

Africa: Diversity and Development

Agenda 2063: Africans in Australia and the Building of a New Africa

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Abstract

The call for 'Pan-Africanism and African Renaissance' continues to echo in the ivory towers of the African Union. The AU has come out with the Agenda 2063, a continental vision for peace, prosperity and unity over the next 50 years. Given that in recent years, Australia has accepted and welcomed a significant number of African immigrants, refugees and displaced persons who can be important players in the continental development, how can the skills and resources of Africans in Australia be harnessed with the ultimate aim to bring about positive socioeconomic transformation in Africa? How can Africans in Australia play their roles in making the vision of agenda 2063 a reality? What contributions can Africans in Australia make towards the new vision for Africa? The paper focuses on the roles African citizens and professionals in Australia can play in addressing the future needs of Africa as well as ascertain how to advance Australian-African relations. The paper aims to contribute to the debate on the positive outcomes of migration and its implication for African development especially now that the African Union after its 50 years of existence, turns not only to policy makers but also to African citizens and the Diaspora to enrich Africa.

Introduction

The call for 'Pan-Africanism and African Renaissance' continues to echo in the ivory towers of the African Union. The AU has come out with the *Agenda 2063*, a continental vision for peace, prosperity and unity over the next 50 years. A reflection on Africa, over the past fifty years or more, reminds us of Africa's many achievements, challenges and future opportunities. Fifty years ago, Africa was richer than its Asian and Latin American counterparts. Between 1960 and 1975, most African countries were among the best-performing countries in the world. Gabon, for one, was the fastest-growing country of the period (Glennie 2008). However, for some years now, Africa has become poorer and fallen far behind its Asian and Latin American counterparts in the quest for socioeconomic development (Oppenheimer 2007). Glennie (2008, p. 125) describes Africa as "a leaky bucket" where billions of dollars are lost every year in illicit capital flight, investment abroad, debt repayments and bolstering central bank reserves. Leadership failure together with over reliance on foreign aid continues to be the single most important contributor why Africa has fallen behind its Asian and Latin America counterparts.

Sad as it may be to admit, Africa remains, in economic terms, one of the poorest parts of the world with almost 40 percent of the population living below the poverty line. Food security remains a cause for worry. Almost one-third of Africa's population is undernourished (African Union Commission 2014, p. 85). And many have no access to clean water, electricity, good public roads; education; and healthcare systems. Sub-Saharan Africa

remains particularly today the region where the world's poorest people are most heavily concentrated world with an average per capita income of roughly US\$1 a day (Moyo 2009, p. 5). Bad leadership, corruption, poor infrastructure, unemployment, disease outbreaks and conflicts remain a cause for worry in many African countries. Worst still, the very people, African best and brightest, who could be leading an African Renaissance, are leaving Africa every year to richer countries in the West where they stand a chance to prosper.

Despite all this, there is hope for Africa. Good News is coming out from Africa about some commendable positive progress been made within Africa in the last two decades. Political, social and economic conditions are improving in many countries in Africa. Speaking on the theme, *Vision for Sustained Prosperity in Nigeria Transparency*, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala (Nigeria's finance minister who served 21 years as a development economist at the World Bank), said: "We see an Africa that is obviously enjoying a peace dividend and better governance with democracy now entrenched in most countries. We see an Africa that is now being courted by foreign investors with FDI increasing from \$9 billion in 2000 to about \$50 billion by 2012". Basically, Africa has come a long way. Today, many Africans live in independent countries which are governed democratically and the yoke of apartheid has been destroyed. Africa has become an almost hot prospect - African economies are growing, HIV prevalence rates are falling, Human Rights are improving, investment is expanding and mortality rate is going down. More importantly, Africa's talents are returning home and the brain drain may become brain gain. For instance, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala has helped transform Nigeria's economy and improve governmental transparency through her reform programs. People like her at home and in the Diaspora are Africa's greatest assets.

Africa's time is now. The future is bright. Success depends on unity of purpose; transparency, good governance, self-reliance and placing citizens first. However, one of Africa's challenges in the next fifty years is how to tap into and take advantage of the resources it has got – its citizens in the Diaspora who can be key drivers of transformative change for the Africa we want. Hence, given that Australia has accepted and welcomed a significant number of African immigrants, refugees and displaced persons who can be important players in the continental development, how can the skills and resources of Africans in Australia be harnessed with the ultimate aim to bring about positive socioeconomic transformation in Africa? How can Africans in Australia play their roles in making the vision of agenda 2063 a reality? What contributions can Africans in Australia make towards the new vision for Africa? The paper focuses on the roles African citizens and professionals in Australia can play in addressing the future needs of Africa as well as ascertain how to advance Australian-African relations. The paper aims to contribute to the debate on the economic and social advantages of African migration and its implication for African development especially now that the African Union after its 50 years of existence, turns not only to policy makers but also to African citizens and the Diaspora to enrich Africa.

The Agenda 2063

The Agenda 2063 also called, 'the Africa we want', was adopted on 26th May 2013 at the 50th anniversary of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) now African Union (AU). The agenda is "a shared strategic framework for inclusive growth and sustainable development for Africa's transformation over the next 50 years" (African Union Commission 2014, p. 10). It is both an endogenous continental vision, as well as, a global action plan for a more united, prosperous and peaceful Africa. The agenda is a part of the African Renaissance. It is anchored on the principles of participation and inclusivity of all stakeholders including the

African Diaspora. The agenda is based on Africans shared values and a common destiny and focuses on these eight key areas: African identity and renaissance, decolonization and the right to self-determination, unity and integration, socioeconomic development, peace and security, democratic governance, Africa's destiny and Africa's place in the world. Changing global and regional events, like information technology revolution, NEPAD's (New Partnership for Africa's Development) experience and implementation, new development opportunities and desire for a more united Africa necessitated the agenda.

The Africa of 2063 is expected to play a more significant role on the global stage and be able to overcome what Moyo (2009, p. 151) calls, "the four horses of Africa's apocalypse – *corruption, disease, poverty and war.*" Thus, Agenda 2063 provides a road map for Africa's sustainable development. It builds on existing strategic frameworks, such as the Monrovia Declaration of 1979 for a self-sufficient Africa, the Lagos Plan of Action for Africa's economic development in 1980, the 1991 Abuja Treaty for African for an African Common Market by the year 2000 and NEPAD in 2001. The agenda outlines new strategies to bring about high levels of socioeconomic and cultural transformation in Africa. Some of the concrete plans outlined in the Agenda 2063 Draft Framework include: free movement of people within Africa by 2015, free trade by 2017, Common Market by 2023, foreign-aid independency by 2028. Science, technology, infrastructure, human and capital investment, youth and women empowerment and regional integration. All these are considered critical to building the future of Africa envisaged.

By 2063 (when the AU will be marking centenary celebration of the OAU and of course, it is the symbolic and substantive significance of choice of a 50-year timeframe), Africa is envisioned to be prosperous, economically vibrant and well established, culturally progressive, democratically governed, socially united, secured and peaceful. It is expected that by 2063, corruption, disease, poverty and war will be a history and women and the youths will be empowered. By 2063, it is expected that Africa will catch up with the rest of the world in technology and infrastructure in size and quality. By 2063, it is expected that opportunity will abound to end the horror illegal migrations of African youths in search of greener pastures elsewhere. It is expected that by 2063, Africa will be attractive and favourable for anyone to live, work, study and settle. Therefore, for a continent such as Africa with nations which have a protracted history of corruption, poverty and underdevelopment, the Agenda 2063 is a long-term strategic plan and a blueprint on how to achieve the desired future we want for Africa.

The Trouble with Africa

In his foreword to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) on Foreign Direct Investment in Africa, Kofi Annan, (former United Nations Secretary General), stated, "For many people in other parts of the world, the mention of Africa evokes images of civil unrest, war, poverty, disease, and mounting social problems" (UNCTAD 1999). These images, unfortunately, are true in some African countries. A major part of Africa's problem as Calderisi (2006) argues, has been the shortcomings in the accountability, transparency and effectiveness of African leaders. According to Calderisi (2006), Africa has a critical mass of unsuccessful and not-performing leaders. Leaders who are not visionary, charismatic nor patriotic. While the slave trade, colonialism, the World Bank, IMF and high debts have had an effect on Africa, individual Africans have risen to the challenges confronting Africa for decades, but many African leaders have not; even worse, most leaders have stood in the

way of individual initiatives and innovative solutions, fearing some loss of control (Calderisi 2006, p. 223). The stifling of entrepreneurial initiatives, misguided public policy and high levels of instability have seen a twofold rise in poverty and underdevelopment in Africa (Oppenheimer 2007). The Nigerian novelist and critic, Chinua Achebe (1983, p.1), once said while talking about Nigeria's problems, that "there is nothing basically wrong with the Nigerian character. There is nothing wrong with the Nigerian land or climate or water or air or anything else. The Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility, to the challenge of personal example which are the hallmarks of true leadership." The trouble with Nigeria as Achebe contends, is the failure of leadership because the character of one good leader can improve Nigeria's political, social and economic conditions. Same can be said about many other countries in Africa. There is nothing basically wrong with them. While Botswana stands out in many dimensions from the rest, the problem with many African countries is the failure of leadership. Most African countries suffer from bad leadership. As a consequence, these countries continue to flounder in a seemingly never-ending cycle of corruption, disease, poverty, and aid-dependency (Moyo 2009). Nothing is more important for many Africans either in Africa or in the Diaspora than to see a more peaceful, self-reliant, well governed, developed and prosperous Africa ready to play its full part in the globe. Sadly but true, these continue to elude them with the mad rush of many of the leaders toward self-enrichment and over reliance on from foreign aid.

The Problem with Aid to Africa

Aid (the sum total of both concessional loans and grants given to Africa) flows to Africa seems to have done little. It seems to have made things worse in Africa (Moyo 2009). Africa receives about \$63 billion in aid annually.¹ Despite these billions of dollars, not much can be shown because poverty is still real, infrastructures are decaying and inflation is rising. Unlike Asian and Latin American countries that are not heavily dependent on aid, aid dependent countries in Africa are still unable to move out of abject poverty and generate consistent economic growth.

Aid to Africa is considered as a disease that has made the poor become poorer and grow slower (Moyo 2009). A number of scholars have questioned the usefulness of all aid to Africa and argue that aid is not working for Africa (Calderisi 2006, Glennie 2008, Moyo 2009). For instance, in *The Trouble with Africa: Why Foreign Aid Isn't Working* (2006), Robert Calderisi contends that self-propelled change works best and not aid. He argues that aid works best where governments are already on the right track and have established the right policies for their own reasons and see foreign aid as a complement to their own efforts rather as a bribe for undertaking difficult reforms. Calderisi (2006, p. 163) gave three reasons why foreign aid to Africa must stop: First, as a whole, it has not worked. Second, corruption is a chronic problem in most African countries. Third, few aid initiatives are really local and well thought out and money rarely reaches its intended target. In *The Trouble with Aid: Why Less Could mean More for Africa* (2008), Jonathan Glennie argues that aid is not the answer to Africa's problems. He contends that aid has failed Africa and is the fundamental cause of Africa's deepening poverty. According to Glennie (2008, p. 2), official aid to Africa has many harmful effects that have actually increased poverty in Africa and put off the development of states capable of fulfilling the rights and needs of African citizens.

¹ Africa receives \$50 billion in aid annually from foreign governments and perhaps, roughly \$13 billion from private philanthropic institutions and donors (Acemoglu and Robinson 2014).

Similarly in *Dead Aid: Why Aid is Not Working And How There is A Better Way for Africa* (2009), Dambisa Moyo proposes an aid-free solution to Africa's problem. She calls aid development programme in Africa 'dead aid.' For Moyo, aid development strategy is a failure. According to Moyo (2009, p. 46), "one of the most depressing aspects of the whole aid fiasco is that donors, policy makers, governments, academicians, economists and development specialists know, in their heart of hearts, that aid doesn't work, hasn't worked and won't work." Moyo argues that no country on Earth has ever achieved long-term economic growth and reduced poverty in a meaningful way by relying on aid. Instead of aid reliance, Moyo (2009) believes that job creation, genuine free trade, foreign direct investment, capital markets, bond market, remittances and microfinance are the right path for Africa's development. She contends that it is a myth to think that aid can alleviate systematic poverty. She argues that with aid, poor economies face four main economic challenges: reduction of domestic savings and investment in favour of greater consumption; inflation; diminishing exports; and difficulty in absorbing such large cash influxes. Aid, according to Moyo is "the silent killer" for it undermines economic growth and investment, discourages free enterprise, keeps countries in states of poverty, causes social unrest, weakens social capital, encourages corruption and makes government unaccountable to its citizens.

In the light of these arguments, foreign aid is not the holy grail to Africa's underlying issues. Aid-dependency may not solve Africa's developmental challenges by 2063 as it has not helped Africa in the past fifty years. Aid to Africa has been, and continues to be, as Moyo (2009) argues, an unmitigated political, economic, and humanitarian disaster for most parts of Africa because most aid-dependent countries in Africa have exhibited slow economic growth. The billions in aid has hampered, stifled and retarded Africa's development when the oil in Angola and Nigeria, and the Gold in DRC can sustain the continent. Foreign aid may not be the answer. The Asian economic growth shows that hard work, discipline, education, trade and foreign direct investment, accountability and a favourable business environment can positively change a continent. Africa can learn from Asia. Just as Asian Diaspora contributed towards Asian economic growth, the African citizens in Diaspora can help in building a new Africa – the future of the Africa we want. Africa's development cannot be the work of African government and leaders alone but our collective optimism and hopes for Africa. Africa can sustain itself without aid with the abundant human, land and mineral resources at its disposal.

The Africans in Australia and the Building of a New Africa

African talents are scattered all across the globe. Twenty years ago, there were not many Africans in Australia. Today, the number of African immigrants in Australian states and territories has increased. As of 2011, Census data showed that there were 337 825 African-born people living Australia (ABS 2014). They have come both as migrants and as refugees. As immigrant people, the Africans in Australia constitute part of the African Diaspora. As people in the Diaspora, though geographically distanced from Africa, overwhelming majority of them still maintain strong ties with their origin countries in Africa. Their connection to Africa flows from their identification with Africa. Africa is considered home for many of them.

Fortunately, African emigration to Australia is not all lost to Africa. It can be 'win-win' if we can harness properly the development potential of African citizens in the Diaspora. The African citizens in Australia can be very instrumental towards the building of a new Africa,

the Africa we want by 2063. The Africans, particularly the African professionals and entrepreneurs, in Australia can play an important role in Africa's development if they are actively engaged with. Already, many of them are contributing greatly to Australia's GDP through working in various sectors as entrepreneurs, doctors, nurses, engineers, economists, academics, and social workers and through paying taxes. While they make significant contributions to Australia, their emigration can benefit Africa as well. Their remittances (the money immigrants sent home to families) can help improve living conditions and establish small-scale businesses. Besides their remittances, the Africans in Australia can assist Africa in various ways such as, through strengthening Australia-Africa partnership, promoting good governance, skills transfer, capacity building, new knowledge transfer, investment, capital market stimulation, and through donations or general patriotism.

i. Partnership with Australia

If there is one thing Africans in Australia can contribute, it is networking, establishing and strengthening partnerships with the Australian government, institutions and private groups. The benefits of mutual partnership are enormous. Partnerships can provide countries with capacities to achieve what otherwise may not be achieved. The Africans in Australia can foster Australia- Africa partnership and strengthen the diplomatic, political and economic relations between Australia and Africa. Both on individual and collective level, the Africans in Australia can link Africa to Australia in three important key areas: trade and investment partnership, capacity building and peace and security.² Africa's partnership with Australia may help deliver long-term solutions to tackle Africa's most pressing challenges such as food security, animal health, natural resources management, education, power and energy, health pandemics, corruption and poverty.

ii. Governance and Corruption

It has been argued often that the cornerstone of development is an economically responsible, accountable and transparent government (Moyo 2009). Bad governance is considered to be one of Africa's problems.³ According to Calderisi (2006, p. 57), "the simplest way to explain Africa's problems is that it has never known good government." Without good governance, Africa will still remain the least developed part on earth in the next fifty years. With their exposure to good governance, democracy and rule of law, the Africans in Australia can support in the fight for better government and improved life in Africa. They are in a good position together with other Africans in the Diaspora to demand more accountability and transparency from their governments, lobby to stop the illegal amassing of

² A key example is the announcement in 2009 by the Australian Government of the establishment of an Australia-Africa Partnerships to provide capacity building for African governments and institutions in key areas such as agriculture, mining and pressing development challenges. Today, Australia has expanded its African Scholarships program for training and professional development opportunities. Also, Australia's trade with Africa has grown steadily. In investment, Australia has a particularly strong presence in mining, oil and gas exploration.

³ Some past African leaders diverted billions to foreign bank accounts. General Sani Abacha, the tenth President of Nigeria from 1993 to 1998, stole an estimated sum of US\$ 2 billion to 5 billion. Mobutu Sese Seko, the second President of the Democratic Republic of Congo (Zaire then) from 1965 to 1997, is estimated to have stolen over US\$5 billion, a sum equivalent to the entire external debt of his country. The Africa we want is not realizable when leaders are corrupt, crown themselves in gold, seize lands and hand over national businesses to friends and relatives

wealth by African politicians and senior officials in foreign banks, champion free press and support solid investigative journalism and reporting.

iii. Skills Transfer and Capacity Building

Nothing is more important for Africa now than insights, skills and training that can be applied to African politics, economics, education, agriculture and military. Skills transfer and capacity building are key elements for sustainable development and empowerment. Besides fighting against corruption and bad governance, the Africans in Australia can transfer new skills and knowledge to Africa in business, agriculture, and science sectors. The Africans in Australia can provide interventions and trainings which can bring about long term sustainable and systemic socioeconomic change and development in Africa. They can train family, friends and relatives in Africa and provide them with knowledge needed for business, farming and education and they can be support partners to African governments and local NGOs.

Conclusion

The present challenges faced in Africa are significant but so are the opportunities for growth, development and success. Whilst the agenda 2063 offers a roadmap on how to achieve the desired future for the Africa we want, Africa's development challenges call for changes in attitudes, new level of consciousness, a greater degree of innovation and hard work. It demands discipline and transparency, honesty about what works and what does not as far as development is concerned. The containment of Ebola in Africa's most populous country, Nigeria, is a spectacular success story for Africa. It shows what African nations can do with a sense of purpose, direction and determination. Africa has great potentials. Individually, Africans are successful but collectively; Africa seems like a failure and like a diamond hidden to be found. To build the future of the Africa we want, what many Africans expect at the very least is good governance and an economic plan which reduces reliance on aid but promotes investment, trade, technology and active engagement with African citizens both in Africa and in the Diaspora. As people in the Diaspora, the Africans, especially African professionals and entrepreneurs, in Australia can play some important roles in the building of the Africa that we want. Even if in a material sense, Africa may never catch up with Australia, Europe or North America, it is possible for people's lives in Africa to improve by 2063.

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