

# Australia needs to be a business partner with Africa – not just a donor

As tragic scenes emerged from the famine in East Africa, the Australian Government was actively seeking both a pragmatic response and broader and deeper relations with the African continent – a key focus at the recent Africa Downunder Conference in Perth during September/October.

When LIW was asked to address the Government's public inquiry into Australia's relationship with the countries of Africa in Perth earlier this year, we thought it appropriate to give a voice to the African leaders we have worked with.

"Don't develop things, develop people" was a simple, yet powerful plea from a senior government official in Tanzania. While clear in sentiment, the challenge is how best to action this request – one that sheds light on how Australia can renew its engagement with Africa at this crucial time.

Foreign Minister Kevin Rudd underlined Australia's desire to embrace a new engagement with Africa in a speech to the Executive Council of the African Union in Addis Ababa earlier this year, highlighting the challenges and interests that the two continents shared.

There is no doubt that the continent of Africa is destined to be an economic power as it develops and harnesses the many natural and cultural assets it possesses. It is a highly complex and diverse continent beset by a history of colonialism, turbulence and vast aid distribution.

With optimistic growth opportunities for Australian investment, what will be the approach of doing business with Africa beyond the immediate needs? If the higher intent seeks a true win-win, there is real potential that Australia can create a legacy in Africa that is both positive and aligned with our national value of "a fair go".

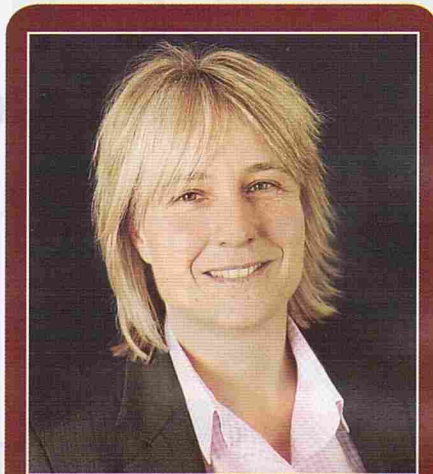
Phillip Ruddock, on the inquiry's ministerial panel, proffered that this legacy needed to be based on accountable leadership that is measured to national goals and success for both countries in their level of engagement.

It is clear then, that aid alone, to the tune of over \$1 trillion over the last 50 years, is not the only answer.

But what can Australia do so that true benefits will be delivered leading to a self-sustaining Africa?

Australia can support the building of a legacy of leadership by Africans, for Africans.

Developing local capability lies at the heart



Pia Lee is chief executive of LIW Global Leadership Consulting, based in Sydney. LIW is a global leadership consultancy which supports companies, countries and communities to achieve success by building leadership at all levels

of enhancing technical capability and innovation. Crucially, it can also reduce the potential for corruption or poor governance, which is often seen as a key part of Africa's problems.

Nigeria's first female Finance Minister, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, said: "The best way to

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help Africans today is to help them stand on their own feet."

It builds on a well-known analogy that throwing fish at the problem often makes things worse, while building the capacity to fish supports sustainable and independent success. It is a useful "and" approach that can be adopted to build strong, bilateral ties.

The question then is "How?"

A decade of working with East African leaders in the public and private sector has shown

LIW the power of aligning leaders to a common strategic goal and in building their will and skill to lead their nations to a better future.

Shifting the focus of good leadership from a few sole leaders to a much broader number within any organisation, builds a depth of capacity that can accelerate growth, opportunity and mutual success. In any organisation, clear and shared goals lead to a focused picture of the culture that will be needed to make the vision a reality and individual commitments that will create that culture.

Sustainability (and for Africa, its long, sought-after economic independence) comes when people in the country develop people, who then do the same. It's a "force multiplier effect" which builds sustainable success well beyond the initial development.

An Australian mining company illustrates perfectly the value of this approach. A mining company sent Australians to lead a project in Namibia. They worked with the local workforce but they did so in a way that would build the capacity of the people. When that company had the opportunity to take on a similar project in Malawi, they sent the Namibian team.

Australia has the skills, the experience and the culture to lead the way as a partner of Africa, not just as a donor. Along the way we will learn from Africa and benefit from its enormous human as well as mineral resources. Where better to find leaders with resilience, adaptability and the capability to do more with less than a leader from an emerging economy?

And what corporation today is not looking for leaders with those attributes?

Australia can play a crucial part in this by using the opportunity for investment and trade to develop the local capacity which will ultimately support the people of Africa.

As Okonjo-Iweala, now a director of the World Bank and an economic reformer, points out, there is another Africa that we hear less about – the Africa that is changing; the Africa of opportunity.

"No one can do it but us".