



Partnering for Development in Africa

By Semere Solomon
April 2021



0767-804659 / 0719-200055

OFISI YA SERIKARI YA MATAA WA SANDALI

UWAZO MWAUACHA
UWAZO HITAJI BARUA
YA SERIKATI MATAA
UWAZO KUPITA KWA
MJIUMBE AKUP
TIE BARUA YA UTAN
ULISHO BILA YA O
YA MJIUMBE
HUDUMA



The world has witnessed major social, economic and political transformation across Africa over the last 25 years. These changes are accentuated by rapid demographic shifts, globalization, the emergence of new technologies and networks, and the rising expectations of a predominantly young population.

During this time, Creative Associates International has been working to partner with communities to ease the effects these transitions and changes have caused, and support and build a foundation upon which the citizens of the oldest continent on earth can stand with relative assurance that it is strong and they are safe.

What is Partnership?

It may be easier in this context to talk about what partnership is not, rather than what it is. Partnering is not teaching. It's not lecturing, forcing, imposing, restricting, dominating or monopolizing. The nature of a partnership is that participants work together, respectfully, and neither is more important or has more authority than the other. Embracing this definition is the key to change and its partner, progress.

Africa: The Good

Africa boasts of immense natural resources — fertile land, rivers, lakes, minerals and fossil fuels to name a few. It prides itself on its young and energetic population and on having a multitude of sociocultural formations, traditions, and governance structures that date back thousands of years. It entertains a variety of social values worth preserving. Its vast and virgin forests are major tourist attractions.

Positive Changes in Africa

Globalization has created opportunities for Africa to connect to the outside world as is the case to the outside world to connect with Africa. The expansion of access to the internet and affordable mobile connections, the growing use of social media, mobility across the globe, increased inclusion in international finance and more have provided opportunities for exposure and exchange of learning. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) plays a major role in Africa's transformation.

Increasing Participation in a Growth Agenda

An emerging vibrant civic society and other non-state organizations in Africa mean governments are no longer the sole actors in framing the development agenda. Nongovernmental organizations, the business community, civic societies, religious institutions, individual champions of peace, philanthropic organizations, renowned leaders in the art and music communities, and academic and research institutions, among others, have made themselves heard and have seen their ideas put into action.

Communities, People Fuel Change

According to the World Bank, six of the world's fastest-growing economies over the period 2014 to 2017 were in sub-Saharan Africa. These countries — Ethiopia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Mozambique, Tanzania and Rwanda — all have one thing in common: Their citizens are not waiting for the government to provide them with a better future. People are finding ways to survive through their own hard work and ingenuity. They are opening small businesses in cities and towns in rural and urban areas, and the government can no longer stand in their way.



Africa: Challenges

According to the World Bank Group, as much as 58 million people (almost 5% of the continent's population) is at risk of falling into extreme poverty due to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. The international poverty line is defined as living US\$1.90 per day. The under-5 mortality rate for Africa has fallen from 85 deaths per 1,000 in 2015 to 76 deaths per 1,000 in 2018, which is an encouraging sign, but still double the global average of 38. Likewise, health outcomes remain the worst in the world. Fragile states, those experiencing ongoing conflict and those in post-conflict situations will continue to demand attention across the region and challenge the development agenda.

Shrinking Economies

Growth in sub-Saharan Africa is predicted to fall to -3.3% in 2020 as a result of COVID-19 pushing the region into its first recession

in 25 years. Nigeria's real GDP contracted by 6.1% year-over-year in the second quarter of 2020. South Africa saw its real GDP contract by 17.1% year-over-year in the second quarter of 2020. Angola, sub-Saharan Africa's second-largest oil producer after Nigeria, saw its economy contract by 1.8% year-over-year in the first quarter of 2020. The pandemic could have also driven up to 40 million people into extreme poverty in Africa in 2020. The continent faces rising and extreme economic disparity. This is more worrisome since, as recently found by the International Monetary Fund, income inequality is strongly linked to gender inequality.

Violence and Religious Extremism

The threat of religious extremism worsens by the day. Residents of Nigeria, Somalia, Chad, Central African Republic and Mozambique face daily disruptions to their lives. In some cases, these situations are developing into humanitarian crises characterized by loss of livelihood, loss of family members in conflict, a breakdown of social fabric and community support systems, exposure to varying levels of direct and indirect violence, pressures on the education and health systems hosting internally displaced persons, and ingrained perceptions that may cause increased tension, stigma and harm when a growing number of people arrive in a community seeking refuge and assistance.

Authoritarian Regimes Stand in the Way of Progress

Another challenge worth mentioning is the insatiable appetite of some African leaders to stay in power indefinitely. Recent attempts to extend presidential terms from two to three or even four terms have resulted in increased political tension and dissatisfaction on the part of African citizens. This development invites instability. Burundi, Uganda, Djibouti, Zimbabwe and Rwanda are cases in point.

Creative's Legacy in Africa

Creative Associates International is one of the leaders in implementing holistic development programs across Africa. From supporting education and economic growth to helping communities transition from conflict to peace, Creative engages communities in developing and implementing projects that improve their lives.

By using evidence-based methodologies and aligning with host country development objectives, Creative builds local talent and improves systems that ultimately ensure that the mission continues long after the project has formally ended. Its approach emphasizes consultation, building trust and setting measurable and achievable goals. The organization embraces community ownership, engages marginalized groups, shares best practices and promotes good governance, among other pillars of proven development approaches.



With more than three decades of experience throughout Africa, Creative has developed the tools, partnerships and network of experts that allow it to quickly and successfully implement projects that make a difference.

Creative’s multi-pronged approach toward development is inspired by its devotion to creating “stable neighborhoods, communities and regions that can develop effective institutions to provide for their people, enabling them to overcome hardship and live peaceful and fulfilling lives.”

Economic development in Africa is linked to improving society by equitably and fairly distributing wealth accumulated over time. Without growth, large populations will not be able to escape poverty. This calls for narrowing the gap between the rich and the poor majority.

Two prominent economists argue that while it is imperative to focus on efficient resource allocation, it is critical for a country to also focus on the economic, social and institutional mechanisms needed to bring about rapid and large-scale improvements in the lives of their populations.

Creative maintains that Africa does not have to re-invent the wheel to clear the path to economic development.

Creative Invests in People

Creative partners with communities to support quality education. Creative-implemented education programs have ushered in better learning opportunities and outcomes for millions of school-aged children and young adults across Africa.

Creative’s holistic “whole child, whole teacher, whole school” approach means projects address issues not just with students, but also with the system. By using this approach, Creative’s efforts in South Sudan, Benin, Liberia, Morocco, Mozambique, Nigeria, Tanzania, Uganda, Somalia, Mozambique, Ethiopia and

Zambia have brought governments and communities together to increase access to quality education and build the systems to support it, even in the most dangerous locales.

Violent extremists are causing significant destruction to regions around the continent. In Nigeria, for example, more than 2.5 million people — almost half of them school-aged children — have been displaced by violence. Working in cooperation with state authorities, civil society and communities, Creative’s USAID-funded programs in Nigeria and Somalia provide basic education, psychosocial support and safe learning environments for displaced children, including girls ages 6 to 17 who are especially at risk. The community-anchored, locally driven project establishes non-formal learning centers, trains facilitators, institutes appropriate curriculum and monitors student progress. With this model, communities can set up centers quickly and efficiently — without sacrificing a certified quality education.

Local Focus for Regional Stability

Regional collaboration is necessary to:

- Promote trade
- Fight environmental degradation
- Neutralize extremism
- Combat human and sex trafficking
- Combat corruption
- Develop a mechanism to pre-empt unconstitutional ways of grabbing power

It is in the interest of the developed world to support Africa’s economic growth. It helps ensure regional stability, promotes economic cooperation and enhances economic growth. Jim Yong



Kim, the Former President, World Bank Group maintains that strong economic growth in developing countries was an engine for the global economy following the 2008-09 financial crisis. He also argues that a global fight against the threat of climate change is a requisite for progress in the global economy. The growth and prosperity of any country is at risk when violence and the factors that drive it are not peacefully resolved. An unrest in one corner of the globe is likely to trigger unnecessary consequences in other corners of the world, e.g. mass migration.

Partnering with Respect

During its four decades around the world, Creative has used good development practices and experiences to shape its work in bringing much-desired peace to communities. Creative has designed and implemented a host of activities aimed at countering violent extremism throughout Africa which focus on denying violent groups the enabling environment upon which they depend. These programs work at the individual, community, national and regional levels, supporting communities addressing the conditions that “push” people toward violent groups. It advises governments on building the framework necessary to challenge extremist ideologies in a holistic and rights-centered way.

Its efforts also reach out to those most vulnerable with alternate messages of peace, hope and opportunity. In northern Cameroon and northern Nigeria, for example, Creative is working with communities threatened by Boko Haram and IS to strengthen local assets and build resilience against violent extremist recruitment.

The programs are agile and locally driven, adapting to the dynamic challenges posed by the threat of violent extremism and challenging the narrative of extremist groups. Grassroots activities focus on:

- Improving communities
- Mitigating conflict
- Reducing perceptions of marginalization
- Addressing youth grievances
- Strengthening community cohesion

Creative’s USAID-funded Partnerships for Peace project is helping West African institutions, governments and civil society to more effectively counter violent extremist threats in the region. The network helps these groups develop long-term, evidence-based strategies to stabilize conflicts and engage and serve at-risk com-



that are often excluded. These programs holistically incorporate young people into desirable market opportunities within competitive value chains, and catalyze youth to build their own futures as innovators, farmers, entrepreneurs and leaders.

Creative partners with countries emerging from crisis or conflict to rebound and stabilize with programs that promote resilience, facilitate market-based recovery, improve productivity and build capacity. By helping small businesses, small farmers and others in the private sector make better decisions, boost skills and gain financing, Creative helps them become more competitive and more successful.

Combating poverty is an area Creative has worked on by supporting the development of sound economic policies that could trigger economic growth. Allowing the poor access to resources that would allow them to generate capital is an area that has proven effective in alleviating poverty. Creative partners with poor communities to help them access funding to start their own small businesses. The West Africa Trade and Investment Hub projects seeks to improve private sector competition in West Africa. By co-investing with the private sector and other organizations such as research institutions, the Trade Hub will facilitate economic growth in strategic sectors, including agriculture, services, water/sanitation and light manufacturing.

Creative partners with communities in transition and at the grassroots level to provide essential services to improve lives. The Nigeria Lake Chad Basin (NLCB) program partners with communities to rehabilitate conflict-torn infrastructure — feeder roads, hospitals, schools, wells, etc. It organizes communities around self-help groups and teaches them to work for the stability of their neighborhoods. It strengthens community resilience through responding to local needs by engaging communities.

Strengthening Electoral Processes to Promote Good Governance Practices

Good governance is a critical ingredient of economic growth in Africa and a precondition of avoiding market collapses and policy failures.

The World Bank describes governance as consisting of the traditions and institutions by which authority is exercised. This includes:

- The process by which governments are selected, monitored and replaced
- The capacity of the government to effectively formulate and implement sound policies
- The respect of citizens and the state for the institutions that govern economic and social interactions among them

munities to prevent and counter violent extremism.

Meanwhile, in Tanzania, Creative developed an enhanced analytical toolkit to provide a better understanding of localized violent extremism drivers in four priority regions of the country. Creative has also worked with donors and countries to develop data to demonstrate the effect of CVE-relevant and CVE-specific programming.

Through the “International Counterterrorism and Countering Violent Extremism Capacity-Building Clearinghouse Mechanism,” Creative is consolidating information on donor and host-country civilian programming on CVE in Kenya, Tunisia and Nigeria. This web-based tool provides donors and host countries with an up-to-date database of recent and ongoing CVE capacity-building assistance efforts. Funded by the U.S. State Department, this initiative helped identify gaps in programming and avoid overlapping programs, allowing countries to optimize assistance.

Inclusive Economic Growth

Creative’s economic growth programs facilitate development of inclusive market systems that engage and benefit a range of actors, including the poor, women and other marginalized groups



The World Bank also describes six dimensions of governance. These include:

- Voice and accountability
- Political stability and absence of violence
- Government effectiveness
- Regulatory quality
- Rule of law
- Control of corruption

Creative works to support electoral processes in Africa through mechanisms including the USAID-funded “Reacting to Early Warning and Response Data” in West Africa program. The initiative is bolstering the conflict early warning and response systems of West Africa’s regional bloc — the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) — and its 15-member states’ ability to support peace and mitigate electoral violence triggers before they escalate.

Meanwhile, in Somalia and Somaliland, Creative is implementing the five-year USAID-funded “Bringing Unity, Integrity and Legitimacy to Democracy” program to strengthen key political structures, lay the groundwork for meaningful citizen participation and build trust in transitional political processes. The program is equipping local civil society and media groups to inform citizens, monitor elections and engage meaningfully in political processes while working with electoral management bodies and political parties to boost electoral integrity and political inclusion.

Creative Associates International: *What Partnering Means to Us*

All development should be based on the principles of partnership. Organizations that continue to operate under the assumption that donor countries are saviors and host countries are powerless and to be pitied will not only never realize success in their efforts to work toward a new, more self-sufficient Africa, they will stand in the way of achieving this goal.

Creative concentrates on finding and recruiting the most motivated individuals, communities, and organizations to partner with — those full of energy and who are laser-focused on improving their lives. These are the most powerful partnerships, the ones most likely to succeed, and thus the ones that can and will stand as examples to others.

It’s time to abandon the old ways. They don’t work — or they work only temporarily. To achieve success in Africa, we must be smart enough to recognize this and bold enough to blaze a trail for change.

Endnotes

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About the Author



Semere Solomon

Semere Solomon, the Senior Director of the Africa Regional Center at Creative Associates International, has more than 25 years of experience in the education and sustainable development programming, with an emphasis on education policy and systems development.

His effective leadership and program management skills in the fields of program design, planning, service delivery, system strengthening and research have been grounded in the coordination of complex programs for USAID, the United Nations and as a Director General of Planning and Development in the Ministry of Education in his native Eritrea. Having mission experience in Sub-Saharan Africa, MENA and Asia, Semere is published and designs and implements education projects across several continents.

As Senior Director of the Africa Regional Center, he oversees the implementation of Creative's regional strategy, coordinates market research for short-and long-term planning and sets regional priorities for business development. He is also the Director, Africa Portfolio of the Education for Development Division.

About Creative

Creative Associates International works with underserved communities by sharing expertise and experience in education, elections, economic growth, citizen security, governance and transitions from conflict to peace.

Based in Washington, D.C., Creative has active projects in nearly 30 countries. Since 1977, it has worked in nearly 90 countries and on almost every continent. Recognized for its ability to work rapidly, flexibly and effectively in conflict-affected environments, Creative is committed to generating long-term sustainable solutions to complex development problems.

Connect with us!



Communications@CreativeDC.com
CreativeAssociatesInternational.com

Creative Associates International

4445 Willard Avenue
Suite 400
Chevy Chase, Maryland 20815

+ 202.966.5804