

ASPK Webinar Series

The 2024 Sustainability Trends: Key Insights for Kenyan Professionals

DATE: FEB 7TH, 2024

SUMMARY OF THE WEBINAR'S DISCUSSIONS

The Association of Sustainability Practitioners in Kenya (ASPK) is a community of sustainability champions, committed to embedding sustainable practices within the fabric of Kenyan society and beyond. We are a network of professionals and organizations spanning the sectors of business, government, academia, and civil society, all bound by a common vision for a sustainable future in Kenya. At ASPK, we champion sustainability not merely as a concept but as an essential blueprint for fostering long-term resilience and prosperity across environmental, social, and economic domains. Our members, a dynamic mix of experts, activists, scholars, and leaders, bring a rich mosaic of experiences and insights to our collective efforts. United by an unwavering dedication to sustainability, they drive change, inspire innovation, and contribute to a more sustainable and equitable societies. We firmly believe in the power of collaboration and collective action. Sustainability, in our view, thrives on synergy and shared purpose—principles that form the cornerstone of our approach.



SECTION 1: BACKGROUND

This one-hour webinar sought to engage Kenyan sustainability professionals to discuss and share insights on the emerging trends and critical issues in sustainability for the year 2024. The session aimed to explore various aspects of sustainability, including regulatory changes, financial strategies for climate action, and collaborative approaches to sustainable development. Through insightful and interactive discussions, the webinar sought to equip participants with the up-to-date developments in the sustainability space of relevance to Kenya and their respective fields.

The trends highlighted underscore the interconnectedness of geopolitical, regulatory, collaborative endeavours, environmental, economic, and technological factors in shaping the sustainability landscape in Kenya and globally. This summary serves as a basis for further analysis, discussion, and action among members of the Association of Sustainability Practitioners in Kenya (ASPK) and other stakeholders.

Webinar Date: Feb 8th, 2024 (Time 1300-1400 EAT)

Speakers: Susan Njoroge

MD, Responsible Business Consulting

MO. Zachary

Secretary, Association of Sustainability Practitioners in Kenya

Topic: The 2024 Sustainability Trends: Key Insights for Kenyan Professionals

Summary compiled by: MO. Zachary

SECTION 2: KEY ISSUES DISCUSSED

1.1 Global Geopolitical Shifts

- **Expansion of the BRICS economic block** and the increasing voice and presence of the Global South at the United Nations were highlighted. This points to a potential shift in global power dynamics, with a focus on economic and policy independence for developing countries.
- **Tensions between the Global South and Global North** over issues like tax transparency, indicating a push for greater equity and accountability in global governance.
- **Impact of geopolitical shifts on sustainability funding:** There's a concern that budgets from the Global North are increasingly focused on immediate humanitarian needs, potentially affecting allocations for sustainability initiatives in Africa and Kenya. This necessitates a re-strategization in engagement with the donor community.

2.2 Conflicts and Governance

- The potential for **increased volatility due to wars and conflicts**, coupled with the role of misinformation and disinformation.
- Nearly **half of the world's population facing general elections** in 2024, including in major countries like India, Russia, Mexico, UK, and the US. This presents a pivotal moment for sustainability agendas, depending on the leaders elected.
- **Elections and Political Dynamics in Africa-** Elections in **17 African** countries with a focus on the types of leaders elected and their agendas. The use of division, polarization, and misinformation during election periods was noted as a concern for promoting sustainable development.

2.3 Climate Change and Environmental Impact

- **Continuation and worsening of climate change impacts**, as reported by global scientists and the IPCC. Despite efforts to mitigate climate change, its effects are expected to persist and intensify, emphasizing the need for urgent and comprehensive action.

2.4 Trust in Institutions

- **Declining trust in governments and institutions**, particularly in the context of elections, debt distress, and inequality. This trend challenges the collective action needed for sustainability and highlights the importance of rebuilding trust for effective governance.

2.5 Economic Challenges

- **Concerns over cost of living, inflation, interest rates, and debt distress**, especially relevant to Africa and Kenya. These economic factors can significantly influence sustainability initiatives and priorities.

2.6 Influence of Technology

- **AI for sustainability:** Artificial intelligence is playing a bigger role in sustainable growth. AI has a great potential to assess, predict, and mitigate the effects of climate change as it gathers, interprets, and completes large and complex datasets on emissions and climate impact, which provides better solutions for informed decision-making.
- Unfortunately, without proper execution, projects to implement AI come with complexities, costs and a carbon footprint that undermine sustainability goals. It is essential for project managers to learn to implement "green algorithms," specialized AI constructs designed to both enhance operational efficiency and prioritize sustainability.

- The role of **AI, technology, misinformation, and disinformation** in shaping public opinion and governance, underscoring the need for digital literacy and responsible use of technology in promoting sustainability.

2.7 Debt Distress and Climate Initiatives

- **COP 28 Initiative on Debt Distress for Climate Change:** An initiative involving France, Kenya, and Mexico aimed at addressing debt distress in the context of climate change was mentioned. This initiative explores leveraging debt for climate swaps and other instruments for debt restructuring to support heavily indebted countries in pursuing climate objectives.
- **The need to learn from successes and failures of pilot finance instruments for nature and climate action** and propose corrective measures to enhance the uptake of the same in 2024. See the case of Debt for Climate Swap in Gabon by the World Bank.

2.8 ESG Regulations

- **Major ESG Disclosure Regulations in Kenya:** The Central Bank of Kenya (CBK) adopted the Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD) guidelines, marking a significant development in managing climate risks for listed companies. The transition to International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) with a strong element on climate disclosures signifies an evolving regulatory landscape.
- **Task Force on Nature-related Financial Disclosures (TNFD):** Launched in Kenya with the collaboration of various organizations, TNFD focuses on managing risks around biodiversity issues. Early adoption by entities like Equity Bank Group indicates a growing emphasis on biodiversity risk management.

2.9 Carbon Emissions and Climate Action

- **Focus on Scope 3 Emissions Accounting:** There's an increasing requirement for companies to report their entire carbon footprint, beyond operations. This highlights the urgency of climate action and the need for comprehensive carbon accounting practices.
- **Transition from CDM to Article 6 Framework:** The change from the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) under the Kyoto Protocol to Article 6 under the UN framework aims to provide a more comprehensive framework for advancing carbon market issues.

3.0 Increased Expectations for Sustainability Reporting and Disclosure

- **Global and Local Regulatory Pressures:** The growing pressure from both global regulations, such as the EU's reporting requirements, and local initiatives, necessitates more rigorous sustainability reporting and disclosure, particularly

affecting sectors like agriculture and horticulture that are part of global supply chains.

3.1 Emphasis on Social Sustainability

- **Human Rights, Labor Practices, and Gender Equality:** The social aspects of sustainability, including human rights and labour practices, are gaining prominence due to global supply chain demands and societal expectations, influenced by recent international media attention on poor sustainability practices.

3.2 Environmental and Social Governance (ESG) Metrics

- The requirement for comprehensive reporting on ESG metrics reflects a broader trend towards transparency and accountability in business operations, directly impacting Kenyan organizations involved in international trade.

3.3 Social Activism and Community Engagement

- **Increased Focus on Community Fairness and Conservation:** There is an expected rise in social activism, particularly around environmental conservation and equitable distribution of benefits from carbon offsetting and other sustainability projects. This trend underscores the importance of engaging with and fairly treating communities.

3.4 Corporate Strategy and Risk Management

- **Boards Demanding Sustainability Strategies:** With financial implications becoming clearer, corporate boards are increasingly requiring C-suite executives to develop and implement robust sustainability strategies, focusing on risk management and compliance.

3.5 Skills and Capacity Building

- **Urgency for Professional Development:** The need for specialized skills in sustainability reporting, carbon accounting, and ESG metrics will drive demand for training and capacity-building initiatives among professionals.
- **Certifications and Learning Platforms**
 - **GRI Certification:** Offers foundational knowledge in sustainability integration and reporting.
 - **Frankfurt Business School:** Recognized for strong programs in sustainable finance.
 - **Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Institute:** Specializes in carbon accounting, management, and net zero strategies within value chains. They also offer a scholarship program.

- **Harvard Business School:** Provides a comprehensive course on business and climate change.
- **CFA Institute:** Offers courses in climate risk and ESG certification, ideal for those with a finance background looking to delve into climate change.
- **GARP (Global Association of Risk Professionals):** Offers courses on sustainability and climate risks, blending risk management with sustainability.
- **Must-Read Publications and Upcoming Reports**
 - **National Climate Action Plan (NCAP) 2023-2027:** A comprehensive guide to Kenya's government position on net-zero development.
 - **WWF and KBA Report (Upcoming):** On the landscape of sustainable finance in Kenya's banking industry.
 - **GGI's 2023 Green Growth Index Reports:** Provides insights into Kenya and other African countries' performance on green growth objectives.
 - **AfDB's Economic Outlook Reports:** Last year focused on mobilizing private sector financing for climate and green growth.
 - **Sustainable Development Reports 2023 for Kenya:** Outlines Kenya's progress in achieving the SDGs.
- **Training Opportunities and Institutions**
 - **Strathmore Business School:** Offers a week-long Sustainability Leadership Program providing in-depth insights into sustainability.
 - **Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership:** Provides eight-week online programs covering various aspects of sustainability, including sustainable finance, sustainable marketing, and business and social justice.
- **Professional Networks:**
 - **Association of Sustainability Practitioners:** A newly formed network by sustainability professionals in Kenya aimed at building the profession and solving sustainability challenges collectively.
 - **The Nairobi Climate Network (NCN):** a community of professionals in Kenya working to address climate change. They focus on building connections, improving access to information, and sharing knowledge within the climate movement. By organizing events, workshops, and other activities, the NCN helps to empower individuals and organizations to act on climate change in Kenya and beyond.

Global Compact Network Kenya: Part of the largest network on the African continent, supporting organizations of all sizes in sustainability practices. It's particularly noted for its SME-friendly approach.

B Lab and B Corp Certification: Focuses on companies looking to start or continue their sustainable journey, with a strong network of SME membership across East Africa.

- **The Importance of Upskilling in Sustainability:** There is growing demand for sustainability skills in the job market, “possessing green skills can significantly increase hiring potential and salary.” One of the speakers noted. She encouraged professionals to think strategically about building their knowledge and expertise in sustainability, highlighting it as a key driver for future business.

3.6 Stakeholder Engagement

- **Aligning Business and Stakeholder Interests:** Companies are recognizing that addressing stakeholder interests, including environmental regulation and community relations, is integral to their business success. This realization is prompting more proactive engagement and strategy development around sustainability.

3.7 The Path Forward for Companies

- **From Compliance to opportunity:** While many organizations will focus on getting their sustainability reporting and practices in order, leaders in the field, such as Safaricom, EABL, and others, will continue to innovate and leverage sustainability as a competitive advantage.

SECTION 3: Q&A Session

The questions from the chat and the responses provided by the speakers highlight crucial aspects of sustainability efforts and strategies for Kenyan companies and the broader community. Here's a summary:

Question from Jay: Path to Net Zero for Kenyan Companies

- **Zachary's Response:** Emphasized the importance of leveraging existing policy frameworks and plans, such as the NCAP 2023-2027, which outlines the government's position on net zero development. He suggests that the private sector engage with public sector strategies and take advantage of initiatives by organizations like KEPSA and KBA. The goal is to develop private sector-oriented strategies that align with public policies while lobbying for a business environment that supports decarbonization efforts.

Question from Bertie: Supporting Sustainable Outputs and Reporting

- **Susan's Response:** Highlighted the need for local solutions to global sustainability challenges and the importance of collective action among practitioners and organizations. She suggests leveraging industry approaches and networks, such as the Association for Sustainability Practitioners, to build a movement focused on identifying and implementing context-specific solutions.

Both responses stress the significance of integrating sustainability into the core strategy of businesses, aligning with national policies and development agendas, and fostering collaboration among stakeholders to address sustainability challenges. This approach not only aims to meet the immediate demands for sustainability reporting and net zero emissions but also positions Kenyan companies and the community to contribute to long-term global and local environmental goals.

SECTION 4: CLOSING REMARKS

1. Remarks from the audience (Christine Mwangi, WWF):

Christine Mwangi from WWF shared insightful reflections on the future of sustainability in 2024, emphasizing the importance of shared learning and collaboration in the journey towards sustainable development. Key points from her comments include:

- **Localized Solutions:** Christine highlighted the need for sustainability solutions to be locally focused, acknowledging that the priorities and approaches to sustainability can vary significantly across regions, nations, and companies. This underscores the importance of tailoring sustainability efforts to fit specific contexts and needs.
- **Learning and Collaboration:** She pointed out the value of forums like the webinar for sharing ideas, exchanging thoughts, and identifying gaps in sustainability efforts. Such interactions provide a crucial platform for mutual learning and support among sustainability professionals.
- **Development of Sustainability Standards:** Christine mentioned her work with financial institutions in Africa to support the implementation of sustainability-focused standards. She noted the absence of a universal rulebook for sustainability standards, illustrating the ongoing development of region-specific guidelines, such as those being developed with the Capital Markets and Securities Authority in Tanzania.
- **Documentation and Learning from Experiences:** A significant challenge identified is the need for better documentation of successes and failures in sustainability initiatives. Christine stressed the importance of creating mechanisms for professionals in the space to share their experiences, learn from

each other's achievements and mistakes, and thereby avoid repeating ineffective strategies while amplifying successful ones.

2. Closing Remarks from Susan:

Susan Njoroge concluded the webinar with an encouraging message, reiterating the importance of collaboration, knowledge sharing, and active participation in sustainability initiatives. Here are the key takeaways from her closing remarks:

- **Call for Local Action and Research**

She expressed a desire for more local-based action research to inform Kenyan industry and business needs around sustainability, advocating for stronger collaboration between the private sector and academia. This approach aims to develop a body of research that can better inform policy and business strategy within the Kenyan context.

- **Collaboration, Partnership, and Consumer Engagement**

Susan stressed the importance of moving from a competitive to a cooperative mindset, suggesting that industries face similar sustainability challenges and can achieve more through collaboration. She also touched on the need for consumer education on sustainability, highlighting the upcoming platform Sustainable Kenya as a resource for promoting responsible consumer behaviour.

- **Encouragement for Professional Collaboration**

Susan emphasized the role of the Association of Sustainability Practitioners in Kenya (ASPK) as a platform for sustainability professionals to share their successes and challenges. She expressed hope for increased participation and collaboration through the association's activities.

- **Call to Action for Sustainable Implementation**

Highlighting 2024 as a pivotal year for sustainability, Susan urged participants to actively engage in sustainability practices. This includes building skills, understanding the current sustainability status of their organizations, developing strategies, and starting to report and track progress in sustainability efforts.

- **Importance of Being Proactive**

Stressing the value of being ahead in sustainability reporting and tracking, Susan encouraged attendees to start delivering and implementing sustainability measures deliberately and proactively.

- **Gratitude and Forward Look**

Susan thanked the participants for their time and engagement in the session, expressing hope that the insights shared would inspire action throughout the year. She also reminded everyone about the importance of completing the feedback survey to help shape future sessions and expressed optimism for future interactions with the attendees.

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STUDENT MEMBERSHIP: Whether you're a recent graduate or a current student in the field of sustainability, ASPK offers specialized membership categories designed to propel your career to new heights. By joining our dynamic community, you'll gain exclusive access to a wide range of resources, educational opportunities, and a network of sustainability professionals committed to making a difference.

LINK: <https://aspkenya.org/membership/student-membership/>



ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP: Are you a sustainability professional with a minimum of 2 years of experience in a sustainability-related industry or role, looking to take your career to the next level? Do you have a professional background in other fields but would wish to start your sustainability journey? Join as an associate to connect with a community of like-minded professionals, gain valuable insights and knowledge, and access resources and opportunities to advance your career in sustainability.

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PRACTITIONER MEMBERSHIP: is designed for sustainability professionals with 4-7 years of experience in sustainability-related roles. By becoming a Practitioner member of ASPK, you'll join a community of experienced professionals and peers leading sustainability integration efforts across sectors and organizations. You'll have access to a range of resources and opportunities designed to help you achieve your sustainability goals. Whether you're looking for information, best practices, or tools to help you innovate and stay ahead of the curve, our community of professionals is here to support you.

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