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# India and Africa - people power

**F**OR both India and Africa, human development is the key challenge. On opposite sides of the Indian Ocean, both regions have much to give each other and learn from each other in meeting this challenge together.

In the emerging global knowledge economy, people power is going to be the defining factor for competitiveness of economies. Africa and India together are home to about one-third of the world's population. India's demographic dividend of a growing workforce is poised to propel global consumption and production patterns into newer directions. Africa, struggling with poverty, low life expectancy and other challenges, can leverage India's demographics for its own development. And it needs India's help to do this.

India with its diversity is no less a continent than Africa. Despite high GDP growth rates, its HDI rank has slipped in the most recent UNDP report. Sub-Saharan African countries are placed in the lowest of the rankings, and are ill-positioned to achieve the eight Millennium Development Goals on time. Both sides need to step up global economic engagement in order to leverage trade and investment for human development. One aspect of this is greater interaction between the two regions.

The just concluded Fourth Conclave on India Africa Project Partnerships sought to bridge the oceanic divide of the two sides. Based on mutual trust and cooperation, the aim is to structure ethical partnerships that are sustainable and mutually beneficial for the long-term. Joint ventures in projects can achieve the twin objectives of building physical and social infrastructure.

Africa has been experiencing close to 6% GDP growth rates in the past three years. But much of this can be attributed to rising oil and commodity prices. To sustain the growth momentum, Africa would need to liberalise trade and move up the value chain in exports, according to the IMF. India, which views Africa as a strategic partner in its global engagement, is keen to help

fraction of the cost earlier supplied to them. Indian companies are setting up manufacturing plants for the drugs in Africa as well, helping transfer technology and expertise.

Science and technology exchanges are also increasing. India is investing in establishing jatropha cultivation for promoting biofuels in West Africa. With South Africa, its trilateral engagement including Brazil under the IBSA initiative focuses on problem solutions through science and technology cooperation. As R&D efforts increase in Africa and more funds are spent, partnership with India will advance significantly.

A major initiative of India's government has been the Pan-African network. This project aims to link universities and hospitals in 53 African nations to their counterparts in India. Constant interaction on a single platform is expected from this enterprise, sharing knowledge and resources for the betterment of the quality of life on both sides. The network has already commenced on its first phase, and can be used to support private sector engagement as well.

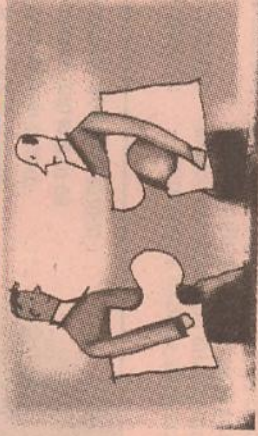
Climate change is an unexplored area of cooperation between India and Africa. With the Indian Ocean a common space, and climate change expected to impact the poor of the two sides heavily, partnerships for mitigation, forecasting, and tackling environmental damage can be advantageous for both. The latest UNDP Human Development Report has warned that climate change is an inexorable part of the future. Working together on energy efficiency, emissions and pollution can help improve the lives of millions of people in both regions.

The vision for Africa and India is to build a comprehensive South-South partnership of their private sectors in multiple dimensions that builds human capital. This would go beyond business to encompass social, scientific, and institutional relations. The people power of both sides can be unleashed through this long-term and sustainable partnership.

*(The author is chief mentor, CII)*

## GUEST COLUMN

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- In the global knowledge economy, people power is going to be the defining factor for competitiveness of economies
- India is keen to help Africa build the human and social capital for this
- A South-South partnership of Indian and African private sectors in multiple dimensions will help build human capital

Africa build the human and social capital for this. Its strengths in information and communication technology, science and research, match well with Africa's new development direction.

There are many areas of cooperation for the two sides. Skilling and training the workforce to meet the demands of the emerging global knowledge economy is being conducted through the ITEC programme for technical education by the government of India. Companies such as NIIT are also active in training for IT in Africa. Other companies routinely provide training in manufacturing and infrastructure projects where they are involved. Thousands of people have benefited from these initiatives.

A key area of cooperation is healthcare. Drugs and pharma products are among the top five Indian exports to Africa. All large Indian pharma companies are active in the continent. A major success was in bringing HIV/AIDS treatment drugs to Africans at a