

## The geography behind Africa

### Multiple identities of Africa

'How do you hunt? How do you keep animals? How do you eat? Do you fetch wood for your fire? Do you have wells? What do children wear to school? Are their teachers like ours? Do you have Peulh (nomadic pastoralists)? Do you have black people? Are black people accepted by white people? Do you carry babies on your backs like we do?' (Questions posed by children in a Burkina Faso school, quoted in Brazier, 1995).

'It is the girls who rise first in the village of Adballah Wallo and go for water even before the sun is up. This is a fortunate village: water is nearby. All one has to do is climb a steep, sandy bank down to the river... after reaching the river, the girls fill tall, metal tubs and plastic canisters with water, help one another place them on their heads, chatting, and climb the steep incline back to the village' (Kapuscinski, 2001).

'Geographically, Africa resembles a bulging sandwich. The sole continent to span both the north and south temperate zones, it has a thick tropical core lying between one thin temperate zone in the north and another in the south. That simple geographic reality explains a great deal about Africa today' (Diamond, 2005).

'Botswana is one of Africa's biggest economic success stories. Money from the country's diamonds has been spent wisely to give the country strong foundations for future growth. As a result, it is now described as a "middle income" rather than a "poor income" country' (Commission for Africa, 2005).



Photo: Emma Cook

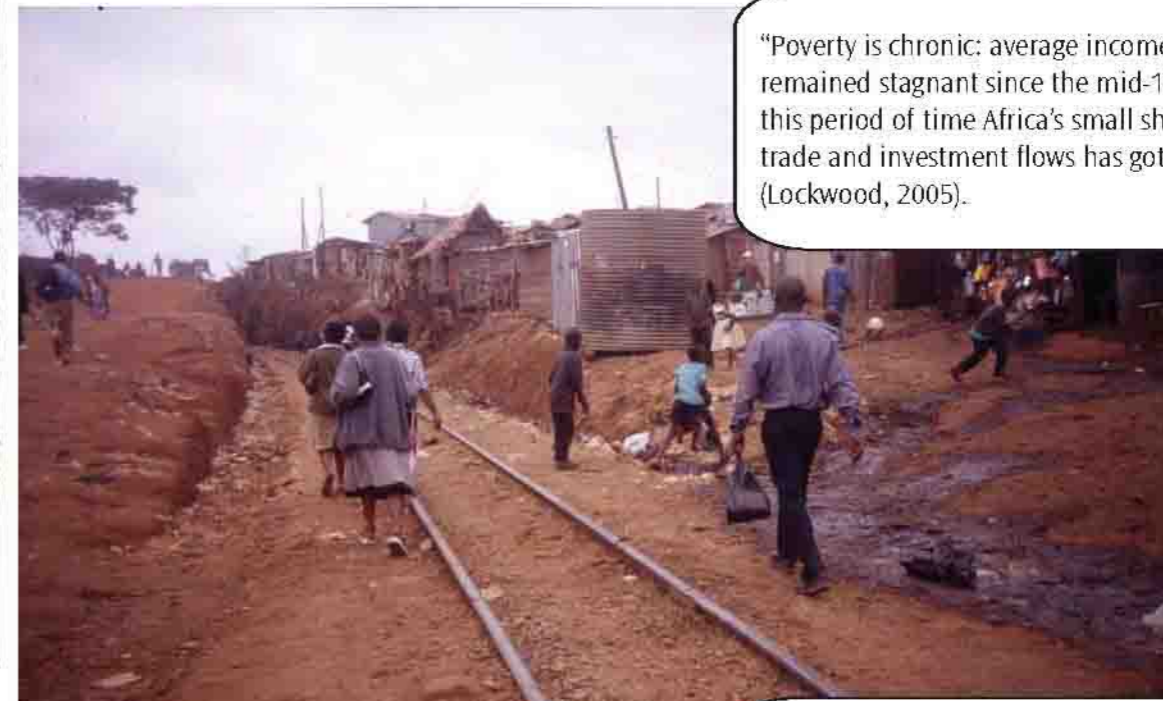


Photo: Margaret Mackintosh

"Poverty is chronic: average incomes have remained stagnant since the mid-1970s and over this period of time Africa's small share in world trade and investment flows has got even smaller" (Lockwood, 2005).

'People living in extreme poverty can't escape from it. The cycle of poverty continues from one generation to the next. Around a sixth of the entire population of Africa south of the Sahara, more than 100 million people, are chronically poor. In Ethiopia, people who are very poor – and therefore have little in the way of food are known as "those who cook water"' (Commission for Africa, 2005).

'Most of us continue to see Africa as an object, a single, blighted place burning in the relentless heat, for others it occupies a romantic space in the imagination of child-like primitives and wild, beautiful creatures. For yet more of us it's the dark side of our minds, the impenetrable place, the unknowable mind. And yes, all of this is partially true too much of the time. But there are other Africas' (Geldof, 2005).

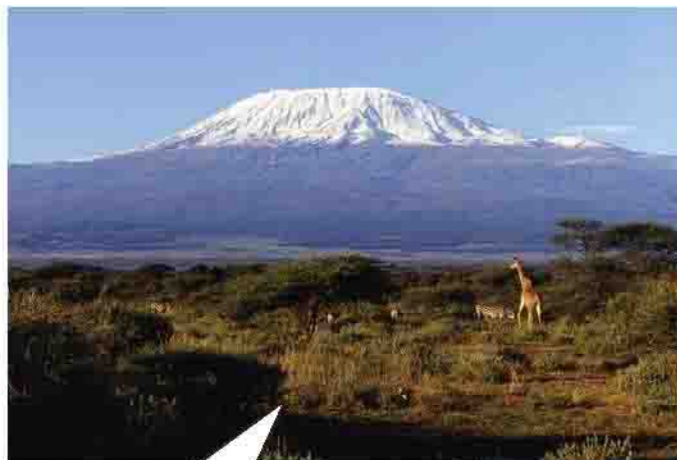


Photo: Jungle Photos



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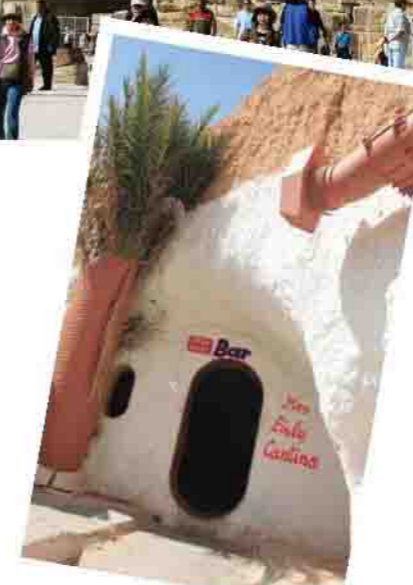


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