

## Title

# Social entrepreneurship as solution to youth empowerment and social-economic wellbeing in Africa: pathway to achieving the Africa's Agenda 2063

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## Abstract

The fifth aspiration of the Africa Union (AU) envisage Africa as a continent with a strong cultural identity, common heritage, shared values and ethics while the six stated that this can only be achieved through the development of people-driven economy, relying on the potential of the African people, especially its youth and women. With the advantage of its youthful population, this can be achieved through small scale entrepreneurship development and innovation using digital technology as tool for socio-economic development. The study examined social entrepreneurship as solution to youth empowerment and socio-economic development in Africa. A mixed method was employed for the study. Snowball sampling technique was used to select young social entrepreneurs. This was complemented with secondary data such as interview extract granted by some notable social entrepreneurs in Africa. Quantitative data obtained was analysed using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation. Findings revealed that innovative young entrepreneurs were able to provide solution to community problems, provide job opportunities for themselves and others which bring social-economic development to the community and enhance wellbeing of the youths. Based on these findings, the study recommended that government and private sectors should provide necessary support and assistance to small scale entrepreneurs in order to expand their businesses. Furthermore, government should also put appropriate policies in place to encourage potentials in young entrepreneurs and improve socio-economic development of the country.

## Key words

Africa, social entrepreneur, socio-economic wellbeing, youth empowerment

## Key dates

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### Indexing



## Introduction

Unemployment has been categorized as one of the serious impediments to social progress of any nation. Apart from representing a colossal waste of a country's manpower resources, it generates welfare loss in terms of lower output thereby leading to a lower income and well-being that can bring untold hardship to the society. According to the African Union (AU, 2019) Africa's youth unemployment problem is a global problem that has contributed significantly to the rising wave and sophistication of crime in many African countries. Similarly, the Africa Development Bank (ADB, 2021) stated that with a large segment of youth alienated from the workforce, it may difficult to sustain the global socio-economic development as hordes of struggling African youths continue to migrate en masse to developed countries in search of employment opportunities. Africa, the world demographically youngest continent with almost 60% of its population under the age of 25 years is confronted with multiple challenges (ILO, 2021). According to the Africa Union (AU) Agenda 2063 there is need to invest in youth entrepreneurship as a prerequisite for achieving the socio-economic transformation of the African continent. Using a mixed method research design, empowerment theory as a framework, and the concept of Africapitalism, as well as the Africa Agenda 2063, the study examined the application of social entrepreneurship as a solution to youth empowerment and socio-economic development in Africa.

## Background

The potential of social entrepreneurship as a mechanism for addressing social, economic and environmental challenges is increasing recognition. Its emergence as a hybrid approach for transforming communities suggests the potential of using it to tackle challenges of poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, climate changes, insecurity and other social and economic issues in Africa. Ihejamaizu & Udensi (2017) describe social entrepreneurship as the ability to recognise a social problem as an opportunity and the application of entrepreneurial principles to organize, create and manage a social venture to achieve the desired social change. It involves the ability to see 'problems' as 'opportunities' and then take the initiative to identify the solutions to those problems and meet these needs profitably. In essence, customers pay to have the problem solved. Social entrepreneurship therefore, creates wealth for the society as a whole by its contribution to community development, and environmental sustainability.

Wale-Oshinowo, Uba, Adeyeye & Omobowale (2019) described social enterprises as organizations

that apply entrepreneurial skills and innovations to address social problems. Such organizations are managed by individuals who have the ability to combine resources in innovative ways to create social value for the society, i.e., organisations that make profits and offer social benefits for the community. By creating new enterprise and new values through creativity and innovation, they provide solutions to critical social problem that benefit humanity at large. Entrepreneurship is a possible option for young people to unleash their entrepreneurial potential and contribution to socio-economic development as well as their wellbeing (United Nations Industrial Development Organization 2016).

Social entrepreneurship has therefore emerged as a contemporary issue in resolving various social problems. It is a concept well suited to address youth unemployment since governmental efforts have failed to address the lingering problem (Yusuf, Precious & Sanusi, 2017). It can be described as a multipurpose approach of being financially effective and socially transformative at generating locally-driven responses to a wide array of issues that hinders collective socio-economic development (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2021). Social entrepreneurs therefore bring a unique contribution to achieving the Africa 2063 agenda. Given that globally, the number of youth aged 15-24 years is projected to increase by 8 per cent over the next 15 years, from nearly 1.2 billion in 2015 to close to 1.3 billion in 2030, solutions addressing challenges faced by young people, such as unemployment, will produce a massive positive ripple effect across the entire African population.

Social entrepreneurship connotes selfless entrepreneurial efforts, undertaking, and strategy geared towards production of social impact. It is also important to note that while social improvement to beneficiaries and communities is the main focus and drive of social entrepreneurship, investors are hugely rewarded financially and socially as well. According to Yanto & Shang (2017) Empowerment is one of the most important social value creation activities performed by social enterprises (SEs). They classify empowerment five types of empowerment building social awareness, meaningful participation, social connections, building entrepreneurial skills, and power sharing between youths and adults. It represents a unique and dynamic approach in dealing with social and economic challenges that span sectors and disciplines.

Social entrepreneurial ventures are found in various fields of practices which range from education, health, welfare reforms, human rights, economic development, environment and agriculture among others. The adoption of the social enterprise model to the provision of social services is increasingly becoming necessary, as the global economy is

undergoing a recession (Rangarirai & Zororo, 2016). Social entrepreneurship is one such innovation for the provision of functional solutions to societal issues. It is not only a tool for the generation of youth employment and development opportunities and the reduction of inequalities; it is also an instrument to help achieve all other SDGs. Where government are unable to provide sufficient opportunities, social enterprises rises to the occasion with tailored responses to provide the needed solutions.

According to Akinwumi Adesina, President of the African Development Bank

*It is time for Africa to embark on youth empowerment and investment. African countries should be more involved in the development of young people who are increasingly facing unemployment* (Akinwumi Adesina, 2021).

The president of the African Development Bank Dr. Akinwumi Adesina lamented the high rate of youth unemployment in most African countries and stated that the youths are discouraged, angry and restless, as they look at a future that does not give them hope. He stated further that the future of Africa continent depends largely on what it does with its large dynamic youth population. He concluded that Africa must take advantage of its youthful population and turned it into asset through investment in entrepreneurship to become a positive force for the socio-economic transformation of the continent, and the world at large.

## Theoretical framework

This study is anchored on the theory of empowerment. The origin of empowerment as a form of theory can be traced to the Brazilian humanitarian and educator, Freire (1973), when he suggested a plan for liberating the oppressed people of the world through education. The concept of "empowerment" has been accepted widely in recent years and now is used extensively in several disciplines such as social sciences. The theory stated that empowerment such as the acquisition of entrepreneurship skills to improve self-reliance, enhance their socio-economic wellbeing and improve their quality of life. The theory stated that empowerment is the process through which the disadvantaged groups (youths) define their own needs and determine the response that is made to them.

Empowering young people means creating and supporting conditions under which young people can contribute to the economic, social and cultural advancement of their societies and gain self-fulfilment. Empowerment theory particularly individual empowerment theory is relevant to this study in the sense that youth constitute a large

population in Africa and faces unemployment challenges. The concept of empowerment is a process of liberating individuals from the state of hopelessness. From the theory, it could be understood that creating and implementing empowerment programmes with regard to entrepreneurship development would enhance youth socio-economic development and raise their entrepreneurial skills to become positive agents of change in their communities and country at large (Ledford & Lucas, 2013).

According to Sanusi (2009), the future of the continent depends on the youths of today; they must be empowered to become useful leaders. It is important to emphasise that fundamental to the generation and sustenance of economic and social development in any society is a vibrant human capital that can transform a nation's potential and resource endowments to real output of goods and services. He concluded that youth empowerment should be given a national priority if the African continent must strive to be among the large emerging economies in the years ahead.

### Concept of Africapitalism in the socio-economic development of Africa

Tony Elumelu developed the concept of Africapitalism. He established the Tony Elumelu Foundation (TEF) as a non-profit organization in 2010. The Foundation has empowered over 10,000 African entrepreneurs across 54 African countries. The concept of Africapitalism was predicated on the belief that Africa's private sector should play a leading role in the continent's development. This is in line with the aspiration in the "Africa Agenda 2063" which envisage Africa as a continent with a strong cultural identity, common heritage, shared values and ethics. The vision further stated that this can only be achieved through the development of people-driven economy, relying on the potential of the African people, especially its youth and women.

Africapitalism is of the opinion that we cannot leave the socio-economic development of Africa to the governments, donor countries, and philanthropic organizations alone. The private sector should also be involved in the business of development. Elumelu (2019) therefore developed the concept of Africapitalism as a collaborative ideology involving several stakeholders. According to Elumelu (2019), the future we all want for ourselves as Africans is of our own making. He further listed the principles of Africapitalism to consist of the following eight principles:

Table 1: Principles of Africapitalism

Principles	Interpretation
Entrepreneurship	Unlock the power of individuals to create and grow their business ideas into successful companies.
Long-term Investments	Deploy patient capital that creates greater and broader economic value as opposed to merely the extraction of resources.
Strategic Sectors	Invest in sectors delivering a financial return as well as broader economic and social value – agriculture, power, healthcare, and finance
Development Dividend	Conduct investments and business activity in a manner that delivers financial returns to shareholders as well as economic and social benefit to stakeholders.
Value-Added Growth	Leverage locally available human and financial capital, raw material and other inputs that create longer, more integrated, and higher value regional supply chains.
Regional Connectivity	Facilitate intra-regional commerce and trade through the development of national and cross-border physical infrastructure, and the harmonization of policies and practices.
Multi-Generational Development	Focus on investments and economic growth strategies that build value for future generations.
Shared Purpose	Foster collaboration between businesses, investors, governments, academia, civil society, philanthropists, and development institutions to create conditions that will empower the African private sector to thrive.

Source: Tony Elumelu Foundation

Youth entrepreneurship also promotes and enhances innovation and resilience as it encourages young people to find new solutions, ideas and ways of doing things through experience-based learning. It can serve as an excellent way to transfer technology (White & Kenyon, 2000). Furthermore, it is also a medium for the promotion of social and cultural identity youth, as is a stronger sense of community where young women and men are valued and better connected to society. According to Jafta (2013), social entrepreneurship helps to solve socio-economic developmental problems and address the lack of social cohesion in society in the sense that it gives young people, especially marginalized youth, a sense of meaning and belonging. It shapes their identity and encourages others to treat them as equal members of society. The study seeks to establish a relationship between social entrepreneurship and youth empowerment and also to establish the relationship between social entrepreneurship and socio-economic wellbeing among youths.

### Concept of Africa Agenda 2063

Agenda 2063 is a set of initiatives proposed and currently under implementation by the African Union (AU). It was adopted at the 24<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union in Addis Ababa on the 31 January 2015. The genesis of Agenda 2063 was the realization by African leaders that there was a need to refocus and reprioritize Africa’s agenda from the struggle against apartheid and the attainment of political independence for the continent (DeGhetto, Gray & Kiggundu, 2016).

Agenda 2063 is Africa’s blueprint and master plan for transforming Africa into the global powerhouse of the future. It is the continent’s strategic framework that aims to deliver on its goal for inclusive and sustainable development. It summarizes Africa’s aspirations and goals to be achieved in order to boost economic growth and development for rapid transformation of the continent. The aspirations and goals are summary as follows:

Table 2: Aspirations and goals of Africa Agenda 2063

Aspirations	Goals
Poverty eradication through social and economic transformation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ End poverty, income inequalities and youth unemployment</li> <li>▪ Provide access to basic needs of life</li> <li>▪ Skills resolutions through technology and human capital</li> <li>▪ Provision of quality health care services</li> <li>▪ Economic transformation through manufacturing, industrialization and agricultural transformation.</li> </ul>
Integrated continent politically united based on the ideals of Pan-Africanism.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ensure unity and integration of trade, through free movement of people and capital.</li> <li>▪ Improve connectivity by rail, road, sea and air; and Information Technology.</li> </ul>
Good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ensure democratic values practices, human rights, justice and rule of law.</li> <li>▪ Build strong institutions for a development and visionary leadership at all levels.</li> </ul>
Peaceful and secure Africa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Strengthen governance, accountability and transparency.</li> <li>▪ Address threats to Africa’s peace and security.</li> <li>▪ Put in place strategies to finance security needs.</li> </ul>

Strong cultural identity, common heritage, shared values and ethics.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Restore and preserving Africa's cultural heritage, including its languages.</li> </ul>
People-driven development particularly women and youth, and caring for children.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strengthen women through gender equality and parity in all spheres of life and eliminate all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls.</li> </ul>
Africa as a strong, united and influential global player and partner.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Be a major partner in global affairs and peaceful co-existence.</li> <li>Improvement in global governance system e.g. (UN Security Council, financial institutions, global commons such as outer space);</li> <li>Respond to African priorities for growth and transformation</li> <li>Ensure the continent has the right strategies to finance its own development and reduce aid dependency.</li> </ul>

Source: Africa Union Aspiration and Goals

## Methodology

### Research design

A mixed method (quantitative and qualitative) known as triangulation was used for the study. This method helps to explain complex human behaviour using a variety of methods in order to offer a balanced explanation. In addition, it increases the credibility and validity of research findings. In essence, both primary and secondary data were used. Questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data. This was supplemented with secondary data from interview extract granted by reputable social entrepreneurs in Africa countries to support the findings of the study.

### Sampling

The population consisted of social entrepreneurs in various field such as education, health care, environmental protection, etc. Snowball sampling technique was used to select forty-five (48) respondents for the study.

### Research instrument

The instrument for the data collection for the quantitative is a structured questionnaire on a 4-point Likert's scale. The questionnaire was divided into three (3) sections as follows: section A measures social entrepreneurship, section B measures youth empowerment while section C measures socio-economic wellbeing of the youths. Validity and reliability test was also conducted to ensure the instrument was valid and reliable while ethical issues in social research were strictly adhered to. Data

obtained was analysed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation.

## Results and findings

### Hypothesis 1

**H01:** There is no significant relationship between social entrepreneurship and youth empowerment

Table 3: Pearson correlation showing significant relationship between social entrepreneurship and youth empowerment

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev	N	r	p	Remark
Social entrepreneurship	23.55	3.71	48	.69	.012	Sig.
Youth empowerment	20.32	2.49				

\*Correlation is significant at the p-value < 0.05.

It is shown in table 1, that there was a significant relationship between social entrepreneurship and youth empowerment, ( $r = .691, n = 48, p < .05$ ). The r shows a result of 0.691 which indicated that social entrepreneurship activities contributed significantly to addressing youth empowerment. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected while the alternatives hypothesis was accepted which indicated that there was a positive significant relationship between social entrepreneurship and youth empowerment.

Table 4: Pearson correlation showing significant relationship between social entrepreneurship and socioeconomic well-being

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev	N	r	P	Remark
Social entrepreneurship	23.55	3.71	48	.73	.006	Sig.
Socio-economic wellbeing	20.47	4.82				

Social entrepreneurship represents a great way for young people to earn a living especially when supported by enabling policies. It also put them in a position to meet their needs and improve their community. A practical example is a Recycling eco-business based in the Southern Suburbs of Cape Town in South Africa founded by Lynn Worsley. The

organization helps to keep the country and its communities clean, by finding a sustainable solution to the thousands of discarded plastic soft-drink bottles. This is evidence as stated by Lynn in an interview that:

*The enterprise benefits so many people along the value chain, including waste collection vehicle drivers, dump site sorters and street waste collectors, all of whom profit from having additional sources of income. The process of recycling plastic bottles not only creates employment opportunities for those most in need, but also raises community awareness of environmental concerns, keeps townships clean and contributes to mitigating climate change (Lynn, Founder of a Recycling Organization).*

In the same vein, Jafta (2013) found out that social entrepreneurship helps solve developmental problems and address the lack of social cohesion in society. They provide practical and sustainable solutions to social problems. For example, Thato Kgatlhanye, founder of Rethaka Trading, a social entrepreneur that is involved in the process of recycling school bags from plastic bags and integrating solar technology that charges during the day and transforms into light for school kids to study after dark. The recycled plastic schoolbags are not only environmentally friendly, but they also provide renewable energy light sources for young students who need to study after dark at home where electric light does not exist. The founder explained the multiple advantages provided by the social enterprise when he stated that:

*Keeping our country clean one bottle at a time - our goal is to be very focused and simple; to create sought-after up cycled products that benefit the environment and empower local women (Founder of All Women Recycling).*

## Hypothesis 2

**H<sub>0</sub>2:** There is no significant relationship between social entrepreneurship and socio-economic wellbeing among the youths

**Table 2:** Pearson correlation showing significant relationship between social entrepreneurship and socio-economic wellbeing among the youths

*\*Correlation is significant at the p-value < 0.05.*

It is shown in table 2, that there was a significant relationship between social entrepreneurship and socio-economic wellbeing among the youths, ( $r = .736, n = 48, p < .05$ ). The  $r$  shows a result of 0.736 which indicated that social entrepreneurship activities contributed significantly to addressing socio-economic wellbeing. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected while the alternative hypothesis was accepted which indicated that there was a

positive significant relationship between social entrepreneurship and socio-economic wellbeing.

Social entrepreneur has been used to achieve social cohesion and collaboration to ensure peace when there is crisis in the country. An example is the case of Lydie Hakizimana who identified the challenge of building a culture of literacy in her country, following the legacy of the tragic genocide in Rwanda and its people; she vowed to do something to change it for the better. Lydie manages 45 employees and thirty part-time distributors covering the five provinces of Rwanda. She has also added exclusive distributor deals with reputable publishing organizations. Her effort resulted in the generation of young Rwandans that have hope for a better future for their country, instead of challenges; she sees the opportunity and stated that:

*There are many problems (in Rwanda), but I see them as opportunities where entrepreneurs like me can thrive and rebuild the country. The process of recycling plastic bottles not only creates employment opportunities for those most in need, but also raises community awareness of environmental concerns, keeps township clean and contributes to mitigating climate change (Textbook Social Entrepreneur).*

Similarly, the desire to find a balance between profit and social impact whilst at the same time supporting the environment and empowering members of the community was the inspiration for the creation of social enterprise known as All Women Recycling. Its founder, Lynn Worsley, found a practical way of keeping the country and its communities clean, by finding a sustainable solution to the thousands of discarded plastic soft-drink bottles. She established the all women recycling that turned discarded plastic bottles into unique gift boxes. She created a sustainable and profitable business which helped the environment and simultaneously empowers women. Her social enterprise created a value chain which provides employment for others in the process of keeping the environment clean. She stated that:

*The enterprise benefits so many people along the value chain, including waste collection vehicle drivers, dump site sorters and street waste collectors, all of whom profit from having additional sources of income (Founder, All women Recycling).*

In the same vein, Jennifer Riria established the Kenya Women Holding that transformed the microfinance industry in Kenya in order to improve the quality of lives of women. As a result, many Kenyan women now have access to finance, previously not available to them, and they are now empowered and have their dreams fulfilled. In the world of entrepreneurship and social impact, Jennifer Riria tackled a major socio-economic challenge in Kenya, as a result was able to empower hundreds of thousands of women in the

process. On the achievement of the organization, she stated that:

*Over the last 24 years we have reached to more than 2.3 million women and their families. We have disbursed over 1.3 billion Kenyan shillings. We have products that address the concerns of women that address survival (Founder Kenya Women Holding).*

Entrepreneurship development is therefore critical to economic growth, employment generation and youth well-being.

## Discussion

The sixth aspiration of the African Union's Agenda 2063 explicitly calls for an Africa whose socio-economic development is people-centred, taking the advantage of its youth population. One of the flagship programmes which can boost Africa's economic growth, development and lead to the rapid transformation of the continent is investment in social entrepreneurship. The first hypothesis revealed that social entrepreneurship activities contributed to addressing youth empowerment. Social entrepreneurship is not only a tool for the generation of employment, development opportunities and the reduction of inequalities (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2018) but also an instrument to achieve Africa Agenda 2063. Despite the fact that governments in most Africa countries are unable to provide the needed infrastructure, social enterprises often create tailored responses to these unmet needs profitably. Through their creativity and innovation, they further strengthen social entrepreneurship activities. Furthermore, they provide a viable path for young people to earn a living and help address their communities' needs while (Zhenmin, 2019).

The second hypothesis revealed that social entrepreneurship activities contributed to socio-economic wellbeing of the youths. Social entrepreneurship been proven to be beneficial for socio-economic growth, job creation and poverty alleviation (Chiloane-Tsoka & Mmako, 2014). Whether the challenge is to find a sustainable solution to dealing with the increasing social problems in the society such as clearing of waste, recycling of waste products to dealing with educational or health issues that threaten the wellbeing of the people, social entrepreneurs are placed at a better position to find solutions and provide practical and innovative ways of creating employment which enhances their socio-economic wellbeing.

They are the catalysts for innovative solutions that addresses these challenges and to bring about new ways of thinking capable of solving many social crises impacting Africa. Their practical response is to

build strong and sustainable companies and organizations generate a host of new inventions, and radical approaches to solve many social problems on the continent. According to Liu (2021) creating pathways for youth social entrepreneurship has the potential to generate positive outcomes for the community and the society as whole. There is need for governmental support by creating enabling policies and programmes to encourage social enterprise. Social entrepreneurship therefore represents a great way for young people to earn a living, and improve the world around them. This is in line with principle of Africapitalism which is not just a call to be proactive towards the socio-economic development of Africa but also the rise of patriotic decision making towards achieving the African Union 2063 agenda.

## Recommendations

Given the significant impact of unemployment on young peoples' quality of life and social-economic wellbeing, there is need for policy intervention to address the problem. In this regard, effort should be made to promote and support social entrepreneurs. Government should remove obstacles e.g. multiple taxation, electricity that hinders the development of social entrepreneurship. Government and private sectors should provide necessary support to social entrepreneurs in order to expand their business, develop the community and enhance their wellbeing. The Africa Development Bank should liaise with other commercial banks in Africa countries and provide special loan for social entrepreneurs.

Linking youth social entrepreneurship through technologies across countries represents an opportunity to disseminate technological solutions that can improve business ideas and innovation. Social entrepreneurs should think globally and act locally. African countries should also foster a culture that supports social entrepreneurship and enables them to reach other entrepreneur that are not geographically close and encourage them to collaborate. This can be achieved through technology using online collaboration. Through this, successful social entrepreneurs can share their experience and mentor others.

## Conclusion

The study concluded that social entrepreneurship activities contributed significantly to addressing youth empowerment and that social entrepreneurship activities contributed to addressing socio-economic wellbeing among the youths. Social Entrepreneurship is like magic wand that does not only provide solution to the rising unemployment among the youths but

addresses other needs in the society, despite the inability of the government to provide an enabling environment, and infrastructure. Therefore, government should ensure that policy programmes aimed at stimulating entrepreneurial activity are put in place to address the rising youth unemployment in various African countries.

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