

DEVELOPMENT POLICY FORUM (DPF)



SUMMER 2019

# AFRICA TRANSFORMING

## AFRICA SUMMIT

EVENT REPORT



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## INTRODUCTION: GETTING RID OF ‘OUTDATED GROUPTHINK’

Africa is in the midst of major changes, and has set an ambitious goal to transform itself into an economic powerhouse by 2063. According to an all-female panel at Friends of Europe’s Africa Summit on 17 June, that success must begin with a cultural and intellectual shift. “Africa is changing and that old-fashioned, outdated groupthink on Africa really needs to be put aside,” said **Shada Islam**, Friends of Europe’s Director for Europe and Geopolitics.

Technology is already bolstering a new generation of entrepreneurs across the continent, but, participants agreed, it will be worth little if it’s not accompanied by efforts to empower women and train young people, ensuring both groups are equipped with ICT skills in particular. And while there has been progress on gender equality - Rwanda and Namibia are now in the World Economic Forum’s (WEF) top 10 countries for gender equality - it will be an “endless fight”, participants agreed.

Another precondition for Africa’s transformation is attracting enough foreign investment needed to upgrade infrastructure like roads, rail and fixed broadband. To do that, governments need to cooperate more with local authorities, international development banks, venture capitalists, young people and civil society to formulate business-friendly legislation that will encourage domestic start-ups, particularly in the ICT sector.

And it goes without saying that all of these efforts must be underwritten by the use of technology, which all participants agreed has the potential to ‘disrupt’ both the traditional development model and perception of Africa - one that is marked by an ‘aid and trade’ mentality and a reductionist focus on migration, corruption and inequality.

The future is not only female; it’s young, it’s high tech and it’s partnership-led.

### IMPLEMENTATION: THE ‘ENDLESS FIGHT’ FOR GENDER EQUALITY

Gender equality is not a new concept in Africa. The African Union (AU) adopted a gender equality policy in 2009, along with the ‘African Women’s Decade’ (2010-2020). Many African countries have gender quotas. The African Women’s Development Fund has provided \$41.8mn (around €37mn) in grants to women’s health, security and leadership projects since it was set up in 2001.

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**Shada Islam**

Director for Europe and Geopolitics  
at Friends of Europe

## “We have these beautiful gender equality policies and quotas that have to be implemented”

### Kamissa Camara

Minister of Digital Economy and Prospective of Mali

And it has paid off. Rwanda has the highest proportion of female MPs in the world (61% of parliament, according to the WEF), while Namibia is sixth on the list with 46% - both above the EU and US. South Africa wrote gender quotas for their national assembly into its 1996 constitution, and achieved gender parity in its current cabinet. And there are relatively more African women in the workplace compared to North America, Europe and Asia (though many work in informal and low-paid jobs).

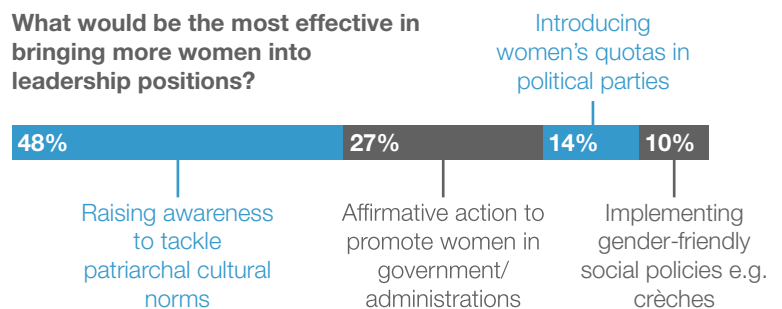
This is “not a surprise” says **Kamissa Camara**, Minister of Digital Economy and Prospective of Mali. The problem is meeting those targets: Mali has a 30% gender quota for government and parliament, but is currently at 10%. “We have these beautiful gender equality policies and quotas that have to be implemented. The AU has the clout to make sure gender questions are not an afterthought anymore.”

Another problem is getting women into leadership positions and getting them to stay there. “A lot of women think that politics or that kind of engagement is not for them,” says **Elisabeth Guigou**, President of the Anna Lindh Foundation, an NGO working to promote intercultural dialogue. “We have to show, to all the women in our societies, that there should not be a glass ceiling. This is a matter of education from the beginning, in the family.”

One practical suggestion is to stop having meetings after 6pm, she says. But according to an audience poll conducted at the event, the problems run deeper. “Patriarchal norms are probably the main obstacle that we have, currently, when it comes to pushing women to be leaders,” said Camara. “And even when they become leaders they face issues. I have seen many women resign from their jobs.” **Ifeyinwa Ugochukwu**, Chief Executive Officer of the Tony Elumelu Foundation agrees that there are “religious and cultural barriers” working against women.

### SLIDO RESULTS:

What would be the most effective in bringing more women into leadership positions?



“Gender equality is an endless fight,” says Guigou, who was France’s first justice minister. “It’s a cultural fight. Women need to be supported by men.”

## THE FUTURE (ECONOMY) IS FEMALE

According to the UN Development Programme (UNDP), Africa ‘lost’ over \$100bn in 2014 because of gender gaps in the labour market. So for **Chiara Adamo**, Head of Unit for Fundamental Rights at the European Commission’s Directorate-General for International Development and Cooperation (DG DEVCO), promoting gender equality is “economically smart”; she estimates that reducing gender inequality by 10% could boost African GDP by 2% over five years.

Multinational corporations have also recognised the benefits of gender equality. Coca Cola’s ‘5by20’ project aims to empower 5mn African women by 2020 through offering them access to skills, finance and investor. **Dorcac Onyango**, Sustainability Director for South and East Africa at The Coca-Cola Company, says these are the three main barriers to getting more women into the workplace.

## A GENDER PEACE ENTREATY

The other crucial area where more women are needed is peace-building. Traditionally, there have been very few women at the table when peace settlements are negotiated, which studies show is detrimental to the success of resulting accords. When women participate in peace processes, the resulting agreement is 35% more likely to last at least 15 years, according to the International Peace Institute. And yet the Council on Foreign Relations cites damning statistics that show that women made up only 3% of mediators, 3% of signatories and 9% of negotiators of major peace processes between 1992 and 2017.

“Women play a crucial role as far as peacekeeping is concerned,” points out Guigou, who referenced the Northern Irish peace process in the 1990s as an example of the importance of their inclusion. Women played conspicuous and essential roles in the success of these accords: the UK’s Northern Ireland secretary at the time was the late Mo Mowlam; Ireland sent former minister of state Liz O’Donnell to negotiate at multi-party peace talks; and Monica McWilliams, who co-founded the Northern Ireland Women’s Coalition, was central in urging all sides to sign the Good Friday/Belfast peace Agreement in 1998.

A comment from the audience provided more food for thought: peace and security is tightly linked to the availability of natural resources - especially water, which is a resource largely used by women for managing their households.

The role of women in peace-building is being acknowledged, according to DG DEVCO’s Chiara Adamo — both by the EU, in its gender action plan for 2016-20, and by the AU’s 10-year-old gender

## “Gender equality is an endless fight”

**Elisabeth Guigou**

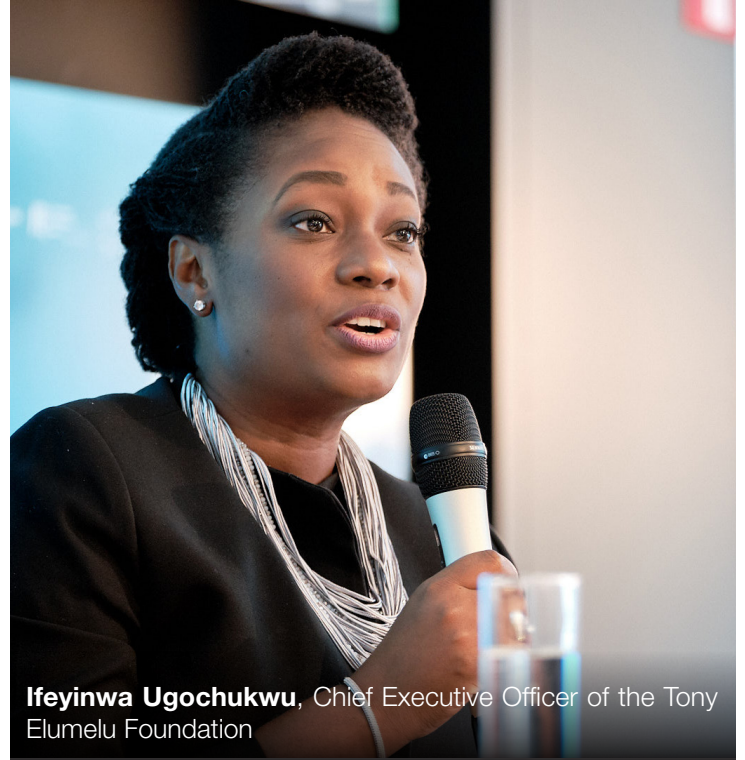
President of the Anna Lindh Foundation



**Shada Islam**, Director of Europe & Geopolitics at Friends of Europe



**Kamissa Camara**, Minister of Digital Economy and Prospective of Mali



**Ifeyinwa Ugochukwu**, Chief Executive Officer of the Tony Elumelu Foundation



**Elisabeth Guigou**, President of the Anna Lindh Foundation



**Samir Abdelkrim**, Author, Entrepreneur and Founder of EMERGING Valley



**Dorcas Onyango**, Sustainability Director for South and East Africa at The Coca-Cola Company



## “I’ve been in classrooms where 1 teacher had to teach 100 children, so when we talk about quality, it’s difficult”

### Sabine Müller

Director-General of the Africa Department of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)

policy. She says the EU has invested around €720mn in last few years to give women a central role in peace processes and mediation.

### SUCCESS STORIES

<b>Mali</b>	<b>The government has launched a specific project to encourage women-led start-ups</b>
<b>Tanzania</b>	<b>One of Coca-Cola’s ‘5by20’ projects helps disabled women enter the workforce</b>
<b>Kenya</b>	<b>The semi-state Women Enterprise Fund trains and finances female-run businesses</b>
<b>EU</b>	<b>Has spent €720mn on getting more women involved in peace talks, and pledged an additional €500mn to a joint ‘Spotlight Initiative’ with the UN to eliminate violence against women and girls</b>

### INVESTMENT: “NOT A HANDOUT, BUT A HAND UP”

It is not only women who have problems accessing skills, finance and attracting investors. Entrepreneurs across Africa complain about an unfriendly business environment and a lack of basic services such as electricity, internet, transport and education, which slow their success.

**Ali Youssouf**, who founded solar energy start-up Kouran Jabo in Chad, has taken his cue from similar projects in Nigeria (Lumos) and Kenya (M-Kopa). Kouran Jabo uses mobile technology to offer customers pay-as-you-go solar panels - in a country where 80% of the population is living without electricity, using torches, candles and kerosene lamps to get by. “It’s going to change people’s lives”, he says.

But success stories like Youssouf’s are not that common. Although mobile technology has taken off - between 50% and 70% of Africans have access to mobile devices - fixed broadband needed for professional operations is often unavailable or unaffordable for start-ups, he says. African countries have made a significant investment in laying undersea fibre cables over the last decade, but, according to the UN, the fixed broadband penetration rate remains below 1%, compared with 27% in Europe, and cost three times the world average.

Then, there is the lack of transport infrastructure. In late 2018, says Ugochukwu, Nigeria was unable to help Ghana out of a coal shortage because of a lack of rail and maritime routes between the two countries. “If there is no transportation, how do you trade?” she asked. “That is where we need to focus private sector investments.”



## ‘REIMAGINING’ THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

But it’s the education system that most often brings Ugochukwu to “tears”.

According to education non-profit Teach For All, there is a “huge deficit” of competent teachers in sub-Saharan Africa, particularly in rural areas. Add to that the fact that qualified teachers are unwilling to move to remote villages, particularly due to their basic facilities and low compensation packages, says **Yonas Maru**, founder of the Bandwidth and Cloud Services group (BCS), which powers mobile operators and internet service providers across east Africa.

“I’ve been in classrooms where 1 teacher had to teach 100 children, so when we talk about quality, it’s difficult,” says **Sabine Müller**, Director General of the Africa Department at Germany’s development agency, the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ). She wants to go back to basics: teaching more STEM skills, rolling out devices to schools, training teachers, increasing technical and vocational education, setting up internships and creating a pan-African system for recognising diplomas and other professional qualifications.

However, all of this costs money at a time when Africa’s brain drain is still a major pull on resources. Tunisian universities, for instance, “are producing some of the best engineers in Africa” only to have them leave for better-paid jobs abroad upon graduation, says **Samir Abdelkrim**, founder of Marseille-headquartered innovation hub, EMERGING Valley.

“After getting fibre networks out there and devices to people, we really have to reimagine the educational provisioning infrastructure,” says Yonas Maru. “We’re used to applying models that work in the US or Europe and planting them in Africa - but these are not [the same] problems as in the US and Europe.”

## DISRUPTIVE TECHNOLOGY

Given Africa’s demographics - 60% of the population is under 25 - reforming the education system is crucial. But so is equipping young people with digital skills. “The inequalities that we see in daily lives are mirrored in the digital world, so what we need to do is really focus on the basics, and I believe education is one of them,” says Malian minister Kamissa Camara.

Technology is not just central to education, but also to development. Leveraging technological advances will help Africa out of the ‘aid and trade’ model, and make the continent’s ‘Agenda 2063’ strategy

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**“Every problem Africa has is a business opportunity that entrepreneurs can solve. If you give them a hand up, there is so much talent and opportunity latent in Africa ”**

**Ifeyinwa Ugochukwu**

Chief Executive Officer of the  
Tony Elumelu Foundation

a success. “Technology is a way to disrupt development,” said Ifeyinwa Ugochukwu, CEO of Nigeria’s Tony Elumelu entrepreneurship foundation. “Africa needs not a handout, but a hand up, help in leveraging technology.”

Broadband entrepreneur Yonas Maru believes that mobile technology can help with Africa’s electrification, powering devices and machines beyond the solar panels offered by Kenya’s M-Kopa, which allows anyone with a mobile phone to spread out the cost of energy consumption in a climate-friendly way.

Technology forms a major part of the AU’s ‘Agenda 2063’, the continent’s long-term strategy for “transforming Africa” into a global economic powerhouse. For Samir Abdelkrim, governments – and more specifically, national development agencies - are coming to “understand that tech entrepreneurs are the missing link” in the investment chain.

“Every problem Africa has is a business opportunity that entrepreneurs can solve,” says Ugochukwu. “If you give them a hand up, there is so much talent and so much opportunity latent in Africa.”

## CONCLUSION:

# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 'TRANSFORMING AFRICA'

As EMERGING Valley's Samir Abdelkrim puts it: "It's about building partnerships - not making Africa a market for Europe."

### 1. Overturn sexist and patriarchal norms by setting examples at the top, such as:

- Implementing existing gender quotas
- Promoting women to high-profile ministries e.g. foreign affairs and finance
- Scrapping meetings after 6pm
- Providing adequate childcare and parental leave
- Ensuring gender balance in local planning e.g. Coca-Cola says it will empower up to 250,000 women through its 'Replenish Africa Initiative', which aims to get clean water to 6mn Africans by 2020
- Linking female leaders via platforms such as 'IKNOW Politics', a UN-backed project to promote women's leadership and public engagement

### 2. 'Reimagine' and upgrade the education system, by:

- Centralising the curriculum, so teachers are more like 'administrators'
- Enticing more teachers to rural areas by raising salaries and training them, perhaps through a kind of 'Erasmus for Africa'
- Creating a pan-African system to recognise professional qualifications
- Rolling out tablets and computers, for instance, by partnering with tech companies or recycling old devices

### 3. Connect entrepreneurs across Africa:

- With investors through technology and innovation hubs (like Marseille-based EMERGING Valley, Lagos's Yabacon Valley), by creating investment 'pipelines' (via non-profits like the Tony Elumelu Foundation) and investor platforms (like Partech)
- With governments, to improve the business environment and access to finance
- With young people and students, to offer mentorship opportunities and internships

### 4. Use technology in a 'disruptive' way. That could be anything from:

- Electrifying rural areas, like M-Kopa in Kenya and Kouran Jabo in Chad
- Improving education systems (with help from the EU, e.g. the Erasmus+ virtual programme)
- Recycling, as Lagos-based Wecyclers is doing with its app for door-to-door waste pickup



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