

degree to which these two roles of chiefs are rivalrous when these tasks could be in many cases complementary. In particular, in adjudicating between these two views of chiefs, she suggests that if chiefs act as development brokers we should see higher provision of local public goods, whereas when they act as vote brokers we would expect the opposite (p. 81). But why should chiefs acting as vote brokers lead to lower provision of local public goods? In many cases throughout Africa, in which chiefs or other local leaders engage in electoral politics, chiefs demand from politicians the provision of wells, renovation of places of worship, or promises of roads, in addition to personal benefits for themselves.

My single point of criticism underscores how remarkable Baldwin's book is. *The Paradox of Traditional Chiefs in Democratic Africa* represents exemplary scholarship in an extremely readable and engaging format, with a broad appeal to a cross-disciplinary audience.

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**Africa and the Millennium Development Goals: Progress, Problems and Prospects**, edited by CHARLES MUTASA and MARK PATERSON

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The varying levels of 'development' experienced around the world almost made it unthinkable for the international community to concur on how to eradicate poverty and improve the lives of the world's most vulnerable populations. Thus it was welcoming news when the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were envisioned in 2000 to capture eight sets of global developmental goals agreed upon by members of the United Nations. A decade and half after this endeavour, there is no doubt the world is still in need of 'development', however defined, particularly in regions such as Africa where there is now a set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) under implementation. But because the past informs future prospects, Mutasa and Paterson's edited collection takes us back to the basis of the MDGs to identify what we learnt and how such lessons could inform Africa's development agenda over the next decades.

Besides the introduction and conclusion, the book contains 11 chapters that are written by scholars with expertise in issues covered by the eight MDGs. Despite what Mutasa refers to as a 'hidden ideological underpinning', he claims the overwhelming acceptance of the MDGs 'brought the issue of socio-economic development back onto the international agenda, mobilised public attention, and to an extent, overcame aid fatigue' (p. 3). However, equality remains an issue based on evidence that socio-economic inequality 'both between and within countries largely worsened over the fifteen-year period of the MDG implementation' (p. 4). This reality affected the attainment of the goals in Africa, but it is expected that the SDGs could help advance the broader goals of poverty eradication, access and equality.

For the goal of reducing extreme poverty and hunger by half, the evidence points to poverty reduction lagging behind economic growth as 50% of Africa's population still lives below the poverty line of \$1.25 a day. The

number of people living in extreme poverty has increased from 290 million in 1990 to 414 million in 2010 partly due to hikes in global food prices and droughts in the Sahel regions of Africa. But part of the problem, as pointed out in Chapter 7, is the lack of attention to Africa's agricultural potential, youth employment, food security, women's empowerment, and failure to adhere to a comprehensive agricultural programme that would support African governments in 'owning and leading agricultural reform efforts' (p. 121).

While some progress has been made towards free basic education (MDG #2), there are remaining issues with quality of education, infrastructure, monitoring, evaluation, and management. Chapter 9 presents that argument that these shortfalls have to be addressed in the post-2015 agenda in addition to increasing access to secondary and tertiary education, and building relevant skills for young adults to cope with technological advancement and 'the pressures imposed by increasing urbanisation and climate change' (p. 161). The remaining six goals were carefully examined in the other chapters of the book. Since the goals cannot be seen as a set of one-size-fits-all targets, 'measurement of their achievement must rather take account of the often low starting points for many African countries, in order to avoid distorted interpretations that can reinforce Afro-pessimistic views of the continent as "failing"' (p. 130). This is a very powerful statement made in Chapter 7 that should have underlined the entire book, had it been highlighted earlier on in the introduction.

Beyond the chapters that went into the specifics of the eight MDGs, the first three chapters after the introduction provide stimulating accounts of the broader political economy of development in Africa – covering a post-2015 agenda centred around the potential of the SDGs to help reduce the risk of conflict, human insecurity and control the spread of weapons. Chapter 4 also compares the principles embedded in African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) to those in the Millennium Declaration, showcasing how the APRM, despite its challenges, has facilitated the attainment of the MDGs in Africa. These initial chapters, albeit insightful, seem out of place. For better organisational coherence of the book, the projections they make into Africa's development agenda post-2015 could have appeared just before the conclusion.

But the conclusion of the book itself, barely eight pages, is too short for a book of this calibre. Although there were some indications on what the prospects are for Africa's development beyond the MDGs, this chapter could have had a more detailed evaluation of such prevailing issues as governance, development 'ownership', accountability, and overall participation in development. Nonetheless, this edited collection complements existing works of its kind such as *Development in Africa* (Kararach *et al.* 2015) and *Millennium Development Goals in Retrospect* (Andrews *et al.* 2015). The uniqueness of the collection is the diverse expertise and practical experiences of the 17 'pan-African' contributors that are brought to bear in each chapter.

Another commendable aspect of the book is the plethora of data submitted to support several claims regarding the progress towards the MDGs or the lack thereof. Although some of these pieces of information could have been updated (for instance, pie charts on pages 174–6), they help give a better sense of where Africa is in meeting specific development targets. Yet, what makes the

book laudable simultaneously raises some questions. The point is whether or not the data presented can be completely reliable especially since based on what we know from Morten Jerven's (2013) *Poor Numbers*, the dubious quality of statistical data makes it hard (if not impossible) to generalise about patterns of socio-economic development in Africa. It would have served the authors better if they began by acknowledging this limitation especially since a great deal of their arguments are primarily based on available statistical data.

In short, this is not your typical scholarly publication that has a plethora of academic jargon and several references to existing scholarship published in peer-reviewed journals and other avenues. However, policymakers who are interested in data-informed decision-making will find this book interesting. Also, students, scholars and development practitioners interested in a comprehensive understanding of the shortfalls of the MDGs in Africa and what holds for the continent as the implementation of the SDGs ensues will find it a good read overall.

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**Assembling Export Markets: The Making and Unmaking of Global Food Connections in West Africa** by STEFAN OUMA

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Assembling export markets is hard work; this is the fundamental message of this book. Bringing together actors, balancing their different modes of working and ensuring that pineapples and mangoes leave the fields of Ghana and arrive on supermarket shelves in the EU is not a seamless linear path that can be managed by a single actor from a Global 'centre of calculation' as promoters of value chains (practice and analysis) would have us think. People, machines and fruit all resist this particular way of organising themselves and it took years and a number of precise political and commercial opportunities to create a space for Ghanaian fruit in the global market.

However, to say that assembling export markets is hard work also refers to the practice of reading it. I find that the concepts developed in the economic sociology of 'economisation' mobilised by Ouma are spot-on in their ability to capture the complexity and tenuous nature of network relations, however the reliance on the vocabulary from this world makes this book inaccessible to those readers who have not mastered it. To master this vocabulary requires a