reversing trends, mortality rates, and expanding access to treatment and prevention of infectious diseases.

- In the last 20 years, almost one-third of the 50 least-developed countries have reduced child mortality rates by 40 percent or more, including Eritrea, Malawi, Cape Verde, Mozambique, and Ethiopia. (UNICEF)
- Rates of maternal mortality are declining in sub-Saharan Africa. There is evidence of accelerating declines from 2000 to 2010, compared with 1990 to 2000. (*The Lancet*)
- Three million people with HIV now have access to antiretrovirals in Africa, compared with only 100,000 in 2003. (UNAIDS)
- The use of insecticide-treated bed nets among children jumped from 2 percent in 2000 to 22 percent in 2008. (2010 Report of the Secretary General, U.N.)

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- Improvements in several key child-survival interventions are expected to yield further declines in the deaths of children under 5 over the next few years. These also include vitamin A supplementation, breastfeeding, and immunization.
- There has been wider coverage of critical HIV interventions in most sub-Saharan countries where HIV prevalence is high. This includes antiretroviral treatment for pregnant mothers who are HIV-positive, to prevent transmission of the virus to their babies. (2009 U.N. MDG Report)

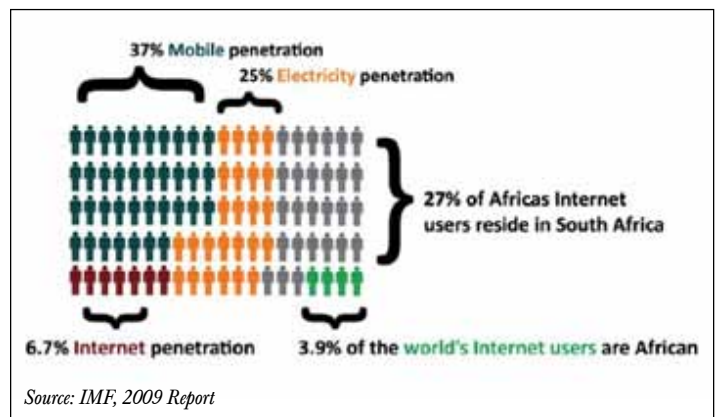


Margaret W. Nea

Economic Growth

More than 30 sub-Saharan African countries recorded higher economic growth rates in 2007 than 2006 (USAID). This year, 23 African economies grew individually at 5 percent or more. In total, 18 non-oil-producing African countries have averaged 5.5 percent growth between 1995 and 2005. The lower-income countries, Malawi and Tanzania, continue to show a steady rise in growth rates.

- Foreign direct investment in Africa was about \$30.5 billion in 2007, up from \$22 billion in 2006 and just \$4 billion in 1995.
- Africa is experiencing an information, communications, and technology “revolution,” with increased investments in infrastructure. The continent now has the highest growth rate of cell phone usage, where a quarter of the population has mobile phones. Cell-phone subscriptions in sub-Saharan Africa grew by more than 60 percent annually between 1994 and 2005.
- South Africa holds 40 percent of the world’s gold reserves and is the world’s third-largest producer, with about 9 percent of global production in 2009. It is one of the world’s primary precious metals producers.



Source: IMF, 2009 Report



Margaret W. Nea

Education

School enrollment has increased significantly in sub-Saharan Africa over the past 20 years. More children, particularly girls, have access to education. The region has experienced the fastest increase in primary education enrollment during the past 10 years.

- Sub-Saharan Africa raised its average net enrollment ratio from 54 percent to 73 percent between 1999 and 2007. Forty-two million children were enrolled in school between 1999 and 2007.
- Benin started out in 1999 with one of the world’s lowest net enrollment rates, but it is now on track to achieve universal primary education by 2015.
- Ethiopia sent 3 million more kids to school and Tanzania 2 million, doubling school enrollment from 2001 to 2006.
- Nearly 75 percent of children are now enrolled in school across Africa, compared with 58 percent in 1999. Tanzania, Burkina Faso, and Zambia have achieved more than 90 percent enrollment. Benin, Madagascar, and Zambia are on track to achieve universal primary education by 2015. (UNESCO)

- Inflation in sub-Saharan Africa decreased from 18 percent in 2000 to about 8 percent in 2008.
- In 1993, nearly 52 percent of South Africans had access to electricity for lighting. This had increased to 80 percent by 2004. (IRIN)

Sources: *The U.N. Millennial Campaign* (www.endpoverty2015.org); *The Lancet, Africa Progress Report 2010*.



USAID

Key Challenges

Key challenges remain in Africa. South Africa is one of the world's most unequal societies, according to a report from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. With more than 50 percent of Africans living on less than \$1.25 a day, more effort is urgently needed to achieve key targets, such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

- About 27 percent of children under age 5 are malnourished. Africa's western and central regions have the highest under-5 mortality rates. (UNICEF/World Bank)
- In sub-Saharan Africa, 40 percent of children under 5 are stunted as a result of malnutrition. More than 90 percent of the developing world's stunted children live in Africa and Asia. (UNICEF/FAO)
- Only a few countries in sub-Saharan Africa—Ethiopia, Mali, Mozambique, Nigeria, Senegal, and The Gambia—have surpassed the threshold of 4 percent agricultural growth in recent years. (IFPRI)

- The World Food Programme estimates that 22 of the 30 high-risk countries in need of external food assistance are in sub-Saharan Africa.
- About 90 percent of all malaria deaths occur in sub-Saharan Africa. Most of these deaths are children under 5; malaria is a leading cause of death for children under 5 in Africa. (UNICEF)
- More than 50 percent of Africans suffer from water-related diseases, such as cholera and infant diarrhea.
- Sub-Saharan Africa remains the region most heavily affected by HIV. In 2008, it accounted for 67 percent of HIV infections worldwide and 91 percent of new HIV infections among children. The region is also home to nearly 90 percent of all children living with HIV, and the epidemic has orphaned nearly 12 million children under 18. (UNAIDS/UNICEF)
- South Africa alone has an estimated 4 million orphans.
- The largest out-of-school population is in sub-Saharan Africa, where about 45.5 million children of primary school age are out of school. (UNICEF)
- Climate change will severely compromise agricultural production and food security in many African countries, disproportionately affecting small-scale farmers. Yield in some countries could be reduced by 50 percent by 2020, and crop net revenues could fall by as much as 90 percent by 2100. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change predicts increases in extreme weather patterns; dry areas will become drier and heavy rainfall and flooding will increase in other parts. (IFAD/WFP)

Africa remains the region most dependent on foreign aid, yet aid to Africa continues to lag far behind commitments and need.

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