

# Let's empower poor to win war against poverty



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One of the precious lessons I have learnt in my work as a champion for sustainable and inclusive businesses is that people at the bottom end of the economic pyramid do not need charity or pity.

What they need is to be empowered and given the opportunity to work and earn their own living.

Sustainable Inclusive Business (SIB), a knowledge centre based in Nairobi, is currently working with a number of large and medium enterprises, helping them to bring low-income individuals and communities to be active participants in their value chains.

This, it has been shown, is one of the most powerful ways through which low-income and poor people can be empowered.

Whereas giving support through various corporate responsibility initiatives is noble, especially in time of emergency, no community or nation has ever overcome poverty on charity alone.



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Every business, small, medium and big can reorient its production, manufacturing, procurement, distribution, warehousing and sales, among others to include the people we rarely think about but whose participation can greatly impact the economy and the long-term sustainability of the businesses themselves.



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I can think of no better way, besides good governance and productive application of taxpayer money to boost the national economy and reduce poverty in low-income communities.

There is therefore urgent need to empower local businesses to integrate low income people in value chains.

Both government agencies and civil society can play a part in this, creating policies and building a framework that supports inclusion.

Examples of businesses whose systems support inclusion abound in Kenya. Philips East Africa, for instance, has a water project in Kiambu which the local community can access at a token price.

The resources raised from the water project are used to maintain a street lighting project in the same neighbourhood and also supports a local public health facility. Residents can feel safe at night and those who fall ill can be taken for treatment without fear of insecurity.

Safaricom's [SCOOM](#) M-Pesa platform has impacted lives more deeply in a way we could not imagine just a decade and a half ago.

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This is what we mean when we talk about a sustainable inclusive business. Sustainable and inclusive businesses go beyond corporate social responsibility and philanthropy. It is not about one off feel good initiatives.

It is about innovation, deliberate initiatives and long term impact. It is time to shift mind-sets and embrace inclusive business as the new normal rather than the exception.