The Business of Emerging Technologies in Ethiopia

Hruy Tsegaye
Founder of iCog Makers

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My Name is Hruy Tsegaye and I am from Ethiopia. I work in a company called iCog Labs.

- AI research and Development
- Mobile Robotics
- Technology Transfer and Capacity Building
- Incubation and acceleration
Let’s begin with the perception of Emerging Technologies

**It is too good for Africa**
Emerging Technologies (ET) are luxuries and there is no immediate use for such business in the country

It is not the time now as the economy is small

Implementing ET is impossible because of the infrastructure gap

**It is Impossible**
Our people are not smart enough neither to develop such technologies nor to use it

We cannot afford to pay

What is it, we don’t know it

Almost all the officials and policymakers I have worked with confuse technology as a by-product of development. Yet, technology is a tool for development!
The Challenges

It looks like the room for sustainable tech market in Ethiopia, right now, is tiny! 😞
What are the Main Concerns

◉ Fear of change
◉ Lack of competitive labour
◉ Inflexible market policies
◉ Absence of regulatory rules and policies
Disruptive Technology displaces an established technology and shakes up the industry; it is a pioneering and radical product that creates a completely new industry and new markets separate to the mainstream. The market for disruptive technology, at the time of its inception, is not only non-existing but it is also unknowable.
The roots of the fear

- accelerate technological unemployment
- Loss of power to control the market
- concentrate wealth in the hands of the few
Lack of competitive labour

Outdated
The curriculum is that of the 1980s and 90s and as a result the students have no clue about what the current development and progress.

Not connected
The universities are not linked with the industry and are lost within their ivory tower assuming that they are the only source of technology transfer.

Theoretical only
Most of the higher institutes have no laboratory. The methodology of education has little room for practice-based education.
Inflexible market policies

Antediluvian

Most part of the financial rules are that of the 1960s and it is a complete chaos to manage businesses engaged in emerging technologies.

Corrupted and vague

A monopolistic and corrupted government interruption and absence of clear rule that defines business relationship between the government and private companies.
Absence of regulatory rules and policies

**Clueless**
The officials in charge are not well educated or have no advisor who can assist them to understand the nature and politics of emerging technologies.

**Lack of communication**
Policy often fails to address the issue because it is not supported and shaped by the people from the industry.

**Isolated and Oblivious**
So far there is no continental communication platforms where policy makers address the issue of AI and emerging technologies.
I fear that these challenges will not be quickly solved because of:

◉ The dead horse theory

◉ The Issue of Priority
Is it all gloomy then?
The prospects of emerging technologies

- Populated
- Unexploited
- Youth dominated
Total Population, number of mobile subscribers and people who have access to internate
Some of the Positive aspects

More than 60 Universities
Ethiopia is investing on tertiary education and right now there are more than 40 public and 15 private universities.

Curricula Change
Even though it is not fast, the government is changing the education system with special attention to STEM.

Foreign Investment
A considerable rise in foreign tech investment witnessing a positive move. Investors are coming with money.

Incubation and Acceleration
The private sector is mobilizing innovation and it’s cultivating innovators through incubation and acceleration centres.

Attitude Change
The public is now open to utilize new technologies. The market is willing to pay as long as the product is good enough.

Outsourcing Business
Ethiopia can become the favourite destination of outsourcing software business in Africa and there are signs of a good beginning.
How Decentralized AI Can Change the Lives of Millions (iCog Labs Website)

Technology: The Last Frontier in Economic Challenges (iCog Labs Website)
Thanks!

Any questions?

You can contact me via

- hruy@icog-labs.com
- +251911753490