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THE LEGITIMACY OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS: THE UNDP'S OPERATIONS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

ZASADNOŚĆ TWORZENIA ORGANIZACJI MIĘDZYNARODOWYCH NA PODSTAWIE DZIAŁANIA UNDP W REGIONIE AFRYKI POŁUDNIOWEJ

DOI: 10.15611/e21.2021.04

JEL Classification: O19

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Quote as: Pogoda, M. (2021). The legitimacy of international organizations: The UNDP's operations in Southern Africa. *Ekonomia XXI Wieku*, (24).

Abstract: International organizations are specialized formal frameworks created to assist states in achieving national goals, stimulating economic growth, and ensuring the protection of their citizens, however their legitimacy has been questioned over the years. This paper aims to answer the question of the adequacy and effectiveness of one of such organizations, namely the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in the economic development of five countries in Southern Africa (Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Namibia and South Africa). According to the analysis, the effects of the programme are satisfactory, although the intervention needs improvement. Southern African countries still lack stable and reliable statistical systems to monitor social and economic changes. In addition, these countries rely heavily on international organizations and do not take their own initiative, which makes all the endeavors less effective. Ultimately, these countries require both technical and expert support at all stages of the implemented projects to maximize the impact of the support and sustainability of the results. In line with these findings, the presence of the programme in the region seems to be justified, hence it actively contributes to its economic growth. Yet so far, no alternative ways of intervention have been found and the current framework, although imperfect, has not found a replacement.

Keywords: UNDP, UN, Southern Africa, economic development.

Streszczenie: Organizacje międzynarodowe jako jednostki wyspecjalizowane w konkretnej dziedzinie życia społecznego są tworzone, by wspierać państwa w osiąganiu celów narodowych, pobudzaniu wzrostu gospodarczego i zapewnianiu ochrony ich obywateli. Celem artykułu jest odpowiedź na pytanie o zasadność i skuteczność jednej z takich organizacji (jest nią Program Narodów Zjednoczonych ds. Rozwoju (UNDP)) i jego działań w rozwoju gospodarczym pięciu krajów Afryki Południowej (Botswany, Eswatini, Lesotho, Namibii i Republiki Południowej Afryki). Z analizy wynika, że efekty programu są zadowalające, choć modyfikacja interwencji mogłaby zwiększyć jej wydajność. Kraje Afryki Południowej wciąż nie mają stabilnych i rzetelnych biur statystycznych, które pozwoliłyby na monitorowanie zmian społecznych i ekonomicznych. Ponadto państwa te w dużej mierze zależą od organizacji międzynarodowych i nie wykazują własnej inicjatywy, co zmniejsza wydajność jakichkolwiek przedsięwzięć. Ostatecznie region Afryki Południowej wymaga wsparcia technicznego i eksperckiego we wszystkich stadiach przeprowadzanych projektów, tak aby zapewnić maksymalną użyteczność wsparcia i długotrwałość rezultatów. Obecność Programu w regionie wydaje się uzasadniona, gdyż aktywnie przyczynia się do jego wzrostu gospodarczego. Dotychczas nie znaleziono alternatywnych sposobów interwencji, a obecne formy wsparcia, choć niedoskonałe, nie znalazły korzystniejszych substytutów.

Słowa kluczowe: UNDP, ONZ, Afryka Południowa, rozwój gospodarczy.

1. Introduction

The term ‘institution’ remains unclear in the literature of international relations. Certain shared norms and values, international regimes¹, as well as international organizations such as the United Nations and the World Trade Organization, are all defined as institutions, despite the rather vague definitions of these three concepts. The broad definition of institutions refers to a sustained set of rules connecting states and other international actors which imply the preferable behaviour of the aforementioned actors in their actions and decision-making (Keohane, 1988, p. 383), this set of rules can be both, formal and informal. International organizations, based on informal institutions (with such values as sovereignty, reciprocity, and security) take the form of organized formal frameworks, aimed to unite actors to work towards shared objectives. In the academic literature, international organizations (IOs) are defined as “formal, continuous structures established by agreement between members (governments and/or non-governmental bodies) from two or more sovereign states with the aim of pursuing the common interest of the membership” (Archer, 2001, p. 33, as cited by Chidozie & Aje, 2017, p. 44).

International organizations tackle almost every area of human life and activity including politics, diplomacy, trade, finance, environment, security, human rights, R&D, and culture, and become part of the global governance system (Bhandari,

¹ International regimes are structures comprising governments which agree on shared and explicit principles in a certain area of relations between them. They are often linked with international organizations which govern and control the development of the agreement and behaviour of their member states. Examples include trade and monetary regimes.

2019, p. 10; Ruggie, 1993). These organizations can take the form of two formal institutional frameworks - intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) and international non-governmental organizations (INGOs). IGOs gather together states which have signed mutual treaties and agreements; member parties include governments themselves or their agencies rather than private individuals, which is acceptable in the case of INGOs (Barkin, 2006). Member states have formal authority over the organization and the whole organization acts as a legal personality in the international legal system (Osakwe, 1972, pp. 24-29). The United Nations (UN), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), as well as the International Labour Organization (ILO), are classified as intergovernmental organizations, whereas INGOs, such as Greenpeace, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and Amnesty International, belong to the group of international non-governmental organizations which gather together public-sector trade unions, enterprises, scientific institutions, and even individuals. States may take part in their activities, however, they do not carry the same amount of influence as in the case of IGOs. INGOs can be also subsidized by governments, and deal mainly with socio-economic aspects of human life such as education, entrepreneurship, infrastructure, health, gender equality and human rights, as well as environmental conservation (Bhandari, 2019, p. 12).

The first prominent international organizations were set up after the 1850s, e.g. the Red Cross (1863), established to help with the treatment and nursing of the battlefield's casualties, and the Universal Postal Union (1874), which created a uniform set of rules for international mail exchanges (Chumakov et al., 2014, pp. 282-283; Wylie, 2002)². However, the Central Commission for Navigation on the Rhine is considered to be the world's oldest international organization. It was established at the Congress of Vienna in 1815 and dedicated to the liberalization of Rhine navigation after the end of the Napoleonic Wars (Collinson, 1972; Pevehouse & von Borzyskowski, 2016, pp. 3-8). Growing interdependence, as well as large-scale military conflicts, have become an incentive for dialogue between nation-states, resulting in the creation of a multitude of organizations specializing in different aspects of international life. Even though initially this form of cooperation was dedicated to the prevention of further war, collaboration and creation of a stable system of global security, in time many other transnational issues emerged, necessitating tighter international integration and search for common ground among the parties involved. A positive correlation between the occurrence of war and the emergence of international organizations was observed throughout the years (Newfarmer, Page, & Tarp, 2018). In 1919, after World War I, the League of Nations, a predecessor of the UN, was established. It failed to prevent the outbreak of another war 20 years later, but encouraged further cooperation after World War II. Eventually, the United Nations was founded in 1945 (Diehl, 2005, pp. 3-5). As the interdependence between states

² The Red Cross is an international non-governmental organization, whereas the Universal Postal Union – an intergovernmental organization.

has grown to an even greater extent due to globalization and more dynamic cross-border relations, the UN has created a range of specialized agencies and programmes to address different problems selectively. The UNDP, the main focus of this paper, is one such programme. The establishment of the UN was followed by a growing multitude of organizations specializing in almost every field of human life. The main reason for the existence of IOs is the facilitation of cooperation between members willing to join the organization to have a share in the benefits offered by cooperation.

The main objectives of IOs have changed over time, from minimizing nationalism, promoting peace and ensuring global security, to motivating states and their citizens to interact and collaborate in other spheres and on a larger scale. Since many problems and their consequences had spread from the national to the international dimension, such as climate change and biodiversity loss, they became global dilemmas affecting every nation. IOs serve as forums where states can communicate and try to reach a consensus on how global risks should be addressed and dealt with. Apart from coming up with response options to already existing crises, IOs unite states to anticipate possible future problems. Organizations assist in defining them and discussing how to prevent their occurrence by identifying weak links and malpractice. Joint efforts and accountability strengthen the resilience of the whole system and balances out the interests of different parties. National governments delegate their authority to IOs to tackle problems that they are no longer able to address adequately, because governments do not possess enough resources and knowledge to solve worldwide problems independently. International organizations are not created to replace them, but rather to complement their work and fill the gaps of ungoverned international spheres. The creation of common bodies, where each state is represented, distributes power among each member. These bodies specialize in certain functions, becoming repositories of knowledge, and take over roles which governmental institutions are unable to perform (Lopez-Claros, Dahl, & Groff, 2020, p. 16). Centralization and a certain degree of autonomy allow for a comprehensive and unbiased judgment of pressing global matters (Diehl, 2005, pp. 6-7). IOs can also pay more attention to issues which could be overlooked or underestimated by nation-states and focus on the long-term perspective rather than short-lived gains. Complex and universal organizations, such as the United Nations, are pivotal actors in the absence of supranational government. Their boundaries are clearly defined, guaranteeing lawfulness and stability. Participation in IOs is voluntary, treaties become promises that states make to one another, and the common decisions represent the collective will of all members. Organizations involve member states in their decision-making by voting mechanisms or delegating their power to independent bodies (like secretariats or councils). In this way, decisions are made in respect of the common good of the whole group without favouring specific members. Nowadays, international organizations are critical actors on the international stage, assisting in the development of trade between states, managing environmental challenges, humanitarian action and armed conflicts.

The legitimacy of international organizations has been questioned over the years (Kirton, 2017). They are accused of ineffectiveness and unequal treatment among their members. The rules and policies created during the forums are not followed by all member countries, and enforcement of the regulations by the IO's bodies is limited. What is more, the maintenance of such complex entities is capital-intensive and their practices lack the desired responsiveness and flexibility needed to act in accordance with each country's condition and circumstances. Malpractice is not sanctioned properly leaving the wrongdoers free to continue their misconduct. During the debates, big and powerful countries hold favourable positions, whereas the objections from less influential parties are ignored or not addressed with proper attention and diligence. It is also believed that globalization, which is one of the outcomes triggered by the popularity of multilateral cooperation, does not tackle the problem of poverty and global inequality properly and the population of the poor is rising (or at best, remains unchanged) instead of shrinking (Stutzer & Frey, 2007). These problems may originate from the fact that IOs are vulnerable to the temptation of following the business interests of some parties, especially the most powerful ones, which may easily dominate the interests of other, less influential members. The unwillingness of large countries to compromise, or let go of their authority, hampers the development of any legislation. It shows that IOs can thrive as long as there is a common recognition of a shared problem and agreement on how it should be tackled. However, disagreement may put an end to any initiative and the pressing problem is left without any appropriate response. The profile of IO's actions is still excessively influenced by governments without incorporating civilians into their decision-making, which, in the end, is supposed to be aimed at individuals. Finally, IOs do not have enough financial resources at their disposal which does not always allow for high-quality solutions and creates more arguments against their operations which may be used against them by skeptics and critics.

The international development literature is increasingly questioning the legitimacy of international organizations, particularly focusing on the UN system by comparing the 'promises' made at the end of the Cold War and its current performance. However, there is little literature taking the form of a case study which could analyse the operations of a particular organization by reviewing publicly available country profiles and country evaluations. Recent articles which derive from country evaluations concentrated mostly on sustainability and environmental issues. Country-specific evaluations are also often limited to a particular industry, like the study carried out by Durham (2016) examining the operations of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Laos' mining industry.

This work aimed to bring together the formal objectives and tangible results achieved through cooperation with one such organization. The analysis looked closely at the impact and contribution of the UNDP to Southern Africa. The most recent study organized on a similar scale was conducted in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Egypt, Moldova, and Tajikistan by Begovic et al. in 2017. As there is a lack of

recent publications in academic journals examining the operations of the UNDP in Southern Africa, this work aimed to fill this gap. The impact of the UNDP's projects was evaluated, taking into account their adequacy and fairness, as well as their effectiveness. Therefore the analysis based on the examples, allows for a critical assessment of the legitimacy of this organization in the Southern African context.

2. The UNDP as the UN's programme

The United Nations is the biggest global organization with the most comprehensive framework on a global scale. Its members are sovereign countries, treated equally in the organization, which have committed themselves to the agreement through signing the founding treaty of the UN – the Charter of the United Nations. It was signed by the 51 founding members³ in 1945 (Schiafone, 2008, p. 308). The essence of the charter is the maintenance of international peace, respect for individual freedom and human rights, as well as international cooperation in other fields. All disputes should be resolved in a peace-supporting and rightful manner. International relations should be managed without the use of force against one another and the security of all citizens should be sought. The UN's influence is acceptable as long as it does not interfere with domestic jurisdiction and it is a manifestation of collective will. The UN's member states pledge to unite in solving economic, social, cultural, environmental and humanitarian problems.

Even though the maintenance of global peace remains the most important objective of the organization, only an insignificant proportion of the UN's actual activities is directly concerned with peacekeeping operations or military support. Nowadays, socio-economic activities dominate its field of interest. Most of the UN's resources are devoted to economic and social development, with the main aim of decreasing the disparities among developed and underdeveloped countries. The organization also attempts to build a stable global economic system which would favor the inclusion of poor countries. Other fields of social importance include the elimination of poverty, food security, women's rights, money laundering, corruption, crime prevention and criminal justice. The fundamental objectives of the UN's operations for 2015-2030 were gathered together and presented in the form of 17 development goals, known as Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The UNDP stands for the United Nations Development Programme. It was established in 1965 by consolidating the Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance (EPTA) and the Special Fund to eliminate the overlapping of the two bodies and increase the effectiveness of their activities (Stokke, 2009). The EPTA was more concerned about the political issues present in underdeveloped societies, whereas the Special Fund provided technical assistance, with all the UN members

³ Poland, the 51st original member, was not present at the UN Conference on International Organization in San Francisco where the treaty was signed. Poland signed the Charter later in 1945.

participating in the programme. The UNDP's main objective is to increase the capacity and wealth of developing countries through eradicating poverty (as an overriding priority), managing risks and building sufficient healthcare systems (Stephan & Zelli, 2009). Regarding the environmental role of the UNDP, it assists in the reduction of ozone-depleting substances in the countries it operates in. It also offers funding and direct investment in ecological initiatives which build wealth-producing capabilities in poor countries and incorporates environmental concerns into its projects. Thus, the development must include both human well-being and environmental protection, and only then can the growth be sustainable in its full potential. The UNDP operates in 170 countries, its projects build knowledge, infrastructure and relationships which allow for the efficient use of natural and human resources in developing countries.

The next fundamental issue covered by the UNDP's actions is inequality. In general, statistics show the increase in global wealth and development (Clemens & Kremer, 2016), owing to technological advancement, stimulated economic activity and international trade. However, most of the increased economic returns are retained by capital-intensive countries, companies and sectors. This means that labour-intensive societies do not record such a dynamic increase in their wealth (Lopez-Claros et al., 2020). Inequalities have always been present, but the globalization processes encouraged growth of disparities and made them more visible. Extreme differences exist in different areas and on different levels. Inequalities are growing between individuals, communities, ethnic groups, urban and rural areas, and between regions and states. In these areas there are income (and wealth), opportunity, power, gender, education and development gaps. Such disparities may cause social tensions, violence, crime, and also alienation, affecting security and cohesion. Growing inequalities weaken social trust in institutions. The superior position can be held by the minority, where the majority is disadvantaged, or vice versa, the minority is deprived whereas the majority is thriving. The problem of inequality can be invisible when using statistical methods like median or mean. This may be the reason why the problem of inequality has been ignored and left unnoticed or underestimated. What is especially important is the fact that inequalities hamper development. For this reason, the UNDP focuses on this aspect, thus fulfilling the 10th goal of the Sustainable Development Agenda, directly to the problem of inequality. Since within the UN system there is still no agency specialized in the problem of disparities, the UNDP shoulders much of the responsibility when it comes to tackling this issue. Institutional engagement is necessary since the efforts made by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank have not been satisfactory.

The UNDP's contribution to building human capacity for human development is carried out through close cooperation with the national governments. The UNDP engages in the country's issues upon the request of the authorities. The assistance is focused on the priority needs of a certain state and later integrated into national development strategies and regional plans (Schivavone, 2008, p. 334; UNDP, 2017b, p. 3), in alignment with the Sustainable Agenda. The UNDP's versatility has

brought the programme to fields which were not originally included in its mandate, emphasizing that development is a universal and central goal in itself. Development has peacebuilding characteristics, especially needed in conflict and post-conflict countries. This is an examples of how the UNDP's contribution spread across the areas beyond its statutory objectives. Within the UN framework, the programme acts as a coordinator and a support platform of the UN development system to achieve the SDGs. In the countries it operates in, it offers support by providing knowledge and technical assistance, advising states in constructing their policies, taking part in emergency relief and advocating solutions. Its projects are meant to attract investment capital and build democratic governance by creating inclusive, responsible, rightful and transparent institutions. It also supports the private sector – it improves entrepreneurship and accelerates economic growth and job creation. The UNDP involves experts in its operations to provide training for employees, build their skills, encourage technological advancement and innovativeness. The current UNDP projects are focused, but not limited to, the reduction of poverty, HIV/AIDS prevention, infrastructure and renewable energy sources. It teaches countries 'how to fish' instead of giving the 'fish' itself. The projects are performed in such a way that countries do not build external dependence and are able to continue learned practices when the UNDP no longer intervenes. Each contribution is tailor-made in support of the principle that every country has its own problems and issues nested in its unique environment, and ultimately, that every country has its own priorities and goals. The responsibility is given to the governments and local institutions from the very beginning of assistance. The UNDP cannot provide financial assistance to individuals, charities and the private sector, however it brings governments, civil society and private entities together to work on a shared goal, ensuring mutual accountability and fair benefits from the collaboration (multi-stakeholder approach). The UNDP is one of the most trusted UN entities, and has earned its confidence by the decentralization of its operations, which subsequently supports the programme's effectiveness, and also its longstanding presence in developing countries, result-based orientation and transparency. The UNDP was ranked third in the 2020 Aid Transparency Index, after the Asian Development Bank (ADB) – the Sovereign Portfolio, and the World Bank – the International Development Association (IDA; Publish What You Fund, 2020, p. 6), and remains the most transparent institution in the UN system. The UNDP works in close partnership with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women).

Every four years the UNDP formulates a strategic plan, which sets out a vision for its activity and acts as a beacon for its development. The 2018-2021 Strategic Plan emphasized the importance of the Sustainable Agenda and described what the support of the organization should look like. The plan mentions three principles which the organization is committed to, respectively, universality, equality and inclusiveness (leaving no one behind). The UNDP wants to become a role model by boosting its standing and quality of the operation by (UNDP, 2017b):

- strengthening its relevance and trustworthiness as a partner, especially in poverty eradication,
- being more agile and innovative, and by handling risks well,
- maximizing the effectiveness in the utilization of its resources to deliver even greater results.

The programme makes constant attempts to strengthen its collaboration with other funds and programmes, including the most important ones – UNFPA, UNICEF and UN-Women, in order to boost the institutional effectiveness of the UN system. It also administers the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) and the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) into the implementation of its projects. The UNV engages volunteers, especially young people, to participate in the activities and the UNCDF assists the UNDP in the allocation of finances and inclusion of funding from public and private sectors.

3. Southern Africa

The current political and economic landscape of Africa dates back to times of European dominance. After depopulating the continent and thereby destroying its economic and social capital by the slave trade in the 18th and 19th centuries, in 1884-1885, Great Britain, France, Belgium and Portugal finally carved up the continent among themselves in the so-called Congo Conference. The borders and infrastructure of African countries, gaining their independence in the 20th century, basically still reflect this colonial concept. Against this background, it is hardly surprising, that, according to the UN's definition of Least Developed Countries (LDCs), 33 out of 46 are in Africa. LDCs is a term used by the United Nations to group the countries with the lowest indicators of socioeconomic development, along with the lowest Human Development Index (HDI) scores across the world (UNCTAD, 2019a).

Southern Africa, the southernmost part of the continent is one of the UN's statistical subregions. It accounts for five countries – the biggest economy of the subregion, South Africa, as well as Botswana, Namibia, and two mini countries – Lesotho and Eswatini (formerly known as Swaziland). The five countries of the subregion together make up the Southern African Customs Union (SACU), the oldest still existing customs union in the world (WTO, 2003).

In recent years, the largest economies in Africa have experienced stagnant development growth, namely Angola, Nigeria and South Africa. Without taking into account the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the aforementioned slowdown was a consequence of – in the case of Angola – declining oil production, Nigeria – underinvestment, faulty infrastructure and power shortages, and finally, South Africa – also low investment, especially in the energy and mining sectors (UNCTAD, 2019b, pp. 21-22). As explained later, it has been detrimental for those countries of South Africa which rely heavily on their mineral deposits.



Fig. 1. Southern Africa subregion

Source: (National Geographic, 2021).

However, and the most developed countries of the continent are not exceptions, the whole Africa struggles with the problem of productivity. According to the Economic Report on Africa (UNECA, 2019, p. 5), productivity growth in Africa declined from an average of 2.4% in the period 2000-2008 to around 0.3% in 2009-2018. African economies should pay special attention to productivity-boosting investments and drivers of long-term growth.

Concerning Southern Africa, the deterioration of investment in the biggest economy of the subregion is affecting its neighbors, impairing the performance of all five countries. In the last four years, Botswana and Eswatini were the only countries with GDP growth above 2% per year (see Figure 2), Botswana being the best performer.

The economic situation of these countries further deteriorated due to persistent drought and falling demand for their exports (commodities such as diamonds, copper and uranium), which account for a significant share of their GDP.

Two micro economies of Southern Africa have similar issues to the development trends of their larger counterparts (Figure 2). Additionally, Lesotho is included in the Least Development Countries Report (UNCTAD, 2019a) as one of the world's 47 least developed countries. Its status is determined by taking into account, among others, gross income per capita, the ratio of malnourished population, child and

maternal mortality, illiteracy, economic vulnerability to shocks, share of victims of natural disasters and instability of agricultural production.

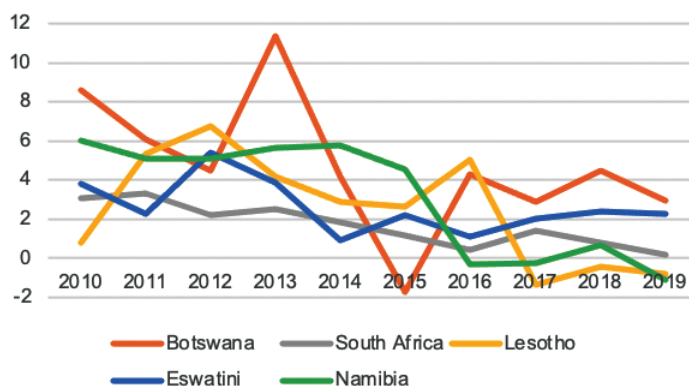


Fig. 2. GDP growth of countries in Southern Africa (%)

Source: (World Bank, 2021).

Southern Africa differs from other parts of the continent. The subregion heavily depends on its mineral resources, stimulating development of the mining sector, apart from that, the countries have relatively well-developed manufacturing and services. Nevertheless, despite the wealth derived from diamond production, the economies struggle with some of the problems common in other parts of Africa, e.g. unfavourable weather conditions, unproductivity and overdependence on imports. What is more, the region established a prosperous manufacturing sector, dominated by South Africa's industries. Profits from the mining sector and manufacturing allowed for further investment in communication and transportation. Nowadays, the share of services in GDP creation is expanding while the importance of industries is shrinking. As a result, services account for more than half of GDP in all Southern African countries (Figure 3). The share of industry has been systematically declining over the years, with a fairly unchanged share of agriculture (less than 10%). Industries account for up to one-third of the countries' GDP (AfDB, 2020, pp. 8-9; AUC & OECD, 2018, p. 94). Growing industries were harmed by cheap imports from China, which was one of the drivers of premature de-industrialization.

Apart from mining and manufacturing, also agriculture, public sector and tourism are important sectors of Southern African economies. South Africa has also well-established financial, retail and construction sectors. Due to the volatility of commodity prices, states have been investing in economic diversification. However, many of them heavily depend on the most developed sector and underinvest in other less profitable branches. In 2019, the general government sector contributed mostly to GDP creation in Namibia and Lesotho, whereas in Botswana – the wholesale,

retail, hotel and restaurant sector, in Eswatini – manufacturing, and in South Africa – financial and business services (SACU, 2021, p. 4).

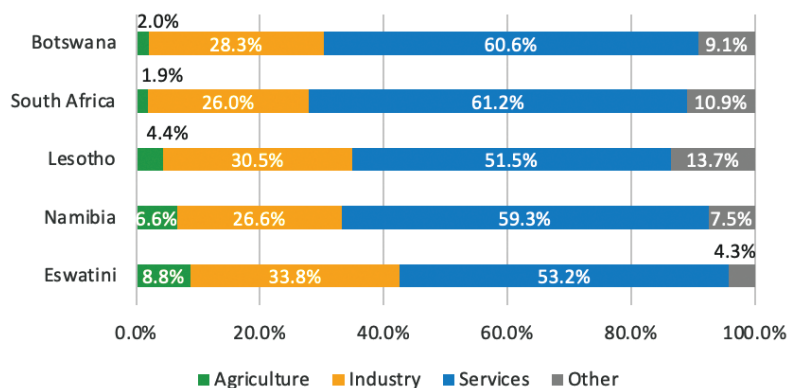


Fig. 3. Distribution of GDP across economic sectors in Southern Africa in 2019

Source: own elaboration based on Statista, 2021.

In Africa, hydropower plants are the primary source of electricity, among the countries in Southern Africa it is heavily used by Namibia and Lesotho. The next major source of renewable energy is solar power, however still underutilized and not widely used in the Southern Africa region. South Africa, Eswatini and Botswana rely on coal. Among all the five countries, South Africa has the most differentiated electricity sources (see Figure 4), with a growing share of renewable energy solutions. There is also a growing demand for the use of renewable energy sources in transportation. However, economies with insignificant access to hydropower struggle to increase the utilization of renewable energy in the industrial sector, which remains a challenge for countries like Botswana and Eswatini. The latter is able to produce only 30% of its electricity needs. The remaining energy is imported from South Africa and Mozambique. The imports are expensive and almost fully dominated by coal – only 3% of purchased electricity comes from hydroelectric plants from Mozambique. Eswatini's domestic energy supply based on hydropower is vulnerable to drought and limited storage capacity, which also determine the yearly import needs (AfDB, 2018b).

In Botswana, the utilization of renewable energy resources is extremely low. Moreover, Botswana has no national renewable energy strategy and the government focuses only on non-renewable resources. There is no potential for the development of hydropower plants because of constant water shortages. A similar situation is present in the wind energy sector, as the speed of wind is insufficient (Danish Energy Management & Esbensen, 2017, pp. 4-9). On the other hand, there is a high potential for generation of solar energy, which is poorly exploited (only 0.17% of the country's energy comes from solar farms – see Figure 4).

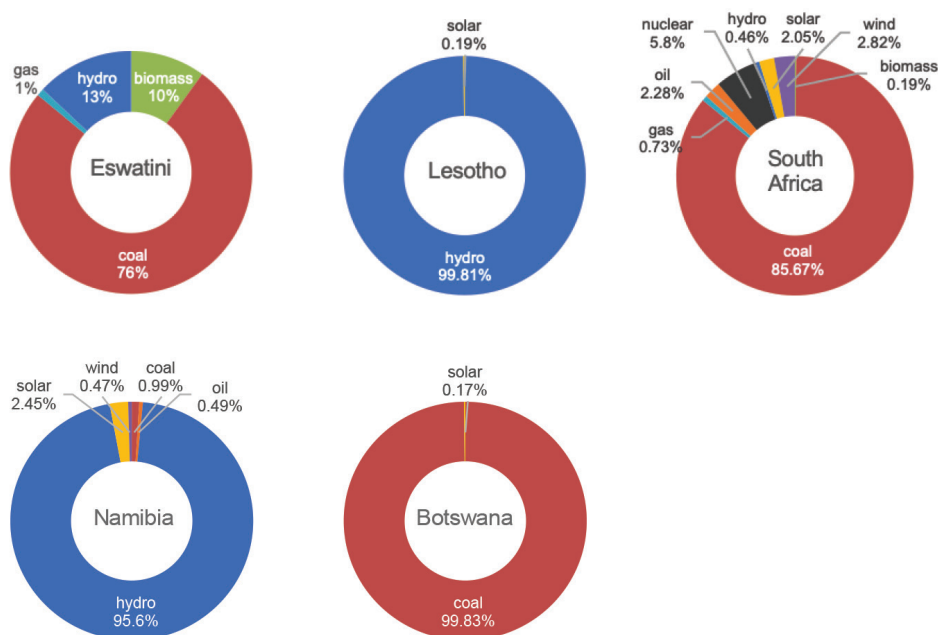


Fig. 4. Electricity consumption by source in Southern African countries in 2018 (including imports)

Source: own elaboration based on (AfDB, 2018; Ritchie, 2019).

None of the countries of the region ranks high in human development according to UNDP's HDI ranking. In 2019, Botswana was the highest ranking (100th and HDI value 0.735), followed by South Africa (114th, HDI 0.709), Namibia (130th, HDI 0.646), Eswatini (138th, HDI 0.611) and Lesotho (165th, HDI 0.527). Even though Botswana and South Africa belong to the group of high human development countries, all of the region's representatives are in the lower half of the list. Namibia and Eswatini are in the medium human development range, however Lesotho is ranked lowest – the low human development group.

4. The impact of UNDP

The UNDP's strategy for each country around the world is articulated in the Country Programme Document (CPD), which forms the foundation for the UNDP's work in a specific country. CPDs are aligned with national development plans, the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDG)⁴, if such had been prepared – national visions, the UNDP's Strategic Plan and the 2030 Sustainable Agenda.

⁴ Formerly known as the United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAF).

The UNDP's work between 2018 and 2021 has been focused on the eradication of poverty, climate change mitigation, improvement of adolescent and maternal health, achievement of gender equality and empowerment of women, enhancement of availability and use of disaggregated data for sustainable development, as well as the provision of sustainable peace, in line with the priorities of countries, national plans, and the Sustainable Development Agenda (UNDP, 2017b, p. 3). The current operations of the programme have been shaped by the 2018-2021 UNDP's Strategic Plan. In its activities, the UNDP has been emphasizing that "development is a central goal in itself" (UNDP, 2017b, p. 3), suggesting that development is a 'journey' and not a 'destination', and that each effort towards a more sustainable world is as important as the results of such efforts and the achievement of such goals. Since African countries have announced their commitment to the African Union's Agenda 2063, the UNDP has incorporated both agendas in its projects. The goals of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and Agenda 2063 complement each other, intending to create a prosperous Africa with competitive and resilient economies. To improve the effectiveness of its projects and the learning experience of the recipient countries, the UNDP promotes South-South cooperation (Khan, 2019, p. 9; Sibanda, 2017, p. 12; UNDP, 2018b, p. 10), which includes the exchange of knowledge and resources between the countries of the Global South. However, the programme also brings best practices coming from developed countries or derived from research and later used in the development of evidence-based policy (Chipika, 2016, p. 14; IEO, 2020a, p. 6; UNDP, 2009, p. 18; UNDP, 2020b, pp. 5, 10).

The UNDP has reported the following issues as the main problems of the subregion: poverty, unemployment, gender inequality, health risks (especially HIV/AIDS) and poor governance. A list of the main development challenges of the five countries is presented in Table 1. The countries share a great number of common problems. However, solutions must be tailor-made for country-specific needs and policies.

Table 1. Main problems of Southern African countries

Country	Country-specific problems	Shared problems
1	2	3
Botswana	Narrow and undiversified economy	Poverty and income inequality Health issues (HIV/AIDS) Gender inequality Poor governance and weak institutions Unemployment High vulnerability to natural disasters and effects of climate change Underdeveloped social protection system and bad access to public services Unsustainable exploitation of natural resources

Table 1, cd.

1	2	3
Eswatini	Food insecurity Lack of democratic institutions Corruption and nepotism	
Lesotho	Weak private sector Bad access to clean water and sanitation Political instability Low life expectancy Poor policy coordination Overdependence on international organizations Lack of leadership Lack of vision at the national level Low statistical capacity Low level of entrepreneurship Low investment	
Namibia	Corruption Low level of entrepreneurship Energy shortages Unsustainable land management Low statistical capacity Low quality of education	
South Africa	Environmental pressures (mainly CO ₂ emissions) Stagnating economy Uncertain future position in the region and on the global scale Social tensions	

Source: own elaboration based on (Abagi & Nthoateng, 2017; AU, ECA, AfDB & UNDP, 2017; IEO, 2020a, 2020b; Siwingwa, 2016; UNDP, 2017a, 2021a).

The programme's contribution to the development of the region has been moderately satisfactory. Nevertheless, the programme could not address some of the most pressing issues or the results of its interventions were insufficient. The Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) reports on the UNDP's performance, and the materials collected by IEO were used to prepare the following analysis.

4.1. Botswana

For decades, poverty has been the second most pressing problem in Botswana, after HIV/AIDS (UNDP, 2009). The UNDP contributed to the reduction of the problem by taking an active part in drafting comprehensive poverty-oriented policies and plans, such as the Poverty Eradication Programme (2011) and Strategy (waiting for the endorsement of the parliament in 2020, currently constrained by the COVID-19

pandemic), and the Botswana National Social Protection Recovery Plan (2020). New policy frameworks covered issues such as malnutrition, disaster resilience, health problems, access to education, empowerment of women, and gender-based violence (IEO, 2020a, p. 30; Siphambe et al. 2020; UN 2020). The UNDP started supporting the government of Botswana in poverty eradication in 2015. Since then, both parties have been working on the development of the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), which could be later used in decision making. Funding provided by the UNDP could be utilized to obtain technical support from the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative. As a result, the first national Multidimensional Poverty Index Report was launched in July 2020. The report drew much from the content prepared for the international conference entitled “Leave No One Behind – The Fight Against Poverty, Exclusion And Inequality”, which was also co-organized by the UNDP in March 2018. It was the first event of this kind organized in Africa. The MPI measures poverty and other forms of social deprivation disaggregated by age, sex, race, migratory status and geographic location. The compiled MPI report contains baseline information, which will be used in the future evaluation of the effectiveness of the Botswana Poverty Eradication Policy and Strategy (BPEPS) (IEO, 2020a, p. 8). As a result, Botswana managed to reduce its headcount poverty ratio from 40.9% of the population in 1985 to 14.5% in 2015 (30 years later, see Figure 5a).

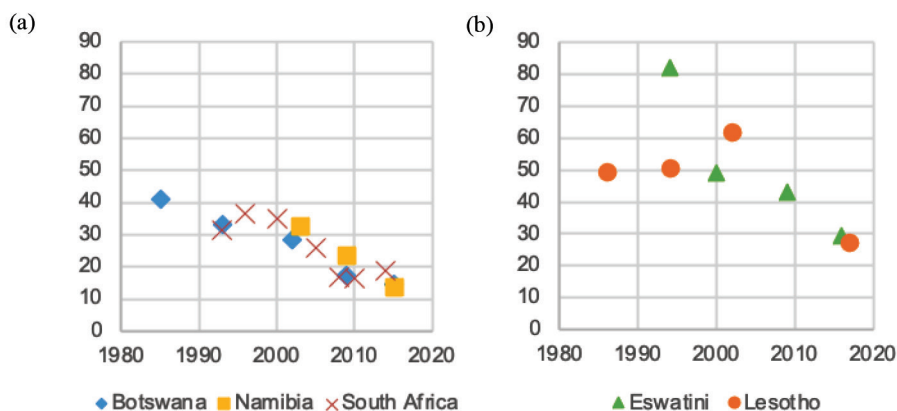


Fig. 5. Poverty headcount ratio at USD 1.90 a day in Southern Africa (%)

Source: (World Bank, 2021).

Poverty has been shrinking dramatically especially in rural areas much faster than in cities. The country's most important strategy in poverty eradication is the Poverty Eradication Programme (PEP), which targeted the population living on less than BWP 300 (around USD 30) per month, as well as orphans and people with

disabilities. However, the programme mainly focused on extreme poverty, hence it did not reach all individuals in need. Other interventions included employment creation, training (for skills development), and the provision of social services supporting everyday survival (UN, 2017a, pp. 15-18).

HIV/AIDS was the major barrier to development growth in Botswana in the 20th century. Only the Government of Botswana HIV Programme (Support to the National AIDS Programme), implemented between 1997 and 2002, and co-delivered by the UNDP, managed to alleviate the negative tendencies. The project helped reduce high mortality among young people and decreased the relative number of children orphaned by AIDS. Subsequently, these trends contributed to the counteracting the national poverty problem. The work on HIV/AIDS was later continued in the Strengthening Capacity for Gender Sensitive Multi-Sectoral Response to HIV and AIDS in the Botswana Programme, which started in 2003 and lasted for the next six years (Chibvongodze, 2011). During its implementation, the project absorbed the largest share of the UNDP Botswana budget – 44% (UNDP, 2009, p. 20). The progress in fighting HIV/AIDS in Botswana is visible in Figure 6.

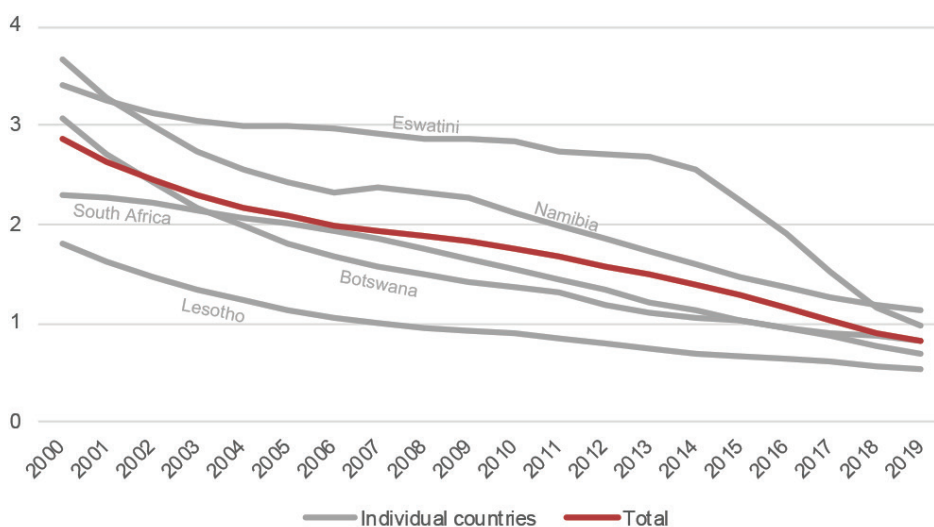


Fig. 6. Incidence of HIV⁵ in Southern Africa (per 100 uninfected population, %)

Source: (World Bank, 2021).

The Ministries and Statistics Botswana need more capacity in order to build a centralized and coordinated database to distribute information without unnecessary effort (IEO, 2020a, p. 14). During the COVID-19 pandemic, the UNDP supported

⁵ The number of new HIV infections in the population aged 15-49.

the Government of Botswana through establishing institutional mechanisms for the coordination and monitoring of the national COVID-19 response. The UNDP also created the National Emergency Operations Centre and a structure of Secretariat workstations responsible for COVID-19 affairs. The UNDP place special attention on the recovery of the private sector during the pandemic, thanks to the partnership with the private sector body, Business Botswana. Both entities have also been working on facilitating the SME's registration process for both the formal and informal sectors of the economy. The data acquired through the Local Enterprise Authority will be later used in COVID-19 impact assessments and further decision-making. The programme has also collaborated with the Ministry of Investment, Trade and Industry in the preparation of a national recovery plan tailored to address the challenges faced by the informal sector. The plan has been completed and is now implemented by the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development. Finally, the UNDP was also involved in the improvement of the information and communications technology infrastructure needed during business closures and restrictions (IEO, 2020a, pp. 8-9).

Among all the countries in the region, Botswana has the highest need for economic diversification (see Table 1). In order to enhance the resilience of this export-led economy, economic activities must be inclusive and of high productivity. The development of policies and programmes is aimed to facilitate the identification of new opportunities, improved market participation and competitiveness (UN, 2017b, p. 23). To achieve these goals, the UNDP worked in partnership with the Ministry of Trade and Industry, and particularly with its Department of International Trade to promote cross-border and intra-regional trade among SMEs, with the Department of Trade and Consumer Affairs to draft new competition law, as well as with the Department of Industrial Affairs to improve supply capacity in the garments sector and to organize pilot programs in Molepolole and Thamaga⁶ (UNDP, 2009, pp. 23-24). Further cooperation with the Ministry of Investment, Trade and Industry concerned the evaluation of the Economic Diversification Drive Strategy, which did not provide reliable information on the country's development. This resulted in the involvement of the programme in additional consultations with the stakeholders to improve the quality of the evaluation. Since 2013, the UNDP has been working with the Ministry of the Local Government and Rural Development on Local Economic Development (LED) programme, which ultimately obtained Parliament's approval in 2017. Today, the plan is being implemented and integrated into sub-national and national planning. The initial geographic coverage included four districts, but has now been expanded and operates in 16 districts. The number of local businesses using the programme is not available, however some of the

⁶ Two villages in south-east Botswana, within a 50 km radius from the capital.

projects include fish farming in the Chobe District⁷ and seasonal harvesting of the veld⁸ plants. Additionally, 27 eligible projects were also identified, but the support from LED has not been initiated.

As far as the multiplication of clean energy solutions is concerned, Botswana organized the Renewable Energy-based Rural Electrification Programme between 2005 and 2010, aimed to decrease the emissions of CO₂ by popularizing the use of solar energy. At the start of the project, 24% of all villages (and 49% of all rural households) in Botswana were not connected to the electricity grid, whereas the country has excellent conditions for producing solar energy. Following its completion, 76.3% of households believed that the new solar power system improved their lifestyles and 60.8% of respondents claimed that they did not see any difference between SHSs and the electricity grid. However, PV systems were not reliable and many technical problems were encountered (UNDP, 2009, p. 20; Vyas, 2011, pp. 13, 21).

In Botswana, the programme's projects have been efficient in all practiced areas. However, in the last IEO evaluation (2020), deepening democracy and strengthening of governance institutions outcomes were 'off-track'. There was also not enough evidence to assess the UNDP's performance in ensuring the country's progress towards the achievement of SDGs. The country had satisfactory accomplishments in its fight against multidimensional poverty and the promotion of policies, strategies and programmes for sustainable development in the economy and the environment. The country's need for economic diversification has also been addressed, however, tangible changes in the economy are still to be observed (IEO, 2020a, pp. 4, 11).

4.2. Eswatini

In the case of Eswatini, the UNDP tackles the problem of poverty by improving access to employment opportunities, especially for women and other economically disadvantaged groups (like disabled and HIV-infected individuals), supporting institutions in achieving sustainable resource management, increasing the number and availability of social services and coverage of social protection benefits. Between 2011 and 2020, poverty was mainly addressed through the Strengthening National Capacities for Poverty Reduction Project, under which technical support has been provided in order to enable evidence-based policy development and the collection of statistical data. In 2018, the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development started preparations for the second Participatory Poverty Assessment (PPA) carried out in the country⁹. The project was supported by the India-UN Development Partnership

⁷ Administrative district in the northern part of Botswana, sharing borders with Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

⁸ Grassland fields in Southern Africa, the same kind of biome is known as steppe in Central Asia and prairie in North America.

⁹ The first PPA in Eswatini was carried out in 1997. Subsequent assessments could not be undertaken due to the poor institutional capacity and lack of statistical tools.

Fund. The process of data collection and analysis has been already completed and the final version of the report is currently in writing. The PPA project is focused on local communities and will serve as a repository of data for local authorities (IEO, 2020b, pp. 6-7, 35; UNOSSC, 2019). In order to improve access to water (especially for rural communities), the UNDP organized resources for the development of public policy concerning water and the mapping of groundwater. The programme also participated in the piloting of sand dam¹⁰ projects aiming to improve the management of water resources. The projects were monitored by three governmental institutions – the Department of Water Affairs within the Ministry of Natural Resources and Energy, the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Public Works and Transport (UNDP, 2018b, pp. 25-27). Subsequently, the poverty level diminished from 82.1% in 1994 to 29.2% in 2016 (Figure 5b). Nonetheless, the country is still struggling with significant inequalities. The situation of vulnerable groups and orphans has improved thanks to the grants for Orphaned Vulnerable Children and the Youth Enterprise Revolving Fund. Social transfers also include the elderly (above 60 years of age) and disabled people. Grants provide enough finance to satisfy their basic needs. The elderly account for the highest share of beneficiaries, even though, year by year, the number of grant receivers is declining (UN, 2019b, pp. 14-16).

Regarding employment opportunities, the UNDP organized training in the production of vegetables to strengthen the capacity of the agricultural sector, and increased the availability of market linkages with suppliers. The positive result of this initiative should also improve food security of the country. The next project will also bring increased benefits for the economy; together with Matsapha Town¹¹ Council, the UNDP has piloted the 'Waste for Jobs' Project, creating jobs for informal workers. The waste is used for the production of jewellery, or utilized as compost in gardening, and has started to provide income for all the parties involved. However, higher employability and earnings are not the only outcome of the project, the Waste Management for Improved Livelihoods and the Resilience Initiative propagate waste segregation and recycling, and resulted in the preparation of the waste recycling policy in line with the aims of the CPD (UNDP, 2018b, pp. 26-27). Up to the beginning of 2021, the project benefited 114 households (UNDP, 2021b). As a result, unemployment has been shrinking gradually over the years (see Figure 7). It went back to the level of 2015 in 2020, due to the COVID-19 lockdown, rising from 22.24% to 23.40% in one year.

The UNDP Eswatini has achieved mixed results across its projects. The most satisfactory outcomes are observed in the environment and sustainable livelihoods. All the policies for inclusive growth have been already prepared and are waiting

¹⁰ Sand dams are cement or concrete walls built across seasonal rivers, with sandy bottoms, to capture rainwater. The sand and soil mixed with the water sink to the bottom. When the dam is filled, 25-40% of the volume is water. Dams are refilled with each rainfall and can provide clean water for local communities. Sand dams are the most cost-effective method of water harvesting in dryland areas.

¹¹ A town in central Eswatini, the largest industrial area in Eswatini.

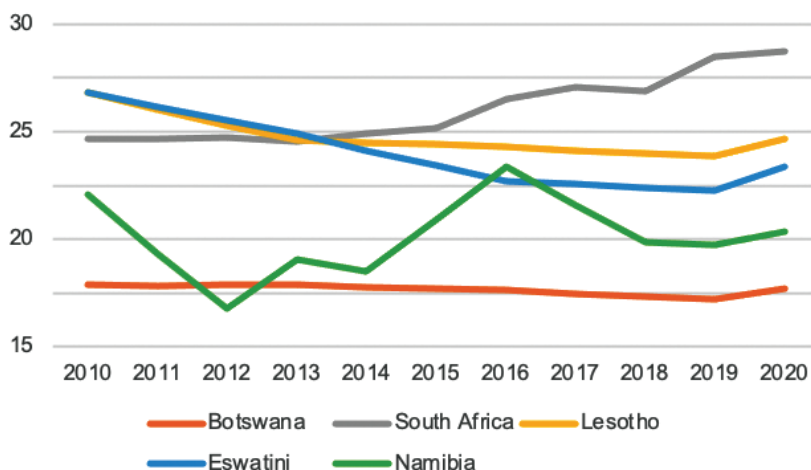


Fig. 7. Unemployment rate in Southern Africa (%)

Source: (ILOSTAT, 2020).

for their formal implementation. However, the programme's contributions have not been in-depth and carried out upon request, especially in the field of governance, which restrains the possible impact of the intervention. The programmes in agriculture, and also other projects, lack monitoring and their impact on beneficiaries has not been measured (IEO, 2020b, pp. 27-28).

4.3. Lesotho

Lesotho's governance lacks leadership (Table 1), the institutions are not transparent and have low monitoring capacity. This not only restrains the development of the country but also affects the collaboration with the UNDP. In line with the CPD, the UNDP is expected to close the loopholes in national policy, strengthen institutions and foster leadership of the legal bodies. Apart from the Ministry of Trade and Industry, which founded the One-Stop Business Facilitation Centre and opened the Ministry of Mining, and the Ministry of Gender, Youth, Sports and Recreation which came up with the new National Youth Policy, other ministries have not taken the expected initiatives. The programme contributed to the strengthening of the Ministry of Development Planning and created a framework to monitor its progress. The aforementioned Ministry of Mining, which was established in 2012, has developed a Mining Policy regulating the extraction of the country's hypothetical deposits. The UNDP has supported the National Bureau of Statistics to increase its statistical capacity and approached other democratic institutions, such as the Officer of the Ombudsman, the Independent Electoral Commission and the Human Rights Unit.

In collaboration with the UNDP, the first National Youth Survey was carried out and published in 2014. The UNDP also provided training for the Bureau of Statistics, which organized the first census of business undertakings in the country. The gathered data were used to create a business register (Chipika, 2016, p. 12-14, 17-18).

Lesotho managed to successfully reduce its poverty headcount over the years, with a slight increase between 1994 and 2002 (Figure 5b). The Government of Lesotho uses evidence-based policy and management to deal with the issue. In this way, the government has improved the country's food security, agricultural productivity and land use. Additionally, the country has strengthened its statistical capacity and started to publish its National Lesotho Poverty Trend and Profile Report in 2019. The content of the report is to be used for monitoring and setting targets in line with the National Strategic Development Plan (NSDPII) (UN, 2019c, pp. 26-30). Youth unemployment generates youth poverty; when young people between the ages of 15 and 34 enter the labour market, they lack the appropriate skills and competencies sought by employers. Once employed, over 70% of young people work in low-paid jobs in the informal sector. Young women are in an even more disadvantageous situation than men. The contribution of the UNDP in the textile industry, allowed for the generation of new vacancies, now occupied mainly by women. Technical assistance provided by the programme resulted in the preparation of the Lesotho Youth Empowerment Survey Report, published in 2014, which collected information about the specificities of this problem and pointed out gaps in the current system. The gathered data were later used by the Government of Lesotho for the development of evidence-based policy, targeting young and unemployed citizens. In addition, the UNDP organized workshops for a group of 50 trainers, which later passed on the gathered knowledge in political and civic education to 1,000 young people. Furthermore, the programme and Lesotho's Ministry of Gender, Youth, Sports and Recreation provided training for more than 1,000 young and/or female entrepreneurs aimed at developing their entrepreneurship skills (Chipika, 2016, pp. 2,14). Nevertheless, the statistics do not show significant changes in the unemployment rates among the disadvantaged groups (see Figure 8).

Lesotho has been struggling with the implementation of solutions concerning its gender gap. Even though the CPD covered the aspect of women empowerment, the Ministry of Gender, Youth, Sports and Recreation has been unwilling to start cooperation with the UNDP or any other UN agency, since the initiation of the CPD in 2019. The Department of Gender in Lesotho's government has an insufficient budget, mostly covering the salaries of the staff members. The ministry has at its disposal only one-fifth of the required financial resources necessary to perform its functions properly. Consequently, the projects for women economic empowerment are underfinanced and do not bring satisfactory results. UN Women is not present in Lesotho, and its actions are substituted by other UN Agencies, within the areas of their mandates. The UNDP's assistance to gender-related issues has not been structured, which also limits the effectiveness of any intervention. However, the activity of

the programme has contributed to the revival of the Gender Technical Committee functioning at national and district level. The Committee has already approved a final draft of a new Gender and Development Policy 2018-2030, replacing the outdated Gender and Development Policy from 2003. Currently, the UNDP is working on the establishment of the women's economic empowerment forum, the strengthening of the National Gender Technical Committee and the creation of a national vision on gender equality which Lesotho lacks (Chipika, 2016, pp. 22-23; Ministry of Gender and Youth, Sport and Recreation, 2018).

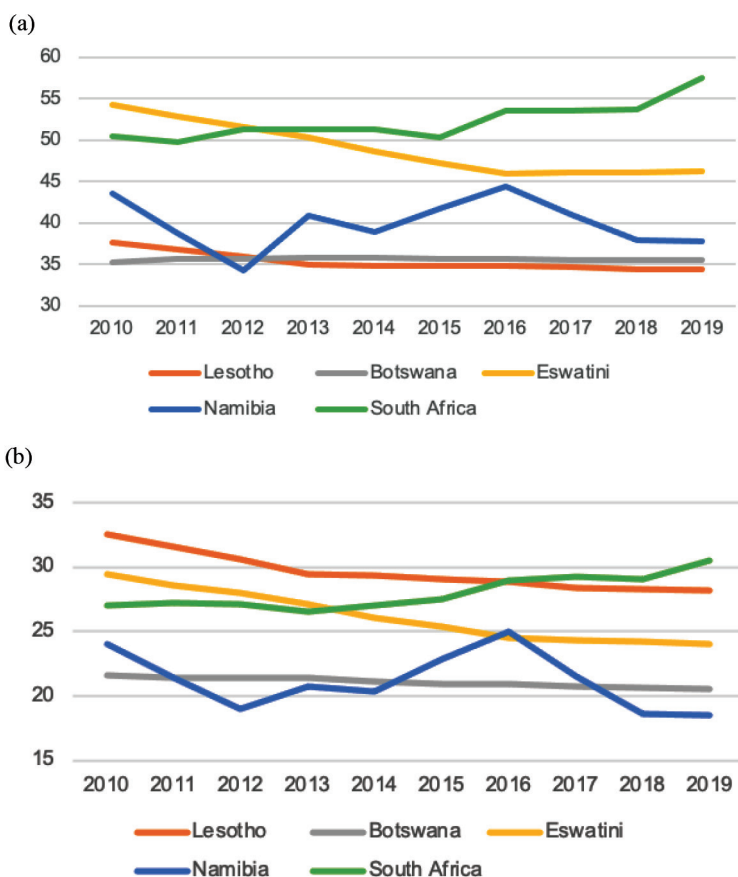


Fig. 8. Youth unemployment (a) and female unemployment (b) in Southern Africa (%)

Source: (World Bank, 2021).

The private sector lags behind when it comes to investment and inclusive development. For years the country was lacking a comprehensive private sector development strategy, and the National Policy for Financial Inclusion has been

anticipated but not created. Lesotho has a number of unfinished drafts of national policies, which include the National Investment Policy. In order to increase entrepreneurship in the country, the government opened the One-Stop Business Facilitation Centre (OBFC), supporting small, medium and large enterprises and facilitating the process of starting a business. Whereas in 2012, a client had to wait 30 days to register a newly established company, three years later the same process could be completed in only three days. The Ministry of Small Business Development, Cooperatives and Marketing, which was established in the last decade, was still unable to deliver the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) Policy in a timely fashion, but it was introduced in 2016. The Ministry requires constant technical assistance and support in monitoring and evaluation practices (Chipika, 2016, pp. 12-13, 18).

Lesotho's authorities have also started making efforts to reverse land degradation, one of the focus areas of the National Sustainable Development Plan. The Reducing Vulnerability from Climate Change in the Foothills, Lowlands and the Lower Senqu River Basin and Capacity Building and Knowledge Management for Sustainable Land Management in Lesotho projects were also devoted to reducing the country's vulnerability to natural disasters. As far as the climate change mitigation is concerned, Lesotho implemented two major projects – the Lesotho Renewable Energy-based Rural Electrification (LREBRE) Project for the time period 2009 and 2014 and the Development of Cornerstone Public Policies and Sustainable Energy for All (SE4ALL) Program implemented between 2016 and 2020. The LREBRE project had a lot of shortcomings; first of all, the newly installed solar household systems (SHSs) were of bad technical quality, which resulted in their faultiness and lower productivity, and only 1,537 out of the anticipated 5,735 SHSs were installed. The project did not encourage installation of the systems in the future, mainly due to excessive subsidizing (amounting up to 84% of all costs). After completion of the programme, the customers had already inflated expectations concerning low-priced products and were unwilling to pay more for installation of the SHSs (Worden, 2016, pp. 2, 21-22). Concerning the SE4ALL project, Lesotho set a target to electrify 35% of households by 2015 and 40% of households by 2020 (Zhou & Simbini, 2014, p. 8). According to the World Bank (2021), in 2015, 31.8% of households had access to electricity and in 2019 (the newest data available) – 44.6%, which means that the country performed better than expected.

Regarding the work of UNDP and other UN agencies in Lesotho, over 42% of the indicators monitoring the country's progress were off-target (Abagi & Nthoateng, 2017). This means that the programme faced many challenges in the implementation of the Country Programme Document, and Lesotho did not meet any of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) in 2015. Many indicators remain untracked because of the shortcomings in the monitoring systems. Most importantly, the UNDP failed to foster the leadership of all ministries which reported that problem, such as the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Development Planning, which were cooperating with the programme (Chipika, 2016, p. 17).

4.4. Namibia

In recent years, Namibia has focused on combating its corruption problem. The UNDP supports the country's Anti-Corruption Commission in the development of its strategy according to the Convention Against Corruption, which involved the Zero Tolerance For Corruption Campaign (ZTFCC), which was started in 2004. Corruption has been on the rise due to the inadequate funding of the anti-corruption institutions, which lowered their monitoring capacities. Other institutions, especially the Office of the Ombudsman and civil society organizations had also been underfinanced, which was corrected by the UNDP's funding assistance and resulted in the development of the National Human Rights Action Plan. The programme provided support to other institutions such as the Ministry of Justice and the Electoral Commission, which was assisted in the preparation of the electoral law reform, the Parliament, and trained to improve its reviewing and monitoring of the federal agencies and policy implementation, as well as the Office of the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Health and Social Services, to incorporate HIV/AIDS response in all sectors (UNDP, 2018a, pp. 13-14).

Poverty in Namibia was successfully reduced through broadened healthcare coverage, which also stabilized the spread of HIV/AIDS, free access to primary and secondary education and the provision of social grants for the elderly, disabled individuals, orphans and vulnerable children. Between 2008 and 2017, the country recorded dynamic economic growth (around 3.7% yearly), accelerated by foreign direct investment and government expenditure. However, paradoxically, the growth did not contribute to job creation, and unemployment remained high (see Figure 7). As a result, the Government of Namibia introduced a set of credit schemes and support programmes aimed at SMEs to create more entrepreneurial opportunities for the unemployed, and in order to increase the share of the skilled labour force, the government invests in education, which is still of low quality (UN, 2018, pp. 6, 8, 10).

The Namibia's response to climate change effects is mostly concentrated in ensuring the resilience of the largest employing sector in the economy, which is agriculture. Namibia ratified the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) already in 1995, very early in comparison to Botswana, which joined 21 years later. The country is constantly increasing the number of performed Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs). Between 2015 and 2016, over 322 EIAs were processed, more than twice as much as between 2012 and 2013, with only 120 EIAs. In general, Namibia has low CO₂ gas emissions (see Figure 9), however, because a significant share of energy is imported from South Africa, the country indirectly contributes to global warming. The government approved the National Climate Change Policy (NCCP) in 2021 and then prepared a National Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (NCCSAP) for the time period between 2013 and 2020, which was ultimately launched in 2014. In order to meet its potential in clean energy production, the country took part in the Barrier Removal to Namibian Renewable Energy Programme (NAMREP), Namibia Energy Efficiency Programme (NEEP)

and Concentrating Solar Power Technology Transfer for Electricity Generation. The country established the Environmental Investment Fund of Namibia (EIF) in 2001 to finance its transformation to low-emission systems and to promote its sustainability (UN, 2018, pp. 7-8, 35-36).

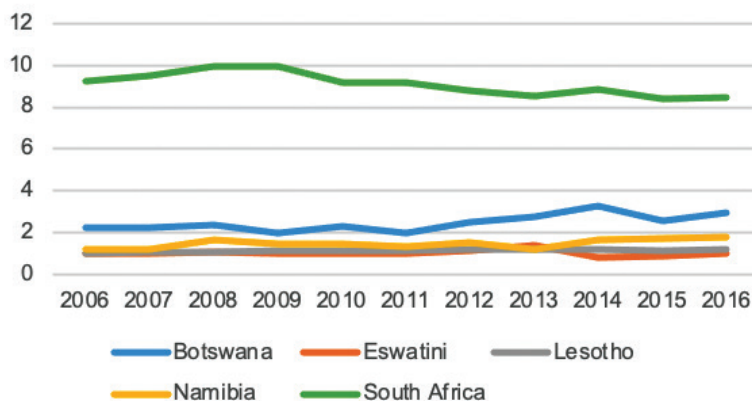


Fig. 9. CO₂ emissions in Southern Africa (per capita, tonnes)

Source: (World Bank, 2021).

The effectiveness of the latest national programme (2014-2018) in Namibia has been satisfactory. The projects in the environment and energy sector were especially effective and impactful. Poverty eradication, gender mainstreaming and democratic governance initiatives are also recording progress, although restrained by limited funding (UNDP, 2018a).

4.5. South Africa

South Africa started combating its poverty problem two decades ago by introducing a set of social grants for citizens meeting the qualification criteria. To date, over 18 million individuals obtain grants in a number of categories, such as Child Support, Old Age Grant, Disability Grant, War Veterans Grant or Care Dependency. In order to maximize the benefits derived from the grants, the UNDP has partnered with the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) and three governmental agencies, namely the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA), the National Treasury and the Department of Social Development. These five institutions work together on the Deepening the Social Development of SASSA Grant Recipients project. The grant payments have proven especially valuable during the economic slowdown caused by COVID-19, when the government expanded the number of grant receivers to 29 million citizens (UNDP, 2021a, pp. 14-16). The UNDP supported research concerning policy options testing the extension of social protection to

informal workers. However, the benefits cannot be measured immediately and the policy will show its full potential in the long term. Nonetheless, more changes in the social protection policy are anticipated (Sibanda, 2017, pp. 8,13). Poverty remains high among the black African population. Today, despite the highest economic development, South Africa has higher poverty rates than Namibia and Botswana (see Figure 5a). In this country, apart from the black population, also women, the uneducated and the rural population remain vulnerable. Between 2010 and 2014 the poverty headcount rose by 2%. This could be the outcome of stagnating growth (under 2%) and the rise in unemployment (from 24.7% in 2012 to 25.2% in 2015, see Figure 7). The most effective tools in poverty eradication include a progressive tax system, free education, electricity, water and sanitation, and also the social wage programme, which provides pensions, child grants, orphan grants, no VAT on certain food items and subsidized basic services (like water and electricity). Among all the interventions, the social grants project was evaluated as the most beneficial (UN, 2019a, pp. 33-37).

The UNDP encouraged the implementation of the 'Leading Like Mandela' Leadership Development Programme, carried out in 2018 at the African Leadership Summit, which provided leadership development to individuals working in the public, corporate and civil society sectors, and the youth. The majority of the UNDP's contribution in South Africa relates to the creation of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, allowing for data collection, tracking and reporting. The country has also participated in the development of the indicators used in the Sustainable Development Agenda, thanks to the collaboration between Stats SA and the UNDP (UNDP, 2020b, pp. 5-6).

The activities of the programme in South Africa concerning unemployment were also focused on women and youth (Sibanda, 2017, p. 9). The UNDP South Africa worked closely with small and medium enterprises, in order to enhance their participation in intra-regional trade. Together with the government, the UNDP managed to establish the Centre for Trade and Regional Industrialization specialized in trade facilitation and value-chain development. The programme engaged the Graça Machel Trust's New Faces New Voices (NFNV) which conducted research on barriers to financial access of female entrepreneurs and analysis of databases concerning youth unemployment (UNDP, 2020b, p. 7). In 2020, the UNDP organized the Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge Fund, when eight participants received cheques worth over ZAR 966,000 (around USD 55,350 as of 12 August 2020, the day of the ceremony) to improve the services offered by their businesses and generate more employment (UNDP, 2020a).

South Africa has started a multitude of biodiversity-oriented projects, such as the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity on the South African Wild Coast Project. The initiative was aimed at the Eastern Cape Province¹². The main aim of

¹² The second largest province in the country, in the southeast part of the country, it borders with Lesotho.

the project included the development of a long-term strategy of land use and the creation of a network of protected areas. What is more, GEF started the Small Grant Programme in 2001, and so far has supported 120 projects, half of which relate to biodiversity conservation. Other popular initiatives concern climate change and land degradation. The grants encourage communities to work on local projects, especially in rural areas. The UNDP takes an active part in the implementation of the programme and individual projects (Sibanda, 2017, p. 18, UNDP, 2020b, p. 4). Currently, all the initiatives meet the conditions set by the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) for the period of 2015-2025. The country office paid special attention to climate change mitigation, mostly because South Africa's electricity sector depends on carbon and hence has the high CO₂ emissions (see Figure 9). In this matter, renewable energy technologies are on the rise, led by the South African Wind Energy Project (SAWEP), operating between 2008-2010 (phase 1) and between 2016-2021 (phase 2). The project has increased accessibility to clean energy and enriched the country's energy-mix. Figure 10 shows how the production capacity of wind farms has been rising in South Africa in the last 10 years. What is more, according to the South African Wind Energy Association (SAWEA, 2020), by 2030 the production capacity of wind farms is going to be eight times higher than it is now.

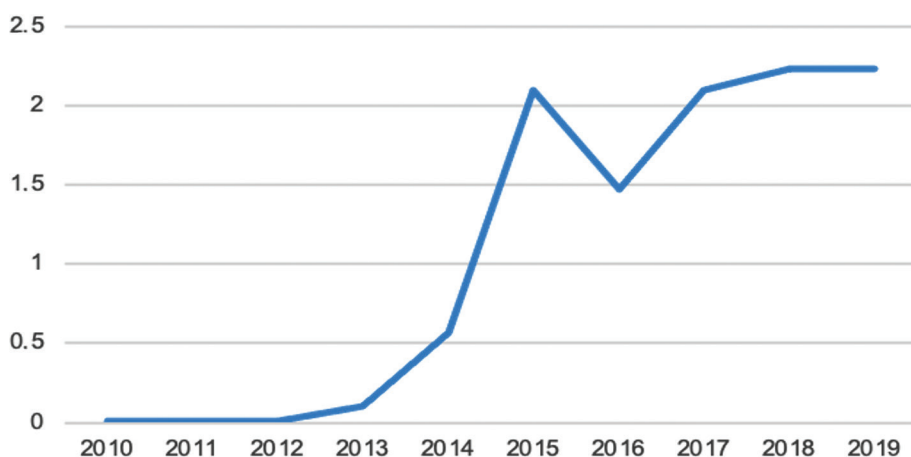


Fig. 10. Production capacity of wind farms in South Africa (MW, thousands)

Source: The Wind Power, 2021.

In 2011, the country office introduced the Market Transformation Through Energy Efficiency Standards and Labelling of Appliances in South Africa (which operated until the end of 2016) in order to inform consumers about energy efficiency standards and labelling on household appliances (Sibanda, 2017). The last area of focus refers to South Africa's high vulnerability to fire hazards. As fire constitutes

a risk for both biodiversity and local communities, the UNDP organized training for 4,500 members of the Fire Protection Association (FPA). GEF investment in strengthening institutional capacity aimed to prevent wildlife fires and manage the frequency of disasters. In this way, the management models of the FPA have been transformed from reactive to proactive (Sibanda, 2017, pp. 15-16).

The environment is also the leading area generating desired outcomes in South Africa. In evaluation reports of the programme's environmental projects, the achieved results are marked as either "moderately satisfactory", "satisfactory" or "highly satisfactory". The programme was efficiently using its available resources, which positively impacted on the country's progress, even though the lack of coordination between the UNDP, the UN and the government remains a challenge restraining the programme's effectiveness (Sibanda, 2017, pp. 14-15; UNDP, 2020b).

5. Discussion

The programme identified the key priorities and the most pressing issues of all the five countries of the region, such as fighting corruption, climate change mitigation, gender inclusivity, sustainable land management, biodiversity conservation and entrepreneurship development. The implementation of the programme has been shaped according to national needs and allowed for active participation in a wide range of areas. However, despite tackling the most relevant development challenges, the outcomes of the projects and interventions often deviate from the initially assumed objectives.

There may be a number of reasons why the UNDP's operations in the region are not fully satisfactory. The lack of statistical data and proper monitoring makes it impossible to evaluate its contribution by the use of figures and indexes. This is why the results can be evaluated through the lens of qualitative, and not quantitative objectives. The impact of the UNDP's interventions in the area of poverty eradication cannot be directly assessed, however, looking at the yearly data statistics, it can be observed that indeed the headcount ratio of people living in poverty is shrinking. In line with the UNDP's motto that "development is a central goal in itself", its relevance cannot be denied; this is because the programme's contributions bring changes to the economies, even if some of the projects turn out to be unsuccessful, or even completely ineffective. If local authorities are unwilling to allow for greater intervention from the UN and the UNDP, and at the same time have their own strategy, frameworks and sufficient monitoring mechanisms, the programme can serve only as an intermediary in the provision of funding, without further intervention.

However, this arrangement would be impossible if the money is to be used for corrupt purposes and other practices not serving the development of the country. The UNDP's assistance appears to be more effective in countries with a higher level of development such as Botswana and South Africa. This could mean that in the low-

-income countries, the UNDP should be replaced by organizations more specialized in the problems of the poorest economies, like the World Bank.

6. Conclusion

Beyond offering criticism, we should ask ourselves what these societies would look like without any external interference. Is the omnipresence of the UN and its agencies a continuation of colonialism in the sense of the non-stop enforcement of Western standards on Third World countries? Should the UNDP retreat to the role of facilitator and money donor only? Is the creation of international organizations legitimate? It seems that there is no right answer to these questions. Developed countries and international organizations coming from the developed (namely, Western) world help in the only way they know and are familiar with. If it is impossible to change the current framework, then at least it should be improved in order to generate maximum benefits, for both developed and developing countries. Nonetheless, it will be possible to judge the legitimacy of the interference only after developing countries become more stable and independent.

Using the example of the UNDP, one can observe that international organizations often move away from their statutory functions and their activities are spread too thinly to generate real impact. The initiatives are small-scale, which does not create incentives for the countries and local communities to get involved. This is one of the arguments against granting legitimacy to international organizations, even though, as already mentioned, development interventions remain the only known and acceptable solution for alleviating poverty, and as long as there is no alternative, this uncertainty will only serve as a factor reinforcing the legitimacy of the UN system and other international organizations.

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