



Is Africa ready to meet the challenge?

In September 2015, 193 countries signed a universal call to action in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), setting out new development priorities for the global community. These 17 goals tackle a range of issues unified by a commitment to end poverty, and include amongst them gender equality, climate change and the achievement of peace and justice for all the world's citizens.

While many have relegated the SDGs to the development agenda, the Business and Sustainable Development Commission's report, *Better Business, Better World*, reveals over US\$12 trillion in new business value in just four key economic areas for businesses that embrace the Global Goals. The report provides a compelling incentive for the private sector by outlining a path to achieve an economic prize while also creating a more sustainable and inclusive world using more socially- and environmentally-focused business models.

We must have the courage to strike out in new directions and embrace an economic model which is not only low-carbon and environmentally sustainable, but also turns poverty, inequality and lack of financial access into new market opportunities for smart, progressive, profit-oriented companies.

Better Business, Better World, YEAR

Africa in context

While the SDGs represent a global agenda, the need for action on the goals are particularly relevant in the developing world. After registering the largest decline in economic growth in more than two decades in 2016, the World Bank projects that Sub-Saharan Africa is showing signs of recovery. The continent's aggregate growth is expected to rise to 3.2% in 2018. These measurements however indicative of positive economic activity in these economies, fail to measure accurately the substantive difference made in the day to day living conditions of the region's populations and the achievement of the SDG's is premised on the very advancement of this kind of development, human development.

In a region where many lack access to adequate food, clean drinking water and sanitation, reducing inequality in all its forms to reach those most at risk and improving the lives and future prospects of its population is paramount. The achievement of this kind of progress can only happen through multi-stakeholder partnerships, involving government, the private sector and civil society.

Unlike their predecessor, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the SDGs are not only within the ambit of governments, but the responsibility of all stakeholders. Civil society needs to apply pressure and hold the public sector to account in their duty to make responsible fiscal and policy decisions. Government needs to further ensure the requisite legislative and regulatory environment to support the private sector in the application of capital and skills needed to scale new ventures.

Business and the SDGs

Key to the success of this kind of development in the region is private sector-led growth, as business leverages its capacity for innovation to drive growth at scale in a manner which supports a social and environmental agenda. Key growth sectors identified by the Sustainable Business Commission are Food & Agriculture, Cities, Energy & Materials and Health & Well-Being. A growing number of businesses both globally and on the continent have heeded the call to action and have incorporated the SDGs into their strategic business objectives, including Safaricom, Woolworths Holdings and The Coca-Cola Company.

We have seen in recent years the creation of enterprises responding directly to the challenges faced by the region's populations. We consider:

- Zipline: which makes last-mile deliveries of blood by drones to health clinics and transfusion facilities in Rwanda, currently delivering 20% of the country's national blood supply outside of Kigali. They have signed a commercial contract with the Tanzanian Ministry of Health to deliver medicines to 10 million of the hardest-to-reach people in the country.
- mPedigree: a mobile phone-based system in Uganda developed by Ghanaian entrepreneur Bright Simons upon discovering that 1 in 10 drugs sold in the developing world are said to be fake or substandard by the WHO. The system allows patients and doctors to check the validity of drugs, helping to combat the sale of counterfeit drugs.

- Farmerline: a Ghanaian software company which builds mobile technologies that put information, financial services and supply chains in the hands of small-scale rural farmers.

These and other similar businesses are placing the SDGs place at the core of their agenda. These businesses are contributing to the achievement of sustainable and inclusive economic development by addressing social and environmental challenges through improving their own revenue-generating capabilities. The private sector is positioned strategically within this agenda to help drive the human-centred growth necessary for the realisation of the central pledge of the SDGs, “leaving no one behind”, on the continent.

Join business trailblazers from across Africa to engage in candid discussions on how the private sector, civil society and governments can act together to achieve these Global Goals at the Africa Shared Value Summit to be held in Johannesburg on 24 & 25 May 2018.