

Least Developed Countries in Africa



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Introduction

Africa remains the most underdeveloped among the comity of continents across the world. It contains over 70% of the least developed countries (LDCs) in the world. Sadly, the African continent largely depends on aids, with most countries in Africa still running as mono-product economies, and a larger percentage affected by corruption, ethnoreligious conflicts, and civil wars (Akanji 2009; Omobowale 2015). To further indicate the

criticality of this situation, out of the 47 countries that make up the global list of least developed countries, 33 of them are found on the African continent. All of Africa's 33 least developed countries are in Sub-Saharan Africa, indicating the precarious nature of the subcontinent as shown in Table 1 below. Further, several reports that are based on empirical data suggest that inadequate access to basic livelihood needs, such as shelter, health, education, food, water, and transportation, compounds the precarious context of underdevelopment in Sub-Saharan Africa (United Nations Development Programme 2016).

Most of the least developed countries in Africa are in West and East Africa, with the former having a total of 12 countries represented on the list and the latter 11 countries. Although the number of countries profiled as LDCs in Central and Southern Africa (except for South Africa) are lower, this does not necessarily suggest that they are more developed than the West and East African regions. Historical literature on the continent suggests that the geographic arrangements which resulted from the colonial and post-colonial delineation of the Western and Eastern regions of Africa may be partially responsible for more countries being represented in these territories.

Over the years, African leaders have tried to tackle this developmental challenge, which is one of the most wicked problems that the continent has been unanimously experiencing for the past five decades. For instance, there are records of several attempts made at integrating countries on

Least Developed Countries in Africa, Table 1 Least developed countries in Africa

	Region	Countries
1	Central Africa	Central African Republic, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, Sao Tome and Principe
2	East Africa	Burundi, Comoros, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda
3	West Africa	Benin, Burkina Faso, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo
4	Southern Africa	Angola, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia

Sources: World Bank (2018), UNCTAD (2018)

the continents through specific indices and factors. The African Union (formerly Organisation of African Unity [OAU]) and the Eight Regional Blocs were formed based on treaties to promote unity, trust, and interdependency among African countries. The eight regional blocs include: the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU); the Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD); Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA); East African Community (EAC); the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS); the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS); the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD); and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) (Economic Commission for Africa, 2018). This chapter conducts a critical review of the literature on least developed nations in Africa with the sole aim of exploring the different contextual factors shaping their economic development and growth. The first section introduces the chapter and contextualizes Africa's LDCs. The second section presents a review of the natural and agricultural resources; the third section examines the regional performance of LDCs in Africa; in the fourth section, a review of international trade in African LDCs was presented; the fifth section discussed the role of the United Nations and other developmental Agencies in promoting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Africa's LDCs; and finally, the conclusion which summarizes the whole chapter.

Contextualizing Africa's LDCs

The LDCs are the most disadvantaged countries, the poorest in socioeconomic development with the lowest human development index. They are Low-income countries, Small Island developing States, Land-locked Developing Countries, Low-Income countries under stress, Highly Indebted Poor Countries, and Cotonou Convention. Some fell into these categories due to their structural obstacles, geographical locations, economic vulnerability from trade and natural shocks, poor governance, and so on.

Natural and Agricultural Resources in Africa's LDCs

Despite its state of underdevelopment, sub-Saharan Africa houses vast deposits of natural and agricultural resources which contribute immensely to the development of the global economy. For instance, in Table 2 below, there are indications that the world's major mineral and agricultural resources originates from LDCs in Africa. Specifically, the largest deposit of cobalt in the world is in the Democratic Republic of Congo; Niger is a major supplier of uranium; Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, and Sierra Leone have some of the largest deposits of Bauxite; and Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Sierra Leone are major suppliers of diamonds (Huff 2007; Mining Africa 2017).

Virtually all the LDCs in Table 2 above have large deposits or are major producers of the

Least Developed Countries in Africa, Table 2 The major mineral and agricultural resources in Africa's LDCs

	Resource	Countries
1	Bauxite	Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Madagascar, Malawi, Sierra Leone, Zambia
2	Cobalt	Democratic Republic of the Congo
3	Cocoa	Togo
4	Copper	Angola, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Mauritania, Somalia, South Sudan, Uganda
5	Cotton	Malawi, Togo
6	Crude Oil	Angola, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Mauritania, South Sudan, Sudan, Zambia
7	Diamond	Angola, Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea, Lesotho, Sierra Leone, Tanzania
8	Gold	Burkina Faso, Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Sudan, Uganda, Tanzania, Zambia
9	Iron Ore	Angola, Liberia, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan,
10	Limestone	Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad, Guinea-Bissau, Malawi, Togo, Uganda
11	Manganese	Benin, Burkina Faso
12	Natural Gas	Eritrea, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Somalia, Tanzania, Zambia
13	Salt	Djibouti, Somalia, Uganda
14	Silver	South Sudan, Sudan, Zambia
15	Timber	The Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia
16	Uranium	Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, Mali, Niger, Somalia, Tanzania Zambia

resources that are indicated besides them. Several scholarly write-ups have suggested in time past that it is the rich mineral deposits in Africa that are indirectly responsible for its underdevelopment (see, for example, Huff 2007; Schlesinger et al. 2015; Ebeke and Etoundi 2017). However, it is important to note that some of these conclusions are drawn from mere anecdotal reports, thus suggesting that colonialism and neo-colonialism critiques have not been able to fully explain the fundamental reasons for Africa's underdevelopment. Though, some scholarly work on the continent suggests the following:

- Africa's rich deposits of natural resources are the causes of predatory local politics, corruption and conflicts that have adversely affected the development of the LDCs (Venables 2016; Akintunde and Omobowale 2018).
- Civil wars and conflicts in Angola, Sierra Leone, Liberia, South Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of Congo are linked to access and exploitation of the natural resources in

those countries (Berman et al. 2017; Seter et al. 2018).

- Government officials and high-ranking military officers corruptly enrich themselves and their cronies through nontransparent mining licenses and contracts while the larger public remains poor.

Overall, the abundant natural and agricultural resources in Africa's LDCs have not significantly contributed to the Human Development Index (HDI) in the continent but somehow seem to be critical to the development of advanced economies and most recently Asia.

Regional Performance Review of Least Developed Countries in Africa

Out of the 33 least developed countries listed above, 15 of them have been on the list from the onset since 1971, while South Sudan is the latest entrant into the list after being included in 2012

(UN 2018). It is however important to note that two African countries have graduated from the category of LDCs in the past after meeting the minimum criteria. The countries are Botswana (1994) and Cape Verde (2007), while Angola, Djibouti, and Guinea are projected to graduate over the next couple of years. To qualify for graduation from the LDCs category, a country must have met certain requirements, which are broadly grouped into three main groups known as Per capita GNI, Economic Vulnerability Index (EVI), and Human Assets Index (HAI). There is a triennial review of the performances of the different LDCs by the Committee for Development Policy of the United Nations to see which has met the threshold set for that year. Usually, for a country to be deemed eligible, it must have met two of the three requirements above or met the income-only threshold set for that year. In addition, such a country must have repeated this feat during two triennial review cycles to earn the recommendation of the committee. At the moment, Angola is deemed to be ready for graduation in 2021, while Sao Tome and Principe have been recommended for graduation after fulfilling two of the three thresholds expected, making it one of the five countries recommended for graduation from the list of LDCs. This implies that going forward, the number of countries from within Africa that make up the list of LDCs may reduce materially, which signifies the progress of African countries in terms of the indices used in assessing the LDCs.

As a result, this section of this chapter undertakes a review of the progress made by the remaining 31 African countries toward graduation from the LDCs category. This is done using the different indices and the thresholds set for 2015 and 2018 as a guide to the project which African countries are likely to be recommended for graduation in the nearest future. Table 3 below was adapted from available information on Africa on the United Nations website to aid the review of the African countries on the list.

It is important to note that aside from Per capita GNI, both EVI and HAI are further measured using other indicators. For EVI, the indicators used include population, remoteness,

merchandise export concentration, share of agriculture, forestry, and fishing in GDP, share of population in low elevated coastal zones, instability of exports of goods and services, victims of natural disasters, and instability of agricultural production. For HAI, the indicators include under-five mortality rate, percentage of the population undernourished, maternal mortality ratio, gross secondary school enrolment ratio, and adult literacy rate.

From the data presented above, it can be seen that some countries such as Djibouti (\$1,894), Comoros (\$1,595), Zambia (\$1,561), Sudan (\$1,452), South Sudan (\$1,303), Lesotho (\$1,296), and Mauritania (\$1,230) have already exceeded the set threshold for Per capita GNI (\$1,230). This implies that once these countries keep improving their indices for this measure, while also ensuring that they meet up with at least one of the other two requirements, they might meet the requirements for recommendations to graduate from the LDC list by 2021. It is also noteworthy that a few East African countries have already met this requirement, while only one West African country falls into this group. Particularly, the presence of Sudan and South Sudan here is of interest considering that they have been through some political instability in recent years yet seem to be managing their economy well enough to continue to fight for graduation, 6 years after being listed in 2012.

As for EVI, there are just five countries that have exceeded the set benchmark of 32 or below, which are DR Congo (27.2), Tanzania (27.9), Togo (28.3), Guinea (30.2), and Uganda (31.7). In terms of the HAI, no country has been able to meet or surpass the set benchmark of 66 and above, which seems to be understandable as the indicators used to measure this index hinge on both education and health. These two areas are increasingly becoming areas of urgent concern to African nations especially considering the patronage by the continent of other countries in these two very important sectors. Another factor influencing this seems to be the issue of population increase, which continuously puts a strain on the infrastructures meant to cater to the people in these sectors. It can be deduced from the above

Least Developed Countries in Africa, Table 3 Population and economic indices of list of least developed countries in Africa

S/N	Country	Population	Per Capita GNI ^a	EVI ^b	HAI ^c
1	Benin	10.9 m	882	34.3	49.8
2	Burkina Faso	18.6 m	642	38.2	42.9
3	Burundi	10.5 m	261	44.5	38.5
4	Central African Republic	4.6 m	370	33.6	17.4
5	Chad	14.5 m	921	52.4	49.4
6	Comoros	765,601	1,595	52.4	22.1
7	Dem. Rep. of Congo	78.7 m	481	27.2	41.9
8	Djibouti	942,333	1,894	36.3	58
9	Eritrea	4.9 m	862	54.7	42.9
10	Ethiopia	102.4 m	644	32.1	45.3
11	Gambia	2.0 m	449	72.2	51.8
12	Guinea	12.3 m	678	30.2	39.5
13	Guinea-Bissau	1.8 m	595	52.4	41.7
14	Lesotho	2.2 m	1,296	42	61.6
15	Liberia	4.6 m	431	53.2	37.2
16	Madagascar	24.9 m	486	37.8	54.5
17	Malawi	18 m	331	47.1	52.5
18	Mali	17.9 m	801	36.8	43.1
19	Mauritania	4.3 m	1,230	39.9	46.9
20	Mozambique	28.8 m	564	36.7	45.8
21	Niger	20.6 m	393	35.3	35.4
22	Rwanda	11.9 m	707	36.4	55
23	Senegal	15.4 m	1,004	33.4	57.1
24	Sierra Leone	7.4 m	582	51.6	27.4
25	Somalia	14.3 m	92	34.7	16.7
26	South Sudan	12.2 m	1,303	55.6	25.8
27	Sudan	39.6 m	1,452	49.2	53
28	Togo	7.6 m	555	28.3	61.8
29	Uganda	41.5 m	661	31.7	50.2
30	Tanzania	55.6 m	902	27.9	56
31	Zambia	16.6 m	1,561	40.5	58.6

2018 Triennial Review Data: Source: United Nations Website (www.un.org)

^a Per Capita GNI (Gross National Income) Threshold: \$1,230 or Income-only \$2,460

^b EVI (Economic Vulnerability Index) Threshold: 32 or below

^c HAI (Human Assets Index) Threshold: 66 or above

brief review of the performances of the African countries left on the list of LDCs that a few countries seem to have the best chances of graduating soon if they are able to maintain their current pace; these are Djibouti, Lesotho, Senegal, Sudan, and Zambia. This review tends to corroborate the position of the Economic Commission for Africa, as expressed by Mr Abdalla Hamdok when he noted that despite the governance challenges faced across the continent, LDCs in Africa have

made good progress over the last decade (ECA 2011).

Worthy of note is the fact that no North African country is on the list of LDCs in Africa, while there are 23 countries on the list from the Eastern and West African countries. There are various factors that could be deemed responsible for this, but one major reason could be leadership. This is regarded as crucial to how well a country develops and takes its people out of poverty. As can be seen,

the countries in the North African subregion have had fairly stable political systems before the 2010 Arab Awakening, and this seemed to have positively impacted their development, especially in terms of their economies. Consequently, the high number of countries from the Eastern and West African subregions that are listed as LDCs can be attributed to the political instability witnessed in these parts of the continent over the past three decades. Hence, it can be said that to quicken the graduation of African countries across different subregions from this list of LDCs, it would be essential to start giving more attention to achieving political stability across the continent, as this may enhance the development of the African continent significantly.

The role of international trade in the development of a country is one that cannot be overlooked, especially in terms of enhancing the graduation process of African countries from the LDC list. Malefane and Odhiambo (2016) have supported this view by presenting the case of Lesotho and how its international trade activities have helped grow its economy. Least developed countries benefit from international trade in diverse ways, such as creating an outlet for their products since their domestic markets are too small to absorb their goods (Bosede 2010), as well as human capacity building and technology absorption (Haq et al. 2014). In Africa, this becomes even more important as it helps the different countries engaged in it to grow their economies by increasing their foreign reserves through international trade. As a result, it becomes pertinent in this chapter to review the international trade activities and patterns of the 33 least developed African countries. However, not all 33 countries will be discussed in this section on international trade as Angola and Sao Tome, and Principe are already on their way to graduating from the LDCs list. Hence, the focus is on the 31 remaining countries. This is approached by discussing the trade relationships of these countries with regional trade blocs and independent countries or economic unions, across the globe that have had or is in a relationship with Africa, such as the European Union and North America, as well as exploring the recent entrance of China.

International Trade of African LDCs

Africa continues to partake in international trade, though it is expected that with its abundance of natural and human resources, it should be contributing more to global transactions. There has been incessant fluctuations in the export merchandise trade of African countries from \$3.4 billion in 1948 to \$92 billion in 1993, reaching its highest point so far 10 years later when it hit \$601 billion in 2013, before plummeting to \$396 billion in 2015, while also contributing just 7.3% and 2.4% of global merchandise export in 1948 and 2015, respectively (Verter 2017). These figures are disheartening especially considering that the continent is endowed with an overflowing supply of natural resources that are expected to really influence the continent's role in the global merchandise export. This dismal performance has been attributed to various factors such as overdependence on crude oil mainly as well as mining and other agro-related products. Others could be not taking advantage of the various schemes that have been negotiated by multilateral agencies to assist developing countries transition successfully into developed nations.

For African LDCs specifically, there have been various schemes and waivers established by advanced countries worldwide to aid economic growth in LDCs, especially in supporting their merchandise exports. Such schemes include duty-free treatment, Regional Trade Agreements, Generalised System of Preferences, trade preferences, the USA's African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), the European Union's Everything But Arms (EBA) Scheme, slacking of state of origin restrictions, and many others. However, it is surprising that with all of these attractive schemes, African countries do not seem to be taking enough advantage of them to increase their merchandise export, despite being an important measure of EVI, which is a critical assessment index used in the process of graduating countries from the LDC list. Furthermore, from Table 4 below, it is evident that the revenue from exports to the USA in 2016 and 2017 for all the 31 LDCs in Africa combined was \$4 billion, while over \$5 billion was spent by these countries to import goods from the USA. Republic of Chad

Least Developed Countries in Africa, Table 4 African LDCs with North America

	Country	USA						Canada					
		2016			2017			2016			2017		
		Exports	Imports	Exports	Imports	Exports	Imports	Exports	Imports	Exports	Imports	Exports	Imports
1	Benin	7,002	58,714	22,420	88,249	420	6,758	37	4,871				
2	Burkina Faso	2,148	266,771	0	0	18,161	29,648	0	0				
3	Burundi	2,388	9,232	0	0	222	1,595	0	0				
4	Central African Republic	0	40,056	0	14,131	0	559	0	321				
5	Chad	957,484	32,817	543,115	31,513	258	1,520	240	3,319				
6	Comoros	0	40,056	0	0	222	1,595	0	0				
7	Dem. Rep. of Congo	178,398	82,754	87,481	74,804	21,866	12,137	31,295	10,346				
8	Djibouti	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0				
9	Eritrea	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0				
10	Ethiopia	180,021	1,536,832	272,292	1,211,235	12,719	65,585	14,649	54,722				
11	Gambia	81	11,158	0	0	0	186	0	0				
12	Guinea	15,948	104,304	0	0	40,345	3,985	0	0				
13	Guinea-Bissau	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0				
14	Lesotho	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0				
15	Liberia	67,781	158,025	95,498	144,119	30,129	10,088	27,549	3,333				
16	Madagascar	292,364	103,721	525,721	107,621	37,318	10,264	62,318	13,246				
17	Malawi	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0				
18	Mali	7,996	101,210	0	0	0	0	0	0				
19	Mauritania	302	315,182	55,160	151,432	301	5,812	119	10,380				
20	Mozambique	97,850	120,994	50,479	111,746	3,444	20,484	1,209	24,614				
21	Niger	36,358	144,662	0	0	122	3,229	0	0				
22	Rwanda	18,742	46,856	0	0	680	8,224	0	0				
23	Senegal	62,740	122,668	0	0	1,268	19,061	0	0				
24	Sierra Leone	144,365	93,441	0	0	0	7,123	0	0				
25	Somalia	1,018	38,827	1,009	72,426	219	1,855	239	4,822				
26	South Sudan	137	9,740	0	0	2	1,318	0	0				
27	Sudan	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0				
28	Togo	4,836	31,028	0	0	18,281	15,103	0	0				

(continued)

Least Developed Countries in Africa, Table 4 (continued)

		USA				Canada			
		2016		2017		2016		2017	
Country		Exports	Imports	Exports	Imports	Exports	Imports	Exports	Imports
29	Tanzania	56,877	252,023	0	0	4,662	100,870	0	0
30	Uganda	40,056	76,870	0	0	8,657	18,754	0	0
31	Zambia	2,150	112,033	3,985	108,296	1,435	16,688	1,263	20,168
	Total	2,177,0042	3,869,918	1,612,160	2,115,572	203,646	381,819	138,918	150,142

Source: ITC Trade Map Website (www.trademap.org): *all values are in thousand US dollars

was the highest earner over a year in trade with the USA, as it made almost \$1 billion in 2016 and another \$543 million in 2017.

These exports were on transactions related to mineral fuels, mineral oils, and products of their distillation, bituminous substances, Lac, gums, resins, and other vegetable saps and extracts. On the other hand, Ethiopia was the highest spender in trade transactions with the USA as it spent over \$1.5 billion and \$1.2 billion on imports in 2016 and 2017, respectively. These imports were mainly made on machinery, mechanical appliances, nuclear reactors, boilers, aircraft, spacecraft, and their parts, as well as cereals. Canada did not seem to have much trade transactions with the 31 African LDCs in the 2 years reviewed, as presented in Table 4 above.

Table 5 presents the value of trade transactions with European Union countries represented by the UK, France, and Germany in 2016 and 2017. France did more transactions with the various countries than the other two European countries, a total combined import and export value of over \$2.4 billion and \$5.4 billion for 2016 and 2017, respectively. Madagascar made over \$1 billion from exports of agricultural produce and goods such as coffee, tea, maté, and spices, articles of apparel and clothing accessories (not knitted or crocheted) to France; while Senegal spent over \$800 million on imports of goods such as live animals, meat and edible meat offal, fish and crustaceans, mollusks, and other aquatic invertebrates from France over the same two-year period.

Table 6 below presents the value of trade transactions conducted with China between 2015 and 2017. It can be seen that the value of the transactions recorded here surpasses the volume of trade transactions between the LDCs and countries from the EU and North America, as shown in Table 5 above. A combined total revenue of over \$25 billion was made from exports to China by these countries, with the Democratic Republic of Congo leading the way, as it made over \$8 billion out of the total exports from the LDCs. In terms of imports value, the different countries spent a combined total of over \$47 billion to import diverse goods from China, with Ethiopia in pole position

from spending over \$15 billion on imports from China.

It is interesting to note that for every instance, the amount spent by the African LDCs on imports was significantly higher than their revenue from exports to each partner country. This indicates that these countries may not really be taking advantage of the various schemes available from advanced nations and international regional blocs. As a result, they are more import dependent for finished goods despite being the custodians of critical input raw materials for most of these finished goods. Therefore, it has become pertinent for African LDCs to exploit the opportunities available in the policies guiding international trade to their advantage in order to grow their economies substantially enough to exit the LDC list.

United Nations and Other Agencies Aids to LDCs: Focusing on the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), also referred to as “Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” or the 2030 Agenda, were developed as an expanded alternative to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which ended in 2015. The SDGs are a group of 17 global goals with 169 targets and indicators set by the United Nations. The SDGs cover a broad range of social and economic development issues. These include poverty, hunger, health, education, climate change, gender equality, water sanitation, energy, environment, and social justice. The SDGs, unlike the MDGs framework, discriminate between “developed” and “developing” nations as the goals do not apply to all countries equally. The SDGs received broad support from many NGOs because it focuses on the sources of some of the problems plaguing developing countries, unlike the MDGs, which were strongly criticized as only dealing with the symptom of these problems. The MDGs were about development, while the SDGs are focused on sustainable development. The implementation of the SDGs started worldwide in 2016, where each country was charged with the responsibility

Least Developed Countries in Africa, Table 5 African LDCs trade with EU (all values in thousands US dollars)

Country	UK						France						Germany					
	2016		2017		2016		2017		2016		2017		2016		2017			
	Exports	Imports	Exports	Imports	Exports	Imports	Exports	Imports	Exports	Imports	Exports	Imports	Exports	Imports	Exports	Imports		
Benin	66	33,477	147	25,572	8,404	264,931	4,568	208,193	1,136	52,012	1,418	27,832						
Burkina Faso	37,478	41,871	0	0	61,908	268,700	0	0	10,699	100,061	0	0						
Burundi	1,174	14,644	0	0	926	27,798	0	0	7,419	12,578	0	0						
Central African Rep	0	12,251	0	12,709	42,952	85,048	115,783	107,867	3,275	4,999	2,342	10,662						
Chad	100	3,499	889	9,396	101,527	121,445	9,891	98,693	3,908	21,365	3,081	11,274						
Comoros	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0						
Dem. Rep. of Congo	15,115	26,712	7,945	29,502	16,430	263,199	17,087	142,806	116,828	101,786	127,114	82,415						
Djibouti	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0						
Eritrea	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0						
Ethiopia	49,190	205,943	55,082	192,059	38,071	211,549	36,378	180,050	166,771	342,099	195,085	232,168						
Gambia	90	13,211	0	0	174	11,814	0	0	15	12,218	0	0						
Guinea	133	196,043	0	0	147,817	240,365	0	0	96,778	59,041	0	0						
Guinea-Bissau	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0						
Lesotho	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0						
Liberia	5,286	18,149	1,089	18,770	24,897	24,066	18,625	9,701	73,812	219,744	487,627	170,168						
Madagascar	39,184	23,693	45,281	53,309	537,657	205,401	630,405	247,090	189,599	71,632	203,729	105,296						
Malawi	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0						

Mali	1,299	23,957	0	0	18,522	331,523	0	0	4,816	169,604	0	0
Mauritania	1,807	24,068	16	25,315	28,349	150,070	24,672	173,494	57,518	49,257	98,728	32,986
Mozambique	59,187	111,765	210,825	37,000	35,558	63,962	25,170	254,758	10,877	141,509	8,845	68,030
Niger	110	4,883	0	0	289,933	527,395	0	0	5,391	47,725	0	0
Rwanda	6,149	16,222	0	0	1,970	24,002	0	0	2,452	67,081	0	0
Senegal	53,849	52,434	0	0	74,312	870,913	0	0	7,889	128,941	0	0
Sierra Leone	3,404	45,203	0	0	25	20,232	0	0	1,844	16,330	0	0
Somalia	271	11,043	294	15,175	11,037	11,945	11,037	42,720	1,357	10,599	1,323	15,663
South Sudan	91	2,180	23	3,111	1	2,060	0	0	267	5,663	98	4,506
Sudan	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Togo	1,851	12,623	0	0	8,582	153,492	0	0	1,867	48,998	0	0
Tanzania	22,827	155,044	0	0	25,755	67,933	0	0	115,274	191,675	0	0
Uganda	16,458	74,392	0	0	76,622	28,104	0	0	76,622	103,844	0	0
Zambia	243,633	122,975	184,082	141,529	458	41,428	705	25,296	31,963	458	9,481	705
Total	558,752	1,246,282	505,673	563,447	1,551,887	4,017,435	894,321	1,490,668	988,377	1,978,769	1,138,871	761,705

Source: ITC Trade Map Website (www.Trademap.org)

Least Developed Countries in Africa, Table 6 African LDCs trade with China (all values in thousands of US dollars)

S/N	Country	2015			2016			2017		
		Exports	Imports	*BOT	Exports	Imports	*BOT	Exports	Imports	*BOT
1	Benin	32,851	276,490	-243,639	27,283	221,437	-194,154	56,339	240,703	-184,364
2	Burkina Faso	64,696	374,091	-309,395	41,978	482,978	-441,000	0	0	0
3	Burundi	780	70,541	-69,761	1,129	103,602	-102,473	0	0	0
4	Central African Republic	6,635	30,280	-23,645	9,201	35,587	-263,86	13,599	27,594	-13,995
5	Chad	90,692	123,550	-32,858	114,908	93,572	2,1336	279,556	115,517	164,399
6	Comoros	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
7	Dem. Rep of Congo	2,627,427	1,408,678	1,218,749	2,084,962	992,467	1,092,495	3,242,693	972,270	2,270,423
8	Djibouti	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
9	Eritrea	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
10	Ethiopia	304,842	6,073,161	-5,768,319	355,170	5,088,933	-473,3763	288,164	4,858,471	-4,570,307
11	Gambia	2,659	29,222	-26,563	1,700	28,975	-27275	0	0	0
12	Guinea	34,353	393,277	-358,924	128,287	581,246	-452959	0	0	0
13	Guinea-Bissau	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
14	Lesotho	14	73,491	-73,477	0	0	0	0	0	0
15	Liberia	172,168	1,356,880	-1,184,712	48,171	1,356,880	-1,308709	28,840	2,102,921	-2,074,081
16	Madagascar	142,975	539,425	-396,450	144,093	632,083	-487990	176,394	756,939	-580,545
17	Malawi	55,839	304,059	-248,220	0	0	0	0	0	0

18	Mali	0	0	0	0	29,526	600,557	-571031	0	0	0	0
19	Mauritania	579,708	191,730	387,978	619,033	202,466	202,466	416567	697,523	162,236	535,287	0
20	Mozambique	87,875	986,859	-898,984	142,714	417,895	417,895	-275181	252,158	493,355	-241,197	0
21	Niger	7,624	565,398	-557,774	49,533	300,877	300,877	-251344	0	0	0	0
22	Rwanda	13,402	358,526	-345,124	4,804	377,773	377,773	-372969	0	0	0	0
23	Senegal	119,626	544,214	-424,588	127,230	564,595	564,595	-437365	0	0	0	0
24	Sierra Leone	1081	203,133	-202,052	33,425	120,363	120,363	-86938	0	0	0	0
25	Somalia	24,712	298,118	-273,406	10,958	391,943	391,943	-380985	11,798	473,644	-461,846	0
26	South Sudan	2,326,887	155,445	2,171,442	1,459,751	46,253	46,253	1413498	1,269,079	51,852	1,217,227	0
27	Sudan	3,153,044	1,915,008	1,238,036	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
28	Togo	7,643	347,220	-339,577	9369	492,386	492,386	-483017	0	0	0	0
29	Tanzania	562,322	1,853,932	-1,291,610	354,226	1,638,488	1,638,488	-1284262	0	0	0	0
30	Uganda	57,739	875,016	-817,277	27,038	886,223	886,223	-859185	0	0	0	0
31	Zambia	1,008,965	688,737	320,228	1,194,817	592,355	592,355	602462	1,328,389	1,120,120	208,269	0
	Total	11,486,559	20,036,481	-8,549,922	7,019,306	16,249,934	16,249,934	-9230628	7,644,532	11,375,262	-370,730	0

*BOT – Balance of Trade; Source: ITC Trade Map Website (www.Trademap.org)

of converting the goals into national legislation, develop an action plan, provide budgets, and seek for a network of partners. Poor countries, especially the LDCs, need the support of rich countries and coordination at the international level to enable them to implement the SDGs.

The achievement of the SDGs is neither a unilateral effort of the UN nor a one-cap-fit-all, but a joint effort in collaboration with other agencies referred to as the UN system informally called the "UN Family," which is made up of affiliated programs, funds and specialized agencies with their separate membership, leadership, and budget. Such agencies include the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP), United Nations Relief and Work Agency (UNRWA), UN Women, UN-Habitat, World Bank, and the likes which are funded by both voluntary and assessed contributions. The SDGs are a commitment and concern to the UN system; hence several programs are being held to see that much is achieved before 2030. On November 10, 2016, the UN system organized a program "Getting to the last mile in LDC" in Istanbul. The focus was on eradicating poverty at the first instance, especially among the LDCs; secondly was to achieve the internationally agreed SDGs; and lastly, to enable the graduation of some counties sustainably from the LDCs category. This program attempted to examine some of the structural, political, financial, and social drivers of inequalities and exclusions confronting the poor people and places in the globe. As part of the follow-up program, another event was held in Istanbul in 2017, which was centered on developing action plans for LDCs to put SDGs at the heart of common developing agenda as well as the commitment to leave no one behind in the SDGs effort. The UNCDF, the UN capital investment agency for the LDCs, with the motto "to unlock public and private finance for the poor," adopted the Istanbul Program of Action (IPoA) with its eight priority actions to enable at least half of the LDC to

graduate by 2020. By 2017, five countries have so far graduated from LDC status: Botswana in 1994, Cape Verde in 2007, Maldives in 2007, Samoa in 2014 and within the SDGs period, Equatorial Guinea in June 2017. Frantic efforts are being made to achieve this Goal. Also, the UNCTAD, especially in the area of poverty alleviation, called for quicker implementation toward 100% duty-free and quota-free access for LDC exports to developed markets, improved monitoring towards technology transfer and differential and special treatment in the World Trade Organisation's (WTO) negotiations. The WTO plays a great role in ensuring the SDGs accomplishment by creating an enabling environment for the LDCs with special emphasis on SDG-2, 3, 8, 10, 14, and 17, because trade is very significant in supporting economic growth and development around the world.

The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), as a specialized organization, promotes the Inclusive and Sustainable Industrial Development (ISID) that echoes the SDG-9. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) focuses on improving access to energy (SDG-7) in promoting development in LDCs and evaluate the financial and technological means to enhance energy access. The survey revealed that 60% of the LDCs inhabitant lacks access to energy and 40% of businesses could not perform due to inadequacy of energy supply. Aside from household needs, economic growth needs energy. Thus, UNICTAD encourages the international community to increase their investment in the LDCs to access relevant technologies and strengthen their energy capacities for absorption of technology.

Conclusion

This chapter gave a general overview of the least developed countries in Africa with a broad exposition on their strengths and weaknesses. Toward the end of the chapter, an expanded perspective is presented on how some of the LDCs in Africa can be graduated from the list to a developing country using the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals as

the major driver of this process. However, there have been several factors inhibiting this process, especially since 2012 where most of the LDCs are still fighting chronic poverty due to recent global financial crises, which took a great toll on their economic growth, thus affecting their chances of graduating from an LDC status (UNCTAD 2017). SDG is an expanded alternative to the MDGs as a transformative agenda for 2016–2030. Each country has the responsibility of converting the goals into national legislation, develop an action plan, provide budgets, and seek for network of partners. Poor countries, especially the LDCs, need the support of rich countries and also coordination at the international level to enable them to achieve these goals. Thirty-three out of the 47 LDCs are based in Africa, and they are the most disadvantaged countries. These countries are the poorest of the poor in socioeconomic development, with the lowest human development index despite being endowed with natural resources. Some fell into this category due to their structural obstacles, geographical locations, economic vulnerability from trade and natural shocks, and poor governance manifested in corruption and wars, compounded with the general precarious context of underdevelopment in Sub-Saharan Africa. The achievement of the SDGs by LDCs on or before the stipulated timeframe of 2030 would be a joint effort of the United Nations as a body and its other agencies such as UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, UNCTAD, UNEP, UNRWA, UN Women, and UN-Habitat. Other recognized international bodies such as the World Bank would also need to be actively involved through various programs which should be purposively developed to tackle inclusive financing gaps in these LDCs, especially among their vulnerable groups. Several developmental programs are needed to effectively tackle the issue of poverty, especially by addressing fundamental social and economic gaps in African LDCs. Equatorial Guinea graduated in June 2017, though not a 2-year activity. Currently, the World Trade Organisation is playing a great role by creating an enabling environment for LDCs to enable them to achieve most items on the SDGs, especially those that lay strong emphasis on trade

(UNDP Report 2016). In recent times, particular attention has been paid to the following items as stipulated in the Sustainable Development Goals by World Trade Organisation: Zero Hunger (2); Good Health and Well-Being (3); Decent Work and Economic Growth (8); Reduced Inequality (10); Life Below Water (14); and Partnerships to achieve the Goal (17). This is because trade is considered to be very significant in supporting the LDCs to achieve and maintain sustainable economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental protection.

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