



THE AFRICA-AMERICA INSTITUTE
Educating People • Connecting Worlds

Equipping the African Continent for Jobs of the 21st Century to Bolster Economic Growth and Prosperity

Key Priorities for the Obama Administration

Policy Brief – The Africa-America Institute

Africa is home to seven of the world's 10 fastest growing economies and is increasingly viewed as an attractive hub for foreign investment. Today, Africa is gradually emerging as a contender to compete on the global economy. The second term of President Barack H. Obama presents an opportunity for U.S. foreign policy to focus on strategic goals that are in the interest of both the U.S. and African continent.

In this brief, *Equipping the African Continent for 21st Century Jobs to Bolster Economic Growth and Prosperity: Key Priorities for the Obama Administration*, Amini Kajunju, president and CEO of The Africa-America Institute, outlines key priorities for the next Obama Administration on strengthening the human capacity on the African continent to prepare African nations to compete in the global economy and accelerate economic growth.

[The Africa-America Institute \(AAI\)](#) is a New York-based international organization dedicated to advancing education and professional training for Africans, and promoting engagement between Africa and America through education, training and dialogue. The theme, “Jobs for Africa”, is a focus for AAI, and was explored in October at its annual gala and Africa Business Investor Conference with African heads of state, senior African and U.S. government officials, corporate CEOs and other business leaders, and representatives of the UN and multilateral organizations.

The key priority areas for the next Obama Administration include:

Increase investment in higher education, vocational skills training and professional development. African participation in higher education is critical for African professionals to gain the necessary skills for today's global economy and to meet local and global market demands for highly skilled workers. Out of every 100 adults in Africa only five are enrolled in higher education programs, compared to 10 out every 100 adults in parts of Asia, and 69 out of every 100 adults in North America and Europe, respectively. Expanding access to higher education is critical for Africa to meet the need for professionals to further African development such as doctors, nurses, lawyers, entrepreneurs, financiers and engineers, among others.

Expand trade and investment. The African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), a U.S.-Africa trade policy aims to strengthen economic ties between select African countries and the United States by providing tangible incentives for African countries to open their economies and build free markets. In the first half of 2012, U.S. total trade -- exports and imports -- with sub-Saharan Africa reached \$48 billion. AGOA must be expanded to other countries and renewed in 2015.

Africa is seen by many investors as a vastly untapped market and the latest investment frontier. More and more international investors are seeing Africa as a land of investment opportunity, instead of a barren land of risks. Investors in Africa can testify that the continent offers some of the highest return on direct foreign investment in the world. Increased investment is one of the key components leading to job creation and economic growth on the continent.

Job Creation for Africa's Young People. Youth in Africa make up nearly 40 percent of the working-age population, yet 60 percent are unemployed. African nations must develop strong job creation strategies to respond to this urgent need for jobs and to ensure that young people can compete effectively in the global marketplace. The [McKinsey Global Institute Report](#) estimates that Africa will add 122 million to its labor force between 2010 and 2020, creating a labor force of more than 500 million across the continent. African governments need to accelerate in creating jobs to absorb this labor force.

At the AAI Africa Business Investor Conference, Ghana's President John Dramani Mahama reiterated that African nations must generate sustainable jobs in response to Africa's fast growing youth population. Ghana instituted a youth training program to engage unemployed young people in targeted industries, and assist them in identifying and developing an employable skill set to assist in securing job opportunities.

ABOUT THE AFRICA-AMERICA INSTITUTE (AAI): Founded in 1953, the Africa-America Institute, a leading New York-based international education and policy organization, is dedicated to advancing education and professional training for Africans, and promoting engagement between Africa and America through education, training and dialogue. For more information, visit www.aaionline.org.



The Africa-America Institute (Headquarters)
420 Lexington Avenue, Suite 1706, New York, NY 10170-0002
Tel: +1.212.949.5666 * Fax: +1.212.682.6174
www.aaionline.org