

14th May 2010, Namibia - Keetmanshoop — "The Government must intensify infrastructure development in rural areas in order to attract investment to these areas".

"A sound and strong infrastructure network will 'catalyst' other sectors of the economy, be it manufacturing, agriculture or services. Emphasis on the infrastructure sector should be encouraged, upgrading and modernising the existing ones, construction of modern roads connecting rural areas with urban centres also for connecting rural areas.

"The electrification of the rural areas, provision of tarred roads, water supply and serviced lands should be accelerated. This will attract private sector investors to these presently neglected areas, attract service clusters to move away from urban conglomerates, leading to planned and optimal development of all areas, which have clogged civic amenities on account of overpopulation.

"This will generate more employment and income, particularly for those living in rural areas. Another important area is civil aviation.

"It is reckoned that Namibia has the potential to become a major tourist destination, however lack of air connectivity hampers the tapping of our tourism potential."

So said Alex Meroro, lecturer in the Department of Agriculture, School of Natural Resources and Tourism, Polytechnic of Namibia.

Meroro was speaking during an interactive debate session on 'Unlocking Development Opportunities for Young People in the Rural Areas of Namibia', during the recently held National Youth Week Festival in Keetmanshoop.

"In order to unlock rural competitiveness in Namibia we need to identify the necessary logistics mechanisms and structures required to foster rural growth and community participation.

"We also need to develop a database and methodology to assist Namibia's rural areas and determine economic growth opportunities and strategies.

"Furthermore, we should assist regional economic growth in constructing effective regional economic advancement strategies, using innovative information driven approaches to identify regional comparative advantages.

"Clusters need to be identified in these regions and stakeholders should be assisted to organise an implement strategy and lessons learned should be documented in order to benefit other rural areas in Namibia," he said.

Meroro continued: "It is essential that farmers produce and sell at their door steps, however regions need to change their mindset and bring about reforms and make farming rewarding.

"The budget thrust on the rural sector should make growth inclusive and sustainable. Government, the private and public sectors should provide opportunities for all able bodied citizens of our country by developing industry, commerce and agriculture by assisting those wish to be self-employed to have access to finance through loan guarantee schemes, supervised credit and acquisition of managerial skills.

"Locate and evaluate pragmatic business models that can be instrumentally applied to different sectors of rural Namibia. Develop skills and empower people with rural training, employment, skills development and community participation.

"Include micro credit and finances in rural finance and rural banking. Regional groups of industries that share common markets, supplies or workforce should be established, however skills are the key to stimulating economic development in rural areas."

According to Meroro, the best guarantee for freedom is the political education and enlightenment of the masses, while a distinction should be made between education for independence and education dependence, and education for liberation and education for slavery.

"Education as contrasted with instruction shall be community or society oriented rather than status oriented. It must emphasize the service to the community and the society rather than the proud possession of certificates.

"Any development without full participation of the chief or village headman is doomed to failure. Therefore, the community needs to be empowered in order to unlock the potential of rural areas to benefit the youth who are the leaders and great citizens of this country."

Source: [allAfrica](#)