



BEANS WITHOUT KORKOR?

And other stories

Sustainable Development Goals as interpreted by young writers from Africa



United Nations
Economic Commission for Africa





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Foreword



The stories in this Anthology by African youth remind us of the hope that mobilizes Africa around the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the frustrations that go with realizing them in the context of the immense challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and the immediacy of the impact of the climate crisis. The stories represent different genres and perspectives by youth across the continent, aged 15-35 years, most of whom are being published for the first time. The narratives reflect the lives of African people and how development relates to them. The perspectives remind us that the SDGs are not just a list of 17 Goals, which have been agreed upon by a group of diplomats in New York. More than just about the numbers and statistics, they remind everyone involved in implementing them that they can be realized.

While visiting Brazzaville and hearing about the beliefs encapsulated in River Congo, I learnt about meeting our needs by respecting nature and recognizing its power. Through the craft of storytelling, we are reminded that community narratives do not define sustainable development in terms of numbers. The Goals are fundamental objectives that are achievable and have meaning in the daily lives of individuals, especially young people. Yet, development often gets caught up in the language of diplomacy, which is often complex and inaccessible. Therefore, storytelling as an art form forces us to translate this language into simple daily experiences. For instance, how do we feed ourselves? If the way we feed ourselves is harmful to nature, there must be a way to recalibrate and go back to many of our traditions and do so more sustainably. How do we educate ourselves? How do we achieve our goals and aspirations

as individuals in a way that enhances society and contribute to a better world and a better planet?

The importance of this storytelling initiative resides in giving voice to young people, giving power to their imagination, and translating the sustainable development goals into our daily lives in a simple way. In these stories, we see the interlinkages between development and people, and it is this link that makes sustainability important. Simply taking the amount of wealth in the world and dividing it by the number of people does not tell us how well the world is doing. And this fallacy of GDP as a measure of development is one of the challenges that we must tackle head-on. Therefore, we must go beyond the statistics and find ways of giving meaning to the SDGs in people's daily lives. Herein lies the power of artistic expressions such as storytelling, poetry and the spoken word. Through the written and spoken word, we can capture the essence of how people feel. We can also capture the hopes and significant frustrations across different generations, which is also an essential part of measuring how we are going about the sustainable development goals. Doing so moves us beyond that simple measure of wealth to one that seeks to measure what wealth means for individuals, their communities, and peer groups.

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