President Rutos deck of cards

Charles Onyango-Obbo | Thursday, September 22, 2022

As William Ruto begins his presidency, the cards he has been dealt and the environment in which he has ascended to power could determine how much he succeeds.

Looking at the state of Kenya and Africa and the world of his two predecessors offers a good reading of his possible fortunes.

Mwai Kibaki, in 2002, came to office in a Kenya that was a near-basket case, potholed and in despair.

It had seen a decade of massive democracy mobilisation and civic activism. His and Narcs victory gave rise to the highest level of national optimism.

Surveys suggested that Kenyans were some of the most optimistic people.

The basket case and despair were a blessing. Years of decay meant there was a lot of upward room to move things even with minimum reforms.

Something as basic as appointing a handful of competent bureaucrats and a few averagely honest ministers offered large payoffs.

Kibaki also came to power at the dawn of the African Renaissance, the globalisation of Africa and a world eager to receive Kenya back into the fold.

There were lots of good tailwinds. Somalia was in great turmoil, Meles Zenawi was bringing Ethiopia to order and the war in South Sudan was raging.

Tanzania was creeping out of its socialist phase and Rwanda was only beginning to come to terms with the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi and to get the economy up.

Burundi was in civil war, as was DR Congo, and the East African Community (EAC) was a three-member affair.

In 2013, Dr Ruto and his predecessor Uhuru Kenyatta had to wrestle with ICC demons.

The 2007/2008 post-election violence (PEV) had shattered the Kenyan self-assurance that had bounced back.

But the economy was rocking. The digital explosion had happened and Kenya was a veritable Silicon Savannah. The EAC had expanded to five members.

The Kenyan economy was again on the trot, having dramatically recovered in the last Kibaki years despite (or, perhaps, partly because of) the PEV dip.

But Kenya was now in its first war in Somalia. Terrorism had become a bigger problem. South Sudan had quickly relapsed into war barely two years after independence.

Uganda was almost thriving. Rwandas star had begun to shine. Burundi was settling down.

Africa Rising was still a believable story. The US had elected its first black president in Barack Obama, a man with Kenyan roots.

Kibaki had left a reasonably healthy economy amidst a significant infrastructure investment spree.

Bout of nationalism

The ICC case had aroused an independence-era-like bout of nationalism, a mix of virulent nativism and pan-African gung-hoism.

The Afro-optimism and its accompanying Africa Rising buzz fizzled quickly. So, to today.

In Ethiopia, the death of Meles in 2012 opened a small window to liberalisation but that went up in smoke with the Tigray war from November 2020.

While still troubled by Al-Shabaab, Somalia is in the best shape it has been in over 20 years.

The EAC has expanded to seven. Rwanda and Uganda are doing reasonably well. In Tanzania, the business-friendly East African accommodationist President Samia Suluhu Hassan has replaced the mercurial Dr John Magufuli, who died abruptly, suspected of Covid, in March last year.

Kenya has climbed to the ninth-largest African economy, though it blew up the bank to get there, and the hind wheels have come off the vehicle.

Although it remains East Africas largest economy, it is no longer the only star on the regional stage.

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It has been weakened by internal nativist politics and corruption and has to reckon with militantly alienated youth living in growing economic inequality.

Drought and famine have beset parts of the country for more than two years. Environmental perils are plentifulwith droughts in one part of the country countered by some of the worst floods in others.

Covid-19 had also left a trail of destruction and the country has not fully recovered.

A hard-fought campaign, a close election and another dispute in the Supreme Court left a bitter taste in the mouth of former Prime Minister Raila Odingas Azimio la Umoja coalition, who lost the verdict.

It has all combined to make President Rutos hustler and bottom-up campaign perhaps the most populist and class-focused since Independence.

Hopes of an immediate fall in fuel, unga (maize flour) and electricity prices were dashed as the complex realities of running an economy in a post-Covid pressure cooker hit home.

In diplomatic terms, Ruto had an easy early goal. Queen Elizabeth IIs burial allowed him to schmooze with the mighty of the world in London without pressure to perform in the international spotlight.

He put his foot in international waters, with little risk, in the perfect emotional moment.

Surprisingly, Ruto is in a less favourable position than the Kibaki of 2002 and 2013 Uhuru.

He has little headroom, far greater expectations, fewer resources to work with, albeit with more tools, and a more favourable geopolitical environment.

Mr Onyango-Obbo is a journalist, writer and curator of the Wall of Great Africans. @cobbo3

End of President Rutos deck of cards

Do not waste money on Environmental Impact Assessment if they arent useful

John O. Kakonge | Thursday, September 22, 2022

No doubt, environmental impact assessment (EIA) is one of the most frequently used and successful tools in global use.

The question, however, is whether it achieves one of its main objectives: To protect the environment.

Opinion is divided. According to William Lawrence and David Salt, EIAs rarely stop bad projects.

There are several cases where EIAs gave the green light to projects that ended up destroying irreplaceable natural habitats.

Moreover, Lawrence cites several projects which were approved despite inadequate EIAs.

EIAs are often characterised by inadequate investment in terms of time, effort and financial resources to carry out rigorous assessments but perceived as a formality.

Corruption is rifesuch as developers hiring staff from the EIA-approving organisation to undertake the assessment; staff being bribed to ensure the approval of substandard EIAs; developers bribing politicians to have projects approved.

That is compounded by governments having a vested interest in development projects as they equate to economic growth and jobshence, votes.

After 50 years, EIAs are institutionalised. Some suggest that the process should be left to change incrementally yet others want it overhauled.

Some cite areas that should be strengthened or taken seriously to make EIAs effective and useful.

But public participation is weak or non-existent. In some developing countries, it is seen as a hindrance to EIA approvals.

But in the developed world, it enriches proposed projects and strengthens community ownership.

The EIA process requires the incorporation of comments from the public and affected communities in the final project proposal.

This element is often missing in developing countries and should be considered urgently. The public should be involved in decision-making in any project that affects them.

Data and information

Secondly, it should provide data and information to ensure environmental protection, one of its main objectives.

But the data and information collected or generated in developing countries, including Africa, tend to be weak, useless and not focused on the significant environmental impacts.

Given that proponents or developers do not invest enough money into preparing substantial EIAs, the data and information used are often secondary.

Consequently, the weak data employed in the EIAs neither help to predict the negative impacts of the projects nor assist in the development of sound follow-up EIA management plans.

To ensure EIAs meet environmental standards, regulatory bodies need to insist on quality data and information, which requires serious investment in the process.

Thirdly, for EIAs to be useful, political will and commitment are needed.

EIA is a legal requirement in the developed and most developing countries. Many resources are invested in it.

In particular, developing countries that have adopted EIA legislation should commit to carrying out EIAs according to the law or continue to be ineffective in responding to the challenges of the 21st Century, such as climate change and implementing many of the SDGs.

Despite its shortcomings, the EIA process should be protected from fraudulent reports, staged public participation and unscrupulous permits.

Dr Kakonge (PhD), a development expert, was Kenyas Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the UN Office and WTO.

End of Do not waste money on Environmental Impact Assessment if they arent useful

Lets not abandon CBC but run it on the existing education system

David Kimori | Thursday, September 22, 2022

Future Kenya will largely be shaped by the children in school. These are the future innovators, medics, engineers, teachers, leaders and so on.

And yes, I said future leaders because, after the recent elections, some of my classmates are now the peoples representatives in the legislative assemblies.

Safeguarding a childs future starts with giving them an education that attends to their interests and the communitys priorities.

As an educator, I havent met any learner or teacher who fondly remembers a good lesson or lecture they learn.

But I have met many who remember the hands-on activity they did, even in lower primary school.

As an 8-4-4 system product, I clearly remember the cooking stick I carved for a project in the art and craft classa skill I later utilised when I moved to a country where ugali was not known and, so, they didnt have the sticks.

In agriculture, I skilfully planted and harvested two 20-litre buckets of Irish potatoes from a plot the size of two coffee tables and I still use these skills in my kitchen garden.

Learning by doing is the most effective way to train a student. Thats what the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) attempts to do.

Competency means applying a related skill set to find a solution for a given problem in a given context.

Kenya needs competent graduates at every level of schooling. This is the only way we can prepare our children to be competitive in future job markets.

About 15 years to come, the most lucrative jobs are non-existent now and are not known yet.

About 15 years ago, nobody knew that one could earn a living from jobs like being a YouTuber, social media influencer or drone pilot.

Successful individuals in these fields only competently applied other skills related to these fields to be successful.

If we dont re-engineer our educational focus and goals, well have a few competent individuals earning a lot of money from these future non-existent jobs that need competency skillssuch as artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning and other digital technologiesand a majority who will eke out a living from skills for todays job market.

Jobs will be lost

Think tanks across the political spectrum project that about half of all jobs will be lost to AI and robotics in the coming decades, which could make human-specific skills obsolete.

Employers will be looking for soft skills such as critical thinking, analytical reasoning, effective communication, real-world skills application, effective teamwork, judgement and decision-making.

These will save our children from becoming obsolete.

One thing the education systems and communities in developed countries like the US have been successful in is instilling in their students' communication skills they can use in any job setting.

And they have reinforced this by introducing it in the curriculum through science, technology, engineering and mathematics (Stem) integrated learning.

The Kenyan education system has been criticised for producing book-smart graduates who find it difficult to operate out there, where soft skills are needed.

In the recent elections, most of the winners were the so-called street smart, good communicators, in whichever language, quick in judgement and decision-making and such traits.

The 21st-Century skills entail communication, creativity, critical thinking and collaboration.

These are the skills CBC seeks to amplify in schools and give practical solutions. That CBC makes parents do their childrens homework should be positive.

Moreover, earlier educational theorists support that. Vygotskys social learning theory says children learn from adults around them better.

However, the introduction of CBC and the change in the education system at the same time was quite a stretch.

Lets not abandon CBC but run it on the existing education system

David Kimori | Thursday, September 22, 2022

The curriculum could have been changed with the existing education system by adding the necessary resources and training personnel.

Education reforms dont have to be always about a change in the system.

CBC can, therefore, be introduced as part of the curriculum within the existing system and gradually be nurtured in a bottom-up approachfrom the lower grades and eventually to full implementation. Let the new regime consider that.

Dr Kimori, an associate professor and Stem educator at Minnesota State University, Mankato, serves on the Minnesota Governors 21st Century Skills Task Force Committee. @dkimori1

End of Lets not abandon CBC but run it on the existing education system

Irrigate farms to beat drought, famine menace

Wornicks Gisemba | Thursday, September 22, 2022

The drought situation in the country is disconcerting with the arid and semi-arid (Asal) lands evidently overwhelmed.

The media is awash with stories of crestfallen locals over the death of their livestock and diminished food reserves that put human life at risk.

Experts attribute the grinding drought to climate change, warning that it might continue for a few more months, perhaps towards year-end.

Unreliable rainfall in the Asals makes them unsuitable for crop farming, hence absolute dependency on pastoralism for the sustenance of livelihoods.

The massive livestock deaths mark a monumentally tumultuous moment, hence an urgent need for a sustainable solution to the perennial problem.

For instance, in Kajiado, one of the counties in the alarm stage, the few dams there have dried up.

With no permanent rivers, pastoralists trek for many kilometres in search of water for their livestock.

That further weakens the animals and some die. The few remaining ones cannot fetch Sh3,000 for a cow that would normally sell for over Sh100,000.

Comparatively, Egypt, ideally a desert country, is more agriculturally viable than Kenya.

Statistics show it receives less than 200 millimetres of annual precipitation, far much lower than average Kenyas Asals.

Human intervention has greatly eased the impact of drought in this Sahara Desert country, basically irrigation using River Nile waters.

Humanitarian intervention

Kenya requires urgent humanitarian intervention for short- and long-term solutions.

Drilling of community boreholes will provide water for both human use and livestock whenever dams dry up.

If the Asal county governments mobilised resources and drilled at least a borehole per sub-county, that would save pastoralists the arduous journeys.

There is a need to practise mixed farming for more food sources besides meat and milk.

Agriculture experts and researchers should educate the locals on smart farming and growing fast-maturing and drought-resistant crops.

On the Nairobi-Namanga Road are privately owned boreholes for large-scale (plantation) and subsistence (small-scale) irrigation at Isinya, Kumpa, Nkoile, Ilbissil and Maili-Tisa areas of Kajiado.

Were that replicated in other Asals, famine wouldnt be as punishing.

Pastoralists should be enlightened to keep a manageable number of livestock.

It is preposterous to keep several hundred heads of cattle only for them to be wiped out by drought.

Charcoal burning thrives in this Nairobi Metropolis county. Without proper counter-deforestation policies, the area will soon lose its little vegetation cover, paving the way to bare ground, hence more drought.

Heavy financial investment is required to drill a borehole sufficient for a village, hence the need for the national and county governments and well-wishers to intervene and mobilise the requisite funds.

As the national government sets off to boost farm produce to reduce food prices, it ought to have strategies to address perennial famine in Asals. A hungry nation is an angry nation.

Mr Gisemba is a high school teacher, author and editor.

End of Irrigate farms to beat drought, famine menace

New IFC podcast promotes women in Africas renewable energy sector

Unknown Author | UnKnown Date

With renewable energy forecast to play a growing role in Africa's energy future, IFC has launched a new podcast series to promote the role of women in the sector as senior executives, engineers and thought leaders.

In the She Powers Africa podcast, host Terryanne Chebet, an entrepreneur and media specialist, speaks with leading women in Africa's renewable energy space to light the path for the next generation of African women leaders into the dynamic sector.

The first three episodes feature Jennifer Boca, Head of Environmental, Social and Governance at Lekela Power; Olaedo Osoka, CEO of Daystar Power in West Africa; and Carol Koech, the Country President for Schneider East Africa.

This engaging podcast is ideal for women interested in working in the renewable energy sector and also for anyone concerned about climate change in Africa and curious about the practical solutions. Renewable energy is Africa's energy future and ensuring more women are part of that future will enhance the sectors success," said Anne Kabugi, IFC's Regional Gender Lead for Africa.

By 2040, renewable energy could account for more than 60 percent of new electricity generation in sub-Saharan Africa, excluding South Africa, according to the Africa Energy Outlook 2019 from the International Energy Agency.

But, despite the sector's importance, women lag behind men in leadership and technical jobs in the renewable energy sector and represent just one third of the renewable energy workforce in Africa, according to research conducted by IFC on womens participation in Africa.s renewable energy sector.

The podcast is produced by IFC's Energy2Equal programme and its Women in Renewable Energy in Africa Network (W-REA), which both aim to enhance women's participation in the renewable energy sector.

Listen in.

End of New IFC podcast promotes women in Africas renewable energy sector

EMTECH to pilot a US CBDC in The Digital Dollar Project Sandbox Programme

Unknown Author | UnKnown Date

EMTECH, a first-of-its-kind central banking infrastructure provider, has announced it will take part in the recently introduced Technical Sandbox Programme by The Digital Dollar Project to explore the new possibilities of a US Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) the digital dollar.

As one of the four announced technical vendors, EMTECH will bring its unique API-First and Energy Efficient CBDC Platform to test various use cases for cross-border payments.

The firm is joining a high-profile group of former US regulators and financial services experts. This initiative marks the next step in our effort to convene the private and public sector in a symbiotic exploration of a central bank digital currency in the US, said Jennifer Lassiter, executive director of The Digital Dollar Project.

EMTECHs Founder and CEO, Carmelle Cadet, is a former Global Business and Finance Leader at IBM. In 2021, she was invited by the US Congressional Financial Services Committee to testify on whether the US dollar should be digital.

A market leader in central banking infrastructure, EMTECHs mission is to leverage technology to enable access to inclusive and resilient financial ecosystems. Its exciting to be part of the Digital Dollar Project Sandbox, and we are looking forward to collaborating with the federal government, policymakers, and private sector organisations to pilot CBDC options that encompass retail or wholesale models for cross-border payment use cases, said Mrs Cadet.

In her testimony, she highlighted the firms vision and focus on helping central banks to build modern digital cash infrastructure using blockchain and distributed ledger technology (DLT). A consistent recommendation to the White House and the Congressional Committee is the use of a regulatory sandbox to enable faster and safer innovation from and with the private sector.

The current ecosystem for cross-border payments is a complex nightmare for financial service providers to navigate. EMTECHs CBDC Platform, with its API-First approach and high-performance DLT, is a more modern design that were excited to bring to the Technical Sandbox Programme, said Tabor Wells, Chief Technology Officer at EMTECH.

Earlier this year, the firm announced its partnership with Hedera Hashgraph to build an energy-efficient CBDC to support its newly announced GREEN CBDC Framework, which is designed to help central banks unlock unprecedented value in deploying a CBDC. A key pillar of the framework is reducing the carbon footprint of financial services, while also limiting energy demand from fragile power structures. You can learn more about the GREEN CBDC Framework at greencbdc.com and emtech.com.

Read more about the technical sandbox in DDPs Press Release.

About EMTECH

EMTECH is building the next generation of central banking Infrastructure to drive inclusive and resilient financial markets. The company provides software solutions and services to connect central banks, other regulators, and financial services providers, in a user and developer-friendly way.

EMTECHs API-First platforms power regulatory data exchange, currency issuance, and currency movement in financial markets. It is a diverse global firm that makes financial ecosystems inclusive and resilient by design. For more information, visit www.emtech.com.

End of EMTECH to pilot a US CBDC in The Digital Dollar Project Sandbox Programme

Unknown Author | UnKnown Date

By Evans Ongwae

Kenya performed well in cushioning its citizens against Covid-19 economic shocks, but could have done better. This is the overall scorecard by UN Women, following a study. In particular, the report stresses the importance of ensuring that adopted economic stimulus and recovery packages are gender responsive and address the gender equity gaps.

Titled, Engendering Fiscal Stimulus Packages and Recovery Efforts Adopted in Response to the Covid-19 Health and Economic Crises, the report states: Compared to African countries, efforts by Kenya to cushion and promote recovery of citizens and businesses during Covid-19 through Economic Stimulus packages are commendable. However, UN Women points out that the country could have achieved more had it made those fiscal and monetary measures more gender-responsive.

The study is a gender-responsive assessment of the fiscal and economic stimulus package adopted in response to Covid-19 in Kenya. It provides vital recommendations for engendering government measures in response to crises as well as for economic recovery now and in the future. It pinpoints where the governments stimulus packages fell short, and offers suggestions on how to make economic stimulus packages more responsive to the needs of women, men, boys, and girls.

Engendering economic stimulus packages means taking into account the experiences and specific needs of women, men, girls, and boys, as well as the underlying causes of vulnerabilities, including gender gaps or inequalities, gender relationships, power structures, social norms, and leadership. These should count in both the design and implementation of the stimulus measures, the report states.

During the launch of the report last month jointly with Kenya's Cabinet Secretary for Public Service and Gender, Prof Margaret Kobia, the UN Women Kenya Representative Anna Mutavati, reiterated the importance of gender data in ensuring women and girls were not left behind in the development agenda.

We know that gender equality and womens empowerment are prerequisites for strong institutions, stable communities, and economies. Evidence from all around the world shows that investing in womens economic empowerment sets a direct path towards gender equality, inclusive economic growth, and wealth creation.

The UN Women study compared Kenyas response with what South Africa and Nigeria did. It recommends some lessons for Kenya to pick from the responses of the two Sub-Saharan African nations.

Consideration of the needs of women, men, boys, and girls in the design and implementation of the economic stimulus packages enhances economic and social inclusion and prospects of achievement of outcomes of cushioning against the shocks as well as recovery from the Covid-19 pandemics, the report offers.

The study is anchored on UN Womens commitment to supporting government efforts that contribute to womens livelihoods and their access to social protection, healthcare, infrastructure, food, and housing, among other sectors that the government has prioritised.

The analysis focused on economic stimulus packages implemented during the financial year 2020/2021. These include cash transfers to vulnerable families; National Hygiene Programme or the Youth Employment Programme; support to the educational sector; support to small and medium-sized enterprises liquidity; support to the construction sector; support to the health sector; support to the agricultural sector; support to the tourism sector; support to the environment; and support to the manufacturing sector.

An important underlying factor in response to and adaptability to changes in times of pandemics and crises is the feminisation of poverty, the UN Women analysis notes.

The study found that women, more than men, were deprived of social economic participation, information, and nutrition, and were generally multi-dimensionally poor. This is a key salient pathway in which gender contributes to disproportionately negative impacts of Covid-19. Women are also, more than men, involved with caregiving activities, including caring for the children, the sick, the elderly, and persons with severe disabilities.

Gender inequalities cause women and men to respond and adjust to pandemics and crises differently. Disasters and pandemics such as Covid-19 disproportionately and negatively affect women and girls when compared to men and boys, because of gender segregation in most economic activities, which is further reinforced by gender inequalities.

Unknown Author | UnKnown Date

Moreover, there has been an increase in gender-based violence, more specifically violence against women and girls.

Following the study, UN Women suggests that in times of crises, such as those comparable to the Covid-19 pandemic, Kenya could:

Consider expanding the sector coverage (of its stimulus package) for better economic recovery outcomes. This includes extending support to sectors such as housing, energy, and transport infrastructure.Temporarily expand social protection coverage during pandemics, through special programmes to reach previously uncovered beneficiaries.Consider extending social protection to practitioners in early childhood development, small-scale farmers and teachers, as well as those in creative, cultural, and sports sectors.Increase the amounts of cash transfers per recipient, for all the existing beneficiaries.Consider establishing a social relief from distress grant for caregivers, aimed at reducing increased unpaid care work during pandemics.Consider targeting micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in all sectors of the economy, and not only in certain selected sectors.Consider implementing an unemployment insurance fund and compensation fund for health practitioners, and provide a temporary employee relief scheme for domestic workers.Consider enforcing the Access to Government Procurement Opportunities (AGPO) provisions, or even increasing the proportion reserved for women businesses.Implement special support to survivors of gender-based violence (GBV) and also, in partnership with civil society, establish a mechanism for linking them to shelter houses. This would address some of the challenges related to increased GBV during pandemics.

Overall, the analysis showed that the size of Kenyas provisions regarding various fiscal measures is small, measured by the size of the issues the specific measures target.

End of UN Women to Kenya: You did well in cushioning citizens against Covid-19 economic shocks, but

Digital payments ignite a new era of hope for SMEs in Kenya

Unknown Author | UnKnown Date

By Shehryar Ali, East Africa Country Manager, Mastercard

Its no secret that the pandemic was especially tough on small and medium enterprises (SMEs), particularly the many small cash-based businesses that operate in the informal sector. These businesses are the lifeblood of economies, and the fact that they couldnt generate incomes or apply for micro-loans to stay afloat, had a knock-on effect on everything, from employment to general community wellbeing.

In Kenya, SMEs account for 80 percent of jobs. In 2021 alone, an estimated 22 million jobs in Africa were lost, pushing more people into poverty. Its a devastating cycle that can only be broken with multiple actions technology and partnerships being chief among them as this challenge cannot be tackled through a single approach.

This challenging period did not have many silver linings, but one outcome that will have a positive impact on SMEs going forward is the increased rate of digitisation.

During times of limited mobility, more small businesses realised the necessity of selling online and getting paid digitally. This helped to boost cash flow without having to exclusively depend on the much harder and more arduous journey that cash entails to change hands.

The value of light

When I think about the economic strife experienced by so many cash-based SMEs during the pandemic, but also the fortunate acceleration of digitisation, I am reminded of the old Kanga saying: The value of light is noticed when night falls.

By now, the case for digital transformation is well established. Access to digital tools, associated training, credit, and resources, are key, not only to the growth of SMEs, but also integral to their survival. Ensuring that these smaller businesses have access to and benefit from the digital economy, is something that Mastercard is very passionate about.

SMEs are recognising the practical benefits of digitisation in day-to-day operations, as opposed to viewing it as a long-term project for the future. Data shows that 41 percent of SMEs that implemented digitalisation initiatives had stronger revenue growth in 2020 than non-adopters. Thats not the only benefit. Going digital better insulates SMEs against economic shocks, as they can tap into the global economy, reach a wider market, and accept cross-border payments.

Furthermore, as more consumers adopt and use a variety of electronic payments, this two-way digital adoption offers increased benefits for both the business and customers. People do not want to be stuck in a cash economy, which effectively leaves them locked out of many economic activities. They want access to a variety of financial services, and more retail choices.

A digital economy that continues to expand

With every passing day, the digital economy is increasingly becoming the economy. That is why digital inclusion is so critical. We all benefit when more people are connected to the digital economy.

At Mastercard, weve made it both our business strategy and our social responsibility to ensure that people and organisations have access to networks, tools and solutions that could help them reach their full potential and achieve financial security. We have pledged to bring one billion people and 50 million micro and small businesses into the digital economy by 2025, with a direct focus on providing 25 million women entrepreneurs with the solutions they need to grow their business. So how do we do it?

Solutions that support small business resilience

Access to credit is one way, and its something we do with data. Digitalisation of SME operations brings the benefit of generating this helpful data. This same data enables financial institutions to make more informed decisions about extending credit one of the key challenges for small businesses. A digitised record of transactions enables more small businesses to be brought into the financial mainstream, with access to finance solutions that can support their growth.

A great example of Mastercards Track Micro Credit Programme, fuelled by digital transaction data from the beneficiaries themselves, can be seen in Kenyas Jaza Duka initiative. Designed for micro merchants, this inclusive credit ecosystem gives small shop owners short-term credit and digital payment capabilities to help them build their creditworthiness and stock their shelves without having to rely solely on cash. Digitisation is empowering these small

Digital payments ignite a new era of hope for SMEs in Kenya

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businesses to reach their true potential.

Collaboration brings scale, and wider inclusion

Partnerships are also crucial to ensure scale and impact. Just like Jaza Duka was originally launched with the help of Unilever, KCB and Mastercard, it was further scaled in partnership with Kasha this year. Another 5,000 MSMEs now have access to Jaza Duka through Kasha, a purpose-driven digital retail and distribution platform focused on providing women with affordable health and wellbeing products.

In addition, many of these newly included small businesses are run by women entrepreneurs, who are among Africas most formidable, but also most marginalised, business owners. So, this is truly inclusion in action, on two key fronts.

Kasha has a long legacy of collaboration with Mastercard, having joined our Start Path engagement programme for start-ups in 2019. Weve also invested in the e-commerce platform, and its great to see this new chapter making such a positive impact on even more businesses.

The journey continues. At Mastercard, were leveraging our technology, innovation, and solutions beyond payments to help small and medium enterprises get paid, get capital and get digital safely and securely wherever they are. We are dedicated to enabling businesses to survive and thrive stronger than before. This is how we are Empowering Every Business. Everywhere.

End of Digital payments ignite a new era of hope for SMEs in Kenya