

## **CHILDHOOD MALNUTRITION IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: THE ROLE OF CORRUPTION, THE WORLD BANK, AND THE WEST**

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### **Abstract**

Childhood malnutrition, one among the myriad of sustainable development challenges plaguing sub-Saharan Africa, remains persistent despite foreign aid. The many developmental deficits associated with both prenatal and postnatal malnutrition with their long-term irreversible effects, detrimental to the realization of potentials, make it imperative to find an elixir to sustainable development problems in sub-Saharan Africa. Opinions vary on how to curb hunger in the sub-region. While some implicated population density as responsible for childhood malnutrition and advocated family planning to control population growth, others blamed natural disasters and internecine wars as the bane of Africa. Still others advocated the provision of infrastructure to fast-track sustainable development. While admitting demographic challenges in sub-Saharan Africa, population growth, natural disasters and conflicts may not solely account for the endemic poverty and nutritional deficiencies in the sub-region. The bane of sub-Saharan Africa is profound and pervasive corruption. Besides, the international financial institutions (World Bank/IMF) through their policies, sustain poverty and human misery in the sub-region. Also, the multinational companies through tax evasion have bilked the sub-region billions of dollars, carting away African wealth without paying fair taxes, thus, impoverishing the sub-region. The various forms of despoliation of sub-Saharan Africa not only impede sustainable development, but also constitute economic shock to the economies of the sub-region, leaving the people poor and the children malnourished. This review advocates sustained global war against corruption, achieved by exposing tax havens where stolen money is harbored as well as repealing bank secrecy laws so that African leaders and their cronies will find it difficult to hide their loot anywhere in the world. Only then can the wealth of sub-Saharan Africa remain in the sub-region for sustainable development of a weary sub-region.

**Keywords:** Malnutrition, Corruption, Multinationals, Financial institutions, Sub-Saharan Africa, Mismanagement, Poverty.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Hunger in sub-Saharan Africa dominates African narrative to the neglect of malnutrition, an insidious and lethal offshoot of hunger, that should be the focus of sustainable development discourse. Childhood malnutrition impairs brain development and limits the development of potentials. The endemic and persistent malnutrition among children in sub-Saharan Africa endowed with abundant natural resources calls to question the quality of resource management by political leaders in the sub-region. The United Nations Children's Fund Standing Committee on Nutrition (UNICEF, 2006) reported rather gloomily that more than one-quarter of all children under five years in developing countries (mostly in sub-Saharan Africa) were underweight, and more than one-third of all underweight children in sub-Saharan Africa were found in Nigeria and Ethiopia. The UNICEF (2004) had earlier noted that sub-Saharan Africa was the only region in the world where childhood malnutrition was on the increase with resultant high rates of infant mortality, impaired physical, cognitive and psychological growth, which over time diminished their mental ability; it further noted that the situation was not abetting, for all the nutritional indicators were moving in the wrong direction as more and more people could not meet dietary requirements to lead full and productive lives. The International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI, 2011) affirmed UNICEF's conclusions and pessimistically observed that if the prevailing malnutrition in sub-Saharan Africa remained unchecked, childhood malnutrition in the sub-region would soar from the current 38.6 million to 41.9 million by 2015. Similarly, the Transparency International (2010) noted that sub-Saharan Africa was the only region in the world where poverty had increased in the past twenty-five years, and thirty-two of the world's thirty-eight highly indebted poor countries were in Africa. Note that most people in the Western world view Africa as an undifferentiated whole; so when they refer to Africa, especially in connection with deprivations and human misery, it is sub-Saharan Africa that is meant. Malnourished children are vulnerable to diseases and infections and those who survive are susceptible to recurrent illnesses that seriously interfere with their quality of life even as adults (UNICEF, 2006). In Nigeria, for example, more than ten million children are physically and intellectually stunted as a result of malnutrition – the third highest number in the world (Mitchell 2010). Therefore, any meaningful sustainable development discourse that is Afrocentric should focus on eradication of childhood malnutrition because the future of any nation depends largely on its ability to feed its population, especially the children as malnutrition is an obstacle to human development; it inflicts irreversible damage on individuals early in life which affects their productivity as adults (UNDP, 2012). This review suggests that corruption, the adverse policies of the international financial institutions, and the corruptive activities of the multinational companies combine cruelly to impede sustainable development in the sub-region. Good governance is a fundamental prerequisite for sustainable development (Economic Commission for Africa, 2005).

## **MALNUTRITION AND BRAIN DEVELOPMENT**

To appreciate the pivotal role of nutrition in brain development and consequent development of capacities, it is important to understand that the effect of nutrition on brain development begins in utero; the mother's nutrition during pregnancy is critical since much of brain growth occurs during fetal life (Hohmann, 2003), and the growth becomes more rapid in the second trimester because the brain develops new neurons and synapses during this period (Berger, 2003). Consequently, severe maternal malnutrition in the second trimester reduces the child's cognitive potentials because of the sensitivity of developmental processes to nutritional influences during this period (Georffieff & Rao, 2003). Since the brain cells are more sensitive than other body cells to nutrients and dietary chemicals, the prenatal and postnatal nutritional status of the mother become salient (Hohmann, 2003). Research (Dobbing, 1984) implicated prenatal malnutrition in stunted brain development and severe mental retardation both of which stultify cognitive competence; children with stunted brain

resulting from malnutrition suffer lasting cognitive and behavioral deficits as well as slower language and motor development, lower IQ and sub-optimal school performance (Alaimo, Olson, & Frongillo, 2001). Postnatal malnutrition, however, appears to have even more deleterious effects on mental development. Research documented that postnatal under-nutrition, especially in the first two years of life, slowed neural impulses, resulting in microcephaly, abnormal neural wave and neural transmission as well as mental and linguistic deficiencies ((Faw & Belkin, 1989). Nutritional intervention influenced and facilitated physical growth among postnatally malnourished children, but it never reversed the resultant cognitive deficits (Stoch, Smythe, Moodie, & Bradshaw, 1982), for a longitudinal study showed that cognitive deficits sequel to post-natal malnutrition persisted till adolescence (Galler, Ramsey & Solimano, 1985b). Adequate nutrition as well as mental and physical activities create more neural connections, synapses, dendrites and receptors, giving the brain full weight for optimal functioning (Hohmann, 2003). Nutritional deficiencies affects brain's macrostructure (e.g. development of brain areas such as the hippocampus), as well as microstructure (e.g. myelination of neurons), and the level and function of neurotransmitters (e.g. dopamine levels), all of which can have adverse impact on cognitive development (Janet, Saskia, Donna, & Eva, 2004). The point is that the brain lays the foundation for the development of latent capacities and "any impediment to normal growth of the brain puts all other accomplishments including academic achievement on shaky ground because many parts of the cortex and many connections between neurons are involved in attaining them."(Berger, 2003:245).

The human brain consists of neurons, and neural messages travel through the neuronal extensions – the axons. Because the neural messages are electrical in nature, the axons are coated (just like electrical wires) with myelin sheath (fatty substance) to avoid leakage of the neural current, thus, ensuring efficient neural transmission. The brain of an infant has little myelin, hence, the slower processing of information among young children. It also explains why a child can think and react faster than a toddler, and an adolescent processes information much faster and more efficiently than a young child. Various parts of the brain do not develop simultaneously; some areas of the brain are underdeveloped by age two. Myelination is an extended process occurring at different rates in different parts of the brain through adulthood. For instance, myelination of the cerebral cortex (the center of learning in humans) begins about six months of age, progresses through childhood, adolescence and adulthood; it starts from the primary motor and sensory areas, progresses gradually to association regions that control the more complex activities such as thoughts, memories and emotions (Papalia, Olds, & Feldman, 2004), and poor nutrition can adversely affect the development of capacities associated with the cerebral cortex (Janet, Saskia, Donna, & Eva, 2004). Myelination of the hippocampus (brain structure deep in the temporal lobe, which plays a vital role in memory) continues until about age seventy (Benes, Turtle, Khan, & Farol, 1994). Myelination is predictable (Berger, 2003), and the only known environmental factor that can affect it is severe malnutrition (Kaplan-Sanoff, Bernard, Parker, & Augustyn, 2001), and where myelination fails to occur, cognitive deficits may ensue; where it is maximized, the mental capacity of the child is maximized (Brown-Miller, 1994).

The curious case of Genie accentuates the centrality of nutrition and stimulation in cognitive development. In 1970, a severely abused child, Genie, was found in California. Confined to a small room at age 20 months, Genie was deprived of adequate nutrition and normal social stimulation except for the frequent barking of her father. She was fed only when remembered, and her meals consisted mainly of milk and baby food. When rescued at age thirteen and a half years, she weighed only 59 pounds, and was 54 inches tall with severe language deficit; she was severely mentally retarded. All the aggressive nutritional and medical interventions were unavailing in her rehabilitation, underscoring the lethal effects of

postnatal malnutrition that operated synergistically with contextual deprivations to engender severe socio-emotional and cognitive deficits (Junn & Boyatzis, 1994). While it is acknowledged that stimulation begins prenatally, it must be noted that the organs to be stimulated must first be established, and proper nutrition is central to the process. Adequate prenatal maternal nutrition (barring other genetic and *teratogenic* confounding variables) ensures normal development of the latent potentials while proper postnatal nutrition and environmental stimulation consolidate, facilitate, and maximize the potentials. Prenatal malnutrition initiates cognitive deficit (because it stifles budding potentials) and postnatal malnutrition in combination with other psychosocial and contextual stressors accentuate it; malnutrition, therefore, charts the adverse course for sub-optimal development of potentials and the miasmal environmental conditions strengthen it.

Two kinds of malnutrition exist – insufficient protein-energy malnutrition (PEM) and inadequacy of other micronutrients. According to Berger (2003:163), thousands of children in many developing countries may “appear well-fed, but do not get enough vitamin A and iodine and risk blindness and mental retardation as a result.” Most sub-Saharan African staples consisting mainly of root crops are very low in protein and micronutrients (Labadarios, Steyn, Maunder, Maclyntryre, & Gericke, 1999; Mostert, Steyn, Temple, & Olwagen, 2005). Even when eaten in combination in one meal, the protein content of these root crops is still far below the recommended daily allowance. Buttressing this view, researchers (Okaka, Akobundu & Okaka, 2002) noted that the main staples in Southern Nigeria (such as cassava, yam, cocoyam among others) were abysmally low in protein (less than 2%), and since these root crops constituted the bulk of caloric intake in much of sub-Saharan Africa, and usually unaccompanied by sufficient protein supplement, malnutrition is prevalent, especially among preschool children. Adequate nutrition for proper physical and neurological growth goes beyond sufficient protein-caloric intake; it requires also adequate intake of other micronutrients such as zinc (Thatcher, McAlaster, Lester, & Cantor, 1984; Rahmanifar, Kirksey, Wachs, McCabe, Bishry, Galal, Harrison & Jerome, 1993), vitamins (McCullough, Kirksey, Wachs, McCabe, Bassily, Bishry, Galal, Harrison, & Jerome, 1990; Wachs, Moussa, Bishry, Yunis, Sobhy, McCabe, Jerome, Galal, Harrison & Kirksey, 1993; United Nations University, 2005; 2007), iron (Grantham-McGregor & Ani, 2001) and other essential minerals. Unfortunately, children in sub-Saharan Africa suffer more from insufficient intake of these micronutrients, resulting in reduced resistance to infectious diseases, stunted growth, and difficulty with concentration (FAO, 2007). Research (Thatcher et al, 1984) linked adequate intake of zinc to school achievement; also sufficient maternal intake of zinc is associated with optimal neonatal habituation (Kirksey, Wachs, Srinath, Rahmanifar, McCabe, Galal, Bassily, Bishry, Yunis, Harrison, & Jerome, 1995) as well as infant alertness (Rahmanifar et al, 1993). Zinc-deficient children are stunted in their first year, but can catch-up if given zinc-rich food (Berger, 2003). An estimated 68% of the population in sub-Saharan Africa are zinc deficient, and the human body requires zinc to heal wounds, grow and repair body tissue and properly clot blood. Malnourished children with persistent diarrhea and respiratory problems may be zinc-deficient and these ailments are common among sub-Saharan African children (IFPRI, 2007).

Vitamins influence behavioral patterns. For instance, easy-to-control babies (that is, babies not prone to extreme distress) have mothers with high levels of vitamin B-6 in their breast milk. Niacin and B-6 taken in the second trimester of pregnancy have positively influenced infant’s habituation (Kirksey et al, 1995). B-6 is also associated with infant vocalization at age six months (McCullough et al, 1990), and mothers with low levels of B-6 were found to be unresponsive to their infants’ vocalization; they tend to use sibling caregivers to respond to their infants’ distress because they are less effective in this regard (McCullough et al, 1990). Infant’s alertness is also influenced by maternal intake of

B-6, riboflavin, and niacin (Rahmanifar et al, 1993). Equally, vitamin B-12 has been found to enhance toddler’s symbolic play (Wachs et al, 1993). In sub-Saharan Africa, vitamin A deficiency affects an estimated 42% of the population; this deficiency in combination with other micronutrient deficiencies account for about 25% of diseases, especially among children (UN University Bulletin, 2005; 2007).

Iron is required for the functioning of the neurotransmission system, and its deficiency is associated with reduced physical activity, poor neuromotor coordination, reduced cognition, and behavioral problems, deficits that persist into middle childhood (Grantham-McGregor & Ani, 2001; WHO Bulletin, 2003). Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO, 2007) estimated that about 40% of children in sub-Saharan Africa were iron deficient. Animal protein and dairy products, rich sources of iron, are uncommon in typical sub-Saharan African meals, hence, research (Galan, Cherouvrier, Zohoun, Zohoun, Chauliac, & Hercberg, 1990) documented that the total iron available in typical diets of West African countries scarcely met the dietary requirements of significant percentage of the population. Iron deficiency has also been shown to affect adversely the brain stem, auditory and visual activities, and may persist even after correction of iron deficiency anemia; besides, iron-deficient children are not only anemic, but are also susceptible to mental retardation (Lozoff, Jimenez, Hagen, Mullen, & Wolf, 2000), and vitamin and mineral supplementation may not have remedial effect once cognitive deficit occurs, and too much of one nutrient might deplete the other (Lozoff et al, 2000). The disquieting reality of the degree of micronutrient deficiencies in sub-Saharan Africa is represented in Tables 1 & 2.

**Table 1**

**Prevalence (%) of micronutrient deficiencies among children in representative sub-Saharan African countries.**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Iron deficiency</b>	<b>Vitamin A deficiency</b>
Benin	82	70
Central African Rep.	74	68
Gambia	75	64
Malawi	80	59
Nigeria	69	25
Sierra Leone	86	47

**Source: Vitamin & Mineral Deficiency, A Global Progress Report.**

**UNICEF and Micronutrient Initiative (2006)**

**Table 2****Estimated % of population in representative countries in sub-Saharan Africa at risk of inadequate zinc intake.**

Country	Population (thousands)	Estimated % of population at risk
Angola	12,092	46.0
Burundi	6,457	46.5
Comoros	658	49.9
Dem. Rep. Congo	49,139	57.5
Mozambique	18,880	60.5
Nigeria	106,409	12.8
Sierra Leone	4,586	56.5

**Source: Christine Hotz and Kenneth Brown (2004). Assessment of the risk of zinc deficiency in populations and options for its control. *Food and Nutrition Bulletin*, 25, (1) 194-195**

Though research is consistent on the malign effects of both prenatal and postnatal malnutrition on development, investigators (Birns & Noyes, 1984) acknowledge the role of other contextual risk factors (such as low socioeconomic status, low level of education, and related environmental hazards) on developmental deficits. For instance, earlier investigators (Richardson & Birch, 1973) isolated and examined the independent effects of malnutrition on cognitive development. They compared children malnourished in early childhood with their well-fed siblings reared in the same family environment, controlling other confounding variables. Both groups demonstrated sub-optimal cognitive functioning, pointing to the inexorable role of environmental variables in cognitive deficits; but malnourished group showed greater deficits than the control, compelling the investigators to infer higher malnutritional contribution to cognitive deficits and other developmental deficiencies. Earlier anthropometric studies (which are measurements of the body weight and height, often in association with age, which permit the development of certain indices, reflecting individual or population characteristics) buttressed the notion that malnutrition contributed significantly to cognitive lag by establishing a link between cognitive competence and anthropometric indices of prenatal malnutrition such as low birth weight (Kirksey et al, 1995), small size for gestational age (Walther, 1988), and slower head growth in utero (Harvey, Prince, Burton, Parkinson, & Campbell, 1982). Nutritional status using weight for age correlated with school performance just as prenatal and postnatal conditions were found to affect school performance (Abidoye & Eze, 2000). However, researchers contended that the correlation between anthropometric and cognitive achievements might be mediated by such parameters as birth order (Belmont, Stein, & Suzzer, 1975), family size (Dugdale & Siew, 1977), parental occupation (Paine, Dorea, Pasquali, & Monteiro, 1992), and sex of the child (Lynn, 1989). Although these findings are inconclusive, they hardly negate the hypothesis that a relationship exists between childhood malnutrition and sub-optimal cognitive development. Consequently, it is safe to conclude that malnutrition is a strand of the complex matrix of adverse factors endemic in sub-Saharan Africa that contribute to sub-optimal cognitive competence, especially among children. Thus, earlier and current research evidence tend to stress the interactive role of nutritional and contextual parameters on development rather than view them as independent influences (Horowitz, 1989). Therefore, in sub-Saharan Africa with a plenitude of all risk-factors that engender developmental deficits, it is difficult to assess the

effects of malnutrition on mental and physical development in isolation from other environmental stressors; these contextual factors impede sustainable development, sustain pervasive poverty, and consequent malnutrition with attendant developmental deficits among children (Kurz and Johnson-Welch 2001). The importance of malnutrition in sustainable development discourse stems from the enormous consequences of malnutrition on cognitive and socio-emotional development. It implies that if childhood malnutrition in sub-Saharan Africa continues unchecked through committed sustainable development that ensures food sufficiency, then the prospects of the sub-region ever developing beyond its current level remains bleak, for the cognitive deficits that interfere with school performance will continue to impede maximization of potentials, thus, reducing the overall quality of life (FAO, 1997). Besides, infants that survive the harsh childhood deprivations are more likely to suffer the lasting effects of the deprivations such as stunting that not only shortens their lives, but also perpetuates the vicious circle of deprivations when they produce their own low birth-weight babies (UNDP, 2012).

Scholars have proffered panaceas for sustainable development, and poverty alleviation in sub-Saharan Africa, opinions sometimes shaped by misperceptions. Berger (1995), for instance, advocated population control through family planning, achieved by sufficiently spaced pregnancies, prolonged lactation, and limited number of children, Desai (1992) emphasized combating natural disasters like drought and mitigating fratricidal wars that typify sub-Saharan Africa. Ojo (2005) advocated widespread use of information and communicate technology (ICT) as a necessary tool to fast-track sustainable economic development in sub-Saharan Africa through information dissemination. These rather discordant panaceas (though each has its merit), represent deficient understanding of the realities and the economic quagmire of sub-Saharan Africa. While acknowledging the demographic challenges of the sub-region with a population of 856 million in 2010, and projected to exceed two billion by 2050 (UNDP, 2012), it is improbable that sharp drop in population alone will bring about sustainable development, increase the per capita (GNP), and improve the standard of living and quality of life of the people. Comparatively, East Asia and Pacific regions with higher populations live relatively comfortably as evidenced by their per capita (Table 4), with resultant impressive longevity, low infant mortality, and low childhood malnutrition; sub-Saharan Africa with half the population of East Asia and pacific regions has more than double, the levels of both infant mortality and childhood malnutrition (Table 3).

**Table 3:****Key Indicators: Regional data from the WDI database**

<b>Regions</b>	<b>Population in millions 2007</b>	<b>Average annual growth % 1980-2007</b>	<b>Life expectancy (2007)</b>	<b>Under -5yrs. mortality rate per 1,000 (2007)</b>	<b>Child malnutrition % under weight 2000-2007</b>
East Asia & Pacific	1,912	1.3	72	27	13
Europe & Central Asia	446	0.4	70	23	-
Latin America & Caribbean	561	1.7	73	26	4
Middle East & N. Africa	313	2.3	70	38	-
South Asia	1,522	1.9	64	78	41
Sub-Saharan Africa	800	2.7	51	146	27

**Source: 2009 World Development Indicators database. World Bank, April 20, 2009**

**Table 4****Key Indicators: Regional data from the WDI database**

<b>Regions</b>	<b>GNI Per capita \$ (2007)</b>	<b>PPP \$ (2007)</b>	<b>Foreign Direct investment net inflows \$ billions (2007)</b>	<b>Net aid received (Total \$ billions) (2007)</b>
East Asia & Pacific	2,182	4,969	175	8.6
Europe & Central Asia	6,052	11,262	156	5.8
Latin America & Caribbean	5,801	9,678	107	6.8
Middle East & N. Africa	2,820	7,402	29	17.6
South Asia	880	2,532	30	10.4
Sub-Saharan Africa	951	1,870	29	35.4

**Source: 2009 World Development Indicators database. World Bank, April 20, 2009**



The overall economic outlook of sub-Saharan Africa is bleak; the GNI (per capita) of East Asia and Pacific regions in 2009 stood at \$2,182 and sub-Saharan Africa a paltry \$951 (Table 4). The high per capita and life expectancy of East Asia and Pacific regions in spite of dense population bolster the view that population growth is not antithetical to sustainable development (Kasun 1992). These demographic realities as Topouzis (1992:35) noted, compelled Algeria and China to incisively contend some years ago that the problems of developing countries resided in under-development and not in population growth, hence, their insistence that “the most effective (contraceptive) pill is development.” Research suggests that sub-Saharan Africa is richly endowed with minerals. About 90% of the world’s cobalt, 90% of its platinum, 50% of its gold, 98% of its chromium, 64% of its manganese and one-third of its uranium; besides, the sub-region has an abundance of diamond, and oil reserves that is higher than that of the United States of America (Goodspeed 2005). If sub-Saharan Africa is so naturally endowed, what then are the contextual factors responsible for the endemic poverty and sustainable development problems in a resource-rich sub-region that should be among the bread-baskets of the world with its population living in cornucopia?



**Map Of Sub-Saharan Africa**

## **PROFOUND CORRUPTION IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA**

IFPRI (2011) blamed poverty and hunger in sub-Saharan Africa on a range of factors including lack of infrastructure, poor network of roads, lack of regular power supply, high level of unemployment rate, ubiquitous conflict, deplorable environmental conditions, and poor service delivery. Unfortunately, these factors wrongly viewed as causes of poverty in sub-Saharan Africa, and discrete problems requiring independent solutions, are intertwined and consequences of corruption and decades of despoliation of the sub-region. Conflict and wars in sub-Saharan Africa, for instance, are rooted in the struggle for the control of mineral resources, and underpins the fratricidal wars and conflicts in Congo DRC, Niger Delta of Nigeria, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Dafour, Sudan among others (Economic Commission for Africa, 2005).

This review suggests that bad governance reflected in corruption, the hegemony of the West through the policies of the international financial institutions (the World Bank and the IMF, which they control) as well as the unholy activities of the multinational companies are the core contextual factors that impede sustainable development, and under gird the endemic poverty in sub-Saharan Africa. The sub-region has potentials for greatness, but lacks auspicious socio-political climate to harness and develop its potentials for sustainable development. In fact, some critics (Stossel & McMenamin, 2006) maintain that what is holding Africans, especially the sub-Saharan Africans down is bad governance that makes it difficult for them to make use of their own property. Paradoxically, corruption (which is pervasive, ubiquitous, and normative in the sub-region) is illegal everywhere, but practiced everywhere, and usually governed by informal rules regarding the amounts government officials skimmed off public transactions (Chazan, Mortimer, Ravenhill & Rothchild 1988; Leff 1964). Not surprisingly, the sub-region consistently occupies an ignoble position in the ranking of the Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index. In fact, between 2006 and 2010, sub-Saharan Africa held the record as the most corrupt sub-region in the world. In 2006, for instance, six sub-Saharan African countries were among the thirteen (about 46%) most corrupt nations in the world (those scoring 1.9 and below), and the same was true in 2007. In 2008, of the nineteen countries considered most corrupt, ten (approximately 53%) were from sub-Saharan Africa, and in 2009, the figures were the same. In 2010, six countries in the sub-region were among the eleven (about 55%) most corrupt nations in the world. In all these years, Somalia, Sudan, Equatorial Guinea, Congo DRC, and Guinea were consistently on the list of the most corrupt countries in the world (Transparency International 2010 Results). However, the sub-region showed improvement in 2011 transparency record. Only four countries in the sub-region (Burundi, Equatorial Guinea, Sudan and Somalia representing 33%) were among the twelve most corrupt nations in the world (Transparency International 2011)

Whereas most developed countries operate on principles of honesty, hard work, and discipline, most sub-Saharan Africa countries are mired in self-interest among the leadership. Most African leaders tend to be overly preoccupied with the vocational objectives of politics (personal gains) rather than with service objectives of leadership (improving the quality of the lives of the governed); the quest for personal enrichment may account not just for the military incursions into governance in the sub-region, but also for the acrimonious power struggle among politicians for government offices since political office guarantees quick and unlimited wealth, and once in office, the unwillingness to cede power when they lose election. (Hanson, 2009). This explains the stand-off in Ivory Coast in 2011 where a president who lost election refused to concede defeat and yield power to the duly elected successor. It is for the same reason that elected

leaders perpetuate themselves in office. For instance, Teodoro Nguema of Equatorial Guinea ruled for twenty-eight years, Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe for twenty-eight and still clinging to power despite advanced age, Paul Biya of Cameroon for twenty-six years, Yoweri Museveni of Uganda twenty-two years, Omar Al Bashir of Sudan nineteen years, and Yahya Jammeh of Gambia, fourteen years. Lansana Conte ruled Guinea for twenty-four years, Arap Moi of Kenya, twenty-four years, and Mobutu Sese Seko ruled Zaire for thirty-two years (Adusei, 2009). But for the civil society, and particularly the press, Obasanjo, the former Nigerian head of state, actively sought tenure elongation just like his predecessor, General Sani Abacha who wanted to transform to civilian president. It is uncommon in developed world for a president truly committed to transparent governance to perpetuate himself in office. It is against this backdrop that the political awakening in much of North Africa and the middle East can be understood; it is an expression of people's revulsion over personalization of government, and perhaps also its coffers at the expense of the people, a hard lesson sub-Saharan African governments can hardly ignore.

The power of sub-Saharan African presidents is limitless and almost absolute as all institutions are under their control. They manipulate the legislature and the judiciary, institutions that ought to be independent to ensure checks and balances, necessary ingredients for effective and strong democracy. They control even the party on whose ticket they were elected. The constitution is not spared in their manipulative tendencies just to perpetuate themselves in office. In Kenya, for instance, a range of anti-corruption legislations was enacted since 1956. In 2002, an anti-corruption Commission was established and charged with investigation of corruption cases though without power to prosecute such cases, but the overwhelming power of the executive eroded these efforts. Forty-five constitutional amendments since Kenyan independence in 1963 strengthened the powers of the president. The judiciary is under his control, and, consequently, corruption cases are rarely prosecuted (Hanson, 2009) The overwhelming power of the executive, therefore, weakens the effectiveness of the watchdog and advocacy groups in the discharge of their duties. Since the legislature lacks capacity and independence, it cannot effectively check and balance the executive (Economic Commission for Africa, 2005).

The British police arrested a former State governor in Nigeria at the Heathrow airport, London, carrying one million pounds. Sacks containing undisclosed amounts of foreign currency were discovered in his London residence, and two million pounds found in his London accounts (The Week Magazine, 2005). Some former State governors in Nigeria were in 2009 arraigned in different courts for allegedly guzzling several billions of naira meant for the development of their States (Newswatch, 2009). In 2001 alone, N23 billion was lost in ten Ministries in Nigeria (National Mirror, 2006). The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) reported that past Nigerian military dictators squandered an estimated \$500 billion equivalent to all foreign aid to sub-Saharan Africa in the last four decades, and also alleged that Nigerian leaders embezzled \$500 billion of foreign aid since independence (Daily Independent, 2006). The Commission claimed recovering in its four years of operation, two billion pounds criminally acquired by Nigerians and other foreign nationals in the syndicate (Daily Trust, London, 2006). The United Nations (UN) maintains that Nigerian corrupt officials bilked the country about \$100 billion (Daily Sun, 2008). These stunning revelations buttress the view that political office in sub-Saharan Africa is a gateway to stupendous wealth. The list is infinite, and in fact, a tip of the iceberg and reveals that the financial resources for the sustainable development of the sub-region are stashed away in foreign banks. Sustainable development cannot be achieved in a climate of unmitigated corruption; both are mutually exclusive. Development of any sort requires financial capital and when it is mismanaged, or embezzled, development is stymied.

It may be difficult to tally accurately what the sub-region loses to corruption annually, but it has been variously estimated. The Commission for Africa set up by the former British Prime Minister Tony Blair, estimated the figure to be \$95 billion (Lerrick, 2005), and a 2004-2005 World Bank Report maintained that an estimated \$148 billion, a significant percentage being foreign aid and loans was lost to corruption in Africa (Jallow, 2010). The African Union study in 2002 revealed that the continent lost about \$150 billion annually (Hanson, 2009). Addressing the Organization of African Unity and the Civil Society in Addis Ababa in June 2002 (the eve of the inauguration of the African Union), Olusegun Obasanjo, former Nigerian president, asserted that corruption had cost Africa, at least, \$140 billion (Obasanjo, 2011). Research conducted in forty sub-Saharan African countries showed that an estimated \$607 billion flowed out of the sub-region from 1970 – 2004, three times the external debt of \$227 billion. The study concluded that sub-Saharan Africa was indeed a creditor to the developed countries because its assets in capital flight far exceeded its liabilities in external debt (Tax Justice Network, 2010). In fact, for every dollar received by sub-Saharan countries, eighty cents flowed out as capital flight in the same year from the recipient governments (Christensen, 2009).

As these staggering sums, sufficient to embark on sustainable development projects and provision of basic amenities as well as improvement on agricultural sector for food sufficiency, are lost to privileged few, the World Bank estimated that the number of people living below poverty line (that is, earning less than \$1.25 a day) in sub-Saharan Africa had not declined; rather, the number had nearly doubled from 200 million in 1981 to 390 million in 2010 (World Bank, 2008). Capital flight is not the only challenge of sub-Saharan Africa; brain drain, a variation of capital flight, leaves the sub-region denuded of critical mass of the population - skilled and educated class needed for the development of the sub-region; an estimated seven hundred thousand of the educated workers emigrate to the West yearly (Economic Commission for Africa, 2005). Corruption remains the major challenge of sub-Saharan Africa, for it drowns foreign aid, perpetuates hunger, poverty, malnutrition, poor infrastructure, and environmental degradation (Letvinsky, 2009; Transparency International, 2010), resulting in what some refer to as *resource curse* because research showed that countries richly endowed with high-value mineral resources experienced most wars and armed conflicts (Hanson, 2009; Economic Commission for Africa, 2005).

The endemic megalithic corruption in sub-Saharan Africa has placed the sub-region on economic quicksand, sinking deeper and deeper into poverty; it makes sustainable development impossible and perpetuates dependence on the West. Lancaster perceptively observed some years ago that sustained growth is impossible without an improvement in governance. Economic mismanagement, corruption, problems of leadership, interest group pressures, patronage politics, lack of transparency and probity in government decision-making, and an absence of public accountability are all problems impeding economic growth in sub-Saharan Africa (Lancaster, 1992). The Economic Commission for Africa (2005) lent credence to the observation, maintaining that good governance and sustainable development are two sides of the same coin. Good governance is a imperative for development, and an improvement in governance leads to increased earning and reduced infant mortality. Poverty in the sub-region has increased exponentially because corruption and bad governance undermine the impact of investment to meet the Millennium Development Goals; sub-Saharan Africa presents the “most formidable development challenge” as thousands of people die daily from preventable diseases (IFPRI, 2011; Karagara, 2010). That sub-Saharan Africans are still subsisting attests to their resilience and indomitable will to survive, for in the sub-region, life is harsh and bare despite abundance of natural resources.

Walden Bello, however, challenged the notion that corruption under-girds sustainable development challenges in most third world countries, notably, sub-Saharan African countries. He blamed the economic problems of these countries on bad policies rather than on corruption. Contrasting the economic performances of China and post Marcos Philippines, Bello argued that despite comparable levels of corruption in both countries as World Bank and Transparency International data indicated, China grew by 10.3% annually between 1990 and 2000 while the Philippines grew just by 3.3% during the same period. The decisive difference in their performances was not corruption, but bad policy. While the Philippines imbibed wholly the directives of the international financial institutions on structural adjustment, which demanded among others: trade liberalization, debt-servicing, privatization, and deregulation, China and other South East Asian countries ignored such directives from the financial institutions and minimized debt repayment and raised government's capital expenditure. Consequently, these countries grew by 6-10% from 1985 to 1995, attracted foreign investment massively while the Philippines had a depressed economy without foreign investors, a case study illustrative of greater explanatory power of wrong-policy than corruption narrative to understanding poverty in much of the developing nations (Bello 2010) Bello's argument may appear plausible on its face value as structural adjustment imposed by World Bank actually contributed to economic depression in many sub-Saharan Africa countries. However, while wrong policy may explain economic retardation and the attendant poverty in other regions of the developing world as in the case of the Philippines, it may not solely account for economic stagnation in much of sub-Saharan Africa. Less emphasized is that until recently, most of the sub-Saharan African leaders, apart from the fathers of independence, were military men with lean education who violently usurped power without any discernible political or administrative skill to craft meaningful development policies. Because of incessant violent changes of government, each military regime operated with a sense of urgency in graft; as one critic puts it, they become short-term greedy grabbing with both hands at an accelerated rate (Lerrick, 2005). Where policies exist, they only serve the whims of the military junta and hardly crafted to enhance sustainable development. Even with the democratic governments in the sub-region, the key players in government are usually not core academics; it is only now that some governments have been pressured to engage technocrats in their administration. These military leaders simply imbibed the directives of the World Bank to maintain legitimacy that enabled them harvest the foreign aid package that inflated their accounts in several off-shore banks.

### **THE MALAISE OF FOREIGN AID**

Scholars have variously implicated foreign aid in development problems of sub-Saharan Africa. Jallow (2010) estimated that between 1960 and 1997, foreign aid to sub-Saharan Africa was more than \$500 billion, yet the deplorable economic and environmental conditions in the sub-region belie such effort as the sub-region is ever poorer with children dying unnecessary deaths from preventable diseases. Rather than uplift the sub-region, foreign aid achieves the opposite effect of making African leaders more aid dependent, thus, stifling initiative for sustainable development (Stossel & McMenamin, 2006). Successive governments in sub-Saharan Africa tended to view foreign aid not as development assistance, but as largesse from the West in appreciation for their docility in imbibing uncritically western policies on the sub-region. Consequently, foreign aid neither reached its targets, nor achieved its purpose because those in power never spared it in defalcation frenzy. In Uganda, for instance, the World Bank discovered that between 1991 and 1995, only about 13% of aid meant for primary education actually reached the intended target. The balance was misappropriated, and a fraction reallocated to other government priorities (The Economist, 2005).

The West is increasingly aware that the profound corruption in sub-Saharan Africa undermines the effort of donor nations to ameliorate the plight of the masses in the sub-region, hence, the insistence on transparency and direct application of aid to the specific projects. Aid transfer should be tied to concrete evidence of proper utilization and governance outcomes (Economic Commission for Africa, 2005). Unfortunately, transparency in the utilization of foreign aid and loans will ever be illusive because corruption is so systemic that if the financial institutions (World Bank and IMF) screen for transparency in the disbursement of foreign aid to sub-Saharan Africa, it is doubtful if a single nation in the sub-region would qualify for any form of financial assistance. Surprisingly, the donor agencies and the World Bank are aware that a significant percentage of foreign aid to the governments of the sub-region end up in bank accounts of corrupt officials, yet, the World Bank frolic with these corrupt governments, often considering them allies in the effort to alleviate the harsh socioeconomic problems of sub-Saharan African (Jallow, 2010), a paradox that compels critics to impugn the seriousness of the international financial institutions and donor agencies to tackle corruption (Washington Post, 2006).

The former British envoy to Kenya, Sir Edward Clay, for instance, denounced the loan of \$120 million (68 million pounds) the World Bank disbursed to Kenyan government when it was clear that Kenyan government at the time was mired in massive corruption. He described the loan as mockery of the effort to extirpate corruption in sub-Saharan Africa (The Times [UK] 2006). Such loans scale through the bureaucratic huddles easily because these corrupt governments in sub-Saharan Africa usually have allies on the Board of the World Bank who defend such loans (Mallaby, 2006), thus, making the fight against corruption a theater of the absurd indeed. Critics argue that the brazen corruption in sub-Saharan Africa had never been a barrier to loan and aid disbursement to such corrupt governments despite the apparent lip service in condemning corruption, for as long as a government of a developing country remained complaisant and complied with the dictates of the West through the World Bank and the IMF, that government was considered a partner in development, but any government that resisted any imposition by these financial institutions was viewed as corrupt (Monblot, 2005).

Critics argue that foreign aid has malign effect on sub-Saharan African governments. Through their insatiable quest for foreign aid, they unwittingly abandoned their natural resources to donor nations to plunder, thus, compromising the national sovereignty the fathers of African independence won at a great cost (Abugre, 2006). East Asia, at a time, was as poor as sub-Saharan Africa, but purposeful economic initiatives for sustainable development propelled these East Asian countries to prosperity with much lower foreign aid (Table 4).

Paradoxically, foreign aid recipients pay much higher than they receive not just in goods and services, but also on interest rates. In 1995, for instance, highly indebted poor nations paid about one billion dollars more in debt and interest to the IMF than they received from it, and the amount the concerned sub-Saharan African countries paid in debt servicing was four times their budgets on education and health in 1996. So, in the long-term, aid does not aid (Aristide, 2000). Less widely known is that foreign aid is often tied to foreign policy. The US foreign aid program, for instance, is not always directly aimed at poverty reduction in the recipient countries, but at the achievement of US foreign policy goals; if, however, hunger is alleviated in the process, good enough (Lappe, Collins, & Rosset, 1998). Similarly, 84 cents of every dollar the US spent on foreign aid came back into the US economy in goods and services exported, and every dollar the US puts into the World Bank (the US is the greatest financier of the World Bank, investing an estimated two billion

dollars) was recovered in goods and services ((Aristide, 2000). Overall, foreign aid has not truly aided the sustainable development of sub-Saharan Africa.

Food aid outside emergency has equally undermined sustainable development in sub-Saharan Africa. About fifty years ago, sub-Saharan Africa was the net exporter of food, but now, the sub-region is the net importer of food (Chiejina, 2012) and Somalian experience is illustrative. The 1998 World Bank study of food importation to Somalia showed that food aid systematically undermined Somalia's food production by making the country more dependent on imported food than any other nation in the sub-region. The report noted that Somalian economy was purely agrarian, pastoral and self-reliant in food production until food aid began to arrive in late 1970's. The volume of imported food rose from 33% in 1979 to over 63% in 1984 and stifled the local food production as prices of local foods were forced down, reducing the morale and incentive of local farmers (Jallow, 2010). The underlying question less addressed is whether food aid is truly aid or a ruse for dumping surplus food on sub-Saharan African countries to undermine local effort for self-reliance in food production?

### **THE POLICIES OF THE INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS, AND THE WEST STUNT SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA**

Some analysts argue that the World Bank, and the West, especially the G8 (the world's strongest economies -America, France, Italy, Germany, United Kingdom, Russia, Canada, and Japan) not only abet corruption, but also entrench poverty in sub-Saharan Africa through their policies. Doug Hellinger, the executive director of Government Accountability Project (GAP) maintains that the World Bank and the IMF through their policies contribute over time to sustainable development problems in sub-Saharan Africa. He contends that the World Bank's structural adjustment program (condition for loan disbursement), requires recipient countries to pursue policies that ultimately aggravate hardship and deepen poverty in the concerned countries (World Bank, 2010a). Buttressing this view, Karagara (2010) opines that structural adjustment is detrimental to economic growth as it involves reduction in total government expenditure on social sector such as education, health, and infrastructure, considered drivers of economic development. Besides, free trade, which requires poor nations to open their markets to allow more importation of goods and services that are sometimes over-priced, and the exportation of local commodities, appears to be the most damaging aspect of structural adjustment. It sustains underdevelopment and poverty as the exported cheap raw materials are processed abroad and sold back at exorbitant prices to the poor nations as finished products, thus, leaving the poor nations the ultimate losers. It is this imbalance of trade that maintains the economic hegemony of the 'North' that is, developed nations (Shah, 2010). Trade liberalization and the maximization of profit is at the core of sustainable development discourse from the economists' view point, and serves the wealthy nations to the detriment of the poor nations as they cannot compete in an unequal world of capitalism. Robbins (1999) succinctly describes the exploitative nature of the unequal trade:

At the first glance, it may seem that the goods such as coffee, cotton, sugar, and lumber, would be beneficial to the exporting country, since it brings in revenue. In fact, it represents a type of exploitation called unequal exchange. A country that exports raw or unprocessed materials may gain currency for their sale, but they lose it if they import processed goods. The reason is that processed goods (goods that require additional labor) are more costly. Thus, a country that exports lumber, but does not have the capacity to process it must then re-import it in

the form of finished lumber products, at a cost that is greater than the price it received for the raw product. The country that processes the material gets the added revenue contributed by its laborers.

Structural adjustment program triggered an unparalleled hardship among people in developing nations (mostly in sub-Saharan Africa) as their governments rolled back spending on social amenities and focused on debt repayment as was the Nigerian experience in the mid 1980's when Nigerian government adopted wholly structural adjustment program that initiated and sustained the downward trend of the economy ever since. The devaluation of the Nigerian currency, part of the structural adjustment arrangement, ushered in an unprecedented inflation that accelerated hardship, and deepened poverty even though Nigeria is among oil-producing nations. It is documented that since the structural adjustment program began, an estimated 500,000 more children had died in developing countries because spending on health-care and education declined by 50% and 25% respectively, drastic reductions that ensured increased capital flow to external banks (McMurtry,1998).

Researchers have contrasted the current era of globalization with the development path of the previous decades that was essentially inward-looking. Before the 1980's, many countries pursued policies that insulated their economies from world market in order to protect and nurture their domestic industries to make them virile and competitive. Also, foreign investors were required to employ the natives in skilled positions to ensure technology transfer. These nations also restricted capital flows, which ensured among others, stability of currencies, realistic measures that enhanced economic growth (Weisbrot, Baker, Kraev & Chen, 2001). Ironically, the same rich nations that practiced protectionism have dragooned developing nations to open up their markets through trade liberalization embodied in structural adjustment, thus, forcing them to abandon the very same development path that propelled these rich nations to prosperity, an economic hegemony that further weakens the weak economies, and, therefore, casts a long shadow on the much-vaunted concern of developed nations, especially the G8, to lift sub-Saharan Africa from poverty, disease and hunger through their millennium development goals (MDGs). Indeed, economic development is a function of politics anchored on Spencer's doctrine of social Darwinism of survival of the fittest. The degree of hardship, and human misery the international financial institutions inflict on sub-Saharan African people through their policies have compelled critics to question the objectives of these financial institutions on the sub-region. Colgan (2002) puts it thus:

The past two decades of World Bank and IMF structural adjustment in Africa have led to greater social and economic deprivation, and an increased dependence of African countries on external loans. The failure of structural adjustment has been so dramatic that some critics of the World Bank and IMF argue that the policies imposed on African countries were never intended to promote development. On the contrary, they claim that their intention was to keep these countries economically weak and dependent. The most industrialized countries in the world have actually developed under conditions opposite to those imposed by the World Bank and IMF on African governments. The U.S and the countries of Western Europe ...practiced strong protectionism with subsidies for domestic industries. Under World Bank and IMF programs, African countries have been forced to cut back or abandon the very provisions which helped rich countries to grow and prosper in the past.



Echoing similar concern, Stiglitz, (2002:40-41) the former World Bank chief economist, observed that the “IMF is not particularly interested in hearing the thoughts of its client countries on such topics as development strategy or financial austerity. All too often, the Fund’s approach to the developing countries has had the feel of a colonial ruler,” which is essentially oppressive. In 2003, the IMF itself admitted that globalization has the potential of engendering financial crisis in the developing countries and suggested that financial integration should be approached cautiously with good institutions and macroeconomic frameworks properly in place. It is hard, the IMF noted, to provide a clear road map on how this should be achieved. However, it seems appropriate to approach each case on its own merit (Shah, 2010). The IMF’s shift from its traditional position that one drug must cure all economic ailments, especially in developing countries, suggests that the financial institution is now admitting that its economic nostrum for the sustainable development problems of developing nations, especially in sub-Saharan Africa has foundered.

Through their corrupt practices fanned by cupidity, the multinational companies systematically and in very fundamental way fueled sustainable development difficulties in the sub-region. The World Bank clearly maintained that multinational companies engaged in corruption by giving bribes to officials in several sub-Saharan African countries (World Bank, 2005). Shell Oil Company admitted that it fueled conflict, fed corruption and poverty in Nigeria through its oil activities (BBC News, 2004). A critic, however, went beyond the multinational companies to blame the governments that profit from the activities of these multinationals, particularly the G8 countries (the base of most of these companies), for actually facilitating corruption by abetting the shady activities of these companies. In the United Kingdom, for instance, these multinational companies can legally bribe governments of sub-Saharan Africa if they operate through the corrupt tax haven of Jersey (Monblot, 2005). Perhaps, this may explain why the G8 countries dilly-dallied in ratifying the 2003 United Nations convention against corruption. In fact, it was in 2006, three years after the convention, that Russia, United States, and Britain ratified the treaty; Canada ratified it only in 2007, and Italy in 2009 (United Nations, 2003). The UN convention against corruption aims at rooting out bribery and corruption world-wide particularly corrupt practices of multinational companies (Deen, 2005). The convention also aims at asset recovery, a salve to many developing countries, especially in sub-Saharan Africa that has lost so much wealth through corruption. But the convention can only have a biting edge if all the 191 member states ratify the treaty.

The extractive companies evade taxes and bribe the client sub-Saharan African governments into silence and cart away billions in minerals (oil, gold, copper, bauxite and the like); through bribery, they gain contracts in construction and arms trade. The handsome dividends paid to the corrupt sub-Saharan African governments help such governments to consolidate their power (Neild, 2002). It is to be noted that these bribes conservatively estimated at \$80 billion a year is roughly the amount that the UN believes is needed to eradicate global poverty (Hawley, 2000). Equally noteworthy is that many of these Western companies do not soil their own hands directly in bribery; instead, they pay local agents who get about 10% of the profit if a contract goes through and usually they go through because these agents have access to slush funds for such deals. Some developed countries such as France, Germany and Britain treat bribes as legitimate business expenses, which could be claimed for tax deduction purposes (Hawley, 2000). The corrupt activities of multinational companies stultify sustainable development, facilitate transfer of money that could have been used in poverty alleviation to off-shore banks, thereby, perpetuating poverty and hunger. Moreover, they increase debt for developing nations, benefit the company and not the country, circumvent local due process, damage the environment, and

promote weapons sale (Hawley, 2000). Western banks, lawyers and accountants collaborate with multinational corporations in the unrestrained looting of the sub-region (Mathiason, 2007). Corruption is a global phenomenon and every corrupt transaction involves two parties, the former World Bank president, Paul Wolfowitz, averred while addressing a conference on African trade at the gathering of the G8 in Scotland in 2005. The former president of Nigeria, Olusegun Obasanjo, had expressed similar view in 2002, asserting that countries and banks harboring illegally acquired money were just as guilty as the corrupt African officials who stole the money (Obasanjo, 2011). Wolfowitz emphasized that both the World Bank and the developed world had critical role to play to facilitate sustainable development in sub-Saharan Africa by assisting the poor countries in the sub-region recover some of the assets taken from them and deposited in banks in western countries (The World Bank, 2010b). Increasingly the world is realizing that corruption is hardly the problem of sub-Saharan Africa; it is a global economic terrorism and the poor of sub-Saharan Africa are as much victims as the masses of the West whose tax money is wasted unproductively in foreign aid, hence, the outcry in the West for effective monitoring of aid money to Africa. How to spend money wisely, cost effectively, and directly for the benefit of the poor in sub-Saharan Africa remains a major concern in the developed world (Wall Street Journal, 2005; Stossel & McMnamin, 2006).

### **PARADIGM SHIFT FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

Too often the West creates the impression that they are determined to rid sub-Saharan Africa of hunger and disease. During their summit at Gleneagles in 2005, the G8 cancelled \$50 billion of the debt poor countries, mainly from sub-Saharan Africa, owed. At the time, the total debt was about \$400 billion, so there was an outstanding balance of \$350 billion. Interest alone would have brought the debt back to \$400 billion by 2007. So, in effect no debt relief was granted because the underlying structure that created the debt was neither settled, resolved, nor even addressed (Mathiason, 2007). In that same summit, the G8 agreed to raise global aid to poor nations (mostly in sub-Saharan Africa) to \$50 billion yearly by 2010, and by 2015, it would be reviewed upwards to \$150 billion annually (Wall Street Journal, 2005). These commonplace political pronouncements are usually devoid of meaningful action, and even if the G8 honors the pledge of \$50 billion a year to poor nations, it is only one-third of what Africa loses to the West annually that is packaged as aid; if they raise it to \$150 billion by 2015, then it cancels out yearly African losses to the West, and, therefore, no aid after all. More worrisome is that the long-term aid proposal for sub-Saharan Africa presupposes that the sub-region will ever be poor and aid dependent, a notion that should be challenged stridently because it implies that the sub-region is perpetually stunted economically, and lacks potentials for growth.

Research documents that tax revenue in sub-Saharan Africa is ten times the value of foreign aid, and since tax is the most important and reliable source of income, the aim of poor, developing countries is to replace dependency on foreign aid with tax self-reliance (Tax Justice Network (TJN), 2005). The United Nations urged the affluent countries to contribute 0.7% of their national income annually to aid developing nations (Wall Street Journal, 2005), but the TJN contends that the figure is infinitesimal compared with the potential tax revenue that can accrue to developing nations as Brazilian tax innovation exemplified where tax yielded a handsome annual income of \$20 billion. In developed nations, tax yields 30 – 40% of annual income, but developing countries are deprived of tax revenue through tax evasion by multinational companies, making capital flow backward to developed countries rather than flow forward to developing countries where it is mostly needed. Financial institutions (the IMF and World Bank) are becoming increasingly aware of the significance of tax in development. The UN 2002 conference on Financing for Development held in Mexico, unequivocally harped on

the need to harness domestic resources (including tax) to facilitate development. In fact, the IMF directly maintained that developing countries should aim at self-reliance, utilizing internally generated revenue (particularly income from tax) to engage in sustainable development (TJN 2005). Scholars contend that while many sub-Saharan African governments spend significant percentage of their annual budget on debt payment, multinational companies siphon a greater percentage out of the sub-region through tax evasion and tax breaks because some governments of the sub-region fail to tax these companies appropriately (Kwenda, 2010). The Democratic Republic of Congo, for instance, received a paltry sum of \$86,000 from mineral rights in 2006, and Tanzania lost about \$265.5 million through abysmally low royalty rate. Similarly, Malawi lost \$125 million in tax allowances in 2008-2009, an amount equivalent to what the government spent annually on its national grain subsidy, which had helped Malawi over the years to maintain grain surplus (Kwenda, 2010). The prevalent tax breaks and tax allowances are arrangements that benefited 'Northern' companies (that is, companies based in developed countries), and creates an environment for corruption in sub-Saharan Africa.

The G8, in 2000, set Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for Africa, understandably sub-Saharan Africa, which, among others, aim at reduction of poverty, childhood mortality, and epidemics like HIV/AIDS by 2015. The MDG deadline is just a few years hence, but how much of the MDGs have been achieved? The Millennium Development Goals cannot be achieved through foreign aid, but through concrete policies that will ensure that the wealth of sub-Saharan Africa remains in the sub-region for sustainable development of the sub-region. The most meaningful foreign aid that will enhance sustainable development in sub-Saharan Africa is the promulgation and strict enforcement of international law prohibiting foreign banks from receiving money from corrupt sub-Saharan African leaders and their cronies. If the UN follows through with its aim on asset recovery and repatriation to developing nations, then necessary checks must precede such effort, otherwise what is repatriated will be re-embezzled. Also, the G8 and the World Bank have the capacity and the responsibility to repeal the bank secrecy laws in Switzerland, Britain, Liechtenstein, Luxemburg, Austria and wherever they exist. Equally, they should dismantle the tax havens which not only facilitate and encourage corruption, but also guarantee the safety of the loot (Adusei, 2009). If bank secrecy laws are repealed, or, at least, declared non-applicable to Africans, then looters, perhaps, will loot less brazenly and with restraint aware that their loot could be traced and possibly repatriated. These measures may even compel some sub-Saharan African leaders to be proactive by investing their loot in their own countries with multiplier effect of job creation, and the consequent minimization of unemployment, poverty and hunger.

## **CONCLUSION**

Poverty in sub-Saharan Africa is socially created. Despite abundance of natural and agricultural resources, millions of sub-Saharan African people remain hungry and malnourished, consuming staple foods deficient in micronutrients and protein needed for optimal child growth and adult productivity (UNDP, 2012). This is why sustainable development has a more fundamental meaning to sub-Saharan Africans. When the debate of sustainable development revolves around environmental concerns, harping on the inverse relationship between economic growth and ecological degradation (environmentalists' perspective), or trade liberalization that spurs economic growth and promotes economic development (economists' view), or application of modern technology to fast-track sustainable development as economic progress is technology driven, some sub-Saharan Africans are at a loss as such disparate arguments hardly capture the existential realities of sub-Saharan Africans. In the sub-region, preservation of life (where daily struggle for subsistence is a constant), has more immediacy over ecological concerns. A man who ekes out living neither understands the logic of

wild life preservation, for instance, when he can hunt a lion for food, nor appreciates the importance of trees in ecological conservation when he can fell a tree to log firewood for a living. Among the odds against information communication technology (ICT) as a tool for sustainable development is that an individual who can barely afford two meals a day may not have the wherewithal to procure or access ICT (Heeks, 1999). It is only when the physiological needs are satisfied can the higher order needs like environmental protection be appreciated. Regrettably, the leaders of sub-Saharan Africa have not learnt from the ignoble history of the relations of the sub-region with the West. From the discovery of the African continent and the subsequent slave trade, the sub-region has spurred the economic growth of the West. The over 50 million young men and women forcibly shipped to the farms of Europe and the Americas provided the cheap labor for agricultural production that yielded the financial capital for the industrialization of these countries. After centuries of sustained evacuation of human resources, the sub-region not only became depleted of the critical mass of the population (able bodied men and women), but left the sub-region in ruins with nothing to replace it (Davidson, 1987). Colonialism and neo-colonialism that replaced slave trade became another form of bondage just as intense in cupidity, and determined in resolve in plundering the sub-region as the slave trade that preceded it. Ship loads of mineral resources from sub-Saharan Africa which continuously dock in various parts of Europe and the US for the continued growth of their economies replaced the ship loads of human cheap labor that served the same purpose centuries ago. Just as the chiefs were easily corrupted and gulled into exchanging their own kind for cloth, metals, beads, spirits, tobacco and firearms, which they considered luxuries (Lamb, 1982), so the various contemporary governments in the sub-region are corrupted and bribed into silence as precious minerals are carted away from their countries on daily basis without fair taxes, striking parallels that should not be ignored. Still more disturbing is that though slave trade depopulated the sub-region, population is renewable, but mineral resources are non-renewable. Nothing has changed over the centuries in sub-Saharan African relations with the West; the same external shocks that demoralized and impoverished sub-Saharan Africans centuries ago is still jolting the sub-region; Africans are always the losers in their own soil. This concern probably informs the view that sub-Saharan Africa is largely responsible for its fixated development and must seek solutions for sustainable development from within (Nwankwo, Chaharbaghi, Boyd, Omar, on-line). Inward adjustment for sustainable development requires breaking with the past (which involves fighting corruption head-on), standing up to the vested interests of the privileged few, and building institutions that rebalance power relations at all levels of society; but this effort requires courageous citizens and dedicated leaders (UNDP, 2012).

Emphasis on the development of human capital in the form of acquisition of skills and knowledge as development is knowledge-based and technology-driven rather than resource-based (Ikeme, 2000) is rather misguided. It is the type of circular argument that bewilders an average person with direct experience of life in sub-Saharan Africa. Can there be real human capital development without the wherewithal to initiate the process? Can a child whose parents cannot afford three meals a day think of secondary education? Human capital development is not achieved fortuitously; it requires financial capital generated from natural resources. Perhaps, the resource-poor nations that are relatively developed has lower rate of corruption, and possibly utilized foreign aid and loans responsibly in the development of human capital; such committed leaders as we have shown have eluded sub-Saharan African for many decades. People of the sub-region have the skills, the capacities, but lack auspicious environment to put their knowledge into use where it is needed, hence, the migration to the West in droves to use their knowledge where it is not really needed, for they only enrich the already rich.

Corruption undermines good governance and sustainable development by generating distortions and vitiating due process; it weakens institutions, reduces accountability, and compromises rule of law – all antithetical to sustainable economic and socio-political development. The policies of the West on the sub-region so far have deepened poverty rather than alleviate it. Children in sub-Saharan Africa will attain their potentials only when the overall conditions of poverty including food insufficiency are alleviated (Gorman 1995). The chronic poverty, hunger, childhood malnutrition, and misery ravaging the sub-region amidst abundance of minerals exploited at the expense of the poor masses is a blot on the conscience of humanity. The international community has the capability, and indeed, the moral obligation to lift sub-Saharan Africa out of its economic morass. The international community has the capability, and indeed, the moral obligation to lift sub-Saharan Africa out of its economic morass. The West, particularly the G8, will initiate true liberation and de-colonization of Africa when they conscientiously pursue to the letter Caplan's (2006) prescriptions on how to ensure sustainable development in sub-Saharan Africa:

If the West is truly serious about helping Africa, it would not use the World Trade Organization (WTO) as a tool of the richest against the poorest. It would not dump its surplus food and clothing on African countries. It would not force down the price of African commodities sold on the world market. It would not insist on growth without redistribution. It would not tolerate tax havens and the massive tax evasion they facilitate. It would not strip Africa of its non-renewable resources without paying a fair price. It would not continue to drain away Africa's best brains. In a word, it would end the hundred and one ways in which the West quietly ensures that more wealth pours out of Africa each day than the West transfers to Africa.

When the fortunes of sub-Saharan Africa cease flowing West through the corrupt practices of African leaders and multinational companies, when Africans are allowed to take possession of their possessions, and the osmotic leakages Caplan enumerated plugged, only then will the jeremiads of millions of malnourished sub-Saharan African children at risk of sub-optimal mental development become less shrill, for the people of the sub-region can then use their own home-generated wealth to embark on purposeful sustainable development that will uplift the burdened sub-region.

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