

Drivers of Change

African vision rewarded

Winner — Government category
Sindiso Ngwenya

Jiang Alipo

Sindiso Ngwenya, the secretary general of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern African States (Comesa), is a driving force behind a new and exciting move — creating what will be Africa's largest free-trade area.

He has been instrumental in bringing together the region's three economic blocs — Comesa, the East African Community and the Southern African Development Community — into a tripartite association.

This is resulting in the three communities working rapidly towards trading as a single market of about 600-million people, leading to more political stability and prosperity.

Ngwenya says his ultimate goal is "to merge the three regional economic communities and contribute to the establishment of an African Economic Community".

Africa has been struggling to establish a viable economic group since the 1950s. In post-independence Africa a number of regional integration entities were formed — there were at least five between 1975 and 1985.

The main challenge has always been for the groups to work together, because most countries in Africa already belong to at least two regional groups on a continent with more than 10 regional groups.

Ngwenya is working to bring together the three biggest groups in the Southern African region, with 19 member states.

He is the third secretary general since Comesa was transformed from the Preferential Trade Area in 1994, 13 years after its founding.

He was appointed in June 2008 and has more than 27 years of service in the industry, at the regional and multilateral levels. He played a key role in the design of the Comesa Customs Union and Common Investment Area.

He was also part of the team that crafted the Comesa Treaty and

oversaw the transformation of the Preferential Trade Area into Comesa in 1994.

Before his appointment as Comesa secretary general, Ngwenya spent 10 years as assistant secretary general in charge of programmes, responsible for overseeing their development and implementation. And he has played a role in turning the secretariat into a dynamic and implementation-oriented institution.

But it is his role in getting the three competing secretariats to reach an agreement for the benefit of the subcontinent that is seen as a major accomplishment. They have agreed on a programme to harmonise trade arrangements, to the free movement of business people and on a joint implementation of inter-regional infrastructure programmes.

The biggest commitment was the agreement that the three should start to merge into a single regional economic community.

However, according to Ngwenya, a quick realisation of the tripartite vision has one big challenge — the inability of member states to build political consensus with stakeholders in each country.

"This is because the involvement of civil society and the private sector in regional integration has not been robust," he says.

Nevertheless, he has faith in the

support of the governments involved, saying that they have strongly supported it in political pronouncements, as evidenced by the summit declarations of the three regional organisations.

"At a practical level, the governments are undertaking consultations with different stakeholders," he says.

He believes the people in the region are ready for one big economic group "because the countries have espoused a pragmatic approach of economic integration as opposed to that of establishing a political federation or the united states of Africa".

Ngwenya's mission is to achieve sustainable social and economic development and to uplift the living standards of Africans through regional cooperation and integration, transforming and modernising the economies of Comesa member states, individually and collectively.

The judges singled him out as a driver of change for African economic development.

"His dedication to poverty eradication and equitable development in Africa through enabling access to broader markets by businesses in the region is commendable," the judges said. "Through his leadership, a future is being crafted for Africa that looks promising."



Sindiso Ngwenya: Driving free trade in Africa

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Corporate Social Investment

When a company has to choose where to target its corporate social investment, the best place to start is by identifying sustainable projects for a better future. Cell C, one of South Africa's top cellular operators, invests in the youth, ensuring that the country's future will be in safe, educated hands.



Cell C is synonymous with Take a Girl Child to Work Day®, which has captured the imagination of thousands of South African businesses and the public sector in the last eight years. The programme demonstrates the success of Cell C's commitment to creating a "multiplier effect" with its CSI investment. In 2010, however, Cell C's flagship CSI project had to be reviewed due to the extended public strike. Cell C immediately identified alternative solutions and opportunities to help the 2010 matriculants by introducing its Matric Revision Programme.

Take a Girl Child to Work Day®

Eight years ago Cell C instituted "Take a Girl Child to Work Day®" to help fill in the gender skills gaps by partnering with other business, government and other organisations to provide girls in Grade 10 to 12 with the opportunity to spend a day at "work". This initiative has become Cell C's biggest collaborative corporate social investment initiative and has since inception established over 700 partnerships with companies, government departments and civil society organisations that have participated in the project, hosting an estimated 500 000 girls at their various places of work.

Gender equality remains a challenge that requires not only the institutionalization of anti-discriminatory measures, but also targeted interventions that create a platform for dialogue and social change. Take a Girl Child to Work Day® is one such intervention.

Matric Revision Programme

Instead of postponing Take a Girl Child to Work Day® indefinitely, Cell C as the possibilities provider, altered the campaign to assist grade 12 learners in bridging the learning and exams preparation gap through a matric revision and supplementary programme.

The initiatives, fully-funded and overseen by Cell C, was rolled out to 67

schools in seven provinces that were going to participate in the Take a Girl Child to Work Day®. The programme, run by the Maths Centre and Star Schools in the form of Saturday revision classes and after-school tuition classes focusing on two subjects per school — that schools needed the most assistance with for revision. The schools received learning material, such as workbooks, and were clustered to assist with resource-sharing. The educators received on-site training and support in running the classes to ensure the sustainability of the programme.

Router Schools Connectivity

As part of its new super fast network, Cell C introduced a special connectivity project for schools that are part of its corporate social investment programme. Ten schools were identified to receive a free modem, a speed stick and five-gigabyte data bundle allowance per month for a whole year. The availability of high-speed internet in the project schools is intended to provide the schools and learners with easy and free access to internet-based learning resources and support materials.

Mobile Learning

With an estimated 70% of the South African population now owning a cellphone, cellular technology is uniquely placed to offer learning opportunities to the masses. Mobile learning is an inventive solution that is designed to provide support to existing educational resources and to introduce new learning opportunities through a device that is almost universally accessible: the humble cellphone.

Cell C, is a partner in a mobile mathematics learning pilot programme initiated in 2009 that is targeted at grade 10 learners within selected schools in four provinces. The project provides maths support to learners via a mobisite that they can access using their cell phones. The project's main focus is on active learning through delivering interactive content from the grade 10 maths curriculum that provides learning through theory, exercises, tutoring, peer-to-peer support, as well as competitions, tests and self-assessment. The aim is to have highly motivated grade 10 learners chatting with friends and doing maths on their mobiles, even out of school, during weekends and holidays — testing themselves to continually improve their scores and competing with their peers.

Girl Achiever Career Boot Camp

Cell C's CSI has always included an element of upliftment aimed specifically at girls, who have traditionally been disadvantaged in pursuing their career aspirations. This year Cell C rewarded the top 100 girls who entered its annual Take a Girl Child to Work Day® Writing Competition with a special career "boot camp" in Cape Town. The grade 10 to 12 girls were selected from over 4000 entries that were received and benefited from information, creative and fun filled workshops focusing on career preparation, opportunities and life skills.

The aim, said Cell C was to "help the girls to recognise their abilities, strengths,



embrace their unique qualities, to learn about career opportunities available to them in line with their subject choices and areas of interest, and to believe in their capacity to be future leaders".

To spread the impact as widely as possible, the boot camp was made available via a mobisite and Facebook. This enabled the boot camp content and experience to be shared with over 8,000 other girls across the country.

Guiding principles

The programmes outlined above, are just a part of Cell C's social investment, which aims of all to contribute towards positive change in the country, based on a strategy that is aligned to its business imperatives, government's national priorities and the Millennium Development Goals.

Cell C's focus areas are:

- Education (grade 7 to 12 school level education)
- Development of girls and women
- HIV/Aids

Being one of the top cellular network operators in the country, Cell C continues to contribute towards bringing maximum benefit to communities by leveraging its expertise and resources to support education and other social development initiatives. The company aims to maintain a conducive operating environment by building strategic partnerships with relevant government, corporate and civil society organisations.

