

# Businesses must move from nice to must

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Newton Kipngetich (left) and Hussein Jaffar from Utumishi Academy, Nakuru, display their Sustainable Development Goals placards as the Great Debaters Contest Nakuru Edition at Moi Forces Academy, Lanet. PHOTO | FILE | NATION MEDIA GROUP

## In Summary

- Devolution has taken essential services such as health care, basic education, agriculture, rural access roads and water and sanitation closer to the people.
- The SDGs cannot be attained without the participation of business. But it also has a responsibility to the people and planet.
- Every business should ask itself what could happen if the people were so weakened that they couldn't afford products and services.

One of the things the international community is good at, but can do even better, is coming up with progressive ideas and churning out well-researched reports.

These ideas and reports are not

just the work of some well-paid bureaucrats in London or Washington.

No. Technocrats representing nations and institutions from around the world often spend months or even years deliberating the ideas before their ministers or presidents fly in to put pen to paper.

One of the brilliant ideas to come out of the international system is the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

These are a set of 17 global goals with 169 targets. At the centre of SDGs is action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure all people enjoy peace and prosperity.

Kenya has done fairly well in implementing SDGs. The mapping of SDGs with Vision 2030, a key pillar of the government's development agenda since 2003, was brilliant.

## **DEVOLUTION**

But Kenya's case has also been helped, almost inadvertently by devolution, a highlight of the 2010 Constitution. Devolution has taken essential services such as health care, basic education, agriculture, rural access roads and water and sanitation closer to the people.

The notable progress, includes the recent ban on the manufacture, distribution and use of plastic bags and making maternity services in public health facilities free or affordable.



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Significant developments have also been witnessed in renewable energy, electricity connection to institutions and households and infrastructure (roads and railway) development.

A lot more remains to be done and businesses can play an even bigger role in coming up with solutions.

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## **SERVICES**

Every business should ask itself what could happen if the people were so weakened that they couldn't afford products and services.

What could happen if people were displaced or couldn't produce food because of political instability or major climatic and environmental changes? Other critical questions include what is the true price of a product or service.

The answers are obvious. There are experts such as the Sustainable Inclusive Business (SIB) Kenya, based at the Kenya Private Sector Alliance (Kepsa).

It helps businesses to look at their entire value chain, focusing on core business, values and business practice. Corporate social responsibility does have its place.

But we must move beyond just doing nice things to the "must do". And the "must do" should make business sense if sustained.

This is about creating a business that contributes to the well-being of the community and the environment.

## **SUSTAINABLE CHANGE**

If good business practice is part of the business DNA, then it will drive sustainable change.

When businesses aim for positive impact on people, planet and profit, they will create value and a future proof model. This way they contribute to the realisation of SDGs as they do their core business.