



# Standards of Living

The term standards of living can be understood as the quality and quantity of material goods and services available to a given population. While a country’s economic growth significantly increases overall standards of living, the challenges experienced through poor access to basic services such as clean water, sanitation, energy, infrastructure, and connectivity, adversely impacts population ability to function and thrive at the most basic level. Of all indicators, the rate of poverty experienced in a country will have the most significant influence on a population’s standards of living. Poverty directly impacts standards of living by restricting access to essential resources and opportunities necessary for maintaining a decent quality of life. Beyond population productivity and quality of life, poor access to basic services has a multitude of negative implications on environmental health due to improper human waste disposals, overexploitation of natural resources, deforestation, as well as excess pollutants related to household energy production. To improve standards of living, as well as mitigate its implications on environmental health, countries need to find new ways to produce everyday goods, many of which have been built on the back of fossil fuels.

For example, Countries are increasingly utilizing sustainable solutions for clean water and energy, innovative approaches to affordable housing and expanding ICT infrastructure to enhance their standards of living.

Beyond productivity, poor access to basic services has a multitude of negative implications on environmental health due to improper human waste disposals, overexploitation of natural resources and deforestation. These environmental Standards of living were specifically highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic where the WHO WASH guidelines became

general practice to prevent spread of disease, clean energy was beneficial in preventing the exacerbation of lung conditions, housing became of utmost importance to observe lockdown policies and connectivity was required to remain in communication with others.

With high disparities, low- income communities in SSA face some of the poorest standards across the world, marked by insecure environments, insufficient access to clean drinking water, sanitation, clean energy sources, formal housing infrastructure, connectivity. Firstly, insufficient access to clean drinking water and sanitation facilities leads to water-borne diseases, resulting in increased illness rates, hindered educational attainment due to frequent absences and reduced productivity in workplaces grappling with sanitation challenges. Secondly, poor access to clean energy and modern amenities results in exacerbated air pollution, hindered educational opportunities due to unreliable power sources and restricting economic activities that are reliant on consistent energy supply. Thirdly, lack of affordable housing increases stress and instability, disrupts school attendance and performance due to frequent relocations and limited job prospects for those unable to secure stable living conditions. Lastly, lack of ICT infrastructure hampers access to technological tools, connectivity, and online resources necessary for fostering new ideas, learning digital skills and participating in the digital economy. Enhancing standards of living involves fostering innovative and sustainable practices and solutions that ultimately improve the daily lives of individuals.

Moreover, the region has the lowest access to electricity and clean energy globally, restricting contemporary economic activities and public services. Ineffective governance, high unemployment, and inadequate infrastructure further exacerbate these issues, compounded by high population growth rates.

**Improving living standards in Sub-Saharan Africa requires effective governance that ensures access to basic needs, security, and robust economic management. Productive employment significantly enhances living standards by improving economic and social welfare, while unemployment has devastating effects. Beyond employment and education, factors like housing conditions, access to media, effective police services, and safe living areas also influence living standards. Poor standards of living negatively affect health, nutrition, education, and information access, highlighting the urgent need for comprehensive interventions. Addressing these gaps involves creating sustainable water solutions, strengthening clean energy capacities, innovating affordable housing, and improving ICT infrastructure. Dedicated efforts by African and global communities are crucial to overcoming these challenges and enhancing overall living conditions.**

Focus Areas:	Objectives <small>(thematic area specific impacts)</small>
Access to Clean Water & Sanitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all</li><li>• To reduce the disease burden on populations due to poor access to water.</li></ul>
Access to Clean Energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To achieve universal and equitable access to affordable, reliable and clean energy services.</li><li>• To reduce Net Zero Emissions in rural and remote areas through clean cooking solutions</li></ul>
Affordable Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To promote solutions that drive affordable housing for all</li><li>• To increase access to safe and sustainable housing material through the circular economy.</li></ul>
ICT infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To promote innovative methods needed to disseminate and decentralize the construction of ICT infrastructure.</li><li>• To increase uptake of digital solutions and literacy for easy information sharing across platforms.</li></ul>

