

Sub-Saharan Africa

Regional findings from the 2024 Listening to Leaders Survey

Leaders in government, the private sector, civil society, media, and universities in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) share their views on priorities and progress, as well as the agenda-setting influence and helpfulness in implementation of the development partners with whom they work.

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SSA leaders responded to our 2024 Listening to Leaders (LTL) Survey

Education

The top development goal for SSA leaders

World Bank

Development partner with the largest footprint across the region

IMF

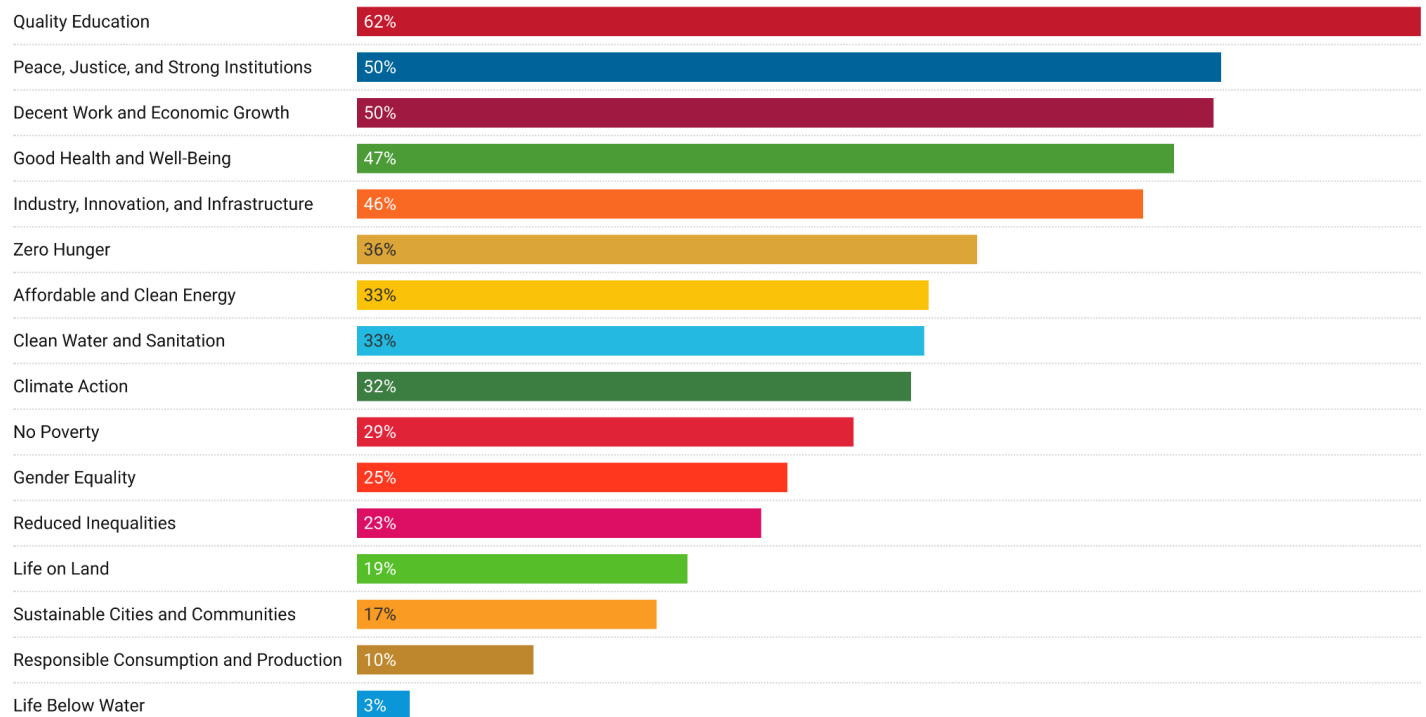
Most influential development partner across the region

Portugal

Most helpful development partner across the region

SDG Priorities

Percentage of respondents



What leaders want

Leader priorities and the Global Goals

When asked to identify their top six development priorities of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), SSA respondents were most likely to identify Quality Education (62%), Strong Institutions (50%), and Decent Work (50%). But these priorities aren't the same around the world. Of all regions in the world, SSA leaders were more likely to identify Good Health (47%), Industry (46%), Eliminating Hunger (36%), Clean Water (33%), and Affordable Energy (33%), and Life on Land (19%) as a priority.

Partner Rankings

Respondents indicated how helpful and influential they found the partners they worked with

Influence		Helpfulness		Footprint	
Development Partner	Percent of Respondents	Development Partner	Percent of Respondents	Development Partner	Percent of Respondents
1. IMF	93.5%	1. PRT	96.3%	1. WB	50.7%
2. PRT	93.1%	2. GAVI	95.5%	2. UNDP	45.6%
3. WB	92.9%	3. UNICEF	95.1%	3. AFDB	43.7%
4. GF	92.6%	4. WHO	94.5%	4. EU	42.5%
5. WHO	91.4%	5. UNDP	94.5%	5. USA	40%
6. EU	89.4%	6. WB	93.9%	6. UNICEF	35.5%
7. USA	89.3%	7. GF	93.4%	7. IMF	32.2%
8. GAVI	88.7%	8. USA	92.9%	8. WHO	30.6%
9. UNICEF	87.4%	9. FAO	92.7%	9. DEU	30.3%
10. UNDP	85.9%	10. IRL	91.7%	10. FAO	26.7%

Influence, Helpfulness and Footprint

Three survey metrics that provide insights on the perceived regional impact of partners

Footprint reflects the percentage of leaders who worked with a given partner. Influence is a measure of the partner's impact on policy decisions that leaders make. Helpfulness indicates whether or not leaders found a partner's assistance to be useful in project implementation. Notably, the average partner was considered more helpful than influential.

Sources

Custer, S., Horigoshi, A., Boer, B., and K. Marshall. (2025). *Listening to Leaders 2025: Development cooperation over a decade of disruption*. Williamsburg, VA: AidData at William & Mary.

Horigoshi, A., Custer, S., Marshall, K., and B. Burgess. (2025). *Prioritizing Agenda 2030: How do Global South leaders navigate trade-offs and assess relevance?* Analytical Brief. Williamsburg, VA: AidData at William & Mary. September 2025.

About AidData

AidData (<https://aiddata.org/>) is a research lab at William & Mary's Global Research Institute in Williamsburg, Virginia, USA. AidData helps governments and organizations make better-informed decisions on the reach, influence, and outcomes of overseas investments. We use rigorous methods, cutting-edge tools, and granular data to answer the question: who is doing what, where, for whom, and to what effect? The Listening to Leaders project surveys global leaders every 2–3 years, gathering insights on priorities,

experiences with development partners, and more across sectors like government, NGOs, civil society, and academia

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