



Just Imagine

We are often preoccupied with what we lack and what we're doing wrong when the topic of socioeconomic development comes up. With everything that we have collectively experienced in the past 15 months, who can blame people for getting stuck in a negative thought pattern? But, once in a while it is worth reflecting not on where we are but where we'd like to be. After all every good and every service traded is a solution to a problem. If not for hunger, we wouldn't buy food. And if not for illness and disease health services would be redundant. So what are the opportunities that may arise from the recession and the pandemic? If we had to imagine our country as everything that she could be, what would Namibia look like?

In the years since globalisation took root in public policy, millions around the world have been lifted out of extreme poverty. Where extreme poverty prevailed and development dawdled, it has been observed that cross-border trade was minimal. To consider this from another angle; a strong positive correlation can be observed between the degree of trade by a country and its development. This phenomenon has been further entrenched as trade evolved bringing services to the foreground. High-value-services tend to be exported by advanced nations while underdeveloped countries remain dependent on commodity trade. The main pillar of globalization responsible for poverty reduction, peace & stability and economic development has been trade.

From trade comes competition which sparks productivity which spawns entrepreneurship, industrialisation and innovation. This in turn creates job, business and investment opportunities. Consumer welfare improves as product variety and affordability rise. Developing countries are able to leapfrog because of the access to new technology that they gained through trade. And because competitiveness requires it, infrastructural and human capital development is incentivised. Trade has direct and multiplier effects that ripple throughout the economy which is why a trade-centric

development agenda can be considered as the stone that can kill multiple birds.

Both the recession and pandemic have disrupted supply chains the world over. On our continent, various supply chains are yet to be established. This raises a lot of questions. What will we need to overcome the health and economic crises? What is the world going to need coming out of the pandemic? What can we offer and where? Who are our potential domestic and external investors? How do we make use of our existing resources? How can we improve the quality of our trade negotiations e.g. our missions abroad? What resources e.g. skills do we need to import in the short-run? How do we align the skills that are being produced with our development agenda? Aside from mainstream industries, how can the SMEs in Namibia be mobilised and prepared to participate in the emerging value-chains? What are the potential obstacles e.g. unfavourable policies? Questions present problems and problems present opportunities - to improve and to trade.

So what does the Namibia that we hope for look like?

It looks like an environment that is conducive for investment and innovation.

It looks like business opportunities and youth employment.

It looks like a better standard of living for all.

While it is by no means a cure-all for everything that ails our economy and society, trade can bring us pretty close to the Namibia we imagine.

TTT Stats
