

It's time for Africa

By [Monde Mawasha](#)

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The rise of the fourth industrial revolution (FIR) in the shape of digitalisation and internet connectivity is adding intricacy to future economies and their employment outcome. It therefore has the ability to drive Africa forward. It will enable innovation, propel new business models and improve the delivery of public services.



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When looking at the FIR, it generally has a disruptive effect on all economies. However, there are three aspects which need to be considered when it comes to Africa.

Development of digital skills is pre-eminent

Africa has become more stressed by services and less dependent on commodities. The African continent must cultivate digital skills as part of transitioning its population from low-skill and low-pay jobs to high-skill and high pay jobs.

A practical example of how this could be done is highlighted in the [The future of jobs and skills in Africa](#) report, which suggests that, to prepare for the future of work, the region (Africa) must expand its high-skilled talent pool by developing future-ready curricula, focusing on Stem education - interdisciplinary approach to learning where rigorous academic concepts are coupled with real world experience.

Public private partnerships are powerful levers for development

Inclusive growth is key to Africa's fourth industrial revolution. There are three areas which African leaders need to delve into to deal with the new challenges while addressing inclusive growth.

Firstly, mobile-related technology is bridging the continent in unprecedented ways. At least 70% of the Africa's population now has access to mobile devices, which allows new opportunities for poor Africans situated in rural and informal economies.

Secondly, the internet of things and 3D printing are disrupting manufacturing, liberalising access to technology and decentralising production.

Thirdly, emerging African investors are reimagining solutions suited to the continental context. For African innovators to develop, policy makers need to provide a conducive intellectual property regime which would make it easier to do business competitively.

Industries are being rattled digitally

According to Akinwumi Ayodeji Adesina, president of African Development Bank, “One of the greatest priorities for the continent is universal electrification to allow digital technology to play its role in transforming lives”.

Mobile-phone technology it has equipped Africans with new tools for managing their businesses and households. Although Africa is moving forward in terms of mobile-phone technology it is lagging in terms of broadband speed as only 1.4% of Africans have a fixed broadband connection.

Graça Machel stated that it is crucial that the Fourth Industrial Revolution does not leave anyone behind. The three previous iterations of change left Africans behind and women in particular were abandoned. Including women will make business and common sense because women make up half of the African population and bring different skills and perceptions to bear on challenges.

In conclusion, the fourth industrial revolution can be used by Africa to become a full player in the world economy, however it must be impatient and ambitious to achieve this goal.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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