



Women, Entrepreneurship, and Economic Development in Africa

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Abstract

The development agenda in Africa is one that is shifting from a rhetoric of underdevelopment and dependency to one that is focusing on the ever-present, but oft understated, role of African people in transforming the continent's economy. In an attempt to address gender inequity and stimulate inclusive socioeconomic growth and development, women have been the target of many development initiatives in emerging economies. Several of these economic development initiatives for women are centered around financial access and entrepreneurship as avenues for inclusion and empowerment. This chapter explores the ways in which entrepreneurship and women's empowerment intersect in theory and praxis to further enable economic development in Africa. Increasingly, there are greater interventions in women's economic empowerment that happen at both micro and macro levels. Drawing on insights from scholars and practitioners that work at the intersection of women, entrepreneurship, and economic development, this chapter captures the varied ways in which these intersections ultimately synergize and affect change on the continent.

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Introduction

Investing in women is smart economics, and investing in girls, catching them upstream, is even smarter economics.

-Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala (former Managing Director of the World Bank 2009; Calkin 2018).

On International Women's Day, March 8, 2015, the then United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon stated: "Poverty and gender inequality go hand in hand. The world will never realize 100% of its goals if 50% of its people cannot realize their full potential...the post-2015 development agenda must prioritize gender equality and women's empowerment." Empowering women and girls globally has been a principal objective for the twenty-first century, particularly with regard to the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This rise in a global development rhetoric that emphasizes the empowerment of women and girls has coincided with a global rise in entrepreneurial activity (Singer et al. 2018).

The growth of entrepreneurship in emerging economies has fueled socioeconomic development in unprecedented ways. Entrepreneurial ventures in technology, agriculture, education, transportation, and other sectors have not only allowed for creative innovation and greater capital investments in African economies but have also provided greater opportunities for labor force employment. Innovations produced by entrepreneurial endeavors have also transformed economic ecosystems and helped fill institutional voids in commerce, politics, and society at large. Investments in entrepreneurial development programs in emerging economies predominantly target women as a way to combat poverty, gender inequality, and socioeconomic disparity. With the collapse of the commodity boom of the 2000s, many resource-dependent African nations and their citizens have been pushed to invent alternative ways of survival (Ekekwe 2016). Economic recession and the subsequent need to survive has ushered in a promising era of problem-solving via entrepreneurial innovation.

Africa as a region of focus has one of the highest rates of women entrepreneurs in the world (Jackson 2017). Studies that consider the role of women entrepreneurs in shaping the political economy of development on the continent tend to concentrate on the challenges facing small- and medium-scale enterprises (SMEs). While investments in microfinance and small savings cooperatives have helped alleviate poverty in a variety of low-income communities across the continent and beyond, there is a dearth of research on the role of African women investing in other African women. Most studies on the relationship between entrepreneurship and economic development in Africa highlight the role of multinational corporations, state-directed development initiatives and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in supporting women micro-entrepreneurs.

Although these varied development initiatives have led to substantial gains in terms of improving the livelihoods of many people across Africa, the portrait of development work on the continent is still starkly white and foreign. Africans and African diasporic communities invest in poverty alleviation efforts and empower their communities in a myriad of mediums, but somehow these efforts are not centered within the discourse on African political economy. Rather, knowledge produced by white North American and European scholars and practitioners tends to dominate and influence the praxis of major development agencies, including the World Bank, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and the International Monetary Fund (Easterly 2006). This lack of balanced representation of African development scholars and practitioners has consequences for research and pedagogy. It shapes the discourse on African development in ways that threaten to underemphasize the work that Africans are doing themselves to enrich the continent's engagement with the global economy. In other words, the portrait of economic development in Africa insidiously feeds into a white savior narrative that sidelines the role of African agency in transforming the continent.

This chapter draws insights from the works of various economic empowerment initiatives in several countries including Nigeria, South Africa, and Ghana, to demonstrate the power of representation in transforming sustainable development discourse and praxis. It highlights the ways in which African and African diasporic communities are changing the nature of economic development through entrepreneurial innovation. The chapter assesses the nature of the development agenda in Africa and provides a broad overview of how entrepreneurship serves as a vehicle for economic development. It then outlines women's experiences in the entrepreneurship ecosystem, exploring cases of development organizations and initiatives led by Africans such as She Leads Africa (SLA), Women Investment Portfolio Holdings (WIPHOLD), Pearl Foundation, and others. Ultimately, the chapter contributes to growing scholarship on the imperatives of development in the twenty-first century and provides a more nuanced and comprehensive account of the role of women in Africa's political economy in order to contribute to a reimagination of the world "through [Black] women's agency, knowledge, and efficacy" (Fortmann 2006, p. 192).

The Development Agenda in Africa

According to the World Bank, Africa is estimated to grow by 450 million people by 2035. The World Economic Forum on Africa notes similar population growth trends by projecting that the continent will have the largest working population of 1.1 billion by 2034 (Oranye 2018). Though many of the national economies in Africa have been experiencing increased economic growth within the past decade, the pace of economic growth is not analogous to population growth. The moderate pace of economic growth on the continent reflects a gradual pickup in growth in the region's three largest economies, Nigeria, South Africa, and Angola (World Bank 2018a). Under the direction of the chief economist for the Africa region, Albert Zeufack, the

World Bank reported that as of 2018, economic growth has rebounded in countries south of the Sahara Desert in the last decade; however, there is still a substantial need for African governments to deepen macroeconomic and structural reforms in order to achieve and sustain high levels of growth. Premised on expectations that metal and oil prices will remain stable, *Africa's Pulse*, a biannual analysis of African economies conducted by the World Bank, projects that economic growth in the region will average 3.6% between 2019 and 2020. Given the pace at which the population is expected to grow, this level of economic growth will be insufficient in the long run.

While African economies have been generating more income in the past 20 years, this income has to be shared among a growing population rising at about 2.6% per year (Chandy 2015). The juxtaposition of rapid population growth with inequivalent economic growth poses several challenges for any government. Rapid population growth causes strain on national economies including areas such as education, health, transportation, employment, energy, agriculture, and housing. A growing population without comparable growing investments in diverse sectors of the economy creates a situation where there are increased risks of crime, widespread unemployment, and poverty. Faced with these risks, African governments face an increasingly pressing need to increase investments in real estate, job creation, quality educational institutions, public health, transportation infrastructure, and agricultural innovation.

As a continent with a fast-growing population and many of the world's poorest countries, Africa can easily be depicted as a site of destitution as it has been in the past and even in the contemporary period. This has indeed been the case in popular media depictions of the continent as a region of starving children, disease-ridden communities, dispirited youth, corrupt politicians, and unstable war-torn countries (Seay 2012; Wainaina 2005). Despite the fact that these are indeed real problems in various parts of the continent (and arguably in other parts of the world as well), this depiction of Africa is incomplete and reduces its legacy to one rife with problems. This singular narrative of Africa overshadows its successes, infantilizes its populace, and oversimplifies the continent in ways that justify paternalistic stereotyping and foreign intrusion. Paternalism refers to the notion that "the actions or preferences of certain persons require interference from others, on the basis that such persons cannot be trusted to do right by themselves or others if left to their own devices" (Baker 2015, p.95; citing Van de Veer 1986). Building on Van de Veer's (1986) work on paternalism, Baker (2015) labels the rhetoric of the white Western world needing to "save" or "fix" Africa as paternalistic stereotyping. Paternalistic stereotyping by foreign aid advocates and practitioners risks the underestimation of the agency of African people. Using survey experiments, Baker (2015) empirically demonstrates that white audiences, particularly in the USA, view "the foreign poor of darker skin through a paternalistic lens that underestimates their capacities to be active agents in bringing about improvement in their own lives" (p. 106).

Underestimating the capacities of Africans to bring about positive changes on their own continent has several real consequences for development. First, it feeds into a white savior narrative reminiscent of the justifications for slavery and

colonialism. For instance, a number of colonial powers used the ideology that African societies were backward and in need of saving in order to rationalize domination over various communities. The civilizing mission underlying colonial policy intended to be “a doctrine of colonization starting from a conception of power or profit for the metropolis, but instinctively impregnated with altruism” (Crowder 1964, p. 204). The long-run negative effects of slavery and colonialism on Africa’s socioeconomic and political development, including its gendered effects, have been studied extensively (Acemoglu et al. 2001; Anunobi 2002; Ekeh 1975; House-Midamba and Ekechi 1995; Mamdani 1996; Michalopoulos and Papaioannou 2011; Nunn 2008; Ocheni and Nwankwo 2012; Rodney 1974). Similarly, neocolonial attempts to “develop” the continent without the presence of Africans as key decision-makers allow for foreign interventionist policies that may have detrimental effects for targeted African communities.

Second, the underestimation of African agency further perpetuates the subordination of African economies within the greater global economy. Frantz Fanon’s 1961 *Les Damnés de la Terre* (*The Wretched of the Earth*) interrogates the developing or “third” world’s underdog position during the cold war by emphasizing the processes of slavery and imperialism that allowed for the hegemony of world super powers. European and American opulence is “literally a scandal for it was built on the backs of slaves. . .and owes its very existence to the soil of the blood of the underdeveloped world” (Fanon 1961, p. 53). Fanon argues that developing nations should endeavor to focus on their values and methods specific to their context as opposed to being constrained by a socialist and capitalist paradigm. The implications of the imposition of this paradigm are seen in the instance of the failures of the structural adjustment programs (SAPs) of the 1980s.

Sponsored by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, the SAPs sought to enhance growth in developing countries by providing loans contingent on a set of prescribed actions. These prescribed actions included currency devaluations; privatization of public enterprises; export promotion; decreasing inflation; financial reforms; reducing government expenditure on education, health, and welfare; and several other policies geared at decreasing national debts and increasing economic growth (Konadu-Agyemang 2000). Most scholars agree that overall, the SAPs were not universally effective in the African countries that accepted them. In fact, the consensus is that, at best, the SAPs did not achieve their intended goal of enhancing economic growth and, at worst, were severely debilitating for African people and their economies (Adedeji 2002; Due and Gladwin 1991; Easterly 2001; Kanji et al. 1991; Lugalla 1995; Mkandawire and Olukoshi 1995; Mkandawire and Soludo 2003; Onimode 1992; Thomson et al. 2017). The top-down mandates of the SAPs propagated the paternalistic ideology that drives many development initiatives in Africa spearheaded by non-Africans. The failures of the SAPs fueled a growing call for “local ownership” of economic reform and for Africans to assume the leading role in defining the continent’s development agenda (Mkandawire and Soludo 2003).

Cited as a form of neocolonialism, the SAPs were not only ineffective in driving long-run economic growth and development, but they also had differential impacts on men and women. In order to reduce governments’ deficits, various features of the

reform packages, such as the shrinking of public enterprises and cutbacks in public healthcare, food subsidies, and social security programs, affected women more severely than men (Sadasivam 1997). In Tanzania, for instance, the removal of subsidies on certain agricultural products, progressive currency devaluation, and the institution of cost-sharing measures in the education and health sectors had adverse effects on women's work loads, malnutrition, poverty, and maternal mortality (Lugalla 1995). This chapter moves beyond a discussion of the effects of colonial and neocolonial initiatives on African development, to capture the ways in which Africans, and African women more specifically, spearhead the transformation of the continent on their own terms.

Entrepreneurship as a Driver of Development

Africa has the youngest population in the world (Yahya 2017). If the continent is going to develop on its own terms in a way that leads to sustainable economic growth and development, then the provision of livelihoods and job opportunities for this ever-growing population is critical. Youth account for 60% of all unemployed people in Africa (Ighobor 2013). Young women feel the burden of unemployment even more sharply than young men. The African Development Bank found that for most countries in Africa, especially those in North Africa, it was more difficult for women to get jobs than men, even when they had equivalent skills and experiences (Ighobor 2013). Entrepreneurial ventures tackle this issue of unemployment in ways that appear promising for the future of development on the continent, and women are at the forefront of this promising direction.

Despite strong Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth across the continent in the last 10 years, sustainable economic opportunities in the form of employment opportunities have lagged. Leading digital media companies such as [Africa.com](#) use the 2018 Mo Ibrahim Index of African governance to demonstrate the gap between economic growth and sustainable economic opportunity as depicted in Fig. 1 below.

Established in 2007 by the Sudanese telecommunications mogul and philanthropist, Mohammed Ibrahim, the Mo Ibrahim Index measures the performance of 54 African countries in 4 categories, 14 subcategories, and 102 indicators that make up the composite governance index over a 10-year period (2007–2018). The Mo Ibrahim Index of governance contains measures of rule of law, property rights, ease of doing business, public goods provision, and a range of other indicators that contribute to overall governance quality in various African countries. Figure 1 demonstrates the gap between GDP growth and sustainable economic opportunity trends in the last decade. Sustainable economic opportunity as an index category evaluates governments' public management, improvement of the business environment, infrastructure investments, and rural sector activities.

GDP is a monetary measure of the market value of all final goods and services produced within a specified period usually within a year. Given that Africa's population is growing significantly, the GDP growth rate captured in Fig. 1 above might be significantly mitigated. GDP per capita serves as a better indicator of

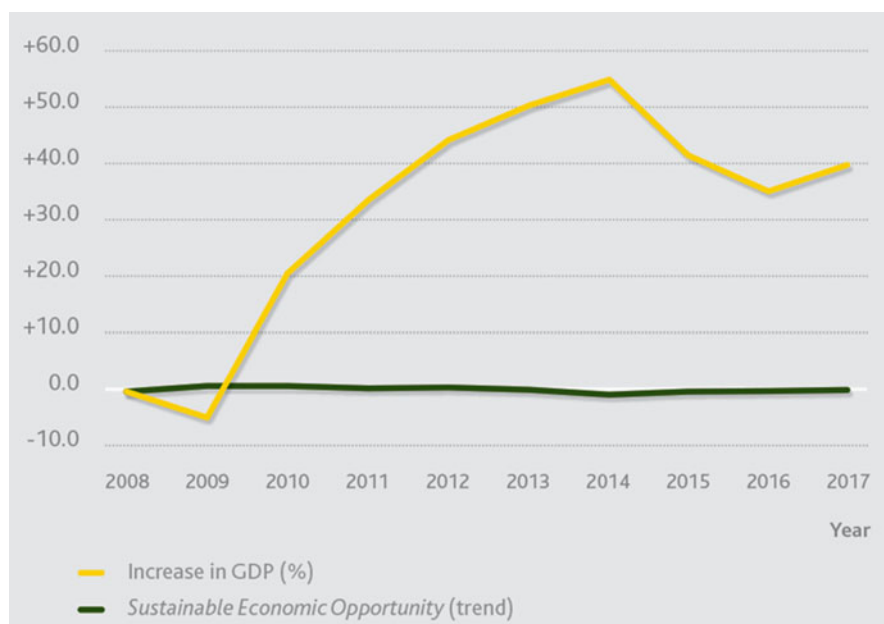


Fig. 1 Sustainable economic opportunity average trend and percent increase in GDP (2008–2017). (Source: Africa.com 2018)

economic growth because it measures the average income earned by a population, which reflects the average standard of living in a country. GDP per capita also has its limitations as it does not capture levels of economic inequality in terms of how wealth and income is distributed among different populations. It also does not capture well-being in terms of health, education, freedom, and human rights (Constanza et al. 2009). GDP per capita also does not reflect informal areas of the economy that are particularly significant when considering women in the developing world such as household work, black market transactions, and undocumented trade. Notwithstanding the deficiencies of GDP as a measure of economic growth, it is still clear that African nations, on average, are lagging in the area of sustainable economic opportunity. The economic growth that Africa has been experiencing in the last decade, mitigated or not, is not being sustained vis-à-vis population growth and satisfactory employment opportunities for this growing young population.

Several scholars cite entrepreneurship as a potential key to unlocking sustained economic activity, not only in Africa but across the world. Pinelli (2015) posits that entrepreneurship plays a significant role in job creation and provides opportunities for young people in a variety of sectors. In an annual Job Creation Survey conducted by Ernst and Young, one of the largest professional services conglomerates in the world, they found that in 2015, 77% of world leading entrepreneurs planned to increase the size of their workforce, compared to 29% of large corporations (Pinelli 2015). In this same survey, they found that 65% of young people surveyed around

the world had the desire to run their own businesses at some point in their careers, and these ambitions were even stronger in emerging economies. From Cameroun, to South Africa, to the USA, and the European Union, scholars and practitioners are presenting quantitative and qualitative data that developing entrepreneurial ecosystems are particularly important for tackling youth unemployment (Hombert et al. 2014; Ganescu 2014; Mobit and Mbella 2016). Though not a panacea for economic challenges in various contexts, entrepreneurial activity is an important aspect of national and regional economic growth and development. Still, high levels of unemployment persist in many countries in Africa, due to various factors that hinder the growth of entrepreneurship and are particularly disadvantageous for women.

Women and Entrepreneurship

There are several factors that affect entry and growth in the entrepreneurial space. These factors include but are not limited to capital access, possession of business skills and know-how, mentorship, social barriers, bureaucratic red tape, corruption, and adequate infrastructure to facilitate businesses such as electricity, transport systems, and Internet access. For women in particular, these factors are exacerbated when patriarchal legislation and the lack of support services, such as childcare, are taken into consideration. The Social Institutions and Gender Index, which measures discriminatory social institutions through formal and informal laws, social norms, and practices, captures several dimensions of gender discrimination and inequity such as unequal land and property rights, early marriage, violence against women, as well as unequal inheritance rights. There is still legislation that bars women from owning property, which leaves them without the collateral needed to secure loans to start or expand businesses. There are also laws that require women to obtain their husband's signature in order to receive a loan (Parker 2009). Even beyond some of these gender-biased legislations, there are also social norms that constrain women's access to resources that would allow them to start and expand businesses whether formally or informally. With shrinking yet persistent gender gaps in formal education and skills, women have limited access to capital and assets and often access necessary financial tools through the men in their family (Diop 2017). In Malawi, for instance, a survey found that about 23% of women entrepreneurs used their spouse's savings to start their business compared to only about 2% of men entrepreneurs (Campos et al. 2015).

In order for businesses and business owners to thrive, they must first survive in the economic ecosystem they inhabit. Financial institutions and private equity funds help contribute to this economic ecosystem, while the government controls the political environment where entrepreneurs operate (Forbes Africa 2017). Many African women do not have access to the entrepreneurial ecosystem that includes capital access and adequate training due to the legacy of historical marginalization that barred women's access to formal education. The ways in which this marginalization affects women's abilities to start and expand their businesses also materialize their abilities to access financial institutions. A 2014 Findex report indicated that

only about 30% of sub-Saharan African woman had access to a bank account, though the spread of mobile money is closing the gender gap in financial inclusion in many countries (El-Zoghbi 2018). According to Mizrahi and Fraser-Moleketi (2015), the African Gender Equality Index had listed limited access to finance as the biggest constraint for women entrepreneurs especially when it came to business expansion. In Uganda, for instance, women own 38% of registered enterprises but only have access to 9% of formal finance. Women comprise 70% of the overall labor force within Africa. Thus, constraints to women's access to economic opportunities severely constrain society's economic potential.

Despite the barriers enumerated above, there has been a large growth in women's entrepreneurial activity in Africa. A third of all businesses across Africa are owned by African women (Mizrahi and Fraser-Moleketi 2015; Bardasi et al. 2007), and sub-Saharan Africa has been lauded as the region with the world's highest rate of women entrepreneurs at 27% (Toesland 2018). In places like Uganda, women were just as likely as men to start a business. Uganda and Botswana were also named as having the highest percentage (about 35%) of women-led businesses in the world (Toesland 2018; Wee Sile 2017). Besides these promising facts, it has also been found that women in emerging markets were driven primarily by a necessity to start their own businesses, as opposed to the desire to pursue a promising business opportunity (MasterCard 2017) (Fig. 2).

Even with the high rate of women starting micro and macro businesses, there are still challenges that make it difficult for women business owners to thrive. In order to be a successful entrepreneur, the sociopolitical and economic environment must be supportive, but for women, oftentimes traditions and cultural norms surrounding gender (many of which are relics of the colonial period) hold them back from engaging in formal entrepreneurship. Qualitative studies on the experiences of women entrepreneurs find that entrepreneurs not only have to prove their product but also themselves to their potential investors. Because of the male-dominated field of entrepreneurship, gender stereotypes tend to portray women as being incapable of starting their own businesses. This, of course, is not unique to the African context but is a global phenomenon. Oftentimes, African women in other contexts are not encouraged to become businesswomen or breadwinners due to threats to patriarchal structures that assert certain culturally ingrained gender roles in the household and beyond. To help lower the barriers to entry for African women in the economic sphere and even in other sectors, development scholars, policy makers, and practitioners have developed several initiatives aimed at empowering women. These initiatives are promising to bring about systemic changes to the political economy of Africa and beyond. The brief case examples presented in this chapter build upon interviews, life experiences, and online research to explore instances in which African women are creating and expanding the entrepreneurial ecosystem as a way to contribute to economic development in Africa and its diaspora.

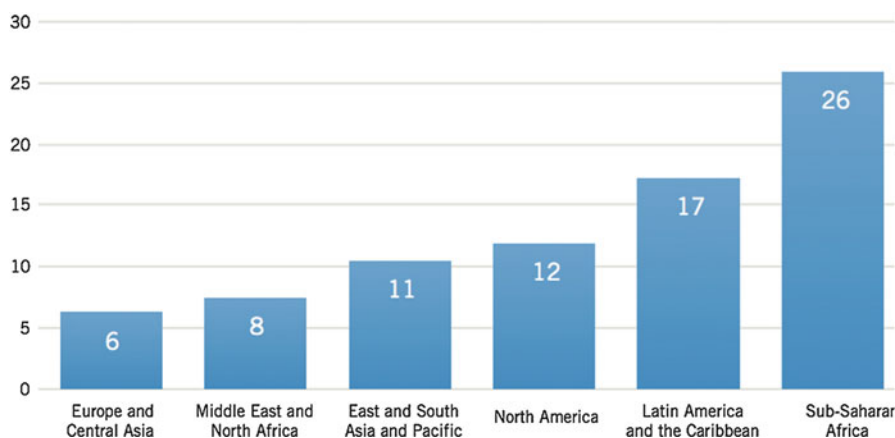


Fig. 2 Regional averages for female total entrepreneurial activity (in % of female population aged 18–64) GEM 2015–2016 (Singer et al. 2018). (Source: Global Entrepreneurship Monitor 2016–2017 Global Report)

Filling the Gap: Creating Entrepreneurial Ecosystems

In Africa and across the diaspora, those who are revolutionizing the economic space by filling institutional voids have diverse profiles. Coined by Tarun Khanna in his survey of business opportunities in emerging markets, institutional voids refer to gaps or inefficiencies that exist within institutions that should facilitate the functioning of markets in ways that allow buyers and sellers to efficiently come together (Khanna and Palepu 2010). Filling institutional voids in ways that not only help create more job opportunities but that help African women enter and expand their prowess in the entrepreneurial space is noteworthy. There are several organizations and programs led by African women that are expanding the entrepreneurial ecosystem by empowering other African women economically and otherwise. Some of these initiatives focus specifically on women entrepreneurs, while others serve women in ways that support their professional development even outside the entrepreneurial space. A select few development initiatives that are expanding the entrepreneurial ecosystem by providing African women entrepreneurs the skills, networks, and support that they need to enter the entrepreneurial space are featured below in order to provide a sense of their work and how these initiatives essentially enable productive entrepreneurship for others.

She Leads Africa (SLA) is a for-profit social enterprise that helps women across the continent in their entrepreneurial ventures and professional development. Co-founded by Yasmin Belo-Osagie and Afua Osei, SLA serves over 500,000 women by providing professional webinars, advice newsletters, and in-person trainings (Blodgett 2018). Operating in several countries in Africa and beyond, but predominantly in Nigeria and South Africa, SLA is an online and offline community that

additionally provides mentorship, digital marketing workshops, and networking opportunities for African women interested in taking their enterprises to the next level and think creatively and strategically about their career objectives. Given the breadth of their services, some of which are free, they target women from different socioeconomic backgrounds, particularly focusing on educated and ambitious millennial women. They have lifestyle expos, innovation festivals, accelerator pitch programs, and a host of pan-African events that aim to connect ambitious people and provide them with resources that they need in order to lead successful personal and professional lives. Following the success of their inaugural pitch competition for start-up enterprises in 2014, they found that mentorship and finance were the two largest areas of need for women interested in business and other areas of professional growth. As mentioned earlier, the rates for female entrepreneurship are high in many African countries compared to the rest of the world. Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest rate of female entrepreneurship in the world at 27%, but most of these businesses tend to be one-woman enterprises with no employees and low growth expectations (Prisco 2015). SLA is tapping into this market to ensure that women entrepreneurs in Africa and across the diaspora are getting the information, training, finance, and mentorship that they need to grow professionally and otherwise.

Women Investment Portfolio Holdings Limited (WIPHOLD) is an investment firm owned by Black women in South Africa that focuses on acquiring and building strategic investments in various sectors of the economy that offer value and returns that drive their broad-based empowerment initiatives. The company was started in 1994 with the official end of apartheid by four Black women (Louisa Mojela, Gloria Serobe, Nomhle Canca, and Wendy Luhabe) who wanted to economically empower Black South African women in ways that were denied to them under the apartheid regime. Operating out of Johannesburg for over 24 years, WIPHOLD establishes beneficiaries as direct shareholders of their company through the creation of WIPHOLD Investment Trust and WIPHOLD NGO. The NGOs they support are those that mainly serve Black women and children. They invest financially in women's advocacy and educational groups and also have a scholarship program for high-achieving students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. They are dedicated to sustainable economic empowerment of Black women through strong shareholder returns and strategic investments in agriculture, mining, cement manufacturing, and financial services. They are active in 9 provinces in South Africa with over 200,000 beneficiaries and over 3 billion South African rand (over 200 million US dollars) invested on behalf of stakeholders.

SheaMoisture Community Commerce Program is a sector under Sundial Brands company that connects women micro-entrepreneurs that produce beauty products from natural ingredients such as shea butter in Ghana with a global market. Co-founded by Richelieu Dennis and his mother, Mary Dennis, Sundial Brands is a leading hair and skin care manufacturer that produces SheaMoisture and Nubian Heritage products from ethically sourced, fair trade, and certified organic ingredients. The company's approach to producing beauty and wellness products from natural West African ingredients stems from the co-founders' Liberian family traditions, which they passed down over four generations. Through natural beauty

commerce, Sundial Brands connect African women with women of the African diaspora. They have intensive entrepreneurship trainings and fellowships that target minority women executives in the USA as well as young potential entrepreneurs in Rwanda and a number of other countries. Through its community commerce purpose-driven business model, Sundial Brands creates opportunities for sustainable social and economic empowerment through its supply chain and communities in the USA and Africa, focusing on entrepreneurship, women's empowerment, education, and wellness. Their trademark community commerce program parallels but differs from the multitude of microfinance initiatives that predominantly target women in the developing world as a way to help alleviate poverty through small, low-interest loans coupled with small savings groups. Via the community commerce program, the company partners with women cooperatives in Africa. Upfront, they give them the revenue that is projected to be made from product sales. This advance revenue is then used in producing the SheaMoisture products. When the products are ready for distribution, the company then provides a 10% premium to the women who work in these cooperatives, and this premium is then invested in social infrastructure such as education and health. The goal of this model of economic empowerment is to provide a pathway to sustainable development for the women who source and process the natural ingredients used to create the SheaMoisture and Nubian Heritage body and hair products. Since 2013, Shea Moisture has invested over \$820,000 in 15 cooperatives within their supply chain network in Ghana and Jamaica (Bates 2017).

Pearls Africa Foundation is a nonprofit social enterprise that empowers young girls and women in underserved communities in Nigeria through training in technology, entrepreneurship, mentorship, skills acquisition, and internship placements. Founded by Abisoye Ajayi-Akinfolarin, the foundation is a community that encourages and supports young women interested in careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. With the objective of adding 20,000 new female computer programmers to Nigeria's tech industry by 2020, Pearls Africa Foundation equips program participants with functional skills in STEM but also helps them develop confidence and skills in leadership and public speaking (Unah 2018). Among the myriad of services that they offer, their flagship project, Girls Coding, is a hands-on learning program that builds digital literacy skills for young girls aged 10–17 years old. They train girls and young women in after-school programs, slums, and camps for internally displaced people, educating them on computer skills, robotics, programming using HTML, Python, Java, and other programming language, and connecting program participants with female mentors and technology companies for internships. Since 2012, the foundation has provided free services for over 400 girls from underserved communities, helping them gain technical skills, exposure to careers in STEM, and the confidence to transform their lives and think creatively about solving community problems (Toner 2018).

There are several other noteworthy initiatives that are revolutionizing development in Africa in ways that are encouraging innovation in various sectors of the economy. Many of these initiatives are connected to the information and communication technology sector and are started by Africans living in Africa as well as Africans of the diaspora. For instance, African Technology Foundation is a Silicon

Valley-based organization started in 2014 by Nigerian American, Stephen Ozoigbo (Fosco 2018). The foundation provides African technology start-ups with access to the necessary knowledge, tools, and resources that empower them to bring their ideas to the market and build sustainable businesses. They have a range of programs and initiatives that promote the acceleration of the incubation and acculturation of African start-ups and enterprises and enhanced business management and strategic collaborations across the diaspora. In terms of empowering women in technology, they support governments, NGOs, and foundations in developing Gender Action Plans that leverage technology in improving the livelihoods of women and girls in Africa and around the globe. Similar initiatives such as African Women in Technology (AWIT) founded by Anie Akpe host seminars and mentorship programs for women in Kenya, Ghana, Morocco, Mozambique, and other locations, educating them on how to become tech industry leaders.

Targeting a younger demographic, Women Technology Empowerment Center (WTEC), founded by Oreoluwa Somolu Lesi in 2008, also engages in similar work by providing young boys and girls with the knowledge, experience, and mentoring needed to imagine careers in diverse fields. They have a series of after-school STEM clubs and residential as well as nonresidential technology camps in different parts of Nigeria. Many of these different initiatives partner with foundations and grant agencies in order to provide free or heavily subsidized services in order to ensure that their services are accessible to a wide demographic. In the same vein, organizations such as African Women Power (AWP) network serve as vehicles for the creation of strategic linkages between investors and women-led businesses. Founded by Mary Olushoga, the AWP network organizes trainings, tech immersion programs, and pitch competitions for young entrepreneurs in order to challenge the narrow microfinance framework that pervades foreign development initiatives that target women in Africa. Rather, AWP and many other African women-led organizations are trying to break the mold by targeting African women as innovative job creators and not just as micro-entrepreneurs or recipients of aid.

The future of development in Africa, whether political, social, or economic, does not depend on the traditional foreign aid industry. Rather, sustainable development comes from African communities. What the so-called developing world needs is not aid but partnerships and equitable engagement in the global economy, and many of the aforementioned initiatives are aiming to do just that. The added value of being African-owned and women-led initiatives shifts conventional development rhetoric and praxis in ways that encourage solidarity and African self-determination. Representation within the ranks of those making decisions about development theory and praxis matters for the empowerment of marginalized communities. Empowerment from an identity standpoint matters for development in answering the questions: whom do development initiatives target, and who gets to make decisions about how targeted populations are empowered? This notion of the potency of representation in building solidarity and empowerment for various disenfranchised communities is captured by Indigenous Australian scholar and activist, Lilla Watson: "If you have come to help me, you are wasting your time. . . But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together" (Watson 2007, p. 47).

Conclusion: Envisioning Africa's Economy in the Twenty-First Century

The nature of development in Africa is changing. The ways in which women are playing key roles in entrepreneurship and economic development more broadly are creating expanded opportunities for innovation. More and more men and women are contributing to the entrepreneurial ecosystem in ways that not only create opportunities for innovation but also are disrupting the narrative of African development to allow for Africans to be lead agents of change on their own continent. This chapter has captured elements of this shifting narrative by examining the intersection of women, entrepreneurship, and economic development in Africa. Public intellectuals and scholars have posited that society is currently in the fourth industrial revolution. The fourth industrial revolution builds upon the digital revolution and is characterized by a myriad of new technologies that blur the lines between physical, digital, and biological worlds (Schwab 2016). Digitization, artificial intelligence, and other technological advancement are having novel impacts on the global economy. As technology disrupts traditional modes of commerce, African women are acting as game changers in innovation by making the technology space and economic realm more accessible and inclusive. This is particularly important given that many traditional modes of economic engagement are becoming obsolete and the need for critical thinking, creativity, emotional intelligence, and digital skills is rising in the fourth industrial revolution (Samans and Zahidi 2017). There are several programs and initiatives that set out to ensure that young girls and women are no longer marginalized from these creative economic spaces by providing the access, information, tools, and support needed for various individuals and communities to be empowered economically and otherwise. Notwithstanding current limits to entrepreneurship development in terms of persistent inequality and poor infrastructure, the future of development in Africa and across the globe is promising, and African women are key players in this future. It would therefore be worthwhile for future studies to consider the downstream effects of these emerging trends. How does technology reduce barriers for women and girls in terms of entering and progressing in various spheres of society? To what extent does women's increased participation in the economic sphere affect the political and social spheres? These are important questions for consideration as the nature of economic development in Africa transforms and as African women continue to work as key players in this transformation.

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