

Honourable community,

It is with grave intention that our organisation takes on the call to address water insecurity challenges within this platform. In recognition of the variegated, multifaceted, and inequitable achievement toward our world's development objectives, it is sobering to acknowledge Africa's predisposition. At this very moment, only 10% of people living in Sub Saharan Africa have access to clean water, while over the next 30 years it is estimated that just half of this region will have piped water – a figure that is lower than 2003 levels. Offset by swelling urban populations, the world's largest youth population growth rates, laggard infrastructure and an exclusionary investment landscape, we urge you to recon with the implications of a failure to divert your efforts toward easing these constraints.

Known as the last frontier of almost every world market of significance, Africa is home to at least 60% of the world's arable land, boasts virgin forestry, animal life, and unpolluted waters. Some African countries have enough untapped renewable power generating activity to fuel the entire continent. With so much potential, it is a great injustice to overlook the protection of water for African people.

Vertex Ecosystem maintains a theory of change that questions how, of all of the hundreds of billions (if not trillions) of American dollars invested into ventures that design, develop, economise, and democratise innovation, less than 1% of capital flows into African enterprises. Yet, of the most environmentally and socially exploitative industries, Africa is bound; by debt, conditionality, policy externalisation, and patronage that is tantamount to corruption, in post-political independence agreements designed to keep the region's economies in the nascent stage cycle of primary sector extraction, low value adding industrialisation, and non-competitive servicification.

Of all of the world's top value adding economies, Africa's strongest ranks somewhere in the 60th percentile. What is perhaps the strongest determinant of this is that it is simply not economical for value adding inputs, processes, and output components of Africa's core industry's to be available in Africa. Whether due to skills gaps, competitive and comparative advantages, structural transformation, or bad luck, what is clear is that for the +500 million Africans living in poverty, there is immeasurable benefit in capturing this capability.

This problem is amplified by hunger. Africa currently has over 200 million people sleeping hungry every day, while over 90% of the food consumed in the region is grown by women, and some 80% of people

rely on subsistent food systems. When people cannot eat, have no water, and have no upward mobility, the set of possible solutions does not come from copy-paste, top-down, epistemology.

We believe that within Africa, on a day to day basis, there are innovations, ideations, textbook 'informalities' and 'subversions' that present the optimal reaction to this situation. From fintech unicorns who have sprung up over the last 15 years to revolutionise payments among the predominantly unbanked Sub Saharan Africa, to microfinance, to agri-tech solutions. We are now observing the emergence of localised social enterprise that has arisen out of an understanding and direct stakeholderhip in the reversal of what we estimate is over \$500bn in annual infrastructure development gaps.

When it comes to water, this is no different. The main risk factor in African agriculture is irrigation. As an essential of life and the biggest factor impeding a basic level of livelihood, the onus is on us as world leaders to seek to elevate the voices of people who live with these problems every day; ensuring that solutions building incorporates the most cutting edge cost saving, optimising, and democratising technologies so as to diffuse, replicate, or reiterate innovation as it is needed.

For this reason Vertex Ecosystem has made contributions to the Water Action Agenda. We are committed to educate and incubate localised innovations that can revolutionise the regions relationship with its water, and encourage you all to join us on this mission. We are calling on financiers; donors, investment and development finance stakeholders to engage us about the solutions we are warehousing, and to learn how your capital can have supernormal returns with an obvious triple bottom line.

We are driven to make this world better, one innovation at a time.

Marc Watum
CEO, Vertex Ecosystem

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Marc Watum', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.