



development

EXTRACTION

POVERTY

CLIMATE CHANGE

SEVERE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

AFRICA

DEVELOPMENT

MDG

**extractive industries:
blessing or curse?**

Extractive industries and Millennium Development Goals for Sub-Saharan Africa

The eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), developed by the United Nations (UN) in 2000, aim to encourage development by improving social and economic conditions in the world's poorest countries. However, it is widely accepted that the Millennium Development Goals will not be met due to unfulfilled political and financial commitments.



Planting seedlings. © alex kamweru



Collecting water. © sean warren/istock



African market. © darek urbaniak, foe europe

Sub-Saharan Africa is among the most deprived regions in the world and is, according to the UN, unlikely to meet some of the millennium development targets for 2015. In some of these countries development efforts are hindered by corruption and the worldwide reduction in civil society space – to name a few of the biggest challenges. In order to achieve the MDGs, good governance on the national and international level is essential, along with transparent financial and trading systems.

Millennium Development Goal 1 (eradicate extreme poverty and hunger), MDG 3 (promote gender equality and empowerment of women), MDG 7 (ensure environmental sustainability) and MDG 8 (developing a global partnership for development) are all strongly impacted by the activities of the extractive industries companies.

MDGs and the environment

Many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa have large reserves of natural resources, such as oil, gas, coal, gold, copper and other mining products. These resources should contribute to the capacity of these countries to develop their economies. However, decades of irresponsible extractive industries operations have resulted in toxic waste, oil spills, leaking pipelines, water pollution and depletion, land contamination, wildlife disturbance, deforestation, damaged crops and farmlands and human and animal health abuses. Extractive industries must take responsibility for their impacts.

These industries are especially influential in resource-rich Sub-Saharan Africa. As conventional sources of fossil fuels are being depleted, extractive industries are investing in new unconventional energy sources such as oil from tar sands and oil shale. Development of tar sands especially in Sub-Saharan Africa is a serious obstacle to achieving MDG 7 (environmental sustainability) due to the serious negative environmental and climate impacts of this form of oil production. Extractives industries must put emphasis on the development of renewable energy technologies and infrastructure, and focus on the creation of green jobs that can provide long term solutions for employment.

MDGs and equality

Achieving MDG 3 (gender equality and the empowerment of women) - a fundamental human right - will have an avalanche effect for economic development by increasing the economic security of women around the world. In the Sub-Saharan region most women do not have the opportunity to receive education and struggle to hold non-agricultural occupations. Even though `creating jobs and employment opportunities` is a slogan extractive industries use in order to gain political and social sympathy, this sector is known to have institutional gender bias, and employment of women is a rarity.

SCALE

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MDGs and climate

Natural resource exploitation creates carbon emissions which cause climate change. Weather patterns have already shown significant changes around the globe. These environmental alterations have fearful consequences for agricultural production. Extreme weather conditions often kill crops and destroy agricultural products; drought and flash-flooding drastically reduce the ability of poor nations to grow crops and feed the malnourished. The unpredictable nature of agriculture and the lack of supplies will ultimately cause an increase in food prices, further widening the poverty gap.

Local farmers and communities in Sub-Saharan Africa are victim to multinational and European corporations expanding their projects even into unstable post-conflict zones, such as ArcelorMittal in Liberia. In such disadvantaged areas, losing land means losing the primary source of work and food, access to primary health care, education, nutrition and safe drinking water.

ENI, the Italian energy producer, and its tar sand developments in the Democratic Republic of Congo, has attracted criticism for insufficient consultation and collaboration with local communities; leading to fears of displacement, and subsequent food insecurity, poverty, and social and political instability.

CLIMATE

MDGs and poverty

Over the last few decades, production of oil has had dramatic impacts on the poorest nations. Oil spills in the Niger Delta have accounted for the devastation of the local wildlife and pollution of water supplies. Gas flaring in this region accounts for 10% of Sub-Saharan Africa's CO₂ emissions. This dangerous and highly toxic practice is a threat to the health and lives of the local population and it is damaging the natural environment.

Extractive industries are often directly linked to human rights abuses and civil conflict. In 1995, Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other activists from the Movement of the Survival of the Ogoni People were hanged for protesting against Shell's actions. A court case appealing against the legality of Shell's actions was settled out of court in 2009, even though in 2011 Shell still has ongoing court cases and growing opposition to their business in developing countries –Nigeria in particular.

POVERTY

Corruption, resource curse and the MDGs

Corruption rooted in some of the developing countries is one of the most important causes of human rights abuses in local communities in resource-rich African countries. Sub-Saharan governments have long supported extractive industry projects, however many local communities have not seen any benefit of these investments. The gap between the poor developing communities and their rich northern counterparts is still widening. The extractive industries do not contribute to achieving sustainable development in Sub-Saharan Africa.

CORRUPTION

MDGs and global partnership

MDG 8 is a unique opportunity to encourage development by forming cross border support units between developing and developed countries. The establishment of global partnerships is an opportunity to support fair trade, deliver debt relief for developing nations, increase aid and access to affordable essential medicines, and encourage technology transfer. Global partnerships are essential to give specific roles to developed countries in aiding developing countries.

PARTNERSHIPS

our demands:

- Extractive industries should stop destroying the environment and people's lives around the world. There should be a ban on any new projects unless free, prior and informed consent of local communities has been fully implemented. Strong environmental and social standards should be introduced.
- European decision-makers must ensure that European extractive industries present in developing countries operate according to the highest international standards.
- European extractive industries must be held accountable for the impact of their operations and contribution to the achievement of MDGs for Sub-Saharan Africa.

DEMANDS

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