

# Our time is now

By [Ashlyn Padayachee](#)

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The world is getting more excited about Africa. Dozens of countries are making meaningful investments in the continent, in everything from infrastructure and telecommunications to mining and manufacturing.



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We only have to look at the sheer size and number of projects currently underwritten by China to get a fair idea of how the world is becoming increasingly enamoured of Africa as a development arena.<sup>1</sup>

But the excitement really ought to start with us – the ones who actually live here. We experience and understand the potential of this place we call home.

This is one of the main principles of the African Union's African Agenda 2063. It adopts a pan-African vision of "an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena".<sup>2</sup>

In other words, it's up to us.

## Why is Africa the new land of opportunity?

To answer this one could simply observe that the International Monetary Fund has predicted that 11 of the top 20 fastest growing economies in 2017 will be African. The opportunities that this growth is and will continue creating are myriad and widespread.

We can dig deeper, however.

We can look at the underlying reasons for this rapid growth. Of course there have been surges in commodity prices – something which always benefits African countries. This is something well beyond our control, though; instead we need to focus on deliberate approaches and actions that have been successful.

Primary here are governmental initiatives to provide more friendly investment environments. These have mainly targeted corruption and armed conflict. In tandem with these have come regulatory reforms to make investment and the doing of business easier.

Countries have also begun placing a more pressing emphasis on the nurturing and development of what could be called “home-grown talent”. This of course means improving the knowledge and skills of local populations, which has had a stimulating effect on the workplace.

## **Education unlocks the necessary potential**

Knowledge is at the heart of everything. It underpins and informs our mind-sets, our approach to life and the actions we take. Knowledge breeds understanding, which is the key to both creating and recognising opportunity. The more you understand, the more you can achieve.

Of course the obvious way to impart this knowledge is through formal education. Much of Africa has long had effective education systems, but a more recent development has been the emergence of many more tertiary institutions, offering everything from university degrees to short courses designed to impart specific skill sets pertinent to particular career and workplace requirements.

Allied to this has been an expansion of the concept of education - from something that stops at a certain age or point in our lives, to a lifelong journey of ongoing knowledge acquisition, career advancement and personal development.

## **Access to education is crucial**

Given the pivotal role that education plays, continued economic growth and development depend on providing access to education for as many people as possible. This is one resource that never becomes exhausted, no matter how much it is exploited, so to speak. Any meaningful investment in education always brings a guaranteed return in human development terms, which in turn drives positive societal evolution.

It becomes clear then that in developing countries like ours, a carefully planned and committed effort must go into ensuring that those who want to study can do so, at any point in their lives. This is the duty we have as education finance providers.

1. [%20Africa%20Forum/2015/investing-in-africa-forum-china-and-africa.pdf World Bank](#)

2. [Agenda 2063](#)

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