

**ARE AGENDA 2030 (SDGs) AND AGENDA 2063 (AU) REFLECTED
IN THE 2016 MANIFESTOES OF THE NEW PATRIOTIC PARTY
(NPP) AND NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC CONGRESS (NDC)?**

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INTRODUCTION

A manifesto is an important instrument of communication and campaigning during the periods before and during elections. It is a published declaration of intentions, objectives, or opinions of an organisation or government to garner public support. Manifestoes are key to making informed choices at elections in Ghana. The public may not entirely read the document published by political parties because they are voluminous. However, Ghanaians are very much aware of the content of these documents through the speeches given and taglines used during political campaigns, rallies, tv debates and other media engagement. For example, the “one factory, one dam” policy was popularised during the 2016 New Patriotic Party (NPP) election campaign.

Multilateralism and globalisation have resulted in an interconnected world. Nation-states ratify and sign onto numerous agreements and conventions that consequently shape the way national or subnational policy documents are formulated. Particularly, political party manifestoes do not only consider national development plans when being formulated but also regional, continental and international plans. With the existence of global and continental goals, manifestoes are drafted to ensure that they fit in with overarching international and pan-African policy frameworks on sustainable development.

The most relevant development frameworks to the Ghanaian context are the United Nations’ Agenda 2030: Sustainable Development Goals and the African Union’s Agenda 2063: the Africa We Want. Are Ghanaian political parties conscious about formulating manifestoes in line with Pan-African (Agenda 2063) and global agenda (Agenda 2030 on the Sustainable Development Goals)? This paper interrogates the extent to which Ghanaian political party manifestoes explicitly seek to incorporate the two global and pan-African frameworks (Agendas 2030 and 2063) during the manifesto formulation process and if they are indeed clearly reflected in them. It will specifically look at the 2016 manifestoes of the two dominant parties, the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the National Democratic Congress (NDC).

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The objective of this paper is to critically analyse whether the Agendas 2030 and 2063 are evident in the 2016 manifestoes of the NPP and NDC. The analysis will be limited to the manifestoes of these two parties for the 2016 elections specifically because the two were published a year after the advent of the new global agenda; Agenda 2030 (2015). This is primarily because both parties have been alternating power since the advent of the 4th Republic in 1992 and continue to do so and both parties have respectively assumed power since the two Agendas emerged.

For example, the NDC had begun its term of office when the Agenda 2063’s 50-year development plans came into action in 2013. The same party was also in its final year of office when the Millennium Development Goals evolved into the Sustainable Development Goals (Agenda 2030) in 2015. On the other hand, both Agendas have been in force even before the NPP, currently the ruling party, began its four-year term 2016. Moreover, President John Dramani Mahama of the NDC and President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo have both served as the Co-Chairs of the UN Secretary-General’s Eminent Group of Advocates for the SDGs during their respective terms of office (UN Blog, 2017). Therefore, it is undeniably clear that the NPP and the NDC were aware of the existence of both Agenda 2030 and Agenda 2063 when formulating their 2016 manifestoes.

This paper does not however, consider the 2016 manifestoes of the minority political parties. Although a handful of the minority parties drafted manifestoes for the 2016 elections, this paper solely analyses the 2016 manifestoes of the two main parties. The article only scrutinises the NDC and the NPP because both parties have the largest following, spend huge sums of money to draft

elaborate manifestoes and carry out massive electoral campaigns. Additionally, this paper will stress on the need for the NDC and the NPP manifesto committees, other political parties and relevant stakeholders to align forthcoming 2020 manifestoes and promises to both Agenda 2030 and Agenda 2063.

This paper will be written in two parts; as previously stated, this first version analyses the 2016 manifestoes of the two parties, NPP and NDC, to determine whether their manifestoes reflect the two Agendas. Given that 2020 is an election year and political parties have scheduled dates to launch their manifestoes, a second paper will examine whether the two parties have in reality aligned their 2020 manifestoes to the two Agendas. Accordingly, a post-publication review of manifestoes shall aim to hold the NPP and the NDC to account because they have both, in the past, championed the implementation of Agenda 2030 and Agenda 2063. It will also seek to determine whether there will be an improvement in the manner in which their 2020 manifestoes incorporate the two Agendas.

TWO COMPLEMENTARY DEVELOPMENT AGENDAS

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a collection of seventeen (17) global goals designed to be a “blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all” by addressing global challenges related to poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace and justice (United Nations, 2015). The SDGs which were developed in 2015 by the United Nations General Assembly through the UN Resolution 70/1 are expected to be achieved by the year 2030 (United Nations, 2015).

Meanwhile, the Agenda 2063 “seeks to build on and accelerate the implementation of past and existing continental initiatives for growth and sustainable development” (Agenda 2063-Background Note, 2015). The Agenda 2063 is Africa’s continental outline of its twenty (20) goals to become a fully developed and well-functioning continent in tune with other continents of the world within a 50-year period from 2013 to 2063 (African Union, 2013). Agenda 2063 “guides individual and collective actions towards the African Union’s vision” (African Union, 2020, p.5) of achieving the “Africa We Want” (Agenda 2063-Background Note, 2015).

The goals, targets and priority areas of both Agenda 2063 and Agenda 2030 overlap with respect to human development through eradicating poverty, providing quality and affordable education and health services, sustainably transforming economies, infrastructure and rural sector, gender equality and youth empowerment, peaceful and inclusive societies, accountable institutions, justice and environmental sustainability (UNDP, 2017). However, Agenda 2063 embodies African-specific goals associated with cultural identity or continental integration processes (African Union, 2013).

TWO COMPETITIVE MANIFESTOES ELABORATING AFRICAN AND GLOBAL VISIONS?

Political party manifestoes have become a primary means of localising the SDGs and the Agenda 2063 goals. Given that manifestoes serve as the guide for formulating medium-term national plans when a party assumes power. The political party which forms the government is bound to implement its manifesto promises declared during electoral campaigns. Simply, it is the foundation for the winning party’s four-year programme until the next elections and governmental achievement is measured by the extent of delivery on the governing party’s manifesto promises (Jonah, 2020).

The Agendas 2063 and 2030 materialised a few years before the 2016 elections i.e. 2013 and 2015 respectively not considering that they had evolved from pre-existing frameworks such as the

Millennium Development Goals and African Union Aspirations. Therefore, the 2016 elections was a prime opportunity to determine whether the political parties' manifestoes incorporated the Agenda 2030 and Agenda 2063. It has often been mentioned that for Ghana and other African nations, localising the SDGs means that by extension Agenda 2063 is being implemented because of the complementary nature of both Agendas. A case in point is the effort that has been made to synchronise both Agendas to avoid duplication and chaos especially at the national implementation level (UNDP, 2017).

Before the 2016 elections, six political parties including the National Democratic Congress (NDC), New Patriotic Party (NPP) declared at a public forum that they will prioritise the SDGs when formulating their manifestoes and messages (Ajarfor, 2016) because the global goals fit well in the development aspirations of majority of Ghanaians" (Suleman, 2016). An analysis of the NDC and NPP's 2016 manifestoes below determines whether they explicitly localised the SDGs and Agenda 2063 goals in their documented campaign priorities and promises. The NPP's manifesto titled *CHANGE: An Agenda for Jobs* (2016) discusses all aspects of Ghana's political and social life with an aim to highlight the priorities and objectives that the party would implement when it assumes power. Without explicitly referring to the Agendas 2030 and 2063, the NPP made efforts to situate its themes and actions within the global and continental narrative.

However, the inclusion of both Agendas in the manifesto can only be inferred. The reader must take time to situate each of the themes discussed within the seventeen (17) SDGs and twenty (20) goals of Agenda 2063. For example, in highlighting the NPP's actions in terms of governance, corruption and public accountability, the manifesto makes its first mention of sustainable development: "the fundamental requirement for sustainable development is good governance" (NPP, 2016, p.39) without referring to either Agendas. Another reference to sustainable development is found in the concluding page where the NPP in an attempt to focalise its plans within the Agenda 2030 SDGs, declares that "the plans we have set out are for the long-term sustainable development of our country" (NPP, 2016, p.53).

The NDC's manifesto titled *Changing Lives, Transforming Ghana* (2016) attempts to explicitly situate its objectives and actions within the context of Agenda 2030 with sparse reference to the Agenda in its manifesto. For example, the NDC clarifies that although its government mandate was ending in 2016, it needed to be re-elected because there were "more roads to construct, more houses to build, more food to produce, additional educational and health facilities to provide and more jobs to create" (NDC, 2016, p.4).

In order to associate these priorities with Agenda 2030, the NDC manifesto stated that its outlined plans correspond to the primary demands of the global compact encapsulated in the SDGs which the party had agreed to respect (NDC, 2016, p.4). With a single reference to a specific goal, the NDC highlighted that it planned to increase support to the Non-Formal Education Division of the Ministry of Education to empower its work in accordance with the SDG Four on provision of quality education to all. Unsurprisingly, there is only a single reference to the 2063 African framework for development. In an attempt to allude to Agenda 2063, the NDC's manifesto stated that as the ruling party, the NDC had achieved remarkable gains towards establishing a continental free trade area in 2017 and had contributed to continental integration (NDC, 2016, p.76).

The problem that a textual analysis of both 2016 manifestoes unearths is that although they attempt to primarily localise the SDGs, they fall short of skilfully and precisely linking their themes to each of the seventeen goals. Any other mention of Agenda 2063 is absent, except the NDC's single reference to this Agenda was when it referred to its achievement regarding establishing continental free trade zone and promoting integration during its 2012-2016 term (NDC, 2016, p.76). This occurrence could be understandable if the manifesto committees considered that by

integrating Agenda 2030, they are by extension integrating Agenda 2063 i.e. following the logic of the complementarity of both Agendas previously discussed.

It can be deduced from analysing both 2016 NPP and NDC manifestoes that the end goal for both political parties was to implement actions towards sustainable development during the next government mandate (2016-2021) in Ghana. However, the implicit and sometimes sporadic manner that Agenda 2030 appears – not forgetting their near silence on Agenda 2063 – in the manifestoes really puts into question the extent to which these global and continental frameworks influence the formulation of manifestoes in Ghana. Does the inclusion of Agenda 2030 and Agenda 2063 really go beyond public declarations to localise the SDGs in manifestoes and sporadic references to these Agendas in the manifestoes?

WHY POLITICAL PARTIES SHOULD INCORPORATE THE TWO AGENDAS IN FUTURE MANIFESTOES

With respect to the NPP and the NDC, it is important that they align their party promises to these goals. This is because their flagbearers i.e. His Excellency John D. Mahama and His Excellency N. A. D. Akufo-Addo are both champions of implementing international development frameworks particularly Agenda 2030. Moreover, with the creation of an SDGs Advisory Unit at the Office of the Presidency, the same unit that also advises on Agenda 2063, it will be unjustifiable if the NDC and NPP who continue to alternate political power do not formulate their manifestoes in line with the SDGs and the AU aspirations. The public and institutional commitments made by these two parties when in power regarding the two Agendas must therefore translate into their parties' manifestoes.

Additionally, it is well known that manifesto promises of the winning party evolve into the four-year national development plans until the next general elections (Jonah, 2020). Therefore, it will save the elected government and the mandated institution, National Development Planning Commission (NDPC), the time, human and financial resources dedicated to streamlining and aligning campaign promises to the two Agendas, especially when it comes to securing foreign aid or producing the UN Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) on the implementation of the SDGs and national-level Agenda 2063 domestication and popularisation reports sent to the AU.

Furthermore, it is important to note that clearly referring to these two Agendas in political parties' manifestoes serve as a means to educate the electorate and broadly, the public about the existence of these developmental goals. The ultimate goal will be to conscientize citizens about political and social issues for global, national and personal development. Even more profoundly, directly alluding to Agendas 2030 and 2063 will contribute to enhancing issue-based electioneering campaigns in Ghana. It would also then make it easier for the government (refers to whoever assumes power per their manifesto and electoral campaigns) to implement its promises within the context of these frameworks.

Considering the two Agendas when drafting manifestoes will ensure that cross-cutting issues that are evident at all levels – national, regional, continental and global – in areas such as education, employment, institutional and constitutional reforms are generally included. The challenge will then lie on the creativeness and strategic prowess of political parties to devise innovative, distinctive and responsive action plans to address such socioeconomic and political problems. In other words, political parties will then be propelled to craft specialised responses to challenges by striving to competitively distinguish their approaches from one another. Consequently, the electorate will be able to vote for the one whose approach will be representative of their interests as well as be given the opportunity to make better informed choices at the polls transcending

political affiliations and ideologies. In the long run, such a system will bring an added value to Ghanaian politicking, election contestation, revive citizen enthusiasm and reduce voter apathy.

Finally, in order to better incorporate the two Agendas in their manifestoes, political parties could also proactively utilize their research and policy units to gather information by tapping into the resources made available by the United Nations and the African Union on how to localise the two Agendas to fill these gaps in the short run. Political parties should also endeavour to collaborate with local organisations who have expertise on advocating for the implementation of both Agendas to efficiently and effectively achieve sustainable development. Again, political parties could emulate the Ghana Civil Society Organisations Platform on the SDGs (2015) to model a Ghanaian political parties' platform on Agendas 2063 and 2030 to facilitate effective alignment of manifestoes and party activities to both Agendas.

THE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING COMMISSION'S ROLE IN INFLUENCING POLITICAL PARTIES TO ALIGN MANIFESTOES TO AGENDA 2030 AND AGENDA 2063

To integrate and coordinate the Agendas 2030 and 2063 into national development frameworks, the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) has been assigned to handle this task (UNCG-CSO Platform on SDGs, 2017). The NDPC collaborates with the Ministry of Planning, the Ministry of Finance and a three-tier implementation structure comprising a High Level Inter-Ministerial Committee, Implementation Coordinating Committee and a Technical Committee that works with the Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs) to ensure that public sector programmes are aligned to the SDGs and the AU Aspirations (Ministry of Finance, 2018, p. 105-188).

According to the Ministry of Finance (2018, p. 105-106), the NDPC coordinates and monitors the implementation of the Medium-Term National Development Policy Framework, the SDGs and Agenda 2063. It is also in charge of preparing the SDGs Voluntary National Review (VNR) reports and SDGs indicator baseline reports that enumerates the progress made with respect to implementing the SDGs (Ministry of Finance, 2018, p.108).

The Commission also drafts the Annual Progress Report to track the implementation of the national development agenda (Government of Ghana, 2019, p.28). Therefore, if political parties' manifestoes evolve into the national medium-term development agenda when a winning party assumes power, how does the NDPC relate to these parties? Does the NDPC in any way influence political parties' drafting of manifestoes to align them to the SDGs and AU Aspirations? Could the NDPC share its experiences and strategies with the political parties about integrating the two Agendas into their manifestoes?

So far, the NDPC has held consultative meetings with the political parties to seek their inputs into drafting the 2019 Voluntary National Report on the SDGs (Government of Ghana, 2019, p.37). Little has been said about the NDPC engaging political parties and vice versa on incorporating the Agenda 2030 and Agenda 2063 into political parties' manifestoes. This analysis has therefore unearthed a gap in collaboration that needs to be filled. Rather than just calling on political parties to formulate their manifestoes in a realistic manner to enable their incorporation into long-term national development plans (NDPC, 2016) particularly that of the winning party, the NDPC can strengthen its input into the manifesto formulation process by doing the following:

- Making available to the political parties toolkits that the Commission uses to integrate or adapt national development agenda according to the two Agendas;

- Coordinating joint consultative meetings or workshops between the NDPC and the manifesto committees, national executive councils, policy and research units of the political parties for experience and knowledge sharing as well as capacity building;
- Collaborating with civil society organisations or technical experts that work on the SDGs and AU Aspirations to assist manifesto committees upon request.

With more involvement from the NDPC in the manifesto formulation process, political parties' capacities would be strengthened so that they can better align their campaign promises to international development frameworks. This collaboration or influence from NDPC is highly important for integrating the two Agendas because political parties are “responsible for aggregating social demands and transforming them into political decisions” (NIMD, 2019). In the long run, it will make it easier for the NDPC to build upon the winning party's manifesto for drafting the medium-term national development plans as well as for reporting on Ghana's progress in achieving both Agendas 2030 and 2063.

HOW INTERNATIONAL ACTORS CAN SUPPORT THE LOCALISATION OF THE TWO AGENDAS IN POLITICAL PARTIES' MANIFESTOES

Transcending political parties and national governments, the UN and the AU should also consider providing technical assistance and when feasible, financial support to political parties in a bid to strengthen their capacity to explicitly localise the two Agendas in their manifestoes. For example, transfer of technical knowledge by sending experts to collaborate with manifesto committees, organising consultations with political parties and their decision-making structures as well as furnishing them with the requisite resources – roadmaps and toolkits on localising the development goals – and funding could go a long way to reinforce the capacities of political parties in Ghana for this purpose.

Despite the important role that political parties play in localising the two Agendas, they are often relegated to the background in the grand scheme of planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the two Agendas. They are often lumped together with other stakeholders without great focus on their role in achieving sustainable development in Ghana and elsewhere. Active and documented effort should be made by national governments and international stakeholders to include political parties in this process.

Just as there are numerous publications by the UN and the AU as well as other organisations on the roles of civil society, government, parliament and other actors in localising global and continental development goals, it would be imperative to create toolkits on the processes through which political parties particularly manifesto committees can localise the Agendas when drafting manifestoes. Where such information already sparsely exists, on one hand, the AU and the UN could coordinate the synthesis of this information to be readily available to political parties via a digital hub or application.

CONCLUSION

Although there have been public declarations to localise global and continental development goals in political party manifestoes in Ghana as witnessed in 2016, there has been little to no mention of the Agendas 2030 and 2063 in the NPP and NDC 2016 manifestoes. The NPP's manifesto was silent on directly referring to the two Agendas while the NDC's manifesto did sporadically or singly refer to both Agenda 2030 and Agenda 2063. These actions or non-actions further drive the need to concretely probe into the extent to which the two Agendas influenced the manifesto formulation process. It can be inferred that rather than an organic incorporation of both Agendas in the 2016

manifestoes, an impression is given of attempting to include Agendas 2030 and 2063 for the sake of it.

A stronger and easily identifiable effort – either by tactfully using graphic design or overtly mentioning which goal a promise corresponds to – should be made towards linking manifesto promises to specific goals i.e. 17 SDGs and 20 Agenda 2063 goals. For example, all poverty reduction aspirations should be linked to SDG 1 and Agenda 2063 goal 1. However, where there are some interlinkages with other goals, creative or innovative design formats could streamline such concerns. The reason why the above is not done might be a mere oversight. However, it further emphasises the need for the NDPC, international actors and experts to support political parties to better incorporate the two Agendas in a more conspicuous way. A timely opportunity to investigate the intentions to incorporate them in formulating the 2020 manifestoes has dawned with the establishment of manifesto committees who are completing manifestoes for the imminent 2020 general elections. Advocacy through consultations and via the virtual space especially within the COVID-19 context to incorporate these two Agendas should continue to take place to influence the political parties in Ghana to properly align their manifestoes to them. The NDPC and international actors should contribute to enhancing the capacities of political parties to incorporate Agenda 2030 and Agenda 2063.

Finally, given that the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the electoral calendar and manifesto committees are racing against time to publish them as soon as possible, it will be important to conduct a post-publication review of the forthcoming 2020 manifestoes of the NPP and NDC to determine whether they were formulated in line with both Agendas, reflect the will of the people and national priorities. If these manifestoes are devoid of an intention to align promises to Agenda 2030 and Agenda 2063, a critique of these documents will ensure that in subsequent manifestoes, political parties truly incorporate them.

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