



# Leadership for Sustainable Development in Africa: Roles and Responsibilities

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## INTRODUCTION: THE ACTORS IN AFRICA

Sustainable development is a concept that has been subjected to different interpretations based on the perspectives and beliefs of different people individually and in their demographic groups. Politicians seem to think of it as community projects; business owners use it to negotiate greater profits; environmentalists view it as the means to effectively utilize natural resources and many people see it as a concept to help meet their needs and eliminate poverty (Dartey-Baah, 2014). The different definitions and understandings of the sustainable development also influence the way these sectors and people might react towards any improvement or actions that needs to be taken regarding it. The word sustainability itself comes from the Latin ‘sustinere’, which means ‘to support, bear or hold up’ and it deals with the capacity of our environment to sustain or carry the weight of human existence now and into the future of the unborn human

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generations. The African continent, considered as one of the developing continents because of the number of developing countries that it is home to, has many factors that threaten its very existence. One of these is the issue of climate change which has a global dimension and is very much an issue in Africa. For this and other reasons, sustainable development is an important topic globally as well as for Africa, since it emphasizes the need to deliberately consider environmental, economic and social questions as countries strive for growth and development.

If we take sustainable development as that development which optimizes the interrelationships between the society, the environment and the economy for present and future generations, it becomes important that such interrelationships and those who are charged with the responsibility of managing these three sectors ensure a balance in order to truly benefit everyone in the society (Mckeown, 2002). The first point of achieving this is through effective leadership, yet others also have a role to play. The question being answered in this book is what those roles are for driving sustainability in Africa, and who has the responsibility to improve the current quality of her people's lives while protecting her ecosystems and preserving her natural resources for future generations. Such roles today in driving sustainability have assumed a more ethical dimension than ever before. They include the country leaders (governments) individuals and corporate organizations operating within the continent who must share the responsibility of preserving the environment.

The issues in Africa have been further exacerbated by a lack of adequate awareness of, inadequate publicity about, and poor funding for sustainability initiatives. To drive sustainability therefore, it is imperative that systems and processes are developed that integrate social, economic and environmental objectives to meet with the present needs of Africans without endangering future needs. As already noted, this should be the responsibility of governments, corporate organizations and individuals. Therefore, in this first chapter of the second volume of the book 'Management and Leadership for a Sustainable Africa', the first segments deal with a general discussion of some responsibilities and then roles for sustainable development, the second segment introduces the chapters that make up the book, contributed by both practitioners and academics, and the last segment concludes with some recommendations.

## WHOSE RESPONSIBILITY IS IT?

Before talking about roles, the first step is to establish who has the responsibility for driving sustainability in Africa. The responsibility for driving sustainability in Africa belongs to every individual living within the space of African countries, to every corporate organization that operates within the region, to specific government agencies that are tasked with providing focus, guidance and policies, and also to advocacy groups, and non-governmental organizations. In addition, international organizations and agencies outside the region also have a responsibility, since what happens in Africa also affects other parts of the globe. In short, the responsibility for sustainability in Africa is everyone's.

The responsibilities comprise the various means within each one's capacity, of propagating sustainable practices: caring for the planet, promoting societal impact, encouraging sustainable business, striving deliberately to reduce energy consumption, ensuring emission reduction, fostering health habits, supporting and championing the green revolution, encouraging reuse and recycling, etc. Generally, the responsibilities can be placed under the following pillars: those that drive economic sufficiency, e.g., encouraging entrepreneurship, those that counter environmental degradation, e.g., stepping away from petro-economy reliance, those that boost human capital, e.g., nurturing communities and combating unemployment. Moving on to reflect on the roles of those who have the responsibility, the first group put forward here is the leadership cadre—African governments and their role in leading their peoples towards sustainability.

## THE ROLE OF LEADERSHIP FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OUTCOMES IN AFRICA

The leadership problems in Africa have been associated with various factors. A World Bank report in 1989 attributed underdevelopment in Africa to governance gaps resulting from the fact that leadership offices in Africa have so often been hijacked through coups d'état, invasion or through unfair elections (Alemazung, 2011; Arthur, 2000). This power-grab approach to leadership has led to depreciation of the African economy, causing unemployment, poor healthcare, deteriorating educational standards and by extension low quality of life, since the leaders

responsible for protecting the continent and its people have frequently pursued personal gain instead (Nasir, 2010; Dartey-Baah, 2014).

Some scholars have also argued that the problem of leadership in Africa emanates from the cultural experiences and practices of Africans (Leonard, 1987; Jackson, 2004; Bolden & Kirk, 2009), claiming that the relationship between the people and their leaders is often a master-servant one (Kuada, 1994) where thoughts, creativity and independence are restricted in spite of some African countries' claims to be democratic. Leaders are seen as superior and therefore are seldom questioned regarding their inadequacies and, when questioned, rarely take responsibility because of that perceived superiority over others. Rather than place due importance on optimizing the potentials of the people, profit and planet for the common good of all, Africans leaders have power-grabbed so much that the continent's potential is still mostly ignored and untapped (Alemazung, 2011).

There is a need for good leaders who can manage the resources of every African country in a way that promotes sustainable development. A good leader is expected to be visionary in that s/he should be able to have foresight and manage resources and tasks with efficiency, while motivating people in ways that bring out their potential and encourage the utilization of such potential for the common good of the whole country. Effective leadership in Africa should be one where leaders think beyond personal enrichment to more strategic outcomes that would develop the country and properly manage its resources for the good of all (Perren & Burgoyne, 2001; Dartey-Baah, 2014). In other words, for effective leadership in Africa to ensure sustainable development, it should be tending towards a transformational leadership style where the goal is the growth of all.

In a study that Sharma et al. (2009) conducted in Malaysia to examine the antecedents of sustainable development, they found that effective leaders contributed to the development of their villages in troubled times by seeing that the needs of the people were met and the social and communal challenges overcome. Specifically, this referred to the ability of the leader to be visionary in detecting the problems of his/her people in time, and to devise strategic ways to overcome them and to enhance the social and economic quality of lives. When this is the case, it is then not difficult to get the buy-in of the people to work towards environmental quality, thinking of the good of present and future generations.

Since 2015, many nations globally agreed to set seventeen (17) sustainable development goals (SDGs) as priorities for sustainable development across their different continents. This constitutes an additional impetus for African leaders to actively take on the responsibility to ensure the implementation of these goals across the continent (Jaiyesimi, 2016). For example, the African Union (AU) and the African Development Bank (ADB) have observed that the greatest challenge to sustainable development in Africa is unemployment. This would mean that leaders in Africa need to find a way to ensure that Africa's labour markets are able to fully accommodate the growing numbers of youth who are obtaining the skills that can develop the continent economically and socially (Hollander et al., 2018). Apart from advancing the achievement of SDGs, governments also need to be strategic and 'market-oriented' in their pursuit of innovation (through technology and the right policy frameworks) (Bell et al., 2002). Sustainable development requires change, and an inert government cannot move its people to embrace change. Leaders in Africa need to act collectively on this important issue, they could come up with and implement a sustainability index for the countries in Africa and periodically reward those with the best indices.

The government's role includes ensuring that corporate entities obey the rules of the society and that their activities do not have indiscriminately harmful effects on their environment. In Nigeria, the enactment of the Petroleum Industry Act has mandated all Joint Venture and Production Sharing Contract companies to set up Host Community Trust Boards to ensure economic empowerment and structural development projects are erected in the areas where their operations take place. This could amount to up to 3% of the companies' (settlers') operating expenditure of their preceding year. This is a huge step that could contribute to ensuring that communities benefit from the exploitation of the natural resources found in their land. The judiciary has the responsibility to ensure that entities that are found irresponsible with regard to their economic, social and governance duties are sanctioned appropriately according to the laws.

### THE ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS (NGOs) AND MULTINATIONAL CORPORATIONS (MNCs)

NGOs and MNCs that are large independent entities have a responsibility to society to play a role in the pursuit of sustainable development. Many of

them are bigger than some governments and, even where they have had to collaborate with the government, they have mostly been able to maintain autonomy. As independent entities, MNCs and NGOs are able to engage as advocates for human rights and community development (Hall-Jones, 2006). Nevertheless, the primary focus of MNCs' contribution to sustainable development should remain that of providing public goods and social services that promote fulfillment of the SDGs—with the resources at their disposal and the economic power that they wield, MNCs are expected to continue to fulfill their commercial obligations for which they are constitutionally, fundamentally and internationally recognized (Amodu, 2020). In order to do this responsibly, they must also manage their processes to minimize waste and any other negative impact to people and the planet. It is a good sign that, as they have grown more conscious of the need for sustainable development over the years, more NGOs and MNCs are deliberately including plans for achieving it in their policies and management strategies as well as in their everyday operational practices, and reporting these to stakeholders, clients and the public (Hall-Jones, 2006).

If the concept of sustainability refers to meeting the needs of people now without jeopardizing the ability of people in the future to meet their needs, then only sustainable systems create genuine and real value. Keeping profits and ensuring continuity in perpetuity are the primary goals of any business. For an organization to succeed, its management must implement practices and strategies that contribute to the goal of remaining a going concern. Yet, truly sustainable businesses consider not only their long-term economic viability but also their environmental and societal impact over time. Good governance helps them to achieve all three goals and this is why Economic, Societal and Governance (ESG) considerations must be integrated into strategic planning, measured with the right metrics, and disclosed to relevant stakeholders in a timely manner. Businesses operating in and from Africa must develop processes, structures to meet the expectations of green practice while also achieving their strategic goals. The responsibilities to be shouldered by their leaders therefore includes minimizing the foreseeable negative impacts of business activities and offsetting those that are unavoidable; promoting positive impacts by respecting human rights, fostering inclusive and gender-sensitive work environments; and collaborating within and across sectors to work for development in Africa.

In particular, oil and gas companies are involved in high-risk activities since it entails exploration, production and processing of highly flammable materials and the deployment of heavy, expensive, and complicated machinery. The industry is one of the most complex globally. Activities, especially with regard to respective host and affected communities, typically result in severe environmental degradation, community unrest and public criticism. The need to meet health, safety and environment requirements as well as sustainability reporting and management as part of risk management helps to keep oil and gas companies in check. In some countries, they are also required to make governance (ESG) disclosures. This concern for sustainability-oriented practices helps to ensure the transparency and accountability of oil and gas companies to their shareholders and stakeholders. Additionally, the sustainability reporting requirement provides a robust framework for the company to describe and manage economic, social and environmental issues.

### THE ROLE OF OTHER CORPORATE ENTITIES, INCLUDING SMES

For emphasis, the private sector should be a major force to the SDGs and their implementation in Africa. Corporate entities are expected to ensure they put in place internal policies and implement corporate social responsibility initiatives that would ensure sustainability of the environment, people, and corporate governance as well as respect sustainability laws and regulations. Organizations should assess sustainability practices and benchmark against their peers, business partners and competitors as well as match their metrics with reporting standards, initiatives and investor requests. They should develop frameworks according to the sustainability maturity of the organization, apply methodical approaches as defined by the selected framework and explore respective reporting requirements and guidance. They can also engage with stakeholders to uncover available internal data to guide their management approach.

### THE ROLE OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS (NGOs)

NGOs whose work is specifically tied to the sustainability drive should champion the cause, and enlighten the populace on the importance of everyone taking responsibility. In general though, they can be helped to

achieve more. Mosweunyane (2010) while studying the role of NGOs in sustainable developments in Botswana discovered that although they do set out to empower their beneficiaries and often accomplish this, NGOs are mostly economically and politically powerless. Due to their complete reliance on donors and funding from independent partners, they are sometimes incapacitated in their pursuit of change. This means that for them to effectively play a role in sustainable development, they need empowerment as NGOs—funding and some of the level of power and control of how to utilize the resources at their disposal for effective change (Mosweunyane, 2010).

### THE ROLE OF INDIVIDUALS

As the saying goes, “little drops of water make a mighty ocean”: the contributions of individuals are indeed beneficial towards ensuring that the sustainable development goals are met. In terms of specific and practical examples, households can eat seasonal and organic farm produce; use water sparingly for personal hygiene and cleaning, agriculture, and swimming pools; cook efficiently by using heat well and not wasting it; close refrigerator doors well and defrost them occasionally; moderate the use of heaters; resist impulse-buying and excessive consumerism despite the pressure from advertising; put water saving devices into taps and tanks; load washing machines and dishwashers judiciously; carpool; reduce or avoid using plastics and cans; take quick showers and close the taps while brushing teeth, lathering or shaving; use rechargeable batteries; plan shopping and go with a list; turn off lights when not in use and use natural light as much as possible; use air conditioning and security lights that work with solar energy; reuse everything possible; collaborate with NGOs that promote sustainability; try not to leave waste by roadsides or on the beach; respect, appreciate and defend cultural diversity and freedom, including religious freedom; and respect, cherish and defend African traditions.

### THE ROLE OF GLOBAL AGENCIES

Global agencies—The initiatives from globally recognized agencies, amongst other things, contribute by indicating the direction of the world with regard to certain concerns. For example, The United Nations (UN) agency set up the Social, Economic and Governance (SDG) developmental goals that mandate all corporate entities to ensure they execute



SDG-related activities and provide a sustainability report. Important local agencies that cooperate in this endeavour include the National Content Development Monitoring Board (NCDMB) and National Environmental Standards and Regulations Enforcement Agency (NESREA).

Global reporting indices, such as the Human Development Index (HDI) and Ease of doing Business, also help to set standards and outline principles for organizations to use to define their standing and make concrete improvement plans. While economic performance indicators include performance demonstrated in aspects like market presence and indirect economic impacts as well as materials, energy, water and effluents, emissions and wastes, biodiversity, and products and services integrity, the indicators for social performance focus on things like product responsibility, labour policies and practices, human rights protection and decent work for everyone.

## THE ROLE OF OTHER KEY PLAYERS

Auditors can ensure companies provide sustainability reports through assurance, advisory and compliance functions. Investors have the responsibility to monitor their investments and raise concerns on any deviation from the accomplishment of the ESG objectives.

In summary, every sector is responsible in the drive for sustainability in Africa when looking at the economic, social and governance factors (people, planet and profit), whether formally or informally. The governments of the various African countries need to keep studying their unique context in order to strategically set up policies that would ensure that organizations are responsible with sustainability in mind.

## THE BOOK'S CHAPTERS

In Table 1.1 below, the content of the chapters is presented and a few research directions are suggested. To begin with, aligning fully with the thrust of this volume on roles and responsibilities and clarifying the role of governments in Africa's quest for sustainability, Apampa (Chapter 2) identifies the sectors and industries that have contributed to economic growth and facilitated the consideration for more sustainability-focused projects. As though complementing these insights, with a well-discussed case study from Morocco and using the PHSI framework, El Ghaib and Chaker (Chapter 10) cleverly argue the role of each stakeholder in contributing to

Table 1.1 Chapter highlights, usefulness and future research directions

<i>Chapter</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Striking ideas/content</i>	<i>Usefulness</i>	<i>Possible further research directions</i>
2	Leading the Way Forward: What Can African Governments Do?	Identification of sectors and industries that have contributed to economic growth and facilitated the consideration of more sustainability focused projects	Teaching, reference, research, and consultancy	How do the recommendations to government relate to local business groups, community traders and various players? In what ways can these recommendations be cascaded and broken down to micro-level actionable items?
3	Responsible Corporate Leadership—Driving Sustainability in Nigeria's Financial Services Industry	Role of organizations and regulators Case studies Call for innovation and creativity	Reference material for teaching practitioners	What are the strategies to shift sustainability from being regarded as a mere cost centre function to being part of the core of an organization?

<i>Chapter</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Striking ideas/content</i>	<i>Usefulness</i>	<i>Possible further research directions</i>
4	Non-Financial Reporting Regulation and the State of Sustainability Disclosure among Banks in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA): The Case of Ghana and Nigeria	Sustainability Reporting	Policy advocacy and teaching	What are the factors that make it easier for banks to engage in non-financial reporting and how can this kind of reporting be more widely adopted in African countries?
5	NGO and CSO Influence and Media Power for Africa's Future	Narratives of NGOs, CSOs and Media	Policymaking	How far are NGOs, CSO and the media helping in shaping the narrative of a green Africa?
6	Sustainable (Green) Supply Chain Management in Sub Saharan Africa	Opportunities to harness clean energy greener manufacturing practices for reduced carbon footprint	Teaching and practice	What are the barriers to sustainable supply chain practices in Sub-Saharan Africa? What impacts can sustainability have on consumers in decision-making at the supply chain management level of organizations?
7	SME Sustainability Goals and Development in a Volatile Environment	Clear depiction of the issues that SMEs in the Africa region face	Teaching and consultancy	How can SME structure their businesses so as to facilitate sustainability practices?

(continued)

Table 1.1 (continued)

<i>Chapter</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Striking ideas/content</i>	<i>Usefulness</i>	<i>Possible further research directions</i>
8	SMEs and Sustainable Development in Africa—Understanding the Impact of Government's Supports	Ethical leadership and government support as success factors	Policy-making, teaching, and consultancy	What is the best approach to taxing SMEs without compromising their sustainability with the tax burden?
9	Sustainability Leadership by More Minor Actors: Individuals and Families	Multi-dimensional impact of the role of the family on sustainability	Teaching	How could Africa mitigate the impact of migration and globalization on the family unit, due to adoption of western cultures by some family members, which may lead to differing and at times conflicting values? What indices should be used to measure the impact of the PHSI framework?
10	Partnership for High Social Impact in Africa: A Conceptual and Practical Framework	PHSI framework for stakeholders to achieve high impacts in the non-profit sector	Policy-making, teaching, and consultancy	
11	Technology and Green Tech in Africa	Green tech in Africa	Teaching, policy-making, and practice	What is slowing the adoption of green tech, given its importance?
12	Participatory Campaign Approaches in Greening Africa—A Case of 93.1 IUIU EM Go Green Tree Planting Campaign	Participatory approach: campaigns initiated by community radio: The 93.1 Go Green Tree Planting	Policy-making, and practice	Which other campaign approaches can be adopted to enhance community engagement? Why is the participatory approach more effective? What are the more subtle moderators of the relationship between passion and effectiveness, for NGOs?
13	The NGOs and the SDGs—Lessons for Leadership and Sustainability	Interviews with NGO leaders in the environmental sustainability field	Teaching, practice, and policy-making	

<i>Chapter</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Striking ideas/content</i>	<i>Usefulness</i>	<i>Possible further research directions</i>
14	On the Path to a Sustainable Africa—The Role of Communalism and Collaborative Enterprises	Collaborative relationships among African enterprises are vital for achieving sustainability	Teaching and practice	What is the relationship between communal sustainability and collaborative enterprises and which one leads to achievement of the other?
15	Taking the Lead—Case Studies Reflecting New Sustainability Trends in Africa	Growth of impact investing across the continent Innovation around waste management through recycling and up-cycling	Teaching and consultancy	What levels of effectiveness do these initiatives have? What innovations are the various agriculture start-ups making, to promote sustainability?

sustainable development for Africa. Their contribution brings to the fore the importance of not making growth and development the sole responsibility of governments, but rather a collective responsibility of the major stakeholders discussed in the proposed framework.

According to Ogah (Chapter 6) larger organizations, SMEs and governments can all do more by adopting sustainable supply chain strategies. After reviewing the nature and characteristics of the traditional supply chain model, he touches on issues of environmental safety and societal impact among consumers, emerging sustainable supply chain with increased concern for global warming, the possible barriers to sustainable supply chain practices, and the solutions for greener manufacturing practices. SMEs have had a hard time during the pandemic, acknowledges Jagun (Chapter 7); showcasing what is happening in various countries and sharing how Kenya is using it as an opportunity to reboot the economy. According to her, the pandemic is threatening and delaying the achievement of SDGs on the continent. Overall, in this chapter, Jagun was able to show the interesting linkages between SMEs, job creation, economic productivity and the SDGs. Chapter 8 (Iheanachor and Etim) concurs with both Ogah (Chapter 6) and Jagun (Chapter 7) and convincingly argues the pivotal role that SMEs are playing to ensure sustainability in Africa and the importance of the government supporting them as well as their need for ethical leaders.

Analysing the topic from a grassroots angle, Apampa (Chapter 5) explores the influence of NGOs and CSOs and the power of the media for Africa's future. Ogunyemi and Nwagwu's Chapter 13 is complementary to this, discussing as it does the role of NGOs in the fight for environmental sustainability. Ejinima's chapter (Chapter 9) looks at the important role that more minor actors—individuals and families—have. The chapter explores the inter-relationships of individuals and families and their impact on the different dimensions of sustainability. The role of the family group as a unit is clearly emphasized and the need for policy interventions to support and strengthen the family is strongly established. That communities are not to be left out of the movement towards sustainability is shown in Chapter 12 (Mpoza, Musisi, and Kasadha) where the emphasis is on achieving sustainable practices in fostering a green Africa through participatory approaches initiated by communities. Using the 93.1 Go Green Tree Planting Campaign case to explain how such approaches bore more results than institutionalized efforts, the chapter makes a case that

sustainability in Africa will be more easily achieved with a participatory approach.

Two chapters talk about the financial services industry: Appiah-Konadu, Korletey Apetorgbor and Atanya (Chapter 4) provide an informative review of the state of sustainability reporting in Ghana and Nigeria, two countries in West Africa while Awogbade (Chapter 3) deals with the regulations and the evolving journey of the sustainability function in the Nigerian financial sector, as well as the strategies employed in various organizations within the sector. The role of regulators is also touched upon and practical suggestions are given to achieve more.

Atuluku (Chapter 15) tackles the question of poverty as its focal issue and describes what initiatives are being implemented to try to tackle this deep-seated problem within Africa. Poverty is a real ground-root issue in Africa and the sustainability implications are wide-ranging, hence this chapter is very important and adds value to the whole book. Its content is well illustrated with the use of up-to-date and recent statistics. Excellent examples are drawn from across the continent, for example, the growth of impact investing in different countries, and the rise of innovation around waste management through recycling and up-cycling. The author also makes a thought-provoking connection between renewable energy and access to opportunities for the youth. As a complement, Ogah (Chapter 11) contribution is rich in its exploration of the subject of technology in Africa—specifically, of green tech. The chapter also highlights the challenges currently faced in Africa that hinder the full realization of green tech and related technologies and the role they should play in transforming Africa.

Chapter 14 (Acquah, Appiah-Konadu and Amoah) speaks of collaboration for sustainable development, pointing out how different groups can work together to attain sustainability. They start by illustrating the main environment of business in Africa and communal nature of Africans. Then, they go on to demonstrate each of their concepts and to present cases in Africa that exemplify the collaborations they mention.

## CONCLUSION

The problems are manifold and extensive, and sometimes controversial in their complexity. From the point of view of environment and planet, there are the effects of global warming following climate change; of reduced rainfall in some areas and flooding in others which increases the spread

of water-borne diseases. Socio-economic challenges include high rates of poverty and unemployment, deficient basic infrastructure, and poor health amenities. If these are attended to, human lives and living conditions will improve. Irrespective of their starting points, everyone needs to take responsibility and play their own roles in journeying towards sustainability. Leaders in the private sector can contribute to solving the unemployment problem and through that provide poverty alleviation to some extent. Public leaders (government) can establish and enforce policies that make the environment of business more supportive, promote social equity and conserve the environment. Communities can also participate, and leaders from within those spaces could also spearhead the projects and initiatives they come up with. Leaders in households and their followers must take responsibility for enhancing the sustainability of their own lifestyles and those of their dependents. In short, all the different actors brought to the limelight in the chapters of this book can and should do something. To enable this in a practical way, the author(s) of each chapter, after sharing their unique perspectives, present the reader with a few thought-provoking points and make useful and feasible recommendations for public and private leaders across Africa.

One last word about the private sector potential: Entrepreneurship is one of the key drivers of sustainability for Africa. The continent contains some of the fastest growing economies globally, and has a favourable climate and vast landmasses for agricultural use. Her human and natural resources are abundant. However, levels of poverty, malnutrition, unemployment, inequity, and insecurity are high, and, in addition, her sustainable development is further hampered by corruption, inadequate infrastructure and vulnerabilities with regard to reliance on primary products. As entrepreneurship entails people starting and managing businesses, these small and medium-scale enterprises (SMEs) can significantly contribute to a sustainable improvement in the economies of African nations. The chapters that deal with corporates and SMEs support this thinking.

It is lucky for Africans that her peoples are resilient. With good leaders playing their different roles as outlined in this book and more, and with responsible followers inspired by their leaders, there is abundant hope for the continent to develop sustainably.



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