

Chapter 8

Public Sector Role in Sustainable Development: Rolling Back the State – A Game Changer to Sustainable Development

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ABSTRACT

Being at a global development crossroad under an era plagued by major global challenges including financial crisis, poor governance, economic inequalities, climate change, food insecurity, human rights injustices, among others calls for a concerted effort from all the stakeholders to play a critical role in development. These roles are to be embraced through market-driven and people-centered modalities that seek to address inefficiency in service delivery and unequal distribution of economic gains. To foster this, the public sector is at the central point in driving institutional reforms in safeguarding progressive development-oriented norms and practices within an economy. In this regard, strategic reforms ought to be upheld as multifaceted processes that involve social structural changes, attitudinal changes, national institutions reforms, economic growth acceleration, reduction of inequalities, and poverty eradication. Restructuring, participation, public-private partnership, accountability, human-resource issues are some of the reformation strategies identified in this chapter.

INTRODUCTION

The attainment of sustainable development is at the heart of all stake-holders globally ranging from the civil society, communities, private sector, public sector and the development partners. The role played by the public sector though is far more pivotal in establishing the fabric of development variable relationships and serving as a catalyst of meaningful engagement and participation of the ‘demand’ side in shaping decisions on issues affecting them. To effectively establish a sustainable driven development, the public sector needs to realign itself through ‘reformation strategies’ to serve the ‘redistributive’ role in addressing social conflicts and equitable redistribution of income, service and goods ‘provisional’

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roles as well as ‘institutional’ role effective in addressing all legislative, judicial and executive roles in a market-driven and civic responsive manner.

This chapter therefore sought to achieve the following objectives:

1. To explore the role of public sector and in attaining sustainable development in African economies
2. To give a historical overview of Africa’s public sector reforms journey.
3. To identify the strategic realignment of the public sector in attaining sustainable development

BACKGROUND

Sustainable Development connotes development achieved presently without the compromise of the posterity’s ability to secure their needs (World Bank, 2007). Sustainable development is characterized by ‘efficiency’ in resource use and ‘effectiveness’ in service delivery sustainably. It is therefore perceived as a sequel of responsive investment strategies, effective control of growth antecedents and the stability of development variables within an economy. The sustainability of such development is about the sustenance of past growth, the stability of current economic development accelerators and the establishment and adoption of productive development investment and viability strategies for the future. To foster the acceleration and sustenance of development progress, it is imperative to establish a trajectory of human development which allows people to determine their development through predesigned exploitation of their choice to meet their aspirations now and future. ‘Sustainability’ too is about facilitating development benefits to spread to those left behind by past-to-date progress.

Being at a global development crossroad under the new fifteen year window for the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) marks a new era of rethinking development strategies that seek to offset the increasing concentration of poverty in Africa majorly marked by non- income deprivation, such as quality access to basic health service and education. Concerted efforts among development stakeholders have to be aligned towards effectuating a stable economic progress, a cohesive society, an involved and informed citizenry, and a sustainable development. Towards this end, a sound and facilitative environment through a market- driven and societal responsive public sector is critical. This is due to fact that the public sector is at the central point in facilitating effective modes of partnership and responsive investments to spur growth and development.

To foster a healthy economic life, regulations of the market through prevention of competitive distortions and the safeguard of the sanity and sanctity of positions of influence is inevitable. The public sector therefore plays the role in safeguarding consumer and workers safety, as well as regulating investments, imports and exports. Further, the public sector plays a unique part in ensuring social cohesion. This is through combating social inequalities as well as investment to the non-income dimensions of development to the weak including education, quality healthcare and housing, reduction of unemployment, elimination of abject poverty, exclusion of unruly and distractive population’s segment to safeguard the rights of others, protection of the minorities and ensuring social order in complex and multi-cultured societies, development planning (urban and rural development), conservation of environment and cultural heritage; safeguarding relationship within systems and department in compartmentalised and multi-echeloned governance systems; safeguarding checks and balances to foster accountability and social justice among other fundamental components in complex societies. With these, it is worth noting that it

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