

A Human Rights-based Approach to Development in Africa: Opportunities and Challenges

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KEYWORDS Millennium Development Goals. Poverty. Democracy. Governance. Accountability

ABSTRACT There is an undisputed and critical link between human rights and development, which is recognised by various international human rights instruments. After defining the concepts 'human rights' and 'development' – based on the views of a variety of bodies, institutions and human rights instruments – and discussing their interplay and relationship, this paper explores and acknowledges the level and extent of current practices of integrating human rights and development in Africa. It pays specific attention to the roles and dimensions of civil and political rights on the one hand, and socio-economic rights on the other, and how they impact on development in different, but important ways. Opportunities and prospects for promoting a human rights-based approach to development are discussed, with some mention of the role of the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, and the African Court of Justice and Human Rights. However, particular and most attention is paid to the various strategies of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Challenges such as poverty, poor governance, lack of democracy, conflict, health, and unpalatable cultural practices prevailing in Africa, are discussed. This considered, and given the backdrop of Africa's varied and substantial political and socio-economic challenges, it is argued that adopting a human rights-based approach to development in Africa is imperative and critical.