

## Six Key Areas for Africa's Development



The forecasted 'African miracle' will NOT happen automatically. Africa's success will depend on the decisions taken by its political and economic leadership in six key essential areas. 1. Intelligent use of its natural resources and stopping blowing this colossal wealth which it needs to transform the continent and to benefit its people. 2. Investing in infrastructure to facilitate production and business, to improve the life of the citizens and to facilitate the exchange of ideas. 3. Integration at all levels to allow free movement of people, ideas and goods. 4. Governments must work FOR *all* of the population. All public services and infrastructures need to be used fully. 5. The embracing of adapted technology in telecommunications and adoption of high-speed networks (fibre optic) in every school, business and building. 6. Prioritisation of

EDUCATION as the key to progress and development. The current education system has to change radically, to focus on promoting the creativity of the regular students. Today with access to internet, you can have access to the best education.

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The forecasted 'African miracle' in the coming decades is good news, as this continual growth can make possible that Africa achieves middle class status in less than one generation. The bad news is that this miracle is NOT going to happen automatically and it is not going to be easy. The success of Africa will crucially depend on the decisions that are made. The political and economic leadership of Africa needs to make the right decisions. Six key areas will ultimately determine the success of the continent:

1. Africa needs to make an intelligent use of its massive natural resources. Till now these have not contributed to the economic growth of the continent. The money coming from these resources has been squandered in wars, corruption, waste and political favouritism. This has to change. Africa needs to stop blowing its colossal natural wealth and needs to start putting it to good use. Natural resources have to be invested productively once and for all and be transformed in the continent.
2. Africa needs to invest in its infrastructures. Infrastructures create networks, facilitate production and business, mobility of people and goods, improve the life of the citizens, reduce costs and time of transportation, allow workers to get jobs that match their abilities, improve the standards of living as they provide hospitals, schooling, irrigation and clean water and sanitation. Even more importantly, infrastructures facilitate the exchange of ideas, the ultimate source of growth. But decision makers need to prioritize infrastructures that are flexible, have multiple uses, are adapted to reality of Africa and are resistant to the passage of time as the tropical weather wears, tears and depreciates buildings, roads, bridges and irrigation systems at a very fast pace. The government should prioritize infrastructures that create networks of businesses, of cities, of regions. And start where there is real demand.
3. Enlarge markets. Africa has 54 economies with over 700 million people, expected to be 1.5 billion by the end of the century. But African economies are disconnected both physically and legally. It is difficult and expensive to travel around Africa by plane, boat, train or road. No infrastructures connect African economies. Africa needs to integrate at all levels: free movement of people to allow talented professionals to participate at its development and free movement of ideas and of goods to help its development.
4. The government must work for the people. Although some dictatorships remain, many African countries have made great progress towards democracy. But, it is not enough to have governments elected by the people. A well-functioning democracy requires governments committed to work FOR the people, for all the population, not only for a segment. Today in Africa too many public human resources such as doctors, nurses, teachers, civil servants, etc. are underutilized. Useless buildings

and roads deteriorate without being used; administrative barriers, inadequate road blocks, and slowness in the borders make life difficult for the population and for the business.

5. Embrace adapted technology. Telecommunications is vital for Africa. The creativity shown in the different uses of the cellular phones is striking. But Africa needs to adopt high-speed networks, as it cannot afford to stay behind in the telecommunications revolution. Fiber optic networks have to be at the top of the list in prioritizing infrastructures. Every building, every business and every school in Africa should have easy and cheap access to high speed internet.
6. But the main infrastructure, policy and urgent priority needed is... EDUCATION! All countries whose economy and standard of living have grown dramatically have made a gigantic effort in the education of their population. Education is the ultimate key to progress and development. But the current African education system is obsolete and it must change radically. Most business ideas come from creativity, not from research. African education systems need to focus on promoting the creativity of the regular students. This means that the focus of the education revolution needs to be in primary, professional and secondary schools, as opposed to tertiary schools (colleges, universities). The internet revolution is changing the way to educate. This makes it essential for Africa to make all efforts to connect every school of the continent to the internet. So that African kids don't miss the train this time! Today if you have access to internet, **it** does not matter whether you are in New York or in a remote village in the African forest, you can have access to the best education in the world.

Only if today's African leaders are able to create such an environment and grant the children with the right kind of education, Africa's future will be as bright as the optimists foresee.

Summary by Begoña Iñarra

From an extract of the keynote speech at the BUILD Africa conference in the Congo by **Xavier Sala-i-Martin**.

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