

A VISION FOR AFRICAN GLOBALISATION

By Ronald Mears

1. Introduction

The relative economic position of Africa is deteriorating continuously within the global context. Africa is growing slower than the rest of the world, mainly because of poor management, corruption and political decisions of its governments. There is also limited integration and cooperation between the countries of Africa. The NEPAD initiative to improve this situation has also achieved very little since its inception in 2003. NEPAD calculated that \$64 billion is needed on an annual basis to make development viable in Africa. Unfortunately this amount is not available as donations and the whole of Africa can not afford to borrow this amount. Foreign loans or donations come with conditions, which Africa is not willing or able to accept. Therefore, the only option for Africa is to become financially self-sufficient and more independent. Africa must develop its environmental and wildlife heritage to such an extent that it can receive \$64 billion annually from the rest of the world. The improvement of the environment at this scale is the best project that can persuade Africa to cooperate and the world to support it. This paper develops this vision for Africa's globalisation further, based on the historical development of urbanisation, migration, the environment and growth and development in Africa. This paper forms part of an ongoing research project concerned with environmental management and employment creation in developing urban areas.

The aim of this paper is to investigate ways to assist Africa to address its deteriorating position within the global context, by becoming financially more self-sufficient and more independent. The next section analyses the main findings and conclusions based on the historical development of urbanisation and urban issues in Africa. Section 3 discusses the limitations to sustainable economic

growth in Africa. Section 4 analyses NEPAD as the long-term policy initiative of the African Union (AU). NEPAD's vision for Africa is examined in some detail. Section 5 speculates and estimates on a vision for African cooperation, development and growth in the global context. Section 6 is a summary of the main findings and conclusions of the paper and some tentative recommendations are proffered.

2. Historical developments of urbanisation and urban issues in Africa¹

Since the late 1980s when the author researched the rural-urban migration or urbanisation process, the subsequent research concentrated on urban issues in Africa and South Africa. Historically, urbanisation in South Africa has consisted of two main components. Firstly, there was a natural process of urbanisation based on the socio-economic mobility of the white population group. Secondly, a regulated process of urbanisation of the black people. South Africa has a long history of deliberate intervention in all spheres of urban development for political, socio-economic and other non-economic reasons (Mears 1991; Mears 1997:596). These interventions have served merely to postpone the inevitable economic causes and consequences of urbanisation. The welfare losses of these policies saddled South Africa with an urban infrastructure that does not tally with its general economic development. Most of Africa also has a poor migration and urbanisation record, indicative of levels of development.

Urbanisation is an increase in the percentage of the population taking up residence in the urban areas. Therefore, people have to move from the rural to the urban areas for urbanisation to take place. The cumulative process of migration and urbanisation is a natural sequence of economic development. Once urbanisation is in motion, it can only be stopped or negated by measures or events that make serious inroads into the natural population growth rate (Mears

¹ Based on the author's experience and publications. Although much of the research was done within the South African context, it is inferred that this is also applicable for Africa as a whole in many cases.

1997:597+600). In Keynesian dynamics, the price or wage adjustments brought about in the respective labour markets by factor mobility are too slow to modify the interregional differences in real income and employment. Such differences tend to become even more pronounced with the passing of time (Truu 1971:175; Mears 1997:600). Consequently there is little tendency towards the interregional equalisation of real wage levels. In fact, initial regional imbalances tend to increase as time passes as is the case in Africa.

The conclusion that can be drawn from an examination of migration theories is that migration may have a generally equilibrating or a generally disequilibrating effect on the spatial distribution of the population and their income. Migration did not have an equilibrating effect on the geographical distribution of the South African or African population (Mears 1991:165; Mears 1997:602). From this it can be inferred that migration has been economically disequilibrating in the sense that it did not close the gap that triggered the migration process in the first place.

However, migration should always be viewed in its societal context. The differences in the migration and urbanisation patterns provide some interesting insights into the potential benefits of urbanisation and the conditions necessary for those benefits to be realised. The differences show that the rate and pattern of urbanisation in Africa are not always synonymous with development (Mears 1997:604+606; Brand 1998:1). The pattern of unequal population and income distribution in Africa makes spatial mobility inevitable. The growing mobility of the developing population places great stress on the urban infrastructure.

The migration and urban settlement patterns were motivated significantly by historical developments and policies. The combined process of rural-urban migration and urbanisation had a disequilibrating effect on the geographical population distribution in most developing countries. It can also be inferred that the process has been economically disequilibrating as stated above. This has

generally also been the case in Africa. By contrast, migration or urbanisation generally had an equilibrating effect in the highly developed industrialised countries, where there is less inequality between average urban and rural incomes (Mears 1997:611). The migration or urbanisation process has also been disequilibrating between the different racial and ethnic groups in Africa. Migration can become an important factor in the economic and human development of Africa. The use of migration and urbanisation as a vehicle of growth and development can also have an equilibrating effect on interregional income distribution (Mears 1997:612). Africa's development potential can be facilitated through cooperation and communication to provide a sound basis for stable urban and rural development for low income communities. Economic growth and development, rather than autonomous political solutions, are the main prerequisites for achieving economic development. This and more equal opportunities for all in Africa can contribute to reverse the poor development record.

While in developed countries there is a sound understanding of the relationship between people and their environment and how this affects, and is affected by economic and political institutions, this relationship enjoys very little attention in developing countries. In Africa there is also a relative lack of attention accorded to urban environments of poverty. In other words, developed economies are in a better position than developing countries to achieve sustainable economic development. This is mainly because they adopt a more integrated development approach which includes the environment. Although it is often stated that human capital is the most important resource, this resource often remains underutilised owing to the high incidence of unemployment among unskilled and poor workers (Mears 1998:256). Environmental change can be used to create employment and a better quality of life for the poor in developing cities. These paradoxes need to be addressed in Africa to enable developing and informal urban areas to address their many environmental problems (Mears 2003:1-2).

The urban environments of poverty are the most pressing problems in developing countries, especially in Africa. Congestion, vehicular and industrial emissions, and poorly ventilated household stoves inflate the high environmental cost of urban crowding. Lost productivity resulting from ill or deceased workers, the deterioration of infrastructure and the essential boiling or treatment of unsafe drinking water are further examples of the costs associated with poor urban conditions (World Bank 1992; Mears 2003:3).

The environments of poverty create a constant set of emergencies for poor communities. Large numbers of residents live in dangerous and unhealthy informal housing and settlements (Rogerson 1993:125–126; Mears 2003:3). It is particularly the urban poor who face the brunt of urban environmental problems. They often live in the marginal environments and are particularly vulnerable to natural disasters. Informal settlements have become a common and unattractive sight in South Africa and Africa (Mears 1999:5).

In many African cities the necessary services such as housing, transport, the supply of clean drinking water and waste disposal systems have failed to keep up with the increasing population. Projections show that Africa will become more crowded and polluted, less ecologically stable and more vulnerable to natural hazards in future. During the last quarter of the twentieth century the worldwide consumption of minerals has been three times that consumed during the entire previous history of civilisation (Fuggle and Rabie 1994:1; Mears 2003:7). Many of these minerals are from Africa and have already caused serious environmental damage, which can hamper future economic development.

3. Limitations to sustainable economic growth in Africa

The most widely used definition of sustainable development is “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (UN World Commission on the Environment and Development 1987:43; Baker 2006:6). The objective of

sustainable development is to maximise goals across all three systems, that is the environmental or biological system, the economic system, and the social system (Mears 2007:1–2). Achieving sustainable development and the objectives of each of these systems require trade-offs, choices and acceptance of the costs involved for the stakeholders.

The visions of the great economists Smith, Ricardo, Keynes and others, are the threads that tie together the development of Economics as a subject, because they shaped and swayed men's' minds (Heilbronner 2000:16; Mears 2007:4). Their common curiosity and fascination with the world about them and the roles every person plays in his drive for wealth moulded their principles. The market system is a mechanism for sustaining and maintaining an entire society and not just a means of exchanging goods. The development of the market system took centuries to achieve and was a process of spontaneous, but a many sided change (Heilbronner 2000:33). The last of these visions was that of Schumpeter, who saw the stationary state not as the end of capitalism, as Ricardo and Mill did, but at the beginning. Profits originate from innovations, which cause the circular flow to increase and springs from the will and willingness of the innovator. In his vision Schumpeter sees capitalism as an economic success, but not as a sociological success. Despite his faith in the inherent buoyancy of capitalism and that the economy would trace a long climbing trajectory in the short-run, capitalism can not survive in the long-run. For Schumpeter, writing in 1942, the long-run was a century. He was also vague on what would end the growth (Heilbronner 2000:302–308; Mears 2007:7). This section discusses one reason why there are limits to sustainable economic growth today.

Visioning means imagining generally and later more specifically what sustainable economic growth is. A sustainable world cannot be realised until it is widely envisioned. The vision must be built up by many people before it can become complete or compelling (Meadows et al. 2004:273; Mears 2007:7). In Africa, better environmental management is a matter of survival, and not just about preserving nature or even about sustainable economic development (World Bank

2002:1). Africa has some of the world's highest rates of soil erosion and deforestation, as well as declining rangelands, wetlands, fish and wildlife populations. Moreover, population growth, economic expansion and climatic change can expose as many as 3 billion people to water shortage problems by 2025 (Michalski 1999:26; Todaro and Smith 2006:494; Mears 2007:7). Many of these people will probably be from Africa.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, the World Bank mission to fight poverty with lasting results is closely linked to environmental protection and improved management of renewable natural resources. In both rural and urban Africa, the poor are affected the most by the loss of natural resources and environmental services. They are also at the greatest risk from natural disasters. The impact of droughts and floods in Africa is aggravated by environmental degradation (World Bank 2002:1; Mears 2007:8). There has been increasing concern about the effects of economic activity on the environment over the last three decades (Thirlwall 1999:268; Mears 2007:8). This rapid economic growth has caused serious environmental damage and the current state of the environment can hamper future economic development. Projections based on current trends indicate that the world will become more crowded, less ecologically stable and more vulnerable to natural hazards in future.

Concern with respect to the limited ability of the earth's eco-systems to regenerate is increasing. The extent of ozone depletion and increasing global warming presents significant implications for the global climate (Todaro and Smith 2006:494–495; Mears 2007:8–9). The potential cost of climate changes vary from region to region and mainly affects people living in semi-arid regions. This has significant implications for the income and food self-sufficiency in many developing countries, especially in Africa.

According to Dicken (2007:543; Mears 2007:9) developing countries are expected to forego possibilities of development through industrialisation, because

of the imposition of environmental regulation. The now industrialised countries did not face these restrictions at a similar stage of their development. Moreover, there are large differences in the nature, scope and enforcement of environmental regulations across the world today. This encourages some firms to take advantage of low standards. The growing seriousness and pervasiveness of environmental problems due to economic growth, has led to attempts to devise global regulatory mechanisms (Pearce 1995; Braithwaite and Drakos 2000; Mears 2007:9).

The “clean development mechanism” of the UN allows developed countries to invest in sustainable development projects in developing countries since 2005, whilst earning emission allowances. This allows them to earn carbon allowances, which can be used to meet their emission reduction commitments. Greenhouse gas emissions from developing countries are expected to reach the level of the developed countries by 2020 or earlier. The cost to developing countries of introducing new clean technologies is high, even with assistance from developed countries (Dicken 2007:544; Mears 2007:10). Moreover, many developing countries believe that the imposition of carbon emission targets is another form of protectionism, which limits their support.

Environmental health impacts poor health, which reduces peoples’ survival rates and quality of life. This affects their capacity to carry out economically and socially productive activities. Environment, health and poverty overlap extensively in Africa, because many of the most widespread and debilitating diseases that affect the poor disproportionately stem from environmental conditions. This also means that they may be mitigated through improved environmental management, such as sanitation and clean water. Water and air pollution from domestic and industrial sources also affects hundreds of millions of people (World Bank 2002:3; Todaro and Smith 2006:494; Mears 2007:10).

The United States accounts for 40 percent of the annual world resource use, but had only 4,6 percent of the world population in 2005. Moreover, less than 20 percent of the rich consumed 80 percent of the resources produced in 2005. This is leading to the depletion of many non-renewable resources, such as petroleum, certain basic metals, and other raw materials essential for economic growth (Todaro and Smith 2006:298–299; Mears 2007:11). If USA standards were to be expanded globally, a six fold increase in world resource flows would be required. However, the actual gross throughput will have to increase by much more in order to bring about a six fold increase in net energy and materials throughput. This is mainly owing to the law of diminishing returns (Opschoor et al. 1999:86). Empirical evidence shows that the present rates of usage are already causing irreversible damage to ecological life-support systems (Mears 2007:11). The inequitable nature of past development processes and patterns are the main underlying reasons why they cannot be sustained into the future, on either moral, economic or environmental grounds (Elliot 2006:87; Mears 2007:12).

The UN has played a key role to shape the international response to the environmental crisis around sustainable development (Baker 2006:78; Mears 2007:12). The promotion of sustainable development requires overcoming the causes of unsustainable development that stem mainly from inequality of the global economic system (Baker 2006:183). The next section explains NEPAD and what it can do through partnerships, including with the UN, to address the environmental and other problems of Africa.

4. NEPADs vision for Africa

The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) is the long-term policy initiative of the African Union (AU). NEPAD provides the framework for the socio-economic upliftment of Africa for the next twenty years or more. It aims to

integrate Africa into the global economy and to place it on a path of sustainable development. The NEPAD initiative was signed, finalised and launched in Abudja, Algeria on 23 October 2001 (De Waal 2002:468; Mears 2007:168). In its efforts to operationalise the AU policies in 2003, NEPAD was integrated into the AU and the activities of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM). NEPAD was conceived in Africa by Africans and was supported by the five prominent leaders of South Africa, Nigeria, Algeria, Senegal and Egypt. The rapidly changing global and societal trends left Africa with little option than to integrate or to fall further behind.

The AU Act initially provided for 17 bodies, including the Assembly of Heads of States, an Executive Council of Foreign Ministers, a Pan-African Parliament, a Court of Justice, a Permanent Representative Committee of Ambassadors in Addis Ababa, seven specialised technical committees, an Economic, Social and Cultural Council and three financial institutions (Cilliers 2001; Kotzé and Steyn 2003:40; Mears 2006:174).

Since previous attempts by Western donors to rescue Africa from aspects of underdevelopment, poverty and strife have failed, mere cooperation is no longer regarded as appropriate. It has now been replaced by mutually binding commitments and partnerships (Kotzé and Steyn 2003:113; Mears 2006:163). The NEPAD attempts to identify a niche for the African continent in the changed international environment. It uses the global agenda and the establishment of mutually beneficial partnerships with the developed world to achieve its aims (NEPAD 2005:1). In short, NEPAD's program of action is a holistic, comprehensive and integrated sustainable initiative for the survival of Africa.

Both the AU and NEPAD strategies rely on the principle of increased African integration and unification, supported by African ownership and control. NEPAD coordinates efforts among African leaders and civil society to implement policies in a climate of joint responsibility and accountability. In short, NEPAD is an

attempt by African leaders to collectively address the continent's lack of development in the context of globalisation (Gelb 2002:1; Mears 2006:164).

Africa faces many problems including declining exports and increasing imports, HIV/Aids, political instability and corruption. Problems in Africa cannot be attributed exclusively to globalisation, but also stem from the neo-patrimonial policies introduced by African governments in an attempt to gain constituent support. This supports Kabemba's (2002:2) statement that Africa's problems are the result of misguided leadership, systematic corruption, economic mismanagement, senseless civil wars, political tyranny, flagrant violation of human rights, military vandalism and bad policies to mention only a few. Surveys in all countries regard issues of good governance as the primary obstacle facing the African continent (Kotzé and Steyn 2003:80; Mears 2006:167–168). Moreover, the vast majority of African enterprises are not ready for sustained networking and partnerships. African entrepreneurs also do not have the capital to make reliable partners.

Although the NEPAD vision is commendable, the implementation thereof is experiencing many problems. The roles that African leaders have to play in the implementation of the NEPAD strategy, places a large burden on the shoulders of individual leaders. They are individually and collectively involved to play a role in the implementation of the NEPAD plan of action. Secondly, they have to promote and protect democracy and human rights in their respective countries and regions. Thirdly, they have to restore and maintain macroeconomic stability by developing appropriate standards and targets for fiscal and monetary policies (NEPAD 2001:Art 49; Mears 2006:174).

The NEPAD initiative is leadership driven, although based on the assumption of a mandate from the African people (Venter and Neuland 2005:361; Mears 2006:178). This places an even larger burden on the political structures of African leadership to play a determining role to achieve a successful outcome for

the NEPAD strategy. Moreover, NEPAD is only one of twenty AU bodies that demand the attention of these leaders.

Although a number of practical and technical problems to implement the NEPAD strategy have been identified, only a few are discussed here (Venter and Neuland 2005:356–357; Mears 2006:185). Without substantial financial support by international partners, the NEPAD envisaged strategy is not possible. After the Kananaskis Summit in 2002, the G8 countries pledged support towards NEPAD. They adopted the Africa Action Plan with a number of conditions. Africa's obligation includes the integration of Africa into the globalised world, the reduction of armed conflicts, the restructuring of African economies, and respect for human rights and good governance. In exchange, support was pledged by the G8, the World Bank, the Global Coalition for Africa, the general secretary of the UN, the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development, the UN Economic Commission for Africa, the EU and the African Development Bank (Kotzé and Steyn 2003:93–94; Mears 2006:165–166). By adopting the African Action Plan the cost to the G8 and others obligations to NEPAD includes a pledge of US\$64 billion annually, the creation of markets for African exports, investment in African infrastructure, increased development aid, and the support of debt reduction. This gives an indication of the financing required to make the NEPAD strategy viable.

Although the G8 members acknowledged that it was too early to judge the peer review process, they saw Africa's commitment to the APRM as "mixed". They regard the deteriorating political and human rights situation in Zimbabwe as regrettable, because every NEPAD principle was being violated. However, this has not come under AU scrutiny, either directly or through the APRM (Brown 2004:8; Venter and Neuland 2005:357; Mears 2006:185). For the G8 this showed the lack of commitment by African governments to good governance.

This discussion shows that the problems and constraints far outweigh the benefits. Moreover, the problems are experienced now, while the benefits may only come later when NEPAD functions well. The heterogeneity, ethnic diversity and independence of African countries will only become less important relative to NEPAD's objectives, once the benefits to all countries far outweigh the costs or problems. To realise this will need more commitment and significant foreign investments, payments for services and aid. However, this will only be forthcoming if the money is spent wisely and also benefits those who make the commitments. A vision to achieve these goals is discussed in the next section.

5. A vision for African cooperation, development and growth in the global context

This section suggests three possible projects that NEPAD can coordinate, investigate and research and then implement if viable. The vision originated from the research discussed in this paper and is only ideas or visions of what may materialise. It is not based on scientific research, but only on a development economic perspective of what may work in Africa.

The most obvious starting point is to utilise Africa's comprehensive comparative advantages of favourable climate, animal wildlife, eco-tourism and scenic beauty. Through NEPAD initiatives better and safer services can attract more tourists to most areas in Africa. This increased income must be used to improve all of Africa and to alleviate poverty and inequality between countries. If all countries can benefit from this the support and integration will improve and Africa can start to move towards a real AU, with fewer barriers between countries. Conservatively estimated, eco-tourism can increase tenfold in Africa.

Secondly, private ownership and secure property rights have to be developed and guaranteed by the AU and NEPAD throughout Africa. This should include all property including those of communal areas that traditionally belonged to the

forefathers. It will lead to a significant increase in the investment in and development of private property. This has happened in all developed countries and will also work in Africa. This will lead to upgrading, improvements and investments in all urban areas, including the informal settlements if they also receive property rights. A property market in all price ranges will then develop to satisfy the needs of property owners.

The planning of urban areas should receive more attention. It should be controlled and managed within the national plan. It can not be managed on an ad hoc basis, as is the case with many informal settlements. New technology such as the global positioning system (GPS) has made the survey of plots and stands much cheaper. This technology can assist greatly in granting and registering secure property rights for all areas in Africa. This will allow people to improve, sell and make loans on their properties, which is an overdue issue in Africa. This will improve financing and the development of small businesses and SMMEs in general.

The most important and urgent issue to address in Africa is the environmental degradation. This is important for the whole world and not only for Africans. The principle of payments for conservation is already firmly established. If Africa's conservation efforts could benefit other countries of the world they can expect support, subsidies or loans and direct payment for these efforts. If done on a large scale this can earn enough to make it worth their while for African countries to integrate and cooperate on a larger scale.

Although the rest of this section may be seen as mere speculation, a lot of thought has gone into it. This project is mainly based on the conclusions made in previous research as discussed in Section 2 to 4 of this paper. Further research may show that this is not economically viable at this stage of Africa's development. It may also not be environmentally feasible due to the ecological sensitivity in the Namib Desert or for many other reasons. This is an example of

the size and scale of the project that can place Africa on the forefront in environmental management. The scope of the envisioned project is such that one person can not develop it alone. If the project or parts thereof is feasible and can be implemented, it will have to be a PanAfrican project. It will also be a truly multidimensional, multinational, multidisciplinary and multipliable project. This is just an idea or vision of a large project that the NEPAD can investigate with substantial development, assistance from the multilateral donors like the World Bank, UN, the Global Environment Facility and other bilateral donors.

The Sahara desert with 8,6 million km² is the world's largest desert, covering large parts of North Africa. An estimated 4 million people live in the Sahara desert and the population density is 2,15km² per person. Its maximum length is 4800km from west to east and up to 1200km from north to south. The Sahara covers most of Mauritania, Western Sahara, Algeria, Libya, Egypt, Sudan, Chad, Niger and Mali. It also touches Morocco and Tunisia (Encyclopaedia of the Orient 2007:1).

At present only 200000km² of the Sahara is a fertile oasis, where dates, corn and fruits are grown. Moreover, a few fertile regions are fed by underground rivers and underground basins. Many of the Sahara's oases rest in depressions or areas under sea level. This allows water to surface from underground reservoirs and artisan wells (Encyclopaedia of the Orient 2007:4-5). Animal life is limited to gazelles, antelopes, jackals, foxes, badgers and hyenas.

Other forms of vegetation include scattered concentrations of grasses, shrubs and trees in the highlands, as well as at the oases and along river beds. Many plants are well adjusted to the climate, allowing them to germinate within 3 days of rain falling and to sow their seeds within 2 weeks after germination (Encyclopaedia of the Orient 2007:5-6). The maximum average temperatures of the Sahara vary between 29 and 38 degrees Celsius and the total rainfall between 0 in the Niger and 233 millimetres in Mali. The total rainfall in

millimetres in Sebha, Libya is 8, Dakhla, Egypt 15, Tamanrasset, Algeria is 29, and Atar, Mauritania 78 mm.

Since the beginning of the 18th century a gradual decline in the precipitation took place in the Sahara. This involved a process in which many regions became uninhabitable, under the climatic and demographic conditions at present (Encyclopaedia of the Orient 2007:7). These areas will most probably deteriorate most due to global warming.

To the north, the Sahara is bordered by the Atlas Mountains and the Mediterranean Sea. The vision is that dams of 3km wide and 3000km long be built on the south of the Atlas Mountains and +/- 10km south of the Mediterranean Sea. These dams of between 30 and 50 meters deep will be filled with sea water, after the dams have been made waterproof by spraying seawater to seal the dams. The logic behind this is that the evaporation from the dams will draw in moist air from the Mediterranean Sea which will fall over the desert areas.

The fresh water will be collected in dams, which will be used to irrigate fruit, nuts and other trees that grow in the desert. These trees and other agricultural products will in turn take up water and will help to turn around the soil erosion and deforestation, wetlands, fish and wildlife populations. This can also lead to more labour intensive employment opportunities and an increase in the population density in the Sahara.

Concomitant to the development of the seawater dams, fresh water dams of 3000km long and 1km wide should be developed +/- 50km from the southern edge of the Sahara. Although there are several rivers running through the Sahara, only the Nile and the Niger rivers flow on a permanent basis. The rest are seasonal and most of the time, dry river beds. Some of the water that flows into the sea may be extracted from these two rivers, but the bulk will come from

the sea water that has been desalinated. The idea is to pour as much fresh water as possible into the desert to fill the freshwater dams. It is estimated that about 3 times as much water as will be collected in the dams, of +/- 75 meter deep, will sink into the sand to build up the surface and groundwater reserves in the areas. The dams will be used to irrigate the surrounding areas and to farm with fish.

This will extract an estimated $3000 \times 3 \text{ km}^2 \times 40$ meters of sea water or 360000 km^2 , plus fresh water of $3000 \times 4 \text{ km}^2 \times 75$ meters deep, including surface and ground water, or 900000 km^2 of water extracted from the sea or which would have run into the sea. The total area of water 1260000 of one meter deep is relatively small compared to the total ocean surface area of about 361 million km^2 , including inland seas and the continental shelf (Google 2007:1). These dams will cause the sea level to fall by about 3,5mm, which is negligible. However, the environmental impact of such a project could be significant if it can reverse the desertification and deforestation in the Sahara.

A comprehensive social cost benefit analysis (SCBA) of the project is needed before any decisions can be made. This includes an estimate of the millions of tons of salt that can be extracted from the seawater dams, the possible income from agricultural production and all the other costs and benefits to the area and countries covered by this project.

As stated above, the project or parts thereof is multipliable and may be extended to other areas, for example, the Namib Desert (Go2Africa 2007:1). NEPAD and Namibia may investigate how the Namib-Naukluft Park of 50000 km^2 , and one of the largest conservation areas in the world, can benefit from the knowledge gained from the Sahara project.

6. Summary of the main findings and conclusions

The aim of this paper is to investigate ways to assist Africa to address its deteriorating position within the global context, by becoming financially more self-sufficient and more independent. Africa's development potential can be improved through cooperation and communication to provide a sound basis for stable urban and rural development for its low income communities. The urban environments of poverty are the most pressing problems in Africa. It is particularly the urban poor who bear the brunt of urban environmental problems. The migration and the urbanisation process can be used as a vehicle of growth and development and can have an equilibrating effect on interregional income distribution if managed efficiently.

The main reason for the lack of sustainable development in Africa is the neglect of environmental protection and poor management of renewable natural resources. Environmental health impacts poor health, which reduces peoples' survival rates and quality of life. Environment, health and poverty overlap extensively in Africa. This can be mitigated through improved environmental management, such as sanitation and clean water. The promotion of sustainable development requires overcoming the causes of unsustainable development that stem mainly from the inequality of the global economic system.

The NEPAD is identifying a niche for Africa in the changed international environment. It uses the global agenda and the establishment of mutually beneficial partnerships with the developed world to achieve its aims. This paper proffers three ways in which NEPAD can assist to make Africa financially more self-sufficient. The developed world is willing to assist Africa to help itself, but not to donate US\$64 billion on an annual basis, without strings attached. Africa can earn this and more from the efficient management and sustainable development of its many assets and comparative advantages.

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