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ACBF African Development Memoirs



The role of Information Communication and Technology (ICT) in Africa's sustainable and inclusive development: understanding the capacity challenges

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The Vice President of the Republic of Malawi





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**THE ROLE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT) IN
AFRICA'S SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT**

UNDERSTANDING THE CAPACITY CHALLENGES

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Vice President of the Republic of Malawi

August 2016

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THE ACBF DEVELOPMENT MEMOIR SERIES

The African Capacity Building Foundation's Development Memoirs Series is a key instrument in the Foundation's knowledge management strategy aimed at harnessing the know-how and learned experiences of eminent senior policymakers and development managers. Central to the series is the understanding that knowledge management tools and practices can be effectively employed to leverage both local and externally generated knowledge to bridge the knowledge gap between Africa and the developed world.

The series provides professional insights, reflections, skills, processes, and experiences in the management of specific policies and programs. It offers case studies on processes, practices, and experiences associated with specific policies and programs that have made a measurable impact on the continent's development experience. The individual voices captured collectively contribute to enhancing the effectiveness of the Foundation's operations, identifying learning and knowledge-sharing opportunities, and providing practitioners with guideposts to best practices in policymaking and development program management.

The Development Memoir Series reflects the Foundation's vision and quest to actively embrace a diversity of knowledge sources including the ways gender, values, and culture influence the generation, sharing, and application of knowledge. The series speaks to ACBF's vision that creating, sharing, and deploying cutting-edge knowledge in an increasingly complex, competitive, and changing world is imperative for Africa's current development efforts and future prospects.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 21st century has brought sweeping changes to Information and Communication Technology (ICT) across the globe and in Africa. Expanded voice telephony and worldwide internet access have transformed society and business, allowing for instant global contacts and information transfer.

But Africa has lagged behind many other parts of the world in reaping the benefits. Connectivity is limited by high costs for devices and data, putting access out of reach for many of the continent's poor. Low computer literacy, inadequate infrastructure, and weak ICT institutional capacity also pose challenges to taking advantage of the potential for growth and development. This digital divide between Africa and the increasingly connected internet world must be a focus for both governments and the private sector as Africa strives to support growth and reduce poverty.

African countries should take steps to promote ICT and achieve the post-2015 development agenda for digital society. They should make budgetary commitments to support ICT policies and invest heavily in ICT infrastructure. National policies should foster entrepreneurship and use of e-government technology in health, education, general public services, and all other applicable aspects of life. Investments should be made in ICT for primary, secondary, and higher education to build the human capital and technical expertise to boost competitiveness and growth. Emphasis should be on allowing women and girls to participate in the information economy. In short, governments should aim to make broadband affordable, accessible, and user-friendly for the majority.

The government and the private sector have the following roles to ensure that African countries ultimately benefit from this sector.

African governments must show a commitment to the ICT policies and strategies so that broadband becomes affordable, easily accessible, and user-friendly to the majority. They should consider ICT as a main driving force for the socio-economic development of their countries by investing in infrastructure and promoting ICT businesses. They should also reinforce ICTs in the primary and secondary school education systems to include all-encompassing computer science lessons. And they need to establish dedicated and visionary leadership to

drive the ICT policies so that all ICT initiatives are demand-driven in accord with national and sectorial priorities, thus promoting socioeconomic growth.

Our private sectors need to promote the use of ICTs in the economy and society as whole. They need to implement ICT services to ensure that there are competitive and high value-added services for subscribers. They need to support the government in developing ICT literacy through the provision of affordable and user-friendly products. They also need to lobby governments to reduce taxes and make mobile broadband affordable for the vast number of underprivileged citizens who have a taste for the internet lifestyle.

Malawi, like other landlocked countries in Africa, faces additional challenges in connecting to high-speed undersea internet cables like the East African Submarine Cable System and the East African Marine System. But the country has scored some considerable gains in ICTs and telecommunications. Currently, there are six major ongoing initiatives encompassing e-government, e-education, e-infrastructure, digital repositories, e-health, and e-banking.

In addition, thousands of internet cafes have been established, and a large, rapidly growing population of dial-up subscribers has emerged. Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) telephone services have made internet providers vital players. The “Phone Shop Concept” has flourished in communication centers all over Malawi. Entrepreneurs, job seekers, and students access essential business communication services such as faxes, email, and the internet. The Malawi government has rolled out telecenters where people access computers, internet, and other digital technologies, enabling them to gather information, create, learn, and communicate with others, while developing vital digital skills.

Several specific lessons from Malawi’s ICT and telecommunication industry include the following:

First, there is always a need to have an enabling environment in any country with regard to governance and the sociopolitical atmosphere if the ICTs are to be successful.

Second, to embark on special ICT promotion packages, policies and infrastructure and incentives are needed to achieve the socioeconomic development goals.

Third, the necessary and user-friendly legal, regulatory, and institutional frameworks must be in place to support ICT development.

Fourth, there is the need for timely mobilization and deployment of technological and financial resources to the relevant sectors for proper implementation of ICT programs.

Fifth, government should document and circulate the developed standards and observed best practices to all the concerned parties for the sake of guiding the deployment, exploitation, and development of ICTs in the key strategic sectors.

Last, the impact of ICTs depends on user attitudes and expectations, as well as on organization policies.

African governments should focus on ensuring that there is harmonization and standardization of ICT policies within the African region. Each government should think about developing ICT programs that can attract ICT-related FDI, becoming a competitive regional business hub for the continent and beyond.

Moreover, African governments should carry on with the ICT policy integration and planning process and constantly carry out the benchmarking exercise of ICT standards and practices within the continent. It is also recommended that each government should be obligated to solicit finance from banking institutions to implement ICT activities. And they should set up gender-specific networks to allow women and girls to partake in the information economy, specifically for jobs and economic opportunities created by ICTs.

Once African countries get the right ICT policies in place, they obviously have to develop the right human resource capabilities. Skilled people are the single biggest competitive advantage in an organization and, so obviously, in a country. Countries need to build capacities in their human capital, retain, and use them. They should also ensure availability of the right tools to work with, which is also linked to the first point of investment. Countries have to invest in people and tools if we are going to be modern and responsive to the demands of the modern-day world. So, governments should identify the right resources, develop them, resource them, retain them, and finally empower them to make the right decisions for organizations and for

countries to move forward when they know ICT and they know what needs to be done.

People will respond if governments provide the right tools to work with. Countries have to invest in the people and resources needed to respond to the demands of the modern world. So, let's identify the right resources, develop them, fund them, retain them, and empower our people to make the right decisions to move forward when they know ICTs and how best to use them to sustain inclusive development in Africa.

African countries and regional institutions should harness the creative capacities of African experts both in the region and in the diaspora by:

- Investing prudently in capacity building initiatives for all African experts both in the region and the diaspora and ensuring that there is good coordination of efforts by various capacity building institutions across Africa such as universities, development partners, and governments.
- Reflecting all capacity development efforts based on the tangible Agenda 2063 vision, which focuses on a sustainable transformation of Africa in the next 50 years. This would require the exploitation of a strategic approach that prioritizes areas of capacity challenges that can get to the potential for implementing the African Union Agenda.
- Creating a continental agenda that can be successfully implemented, monitored, and evaluated within the designed time framework. Development of cross-cutting capacities should be obligatory at the individual, organizational, and institutional levels and also at the local, community, national, regional, and continental levels.
- Assembling and sharing requisite knowledge that highlights best practices and game-changing lessons through conferences, symposiums, workshops, and training sessions.
- Advocating for and mobilizing multistakeholder support for action-oriented knowledge generation through targeted engagements, workshops, networks, and communities of practice.

- Conducting critical research on need assessment studies in relation to action-oriented knowledge generation in order to identify the capacity dimensions as well as the risks involved.
- Inculcating into all African middle-management employees the transformative agenda through mind-set changing and self-confidence rebuilding.
- Developing and enforcing development policies that aim for retaining professionals in their respective specialized fields, thus preventing the brain drain and promoting retention of African experts.

INTRODUCTION

This ACBF's 9th development memoir features Right Honorable Saulos Klaus Chilima (PhD), vice president of the Republic of Malawi. In this series, he shares his memoirs, insights, and experience on *The role of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in Africa's sustainable and inclusive development: Understanding the capacity challenges*.

The African Capacity Building Foundation, through its Knowledge Monitoring and Evaluation Department, is geared toward generating, sharing, disseminating, and utilizing knowledge for capacity building and development management. The foundation's knowledge and learning strategy seeks to achieve four major objectives, among others, to:

- Enhance the performance of internal project and program operations based on best practice methodologies, strategies, and instruments.
- Foster the sharing of best practices in capacity building, the design and implementation of development policies and programs, and reform programs directed at strengthening the effectiveness of Africa's development process.
- Contribute to programs and mechanisms for extracting and sharing tacit knowledge about capacity building for the benefit of national and regional development.
- Enhance returns and efficiency of investments in capacity building.

One of the key instruments in the Foundation's knowledge management toolkit is the Senior Policymakers and Development Managers' Knowledge Sharing Program. The program provides a platform by which successful development practitioners (serving, retired, on sabbatical, or on leave of absence) who have made significant contributions to the development process in Africa or other developing regions and are willing to document and share their memoirs are targeted for extracting tacit knowledge for the benefit of future efforts toward African development. The program specifically targets very senior policymakers and development managers, including visiting academics and eminent guests

to the Foundation. Participating policymakers and development managers are selected nationally, regionally, continentally, and globally from the public and private sector, national, regional and continental institutions, international development agencies, civil society organizations, ACBF partner institutions, tertiary institutions of learning, research and specialized training institutes, and others.

The African Capacity Building Foundation extended an invitation to Rt. Hon. Dr. Chilima, vice president of the Republic of Malawi, to draw on his experience and share his insights guided by the theme: *The role of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in Africa's sustainable and inclusive development: Understanding the capacity challenges.*

PROFILE OF THE CONTRIBUTOR

The Rt. Hon. Dr. Chilima is a Malawian economist and current vice president of Malawi, holding this position since May 2014. He was born on 12 February, 1973.

The Rt. Hon. Dr. Chilima holds a Bachelor's Degree in Social Sciences (majoring in Economics) and a Master's Degree in Economics, both from Chancellor College of the University of Malawi. On 10 August 2015, he received his PhD in Knowledge Management from the University of Bolton in the United Kingdom.

Before joining politics, Rt. Hon. Dr. Chilima held key leadership positions in various multinational companies including Unilever, Coca Cola, and Airtel Malawi. At Airtel, he rose to become the first Malawian to head Airtel Malawi as chief executive officer. Airtel is one of the leading mobile telecommunications companies in Africa. Before venturing in telecommunications, Rt. Hon. Dr. Chilima also held senior sales and marketing positions in banking and the fast-moving consumer goods sector.

In May 2014, Dr. Saulos Chilima became Malawi's vice president. His engagement in politics dates back to the time he was in college, when he was president of the University of Malawi's Chancellor College students' union.

Given all his achievements by the age of 43, he is one of Africa's truly inspirational young leaders. His performance and achievements are well acknowledged on the continent.

GUIDING ISSUES

Rt. Hon. Dr. Chilima's experience spans from senior sales and marketing positions in banking, key leadership positions in various multinational private companies, to the recent position of vice president of Malawi. Rt. Hon. Dr. Chilima's face-to-face knowledge-sharing interview with the Knowledge Monitoring and Evaluation Department of the African Capacity Building Foundation on 23 March 2016 at his office in Lilongwe, Malawi provided insights and thoughts about:

- Progress in the ICT and telecommunication industry in Malawi and the continent in general.
- Specific experiences in Malawi to share with other African nations as lessons in the ICT and telecommunication industry.
- Critical capacity challenges for African countries to realize the ultimate benefits from the ICT sector and the roles of different partners (government and private sector) to address the capacity gaps.
- Strategies for African countries to ensure equitable access to information, supporting both social and economic growth in urban and rural regions.
- Major capacity constraints for African countries to embrace and develop their ICT and telecommunication sectors, as well as the capacity challenges, possibilities, and opportunities for more Africans to own and manage local and international ICT and telecommunication companies.
- The role and capacity challenges facing women and girls in the ICT and telecommunication sector for national and regional socioeconomic sustainable development and utilization of the opportunities that the ICT and telecommunication industry presents.
- Means for African countries and regional institutions to harness the creative capacities of African experts both in the region and international

diaspora for action-oriented knowledge generation necessary for implementation of Agenda 2063.

- Key messages on support for capacity development to donors and African governments.
- Key advisory messages to Africa's young people.

In what follows, Rt. Hon. Dr. Chilima shares his thoughts on the leading issues relating to *The role of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in Africa's sustainable and inclusive development: Understanding the capacity challenges*. Rt. Hon. Dr. Chilima draws on his experiences and offers case studies that present invaluable insights on what he envisions as critical steps and capacity challenges central to Africa's quest for ICT development, and for Africa's sustainable inclusive development.

THE KNOWLEDGE-SHARING INTERVIEW

ACBF: You have an admirable track record of being appointed and holding key leadership positions in various multinational companies including Unilever, Coca Cola, and Airtel Malawi, where you rose to become chief executive officer. Can you please tell us what these positions entailed and what were your challenges and success factors?

Rt. Hon. Dr. Chilima: Indeed, I have a track record of being appointed and holding key leadership positions in various multinational companies including Unilever, Coca-Cola, and Airtel Malawi, where I rose to become CEO. Through my Roman Catholic faith, I believe all this was possible due to God's plan and Jesus Christ's love for my family and professional life.

Nevertheless, I would say that professionally these high positions required that I master marketing and leadership and have a track record of getting results. I am also able to figure out how to be effective in any market with nominal supervision. I have the ability to work beyond troubleshooting to analyze, resolve, and settle technical and managerial issues.

In addition, I possess solid management skills within the companies' domestic operations, as well as a depth of experience in running sales and marketing projects, tasks, campaigns, and programs. I have the added ability to respect and understand a host culture and the work culture, cushioned with the corporate framework, plus hands-on and entrepreneurial experience—that is being able to show my performance and value to others in order to capture mature market shares.

In the multinational companies, the professional progression in my work life led to increased knowledge and experience through frequent international training programs. Due to that, I have enjoyed a comfortable work environment and ample time to reflect on strategic focus areas of corporate multinational business.

In international corporate operations, I executed international business network systems with branches and subsidiaries in the host nation using high technology

skills that allowed me to handle the advanced and sophisticated technology associated with the business and production of world-class products.

I was also well-equipped with oligopolistic power skills, which allowed me to acquire and improve market share, as well as improve revenue growth. I was able to manage and control all corporate functions aimed toward achieving both revenue growth and customer/consumer targets.

I had several main challenges. They included centralized control of operations; biased government policies and organizational cultural obstacles; conflicts between the local culture and the respective multinational policies; defective data retrieval systems and lack of knowledge-management capacity initiatives; and insubstantial partnership in the harmonization of market and trade policies.

My success factors included professional management skills acquired through experience and regular international training programs, as well as comfortable working conditions that allowed me ample time to reflect upon strategic focus areas for corporate multinational business. Moreover, being equipped with oligopolistic power skills enabled me to acquire and improve market share and achieve revenue growth and customer or consumer targets.

ACBF: As the first Malawian to become chief executive officer for a giant ICT and telecommunication company in Malawi, how did you ensure that the company contributed to Malawian social economic development? What are your specific experiences in Malawi that you would like to share with the rest of Africa's nations as lessons learned in the ICT and telecommunication industry?

Rt. Hon. Dr. Chilima: As the first Malawian to become chief executive officer for a giant ICT and telecommunication company in Malawi, I made sure the company contributed to Malawi's social economic development by promoting the development and pragmatic use of ICTs in all sectors through the existing and upcoming mobile network operators.

I personally encouraged and instilled in all senior managers and employees the great need to emphasize the easy and affordable Community Access to

ICT-Support to Tele Centers and Mobile Money project, providing strategic ICT leadership and sustainable growth, ICT human capital development, ICT infrastructure development to increase net coverage and easy access, and responsive ICT legal and institutional frameworks.

I used knowledge management as a tool to develop the human capital and universal use of ICT. I made sure that there was customer expansion and revenue generation based on affordable price principles for business sustainability.

I would also like to point out that mobile network companies, through a regulatory body, should promote the deployment and exploitation of information, knowledge, and technology within the economy and society as key drivers for social economic development. In Malawi, the ICT and telecommunication industry has improved the quality of education through easy access to education and research resources. The industry has also made the education system responsive to the needs of the economy and society.

Several specific lessons from Malawi's ICT and telecommunication industry include the following:

First, there is always a need to have an enabling environment in any country with regard to governance and the sociopolitical atmosphere if the ICTs are to be successful.

Second, to embark on special ICT promotion packages, policies and infrastructure, and incentives are needed to achieve the socioeconomic development goals.

Third, the necessary and user-friendly legal, regulatory, and institutional frameworks must be in place to support ICT development.

Fourth, there is the need to timely mobilize and deploy technological and financial resources to the relevant sectors for proper implementation of ICT programs.

Fifth, government should also document and circulate the developed standards and observed best practices to all the concerned parties for the sake of guiding the deployment, exploitation, and development of ICTs in the key strategic sectors.

Last, the impact of ICTs depends on user attitudes and expectations, as well as on organization policies.

ACBF: The 21st century thrives on information and communication technologies. Expanded voice telephony, undersea fiber optic cables, and constant worldwide internet access have transformed society and business, allowing immediate global contact and transfer of information. To what extent would you say this industry/sector has provided a unique platform for achieving sustainable economic development in Malawi and the African continent?

Rt. Hon. Dr. Chilima: Indeed, the 21st century has unveiled the expansion of voice telephony, undersea fiber optic cables, and constant worldwide internet access—transforming society and business, allowing immediate global contact and transfer of information. My academic and professional stance convinces me that this industry/sector has provided a unique platform for achieving sustainable economic development in Malawi and the African continent in the following ways.

First, it facilitated the establishment of thousands of internet cafes and the emergence of a rapidly growing population of dial-up subscribers within the respective mobile networks companies.

Second, the undersea fiber optic cable has prompted the Malawi government to undertake e-government initiatives, including the automation of a common database for Malawian citizens and reform projects at Immigration and the Road Traffic Directorate. Moreover, the undersea fiber optic cables have brought about the advancement of 3G to 4G on the mobile networks.

Third, the expansion of voice telephony has triggered internet providers to become vital players in the developing world through the promotion of VoIP telephone services and the existing broadband access technology.

Fourth, with the constant worldwide internet access, the “Phone Shop Concept” has flourished into communication centers all over Malawi whereby entrepreneurs, job seekers, and students access essential business communication services such as faxes, email, and internet facilities. Within this context,

the Malawian government has also rolled out the telecenters where people are accessing computers, internet, and other digital technologies that enable them to gather information, create, learn, and communicate with others while developing vital digital skills.

Last, the fiber optic cable has also provided the telecommunication industry a cost-effective way of giving Malawi and African states faster multiservice broadband access and connectivity to other countries in the world. It is also important to mention that the expansion of cell phone infrastructure in Malawi has facilitated community development in the sense that some providers have been involved in promoting access to ICTs in rural areas.

ACBF: Thanks for your insights. So what is your assessment of the progress made in the ICT and telecommunication industry in Malawi and the continent in general?

Rt. Hon. Dr. Chilima: My personal assessment on the progress made so far in the ICT and telecommunication industry is as follows. In my country Malawi, for example, at the national level we have really scored some considerable points on the implementation of the ICT and telecommunication industry. Currently, there are six major ongoing initiatives encompassing e-government, e-education and e-learning, e-infrastructure, digital repositories, e-health, and e-banking.

On the African continental level, tremendous work has been done within the context of major projects, namely the East African Submarine Cable System and The East African Marine System. Nevertheless, some hiccups have been experienced with the landlocked countries. The scarcity of cross-border back-haul links has been one of the key broadband access gaps.

ACBF: According to International Telecommunication Union facts and figures for 2015, Africa is the only region where mobile broadband penetration remains below 20 percent. What are the capacity challenges for African countries to benefit from this sector? What are the roles of government and the private sector?

Rt. Hon. Dr. Chilima: The capacity challenges for African countries making it tough to realize benefits include the costs for devices and data. The costs are high, and the majority of people in most African countries are deprived of mobile broadband facilities. Many people earn only \$1 to \$2 a day, and human development indicators for the Africa region are low.

Access to ICT resources is inadequate. Computer literacy is low. Costs of telecommunication equipment and electricity are high. And building ICT institutional capacity and infrastructure for network connectivity is sluggish.

There is also a tax on computer and ICT products and services. For instance, a few years ago Kenya removed a value-added tax on handsets, and that led to a 50–70 percent increase in mobile broadband penetration. In Ghana, import duties for smartphones were reduced and that immediately increased internet subscribers and use.

In addition, there is a distinct digital divide where most countries aren't connected to the increasingly connected internet world. It is also important to note that Africa has insufficient professionals in the critical areas of ICT due the "brain drain" of ICT experts, who are in the international diaspora searching for greener pastures. This has resulted in a shortage of ICT scientists and engineers in most African countries.

The public sector has been avoided by ICT professionals, who opt for better pay in the private sector. Cognizant of the fact that the public sector is responsible for the implementation of national ICT policy, the exodus of ICT professionals from the public sector threatens awareness of the government ICT development plan.

The government and the private sector have the following roles to ensure that African countries ultimately benefit from this sector.

African governments must show a commitment to the ICT policies and strategies so that broadband becomes affordable, easily accessible, and user-friendly to the majority. They should consider ICT as a main driving force for the socio-economic development of their countries by investing in infrastructure and promoting ICT businesses. They should also reinforce ICTs in the primary and

secondary school education systems to include all-encompassing computer science lessons. And they need to establish dedicated and visionary leadership to drive the ICT policies so that all ICT initiatives are demand-driven in accord with national and sectorial priorities, thus promoting socioeconomic growth.

Our private sectors need to promote the use of ICTs in the economy and society as whole. They need to implement ICT services to ensure that there are competitive and high value-added services for subscribers. They need to support the government in developing ICT literacy through the provision of affordable and user-friendly products. They also need to lobby governments to reduce taxes and make mobile broadband affordable for the vast number of underprivileged citizens who have a taste for the internet lifestyle.

ACBF: Right Honorable, you know there is huge disparity among African countries in the levels of connectivity and overall advancement of ICT and telecommunication development and infrastructure. Morocco, Seychelles, Egypt, Tunisia, Mauritius, South Africa, Cabo Verde, and Nigeria are making impressive progress on the number of internet users and connectivity. But Eritrea, Comoros, Equatorial Guinea, Lesotho, West Sahara, and Sierra Leone remain the least connected. Recognizing the impact of this sector in other regions and understanding the importance these technologies hold going forward, what in your opinion are the causes of this disparity? What capacity building initiatives are required to alleviate this challenge?

Rt. Hon. Dr. Chilima: I think that the primary reason is that government policy priorities are set based on political drive and interests. There is also disparity in the economic positions of different countries. Availability of ICT infrastructure also causes some of these disparities. The geographic location of some countries makes it difficult for the landlocked countries to be directly connected to the undersea fiber optic cables.

Again, illiteracy in most African countries makes use of ICT services inaccessible and creates disparities compared with the few African countries that registered tremendous improvements in ICT. To alleviate this challenge, there is the need to embark on capacity building among the local populace to create a society well-educated and informed on the benefits of ICT. There is also a

need to modernize, build capacity, and reform the civil and public services into a more efficient ICT entity and establish an enabling environment for ICT policy implementation. This environment includes good governance, stable economic policies, and functioning democratic institutions. Most important, stakeholders should institute well-disciplined, corruption-free socioeconomic leadership within the ICT arena.

ACBF: It's a well-known fact that use of internet services in Africa is still low. For example, only 4 percent of Southern African Development Community (SADC) residents are internet users, although use varies widely among SADC member states—from 1 percent in the Democratic Republic of Congo to 40 percent in the Seychelles. How can African countries ensure equitable access to information, supporting both social and economic growth in the urban and rural areas?

Rt. Hon. Dr. Chilima: African countries, particularly in the SADC region, can ensure equitable access to information, supporting both social and economic growth in the urban and rural areas. Part of the solution is ensuring that each member state has a broadband connection with open access to fiber optics in their respective capital cities. This could involve creating an internet exchange point in each country. Member states should also institute a cost-effective and conducive ICT working environment among sectors.

All landlocked countries such as Malawi and Lesotho need to be equipped with backups through alternative routes, and they should ensure that most of them are making use of VOIP services universally. High-speed affordable internet facilities should be provided in collaboration with full participation of the private sector through foreign direct investment. Countries should ensure cost sharing in the use of the existing ICT infrastructure among countries and encourage immediate upgrades of such infrastructure when the need arises. Finally, African countries should ensure that in all associated countries peace, unity, and security prevail, coupled with economic stability.

ACBF: According to International Telecommunication Union facts and figures, it is clear that ICTs will play a significant role in achieving the

Sustainable Development Goals as the world moves faster toward a digital society. In your experience, what should African countries do in this area, given that only 9.8 percent of global internet users are from Africa?

Rt. Hon. Dr. Chilima: African countries should do the following to achieve the post-2015 development agenda with regard to the digital society. First, they should invest heavily in ICT infrastructure coupled with the budgetary commitment to implement ICT policies. This is so because ICT matters have to be in the national economic agenda of each nation so that all stakeholders participate appropriately and coherently in implementing the ICT business.

Bear in mind that technology advancement is changing in scope every day. So, national policies should aim to foster free entrepreneurship and nationwide use of e-government facilities. Not only that, governments should allow their respective community-level leadership to encourage creative ICT applications in education, health, public services, and any other applicable aspect of life. Finally, African governments should promote innovation through investment in ICT and higher education activities, since this will boost competitiveness and achieve the socioeconomic growth agenda.

ACBF: What have been the major capacity constraints for African countries to embrace and develop their ICT and telecommunication sectors? Is it a lack of investment in existing planning frameworks and national development policies that are not well executed, or has the environment in some states not been supportive?

Rt. Hon. Dr. Chilima: In my opinion, the following have been the major capacity constraints for African countries embracing and developing their ICT and telecommunication sector.

First is inadequate financial support for developing the critical frame of ICT skills required for a knowledge economy through the establishment of ICT centers of excellence. There has also been a lack of adequate financial resources for infrastructure development in the absence of donor funding. Incomplete national ICT policy and legal institutional frameworks are another capacity constraint in many African states. Some African states have also experienced

capacity challenges with the delayed switchover strategy from analog to digital. Compliance with standards and safety of mobile networks has been a capacity challenge to others. Delayed coordination processes across different sectors such as health, finance, education, and agriculture are also a capacity constraint facing some African states. Moreover, aspects of content regulation regarding recommendations for people allowed to visit websites is a major constraint in some African states, along with the issues of cyber security.

Nevertheless, I feel deeply that it is not true that there has been a lack of investment in the existing planning framework and that national development policies have not been well executed in Africa. Most governments have taken the responsibility to embrace ICT to meet the Connect Africa Summit resolutions. Most countries have developed national e-strategies with implementation budgets. Some have been implemented while others await funding. A few countries in Africa have even jumped ahead in the process by implementing ICT projects without necessarily having ICT policies and strategies in place.

The major issue in some countries is that despite having policies in place, the environment has not been supportive enough to allow the total embrace of ICT and telecommunication activities. I am sure that adequate frameworks are in place for national governments and their partners. Furthermore, I believe there is a robust, systematic way of identifying, prioritizing, and working on bottlenecks to make ICT and telecommunication accessible to all citizens. Technocrats and professionals in Africa have met in summits and conferences to discuss how to bridge the ICT and telecommunication divide between the African continent and the rest of the world.

My main recommendation for African states with regard to ICT development is related to the state of readiness—readiness in people, national policies, investment, and infrastructure. Infrastructure and investment are probably linked. So it is people, investment, national policies, and infrastructure that are hindering ICT development on the continent.

With people, there are two parts: literacy levels and the willingness of the nation to invest in its people becoming ICT experts. Rwanda is good example. It decided that it is going to have smart cities.

With policies, decisions taken on ICT and telecommunications need to be supported by national policy. Widespread public awareness of the latter is also important. The gaps in many African countries need to be addressed so that everybody embraces that their country wants to move on to become ICT advanced. Then the decision to invest in that will be made, and the nation will turn to ICT as the answer. As a result, you can start talking about e-agriculture, e-health, e-education, and so on as countries move forward.

Geographical location matters. On the investment side, that is also in two parts. Number one is a country's willingness to invest in ICT based on its geographical position. Now, looking at the African continent, there is the Western Coast and the Eastern Coast. The countries on the coastal lines will have easy access to submarine cables. The investment needed might not be as high because they are connected to the sea.

But for landlocked countries like Malawi there are two options. One is to interconnect through neighboring countries, and in our case we have done that—one route through Tanzania, and the other route through Mozambique. Between the two of them, one is redundant to the other. We are in the process of connecting into the Western side so that we have three connections. Over and above that, of course, if Malawi and other African countries are to be more resilient, they have to keep in mind the satellite connections that were there before, I think. Everybody agrees that fiber optic connections are a little bit more resilient than satellite boards. But countries will make those decisions. When these decisions are made and there is a national ICT policy to support, countries should know where investment must go.

Costs vary. With infrastructure, the terrain matters because it affects the kind of and the extent to which ICT will be developed in a particular geographical location. If a country has a topography that is quite uneven, it will present a challenge—and affect how it will transport its data. For instance, the terrain (mountainous verses plain plateaus/flat terrain) will surely affect the level of investment. Countries could do hook ups with the towers, or even if they are going to dig up and lay their fiber, it will be much more cost-effective. The cost is another barrier to development. It's one that will affect the extent to which African countries are going to be growing their ICT sector.

So, African countries have to move on from the state of readiness and embrace the fact that ICT can improve their national economy. They must have the right policies, right investment levels, and ensure the right infrastructure. These, in my view, are the major issues that would affect ICT growth in an economy in Africa.

From the foregoing, I would recommend that African governments should focus on ensuring that there is harmonization and standardization of ICT policies within the African region. Each government should think about developing ICT programs that can attract ICT-related FDI, becoming a competitive regional business hub for the continent and beyond.

Moreover, African governments should carry on with the ICT policy integration and planning process and constantly carry out the benchmarking exercise of ICT standards and practices within the continent. It is also recommended that each government should be obligated to solicit finance from banking institutions to implement ICT activities. And they should set up gender-specific networks to allow women and girls to partake in the information economy, specifically for jobs and economic opportunities created by ICTs.

ACBF: Right Honorable, what would you recommend to African countries for capacity building?

Rt. Hon. Dr. Chilima: Once African countries get the right ICT policies in place, they obviously have to develop the right human resource capabilities. Skilled people are the single biggest competitive advantage in an organization and, so obviously, in a country. Countries need to build capacities in their human capital, retain, and use them. They should also ensure availability of the right tools to work with, which is also linked to the first point of investment. Countries have to invest in people and tools if we are going to be modern and responsive to the demands of the modern day world. So, governments should identify the right resources, develop them, resource them, retain them, and finally empower them to make the right decisions for organizations and for countries to move forward when they know ICT and they know what needs to be done.

ACBF: In your opinion, are there adequate frameworks in place that offer national governments and their partners a systematic way to identify, prioritize, and work on bottlenecks in order to make ICT and telecommunication accessible to all citizens? What would be your recommendations to African governments in this aspect?

Rt. Hon. Dr. Chilima: I am sure that there are adequate frameworks in place for national governments and their partners. Furthermore, I believe there exists a robust, systematic way of identifying, prioritizing, and working on bottlenecks to make ICT and telecommunication accessible to all citizens. Technocrats and professionals in Africa have met in summits and conferences to discuss how to bridge the ICT and telecommunication divide in Africa as a continent alongside the entire world. As I said previously, I would recommend that African governments focus more on ensuring that there is harmonization and standardization of ICT policies within the region. Each government should develop its ICT programs to attract funding and become competitive regional business hubs for the continent and beyond. Moreover, African governments should seek ICT policy integration and planning processes and constantly carry out the benchmarking exercise of ICT standards and practices within the continent. In addition, they should set up gender-specific networks to allow women and girls to participate in the information economy.

ACBF: Right Honorable Chilima, building on your role as former president for the Association of Telecommunication Operators, what are the capacity challenges, possibilities, and opportunities for more Africans to own and manage local and international ICT and telecommunication companies?

Rt. Hon. Dr. Chilima: By and large, there is shortage of ICT skills, limiting implementation. There is therefore the need to invest in indigenous ICT capacity building, including ICT user skills, and soliciting local support for ICT users. Fiscal resources are also one of the major challenges because of too much donor dependence for implementing ICT policy and strategies. In this regard, governments should include ICT-related budget line items in the annual financial budget for ICT company utilization.

I also think there is lack of local logical content for ICT. The predominant use of English on the internet is a problem, especially for most Malawians or Africans who do not understand the language. I believe there is the need, therefore, to establish online repositories with freely accessed materials, particularly for students and underprivileged citizens.

Let's also talk about procurement regulations, especially as we consider import duties on ICT equipment. There is the need to eliminate some of these duties, as I pointed out earlier about our fellow countries such as Ghana and Kenya. We should either remove or reduce import duties on ICT equipment and software to make sure that most people are accessing ICT services.

ACBF: What is the role of women and girls in the ICT and telecommunication sector for national and regional socioeconomic sustainable development? What do you consider to be the capacity challenges facing women and girls for their effective participation and use of the opportunities that ICT and the telecommunication industry present? Are there lessons and success stories that you would like to highlight on the benefits for women and girls?

Rt. Hon. Dr. Chilima: The role of women and girls in the ICT and telecommunication sector vis-à-vis national and regional socioeconomic sustainable development is characterized by their involvement in e-health, where maternal health issues are monitored by SMS through broadband mobile phones, and their direct involvement in the formulation of ICT policies and strategies. For example, women and girls are the drivers for school children in relation to ICT education and training opportunities. Those in high positions act as role models, hence building a foundation of increased literacy and ICT education for girls and women in urban and rural areas.

Despite their being drivers of social development, women and girls are facing capacity challenges for their participation in and use of the opportunities that the ICT and telecommunication industry is offering.

There is a lack of ICT centers where women and girls can exploit ICTs in their activities, and also insufficient income for ICT use due to poverty among women in many families. Overall, there is also low awareness of ICT, especially

in rural areas where most women are active in farming. This, coupled with limited internet connectivity and frequent and erratic power cuts, makes ICT access poor for women and girls. National governance policies that hinder rather than encourage affordability and universal access for women and girls should be eliminated, and information should be translated into the local languages closely linked to the needs of women and girls.

I would like to offer a few success stories:

Success story #1: Women entrepreneurial ventures in Malawi

An understanding of information technology among women and girls has led to entrepreneurial ventures in Malawi, with women starting their own businesses using communications centers on mobile cell phones. So far, there is empirical evidence that many women and girls in the main cities of Malawi (Blantyre, Lilongwe, and Mzuzu) have progressed well in the ICT and telecommunication industry through mobile money cash transfer businesses (Airtel Money and Mpamba). To a certain extent, these ventures have propelled women from the ranks of the unemployed to those running small businesses, thereby empowering themselves and their communities.

Success story #2: Women and market information system in Malawi

Thanks to a United States Agency for International Development (USAID)-funded program, women farmers have been connected to real-time market information through ICT services. One of the prominent women is Sara Maunda from Lilongwe District. Through the USAID-funded Market Linkages Initiative, the woman was trained on a market information system (Esoko) that provides real-time market prices from 13 markets in Malawi by mobile text messages. Sara Maunda attended the trainings and signed up to receive commodity prices from markets within Malawi through SMS on her mobile phone.

This Information and Communication Technology platform helped her to easily access national market prices, to sell at a transparent and real price. This has enabled her to increase her income fivefold. With the availability of ICTs, it was easy for her to verify the vendor's prices and no reason for her to panic and

sell her farm produce to a vendor at unconfirmed prices. She has been able to follow the market price discrepancies through the ICT platform.

In one instance, she was able to know through SMS that the price for groundnuts in Lilongwe was more than four times the vendor's offered price. Quite often, Maunda communicates with her fellow farmers and neighbors through ICT services about market prices and how they should sell when groundnuts are not yet dry.

Success story #3: ICT increased the quality and accessibility of community reproductive health services

Malawi has promoted sustainable use of ICT in the health sector to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of its health care systems. This initiative is targeting maternal and infant health, so women and infants directly benefit. One of the projects seeks to improve the quality and accessibility of reproductive health services at the community level by providing effective, reliable, and timely communication and data recording and an analysis and evaluation system. So far, high-quality data has helped in effective decision-making, bringing in suitable and effective interventions where needed.

Real-time communication between community health structures and hospitals through mobile phone messaging has been the norm. The community health structures are able to send electronic reports to the hospital using mobile phones. When applicable, the community health structures' members are enriched with knowledge and facts (by sending targeted awareness messages and receiving feedback through mobile phones). Most important, this initiative has enabled health officials to send reminders to members of the community being treated so that they do not miss their appointments. Health officials in the project now receive accurate HMIS data in a timely manner, empowering them to make evidence-based decisions regarding resource allocation and respond to outbreak-prone diseases quickly.

ACBF: Right Honorable Vice President, as you know, the African continent remains vulnerable to major risks and external shocks ranging from political crises to conflict, disease outbreaks, natural disasters, and global economic

volatility. They all pose important challenges to achieving tangible and sustainable development in the ICT and telecommunication sector in the continent. How do you see the role of capacity in continuously strengthening national institutions to respond to and mitigate these risks?

Rt. Hon. Dr. Chilima: Without prejudice, I envisage the need to continuously build the capacities of national institutions by strengthening them to respond to and mitigate the risks mentioned, with adequate coordination of all stakeholders. African governments should also promote an enabling environment and political will that ensures solid investment in the modernization of civil/public service through practical reforms in relation to ICT.

Instituting ICT systems and infrastructure for disaster prevention, mitigation, and preparedness policies and strategies is another strategy that African states can follow. When that is done, promoting the use of ICT equipment such as telephones (fixed and mobile), SMS, cell broadcasting, satellite radio, the internet, email, and community radios will be easy and affordable. Finally, it is important to invest in stakeholders' (international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), national NGOs, media, and private sector) data analysis processes for potential risk areas through standardized ICT equipment such as GIS.

ACBF: Right Honorable Dr. Chilima, you recently acquired a PhD degree in Knowledge Management. What interested you in this field of study?

Rt. Hon. Dr. Chilima: Knowledge management is an emerging discipline, which is about using information, data, or knowledge in an organization for competitive advantage. That also includes sharing best practices. Knowledge allows companies to know about their customers and markets, the hiccups and attitudes, the customers' tastes and habits. This helps companies to develop relevant products and interventions to remain useful and relevant to the market and community needs.

Please allow me to give an example of a telecom set-up, which I studied when I was doing my PhD thesis: What is it that would endear a customer so that they continue to remain on network A versus B? Yes, everybody talks about the

price, and that could be one attribute. But it could also be quality of service. It could be the quality of the network. It could be the speed of the service delivery, at which you give your responsive services. So, that's dealing with the outside world, which is customers. You will understand them, their consumption patterns. For example, what time do they make calls, based on the data you mine from the system? And then you come up with interventions, such as discounts and consumer promotions. You are satisfying your customers and remaining relevant to them. You are getting an edge over your competitors.

But you can also do the same within the organization. We are talking about human resource development here. You could mine information about the organization from the people. For example, what is it that the members of staff like or don't like, how do they feel about the work environment, what do they feel about remuneration, what do they feel about the management, what do they feel about the future of the organization, do they see any hope or not, and the like? From the literature and professional experience, it was apparent that knowledge management is emerging as a key concern of business organizations, particularly those that have already redesigned their business processes and embedded a total quality approach into their practices. I also recognized that in the last decade vibrant firms had geared up to add knowledge management (KM) to their lines of business and the telecommunication industry was no exception. Company X had aligned KM processes with the customer processes in order to understand its customers better and know the customers' lifestyle and behavior in detail. Nevertheless, there was little effort in place to assess the influence of KM implementation.

I was convinced that the pervasive influence of new and more advanced technologies as well as the realities of global infrastructure had made it necessary for Malawi's telecommunication organizations to play a proactive role in leading and transforming the country's economy into an information-based economy. As such, my professional stance dwelled on the fact that management of knowledge is a competitive weapon for the telecommunication industry to move forward and to chart more successes in an uncertain future. Additionally, it was evident from the literature that there were still gaps in synergetic effects of KM and ICT on telecommunication business progression.

It was my hope that findings from this research would provide insights and identify practical critical success factors and barriers to the implementation

of knowledge management practices in the telecommunications industry that would benefit the telecoms sector in decision-making effectiveness and creating a sustainable competitive advantage.

ACBF: Lately, Africa's development partners have put a strong emphasis on action-oriented knowledge generation in the region. How can African countries and regional institutions harness the creative capacities of African experts both in the region and from the diaspora?

Rt. Hon. Dr. Chilima: The African countries should create an environment where knowledge creation, knowledge storage, knowledge accessibility, knowledge sharing, and knowledge usage or application is easy. More specifically, amid the implementation of the Agenda 2063 and action-oriented knowledge generation, African countries and regional institutions should harness the creative capacities of African experts both in the region and in the diaspora by:

- Investing prudently in capacity building initiatives for all African experts both in the region and the diaspora and ensuring that there is good coordination of efforts by various capacity building institutions across Africa such as universities, development partners, and governments.
- Coordinating all domestic resource mobilization ventures across the continent with reference to action-oriented development programs.
- Promoting gender equality and youth involvement in all the knowledge and skills acquisition programs.
- Reflecting all capacity development efforts based on the tangible Agenda 2063 vision, which focuses on a sustainable transformation of Africa in the next 50 years. This would require the exploitation of a strategic approach that prioritizes areas of capacity challenges that can get to the potential for implementing the African Union Agenda.
- Creating a continental agenda that can be successfully implemented, monitored, and evaluated within the designed time framework.

Development of cross-cutting capacities should be obligatory at the individual, organizational, and institutional levels and also at the local, community, national, regional, and continental levels.

- Assembling and sharing requisite knowledge that highlights best practices and game-changing lessons through conferences, symposiums, workshops, and training sessions.
- Advocating for and mobilizing multistakeholder support for action-oriented knowledge generation through targeted engagements, workshops, networks, and communities of practice.
- Conducting critical research on need assessment studies in relation to action-oriented knowledge generation in order to identify the capacity dimensions as well as the risks involved.
- Inculcating into all African middle-management employees the transformative agenda through mind-set changing and self-confidence rebuilding.
- Developing and enforcing development policies that aim for retaining professionals in their respective specialized fields, preventing the brain drain.

ACBF: Sustainable and inclusive development is at the core of the UN Sustainable Development Goals framework. What areas do you think the African leaders should prioritize in promoting inclusive growth and creating resilient societies? What do you consider to be the critical capacity imperatives to realize this?

Rt. Hon. Dr. Chilima: Indeed, it is true that sustainable and inclusive development is at the core of the Post-2015 Development Framework. African leaders should prioritize the following issues in their efforts to promote inclusive growth and create resilient societies:

- Focus on genuine global partnerships for development, monitoring, and financing projects aimed at sustainable development. This should consider

SMART indicators and universal commitments calling for real actions mainly focusing on the poorest and the most vulnerable in societies.

- Promote environmental sustainability with the determined action of protecting the environment from degradation and developing sustainable consumption and production. This includes urgent action on issues related to climate change.
- Focus with an eagle eye on issues of prosperity and peace. The majority of citizens in each African country should enjoy prosperous and satisfying lives. Societies in all realms should be free from fear and violence.
- Develop tangible initiatives to end poverty and hunger through world-class benchmarking. African leaders should dwell on “doables” rather than wasting resources on “undoables.”
- Embark on technical entrepreneur youth and women programs through tertiary education curriculums to foster action-oriented knowledge.

To promote inclusive growth and create resilient societies, the following are the critical capacity imperatives:

- Providing basic services and infrastructure for health and agriculture-related issues.
- Concentrating on the real national economy and profitable business investments, empowering individuals to cultivate financial opportunities.
- Fostering productive employment and remuneration packages to enhance active labor force participation and lower unemployment among youth.
- Providing education facilities sufficient to provide skill development through easy access, good quality, and prominent equity.
- Instilling asset-building entrepreneurship to propagate small business and financial asset ownership among local communities.

- Establishing fiscal transfer systems providing social protection and fair tax burdens on labor and capital consumption.
- Encouraging technological change among the citizens for sustainable growth inclusive of ICTs.
- Instituting fiscal discipline and a corruption-free society.

Nevertheless, I would like us as leaders to reflect carefully on what Pope Francis said about inclusive growth:

“Some people continue to defend trickle-down theories which assume that economic growth, encouraged by a free market, will inevitably succeed in bringing about greater justice and inclusiveness in the world. This opinion, which has never been confirmed by the facts, expresses a crude and naïve trust in the goodness of those wielding economic power and in the sacralised workings of the prevailing economic system. Meanwhile, the excluded are still waiting.” (Pope Francis, Tuesday 29 November 2013).

ACBF: Right Honorable Vice President, what message would you want to send out to donors and African countries in support of the capacity building work that the ACBF is doing on the continent?

Rt. Hon. Dr. Chilima: I would like address the two constituents—the donors and the African governments—as follows. For the donors, I would like to call them to support capacity development efforts in Africa and the work being done by the African Capacity Building Foundation. This support is needed in two areas: technical and human resources. The technical capacity building is necessary for the knowledge workers, because of the importance of knowledge management. The human resources working on knowledge management should have the capacity for ACBF and African institutions to establish human a resource base that is adequately skilled in all fields.

Donors are also called to provide all necessary resources—first to enable the capacity building, and second to facilitate implementation of the capacity

building programs. There will be certain interventions that require financial resources for them to be implemented. Therefore, while it will be good for the donors to develop human capabilities, it would also be good for them to provide resources that would enable them to go and implement whatever they have come up with.

African governments and institutions need to first of all embrace ICT, the state of readiness, and the culture of knowledge management and sharing and allow people to take the calculated risks we talked about. If workers have, first and foremost, self-belief and confidence that if they would do something the results would be positive, if they can say this with a certain level of confidence, that will allow them to take that good calculated risk. Because guess what? That could actually be the answer to the particular development challenges in a country. So as we ask donors to add resources, governments should also add them. It should be a two-way thing. Everybody must be able to say that “we came up with an intervention, and we put in these resources, look we have improved the poverty levels.” Or, if you don’t want to look at it negatively as poverty, you can look at it as wealth creation and be able to say, “Because we intervened with this particular program with the private sector, we are able to see more SMEs mushrooming... in a particular time.”

So, if there is a boom in a particular sector because there are many more small and medium enterprises coming up, yes you will be dealing with poverty alleviation or wealth creation. But you will also be improving your earnings capacity for the government—your tax base is expanding, and therefore more and more players are there. Small and medium enterprises booming, job creation, so you can carry on with the equation and at the end you find that it’s an ultimate win, first for the person who assisted you with the resources, as well as the citizens. Most important, the political economy will gain because these people will speak in favor of a particular regime.

ACBF: Lastly, Right Honorable, being in your early 40s, you are one of few young African high achievers, setting very high standards for young people in Malawi and on the continent. If you are to give advice to African youth who are looking up to you as their role model in areas of social, economic, and political achievements, what would that be?

Rt. Hon. Dr. Chilima: First of all, you are very generous with your excerpt, but anyway, it's an honor to learn that many young people look up to me as a role model. That is a very big endorsement. But let me say there are attributes, skills, and behaviors that I believe the youth should look at: prayers, education, priorities, commitment, focus, dedication, personal responsibility, constructive risk-taking, sensitivity to others, and learning from other peoples' mistakes. I will explain.

Prayers. First and foremost, this is me—prayers. I am a person who believes that whatever I have achieved came from God, and therefore I will continue to pray. And if people think that I am their role model, then they must have prayer as one of the ingredients.

Second is education. And education, I think, is one thing, and qualification is another. So, I am going to say education. Education and qualification are big bonuses. Education without qualification is maybe still better. There is a difference between the two, quite distinct because some people are qualified and not educated. And I know what I am talking about because I know people who have cheated and they have ended up being qualified but not educated. This is a good ingredient to help people understand and comprehend issues going on nationally and internationally. So, for youth to understand complex global issues, they need education, and at every level they must continue to improve on their education. Education will help the youth to understand both simple and complex matters. It's a foundation. It might not be the end. It's a means.

Third is priority. Over time, youth need to make choices. Growing up depending on what we saw our parents doing, one might have wanted to become a teacher, a doctor, a lawyer, or a security officer. But growing up, while I might have wanted to become five things, I zeroed in on a few things and I picked one. My message to young people is that it must not be an accident. It must be an act of choice. I am saying that the youth should always focus on their development agenda and work on priorities. Be able to think way ahead and make decisions aligned with goals. In critical situations, they should have the power of contrary thinking where they can see opportunity where others are seeing problems.

Fourth is commitment. Youth should believe that any achievement is enjoyable and valuable. In this regard, they should always concentrate, commit, and involve themselves fully in any given task. This brings about a "winning pace," as

I personally believe that life is a marathon and not a rehearsal. This means that whatever we decide to do, let's do it with all our heart and commitment and embrace the failure-is-not-an-option mantra. When you go into something, you must make sure that you succeed. There must only be one option, and that option must never be to fail. And if you embrace that kind of thinking, you make decisions to get the right resources, dedicate the right amount of time, and dedicate the right amount of energy so that you achieve your goal ultimately.

The fifth trait is focus. Lions are the best example. Lions hunt, and they isolate, and pick one target. It doesn't matter whether it's close to a zebra or a gazelle running next to it or rubbing shoulders, but the lion will have picked the target and will go for it. It's focus, so that you are not all over the place, but you stay focused on your target. That's equally important.

Sixth is the ability to balance study, work, and sports. Young people should develop habits and skills to balance their lifestyle activities (academic, social, and sports) in order to have a healthy emotional state. This helps to control emotions and have empathy for others, hence the ability to pick good friends and avoid bad habits.

Dedication is another critical trait. They should appreciate that they can improve their performance on every demanding task through practice, training, coaching, and dedication to the given tasks. For this to happen smoothly, persistence is key. To overcome obstacles and failures, they should believe in themselves and work hard to make their dreams come true. Be persistent and chase after their individual dream until they achieve what they want. They should always take success as a personal responsibility and continue believing in innovations.

Constructive risk-taking is important. Youth should develop skills and behaviors to be constructive risk-takers in life. The challenges they are facing now are only there to prepare them for a prosperous future. They should take demanding tasks as challenges or opportunities, rather than looking at them as threats. *"Lazy hands make for poverty but diligent hands bring wealth" (Proverbs 10:4).*

Be sensitive to others. The youth should be sensitive to others by knowing exactly what others want and how best to communicate with them. This helps in handling conflicts among others in the society.

Learn from others. To conclude, it's critical for young people to learn from others' mistakes so they don't repeat them. So it's good for the youth to have a dose of wisdom after having been qualified and gotten the right levels of skills and energy, so that they are able to say things at the right time and place, and in the right amount—not to be very wordy because that might also begin to waste time.

So, what I would say to youth is “go for it.” Never give up. It is never too late. Everything happens for a reason and happens at the right time. I have given a list of things youth must do, but at the end of the day the choice, the decision, must be to do it. Not doing must never be an option.

The African Capacity Building Foundation

The African Capacity Building Foundation is Africa's premier institution in capacity building. Established in February 1991, ACBF is the outcome of collaboration between African governments and the international donor community. Since 1991, ACBF has supported and invested in efforts to build human and institutional capacity across Africa to meet development needs at the country, regional, and continental levels and has emerged as one of the leading capacity development organizations in Africa. It has catalyzed scalable change in Africa by investing in capacity building initiatives in the public and private sectors and civil society organizations

The major sponsoring agencies of the Foundation are the African Development Bank, the United Nations Development Programme, and the World Bank. The International Monetary Fund became a member of ACBF in 2002. The African Union is an Honorary Member.

ACBF's mission is to build sustainable human and institutional capacity for sustainable growth, poverty reduction, and good governance in Africa through enhancing skills, strengthening institutions, and promoting regional integration. To achieve this, ACBF supports capacity development through investments, technical support, and knowledge generation and sharing across Africa. ACBF not only invests through extending grants, it also provides grant management and technical assistance throughout the implementation of the capacity development interventions, catalyzing scalable change in Africa. The Foundation intervenes in six core competency areas, namely, economic policy analysis and management, financial management and accountability, strengthening and monitoring national statistics, public administration and management, strengthening the policy analysis capacity of national parliaments, and professionalization of the voices of the private sector and civil society.

To date the Foundation has empowered governments, parliaments, civic society, the private sector, and higher education institutions in more than 45 countries and six regional economic communities. It has invested in more than 321 capacity development projects, produced 73 knowledge products advocating emerging development issues, and has committed more than USD700 million to capacity development in Sub-Saharan Africa. Besides intervening directly

in the area of capacity development, ACBF provides a platform for consultation, dialogue, and cooperation as well as information and knowledge sharing among development stakeholders and partners across the African continent.

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