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Article 1: Climate Change: Tracing Our Past, Understanding Today's Challenges, Shaping Tomorrow's Solutions

Professor Dr Daniel Chigudu

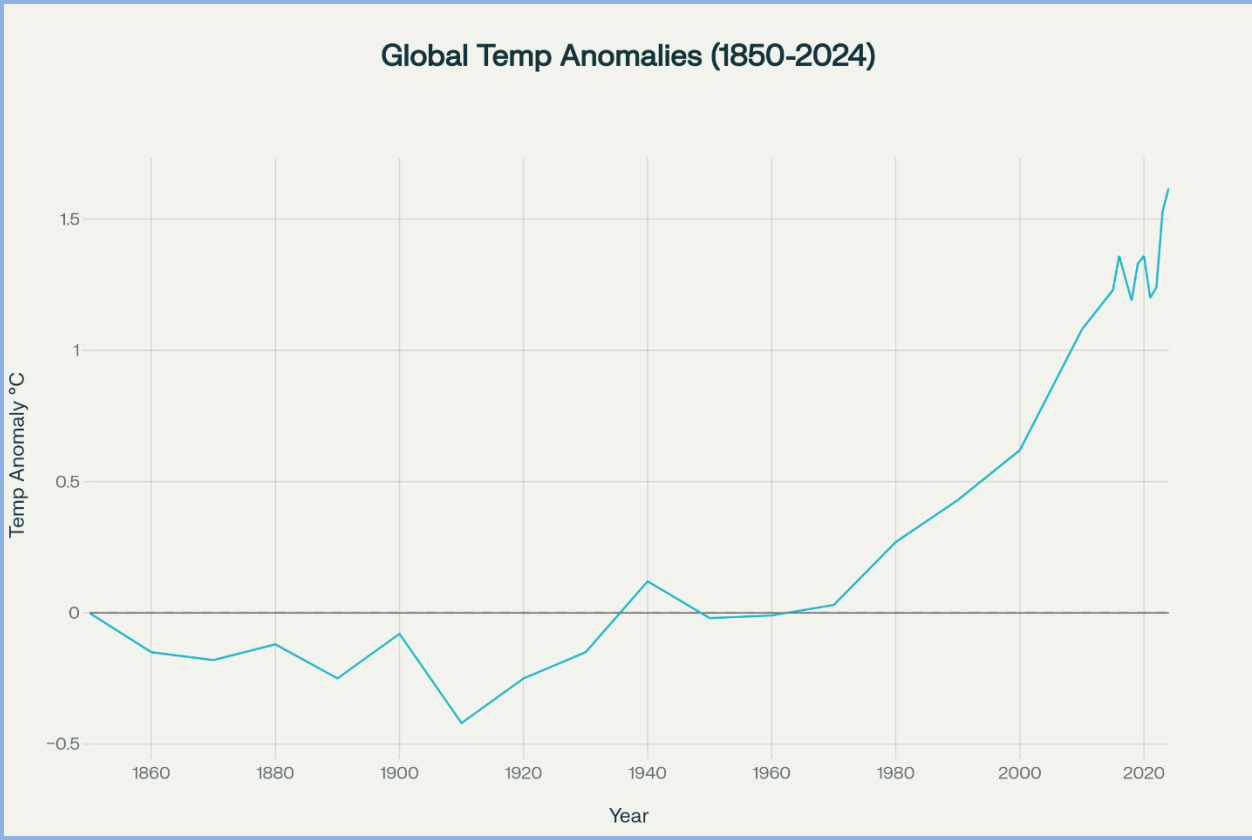
Introduction

The climate crisis presents one of the most significant challenges of our day and time, drastically shifting Earth's systems at an unprecedented rate. Addressing the climate crisis calls on us to think about the Earth, its long climate history, and the rapid changes under human influence following the Industrial Revolution. The data is precise as we approach the 'climate crisis', now formally the 'climate emergency' in 2025. To date, global temperatures have consistently made record high temperatures practically annually. We have had the hottest year on record - 2024 at 1.62°C above pre-industrial levels. This challenge also brings opportunities. Emerging technologies, policy frameworks, and global cooperation provide strategies towards sustainable futures.

Lessons from Earth's Climatic Past

- Ancient Climate Patterns and Natural Variability

Over its 4.6 billion-year existence, Earth has seen significant changes in its climate, and this history is key context for determining if the current warming is unusual. Paleoclimate studies have identified natural climate variability associated with specific "forcings" (i.e., factors that cause the climate system to change). Potential natural forcings include solar changes, volcanic activity, and orbital changes. These paleoclimate records also highlight a clear relationship between global temperature and atmospheric carbon dioxide levels, in which increases in carbon dioxide concentration are followed by increases in temperature and decreases in carbon dioxide are followed by decreases in temperature, generally on 100,000-year cycles. This provides scientists with a foundation of understanding that greenhouse gases have played a significant role in climate change throughout Earth's history. For example, approximately 54-48 million years ago, the Early Eocene had global surface temperatures 9° to 14°C higher than present, with atmospheric carbon dioxide concentrations between 1,000-2,000 parts per million (compared to approximately 414.27 ppm in 2021). These relatively high greenhouse gases were likely due to increased volcanic activity, showing how natural processes can cause the global climate to change significantly.



Global Temperature Anomalies: Rising Trend Toward Record Warming (1850-2024)

- The Pre-Industrial Baseline

The past 2000 years of climate data demonstrate important patterns that situate current warming. Paleoclimate reconstructions suggest a millennial-scale cooling period before 1850 CE, which included a multi-century span of relatively cool temperatures extending from the 15th century onwards. This natural variability provides a critical contextual baseline for assessing anthropogenic warming. Nonetheless, paleoclimate data also suggest three important conclusions regarding recent warming: over the last 50 years, temperatures have increased at an unprecedented rate; warm anomalies have become geographically more pervasive across the Northern Hemisphere during the mid-20th century than at any time earlier; and current warming is occurring, on average, approximately 10 times more rapidly than the long-term natural warming rates.

The Industrial Revolution: A Turning Point

- The Birth of the Carbon Age

The Industrial Revolution radically changed how humans relate to the global climate system. In the late 1700s, the transition from agricultural to manufacturing economies inaugurated large-scale consumption of fossil fuels. Semi-automated factory systems and mass production were enabled by steam power, but heavy, industrial machinery required tremendous energy, provided almost exclusively by coal. In the industrial age, 2.3 trillion tonnes of CO_2 have been released into the atmosphere. While oceans and ecosystems have absorbed roughly half of the CO_2, the other half

remains in the atmosphere and has led to significant increases in the concentration of CO_2 in the atmosphere. In 2022, global CO_2 emissions were 182 times greater than CO_2 emissions in 1850.

- Accelerating Emissions Growth

The First Industrial Revolution introduced mechanization and steam power, leading to heavy coal usage. The Second Industrial Revolution (late 19th to early 20th centuries) introduced electricity, steel-making, and internal combustion engines, which significantly increased the consumption of energy and extraction of resources at nearly exponential rates. Each phase added to cumulative environmental pressure in time, causing drastic increases in air pollution, deforestation, and greenhouse gas emissions worldwide. Cities became industrial powerhouses, but greater pollution came with greater investment in industrialization. Many cities like Manchester, Glasgow, or Birmingham grew rapidly. However, darkening skies filled with thick smog from coal-fired factories hovered overhead, and rivers became local dumping grounds filled with industrial wastes. These patterns of unregulated resource extraction and emissions created systems of mass production and fossil fuel dependence that continue to drive global climate change today.

Today's Climate Reality: Unprecedented Warming

- Record-Breaking Temperatures

In climate history, 2024 is now a turning point -- the hottest year ever documented since direct measurements have been available from 1850 onward. Several global datasets show the exact change, with the global average surface temperature in 2024 being between 1.55 °C and 1.62 °C above the preindustrial (1850-1900) baseline. It is the first year in the Berkeley Earth analysis, with an annual average crossing the threshold of 1.6 °C; we are not ready for that change. The spike in observed warming from 2023 to 2024 has been extreme, much larger than expected, and incredibly rapid, representing a larger deviation from previous warming than is characteristic. Between 2015 and 2024, we have observed the 10 hottest years ever instrumentally recorded. The increase from 2022 to 2024 represents the most significant recorded increase since the 1870s.

- Accelerating Climate Impacts

The ongoing temperature rise is causing significant shifts in Earth's systems. Warming in the Arctic continues to increase faster than the rest of the planet, and models project that in the next five years, the Arctic will experience an increase of over three and a half times the global average temperature. At the same time, regions like the Barents, Bering, and Sea of Okhotsk have seen declines in sea ice concentrations. The implications of our changing climate go beyond records of temperature. The wildfires in January 2025 in Los Angeles could be among the most expensive weather-related catastrophes in U.S. history, with total costs of $100 billion or more. Scientists affiliated with the World Weather Attribution Group found that climate change made hot, dry conditions, which contributed to the wildfires, more likely. Likewise, parts of East Africa experienced their worst drought in 40 years in 2022, and climate change made this drought at least 100 times more likely.

Current Emissions and Trajectories

Although climate negotiations have continued for decades, gas emissions have yet to reach pathways allowing the Paris Agreement aims to be met. Current national climate plans would lead to a 2.6% reduction in global emissions by 2030 compared to 2019—a minuscule amount compared to the 43% reduction scientists say is needed to limit warming to 1.5°C. There is an 80% chance that at least one year between 2025 and 2029 will be warmer than 2024, and a 70% chance that the five-year average warming for 2025-2029 will exceed 1.5°C.

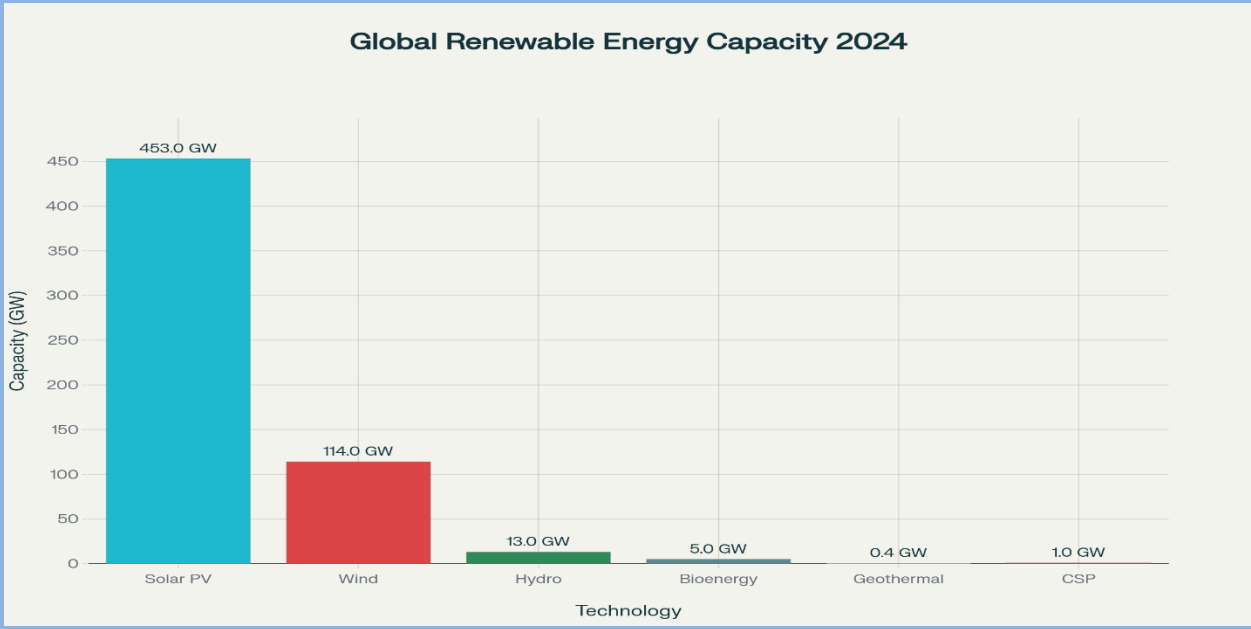
The Technology Revolution: Tomorrow's Solutions

- Carbon Capture and Storage Technologies

Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS), regarded as one of the most promising technologies to help manage emissions from hard-to-decarbonize sectors, captures CO_2 from significant point sources (e.g., power plants, industrial processes) and transports it (often via pipeline or ship) to be permanently stored underground in geological formations. By 2025, carbon capture technologies, including Direct Air Capture (DAC), will become more efficient and affordable within the energy market, something leading companies in this space, including Climeworks, are actively working to advance. As more advanced technologies evolve, like Bio-Energy Carbon Capture and Storage (BECCS) and mineralization of carbon (solid carbonates created from CO_2 for permanent storage), companies like Carbfix are building on the idea of permanent carbon storage, which is furthering harmful emissions into the atmosphere. There are also many challenges that CCS must handle, including the fact that, as of 2024, CCS operated at only 44 sites in the entire world and captured a mere 1/1000 of global CO_2 emissions.

- Renewable Energy Acceleration

In 2024, the renewable energy sector achieved noteworthy progress, with total capacity increasing by an impressive 15.1% globally, equating to 4,448 gigawatts (GW). Rising capacity was driven by solar energy, with sustained growth exceeding nearly a third; more than three-quarters of the new renewable capacity globally came from solar energy. Wind energy was the second-largest growth contributor in capacity, primarily due to contributions from China and the U.S.



Global Renewable Energy Capacity Additions by Technology (2024) - 582 GW Total

Although growth is achieved at record levels, growth rates are still below the levels required to achieve the COP28 commitment to tripling renewable capacity by 2030. A 16.6% year-on-year growth rate is still necessary to meet the levels needed by 2030, exceeding the levels currently achieved. Nonetheless, technology continues to progress: wind capacity is projected to be nearly 3,000 gigawatts (GW) by 2030 and 8,000 GW by 2050, while solar PV capacity is projected to increase to about 5,400 GW in 2030 and 18,000 GW in 2050.

Artificial Intelligence and Climate Solutions

AI rapidly develops into a trusted ally for climate action, providing data-driven solutions for several applications, including weather forecasting, energy management, and renewable energy optimization. Artificial intelligence systems are designed to collect and analyze large datasets from satellites, radars, and weather stations, which give us variance in resolution and accuracy. AI systems will enable climate monitoring of deforestation/melting glaciers/urban heat islands, where material improvements have occurred. AI and organizations like IBM and Google are creating AI systems to monitor emissions or resource use with heightened detail. The farming sector utilizes systems like ClimateAI to improve processes and help farmers improve yields with less water and fertilizer. For example, other platforms, like AutoGrid and Grid.io, use AI applications to manage energy flows on smart energy grids with modeling output that accommodates many interconnected grid parameters that are otherwise missed. Recent research by PwC suggests that AI systems could reduce CO_2 emissions by more than 4% by 2030.

Nature-Based Solutions

Solutions based on nature have considerable potential on the supply side for emissions reductions and adaptation to climate impacts. Nature-based solutions consist of conserving, restoring, or managing ecosystems differently to sequester CO_2 from the atmosphere while providing other

benefits such as cleaner air and water, increased biodiversity, and greater resilience. Evidence suggests that well-designed nature-based solutions can provide avoidance or removal of up to 10 gigatonnes of CO_2 equivalent per year at least until 2050, of which 85% would come from changes in land management such as using agroforestry in combination with conventional agriculture. Nature-based solutions include reforestation, wetland restoration, regenerative agriculture, and ocean-based solutions, such as seagrass restoration. Although it is estimated that the contribution from nature-based solutions will be substantial, it can contribute only about 20% of the reductions needed in

2050, with technological decarbonization contributing the remaining share of cuts.

Climate Adaptation: Building Resilience

- Adaptation Strategies and Approaches

Climate adaptation requires adjustments to ongoing and expected climate impacts through infrastructure, institutions, behavioural change, or nature-based solutions. Examples of adaptation measures include constructing seawalls or flood barriers, establishing new insurance methods, shifting the times or types of crops planted, and introducing green infrastructure elements to buildings and public spaces. Adaptation needs vary significantly by region and community. Coastal areas primarily focus on sea-level rise barriers and restoring mangroves, while arid regions focus on adaptation to address water scarcity and heat stress. Adaptation needs are most significant in developing countries, which are the most vulnerable to climate impacts and need additional assistance in sectors including food, water, and infrastructure.

- Innovation in Agricultural Adaptation

Innovative agriculture technologies are changing how agricultural systems respond to climate change. Precision agriculture combines drones, sensors, and GPS mapping to track crops throughout the season and improve resource efficiencies, minimizing excess water, fertilizers, and pesticide applications. In Kenya, scientists have developed drought-resilient maize varieties, which are 20 to 30% more productive than regular cultivars during dry seasons. Vertical farming is another innovation, as companies like AeroFarms grow crops in controlled environments, using 95% less water and without pesticides. Agroforestry agricultural practices allow farmers to enhance soil productivity and manage the heat impacts of climate change. The Food and Agriculture Organization suggests climate-smart agriculture could reduce global agrarian emissions by 25% to 30%.

- Economic Benefits of Adaptation

Adaptation methods rooted in nature regularly demonstrate greater cost-effectiveness than engineered alternatives. Natural methods of coastal defense are anywhere from two to five times more cost-effective than engineered solutions. The Global Commission on Adaptation reports that the benefits from restoration of mangroves (concerning fisheries, forestry, recreation, and storm protection) are 10 times greater than the associated costs.

Global Cooperation and Policy Frameworks

- The Paris Agreement and Beyond

The Paris Agreement remains the anchor of global climate action, with almost 200 countries pledging to limit warming to well below 2°C above pre-industrial temperature levels or, if possible, to limit warming to 1.5°C. Since September 2025, as we head toward COP30, momentum has built considerably in the run-up to COP30, with nearly 100 countries representing two-thirds of total global greenhouse gas emissions having submitted or announced new climate targets. Major economies, including China—the largest emitter in the world, no less—announced new economy-wide reduction targets that cover all greenhouse gases and all sectors of the economy for the first time. China's new commitment signifies a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 7-10% across its economy by 2035 while increasing wind and solar generation capacity to more than six times its 2020 levels. Some critics point out that these climate commitments are insufficient to achieve the necessary reductions that would align with limiting warming to 1.5°C.

- Climate Finance: The Critical Challenge

The financial aspects of climate action may be the biggest challenge to scaling solutions. At COP29, rich countries agreed to raise climate financing to $300 billion annually by 2035. This is better than the previous target of $100 billion; however, it is far short of what is needed. Leaders also agreed to try to mobilize $1.3 trillion by 2035 for the most vulnerable countries. Less than 1% of the projected global GDP for 2035 is represented in the $1.3 trillion target, yet making this a reality will involve unprecedented coordination across a range of financial sources. Capital increases at multilateral development banks, new financing mechanisms, such as carbon markets and debt-for-nature swaps, and significant private sector participation are all essential to achieve the funding needed. At least half of the $1.3 trillion must be from private sources.

- National Climate Commitments

The nationally determined contributions (NDCs) are still inadequate for achieving the global climate goals. Countries have made pledges, but combined, they would lead to only a 2.6% reduction in global emissions by 2030 compared to 2019, far short of the 43% reduction needed. On the positive side, newer NDCs submitted before COP30 ("World Climate Day") are showing greater ambition, with several nations providing details about their declared renewable energy goals, plans to cut methane, carbon sink strategy related to forest protection, and intention to phase out fossil fuels. The European Union has set a legally binding goal of climate neutrality by 2050, with an interim plan of a 55% reduction by 2030, and pre-existing EU measures could achieve a 43% reduction by 2030; planned measures are likely to achieve a reduction of around 49% by 2030. These NDCs reflect among the world's most ambitious national climate policies.

The Path Forward: Integration and Implementation

- Systemic Transformation Requirements

Achieving global climate goals requires unprecedented transformation across all sectors of society. The window for limiting warming to 1.5°C is rapidly closing, with current warming trajectories suggesting this threshold will be crossed within the next 5-10 years regardless of immediate actions. This reality necessitates both aggressive mitigation efforts and substantial adaptation investments.

Energy system transformation must accelerate beyond current renewable energy growth rates. While 2024 saw record renewable capacity additions, maintaining current growth would still leave the world 7.2% short of tripling renewable capacity by 2030. Following five-year growth trends since 2018 would result in a 27.9% shortfall. This gap requires faster deployment and enhanced grid infrastructure, energy storage solutions, and policy frameworks supporting renewable integration.

- Technology Integration and Scaling

The integration of several technologies presents collaborative opportunities for climate solutions. AI optimization of renewable energy may improve performance, while carbon capture technologies will allow emissions reduction options for sources that cannot easily transition to electrification. Nature-based solutions provide mitigation and adaptation benefits while offering biodiversity conservation. However, scaling these technologies will require many resources and the right political and regulatory ecosystem. While carbon capture and storage offers promise, it is currently in operation at a small scale and has significant cost and deployment challenges. Likewise, many nature-based solutions require long-term commitments and changes to land use practices that face economic and political difficulties.

- Justice and Equity Considerations

Climate solutions must address the inequities at the root of climate change causes and effects. In general, developing countries most impacted by climate change contribute least to historical emissions and face constrained capabilities to finance adaptation or transition to clean energy. The goal to mobilize financing to developing countries at approximately $1.3 trillion highlights this disparity between domestic capabilities and those needing outside support.

Achieving climate action necessitates ensuring that solutions do not expand pre-existing inequalities. Just Transition policies must explicitly support workers and communities reliant on fossil fuels while creating opportunities for clean energy jobs. Investments in adaptation will focus on the most vulnerable communities and mitigate not only near-term climate risks but also address causes of vulnerability. Climate change is the greatest challenge and defining opportunity of our generation. The paleoclimate record illustrates that Earth's climate system can change significantly, while human actions drive warming at unprecedented rates. The record temperatures of 2024 and continuing growth in emissions are sobering, while we embrace accelerating renewable energy deployments, climate technologies, and international cooperation to help chart pathways out of these obstacles toward a sustainable world.

The transition requires integrating lessons from Earth's climatic past with cutting-edge technologies and equitable policy frameworks. Success depends on technical solutions, unprecedented global cooperation, adequate financing, and commitment to justice and equity. As world leaders prepare for COP30 and beyond, the choices made in the coming decade will determine whether humanity can build a resilient, sustainable future while avoiding the most catastrophic climate impacts. The tools exist, what remains is the collective will to deploy them at the scale and speed that science demands.

Article 2: Global Entrepreneurship and Its Impact on Less-Developed African Nations

Dr Stanley Simon

Introduction

The story of African development has historically been framed around aid dependency, natural resource extraction, and structural poverty. Yet, over the past two decades, a quiet revolution has emerged: entrepreneurship as a pathway to resilience and global integration. For less-developed African nations, entrepreneurship is not merely a luxury or a peripheral phenomenon; it is central to the pursuit of sustainable economic independence.

Globalisation and technological advancement have accelerated this trend. International investors are increasingly turning to Africa's untapped markets, while young entrepreneurs are building ventures that address local needs in innovative ways. However, the landscape remains uneven: while countries like Nigeria, Kenya, and South Africa have become continental hubs, smaller and less-developed nations still grapple with exclusion.

Entrepreneurship and Developmental Outcomes

Job Creation and Youth Employment

Africa faces a demographic paradox. On one hand, it has the youngest population in the world, with over 60% under the age of 25. On the other hand, it suffers from some of the highest youth unemployment and underemployment rates globally. In this context, entrepreneurship is less about innovation for its own sake and more about necessity-driven survival.

SMEs and start-ups offer flexible opportunities that absorb labour otherwise excluded from formal employment markets. In Rwanda and Ethiopia, for example, community-based enterprises provide income to thousands in rural areas, while in Nigeria and Kenya, urban tech hubs generate new, higher-value jobs. Importantly, entrepreneurial ventures often create secondary employment through value chains for instance, logistics, retail distribution, and customer support.

Digitalisation as a Growth Driver

Digital transformation has proven to be a game-changer. Mobile money, e-commerce, and agritech solutions illustrate how African entrepreneurs have harnessed global trends to leapfrog traditional barriers. Mobile fintech platforms such as M-Pesa did not only provide banking services but also catalysed an entire ecosystem of microbusinesses reliant on digital transactions.

The uneven distribution of entrepreneurial activity is illustrated below.

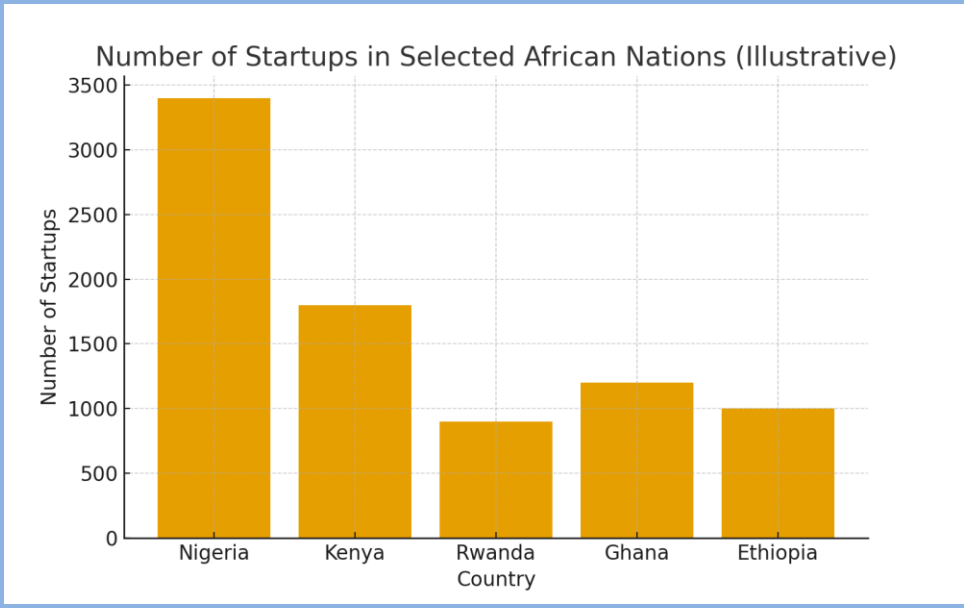


Figure 1: Number of Startups in Selected African Nations.

Access to Finance and Global Integration

Unequal Funding Flows

Despite the rise of global venture capital and impact investors targeting Africa, funding remains concentrated in a handful of countries. Nigeria and Kenya, for instance, capture more than half of all African start-up investment annually. Smaller economies face structural disadvantages: limited visibility, smaller consumer markets, and weaker investor confidence.

The disparities are reflected in the following chart.

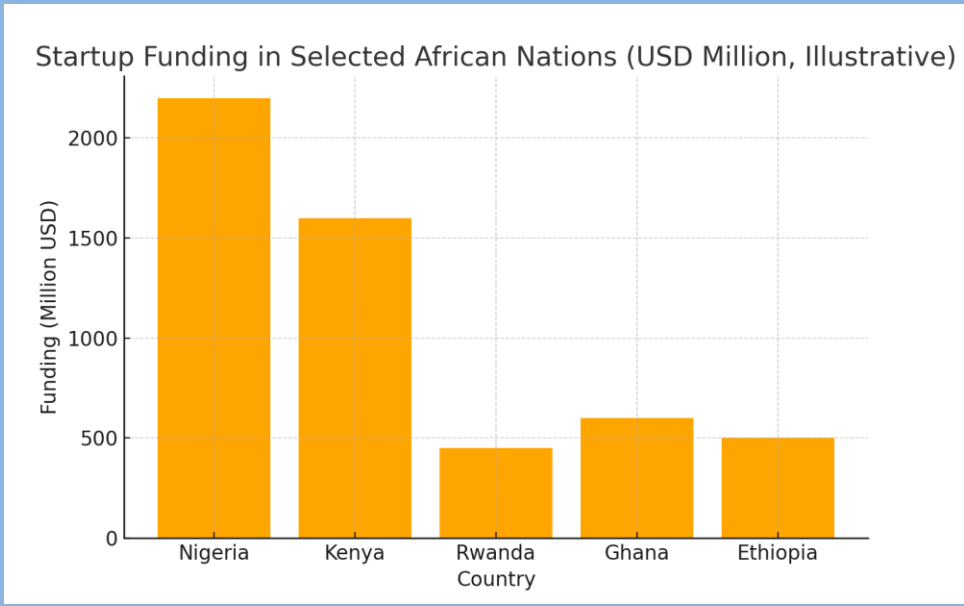


Figure 2: Startup Funding in Selected African Nations (USD Million).

Regional and Global Linkages

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) is potentially transformative. By integrating 54 nations into the largest free trade bloc by population, AfCFTA offers a unique opportunity to dismantle barriers and allow entrepreneurs from smaller economies to access larger regional markets. This is critical for less-developed nations, as domestic demand is often too small to sustain scale.

Moreover, global partnerships through diaspora networks, accelerators, and foreign universities connect African entrepreneurs with knowledge, mentorship, and capital, enhancing their ability to compete internationally.

Structural Challenges

Despite progress, significant barriers constrain entrepreneurship in less-developed African nations:

1. Infrastructure Deficits – Power outages, weak internet connectivity, and poor transport logistics significantly increase operating costs.
2. Regulatory and Institutional Weaknesses – Inconsistent policies, corruption, and opaque licensing procedures discourage entrepreneurship.
3. Skills Gap and Education Deficits – Many entrepreneurs lack formal training in finance, digital technologies, and management.
4. Funding Inequalities – Over-reliance on foreign capital exposes start-ups to external shocks and leaves smaller nations behind.

Policy Directions

To ensure entrepreneurship drives inclusive development, less-developed African nations must:

Strengthen infrastructure to support both digital and physical connectivity.
Implement simplified, transparent regulations to encourage start-up growth.
Expand financing mechanisms, including microcredit and blended finance models.
Invest in education that prioritises entrepreneurship, digital literacy, and sustainability.

Conclusion

Entrepreneurship represents both the present and future of development in less-developed African nations. The graphs included in this paper underscore two realities: first, entrepreneurship is growing rapidly; second, its benefits are unevenly distributed. To ensure equitable impact, nations must invest in infrastructure, streamline regulations, and democratise access to finance and education.

Global entrepreneurship, when harnessed strategically, can shift Africa away from aid-dependency towards resilience and prosperity. For less-developed nations, the challenge is not a lack of entrepreneurial spirit, but the need to build the systems that allow this spirit to flourish on a sustainable, globally competitive scale.

Article 3: Insights to Cambodia and Real Estate Growth

Professor Dr Wilson Lim

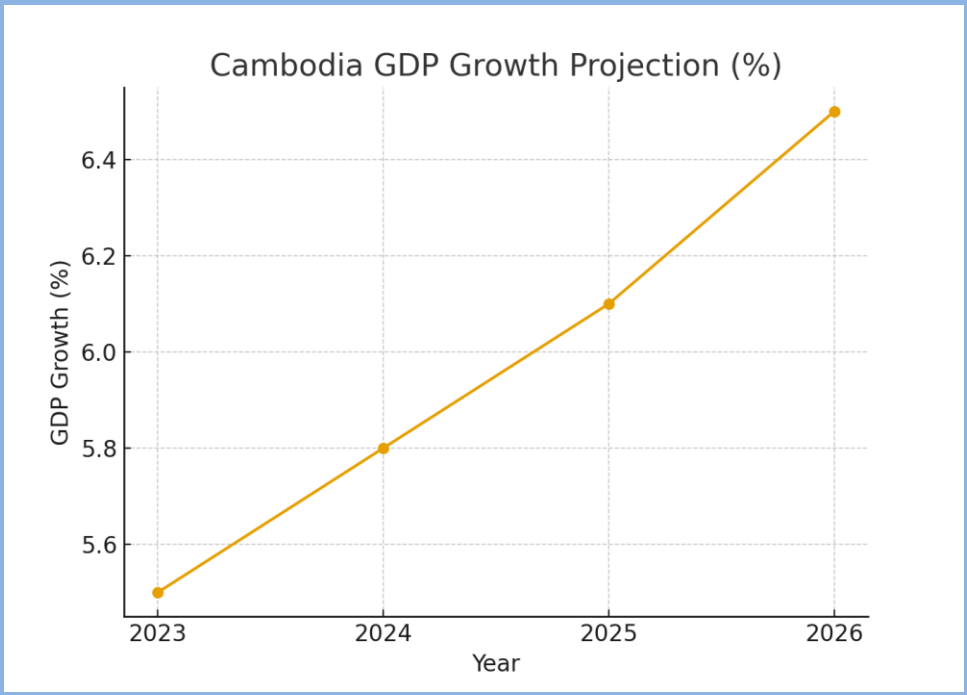
Introduction

Cambodia, once overshadowed by its more developed Southeast Asian neighbors, is emerging as one of the region's most intriguing real estate markets. The country has shown resilient economic growth, youthful demographics, and ambitious infrastructure projects, all of which have combined to create fertile ground for property development. Yet beyond the surface headlines, there are hidden sectors that may represent "golden opportunities" for those willing to explore Cambodia's frontier market potential.

Economic Growth as the Bedrock

Cambodia's economy has steadily expanded, with the World Bank and Asian Development Bank projecting GDP growth surpassing 6% in 2025–2026. This momentum underpins long-term demand for housing, retail, and mixed-use developments.

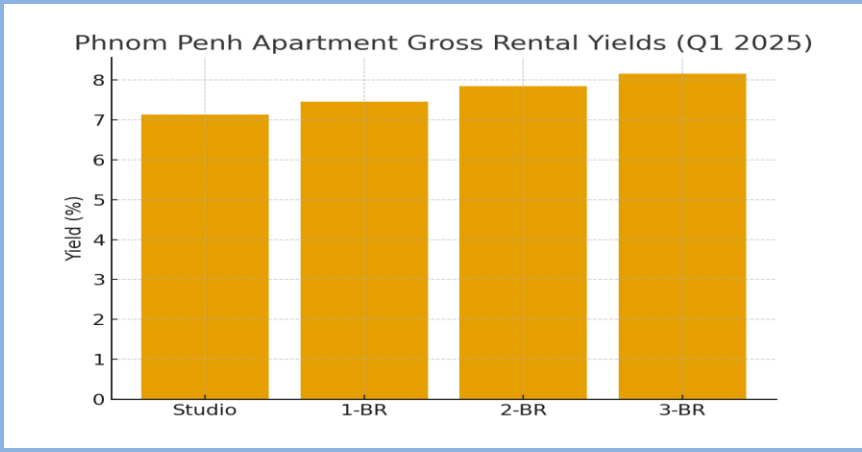
Figure 1. Cambodia GDP Growth Projection (%)



Strong Rental Yield Potential

For international investors, Cambodia's property market stands out for its relatively high rental yields compared to regional peers. In Phnom Penh, yields for apartments typically range from 7% to 8%, which is considered very attractive by global standards.

Figure 2. Phnom Penh Apartment Gross Rental Yields (Q1 2025)



Hidden Catalysts in the Market

Beyond general macro growth, Cambodia's property sector has "hidden gems"—underappreciated drivers that may accelerate future growth:

1. Infrastructure Expansion – Techo International Airport and Funan Techo Canal will reshape land values and logistics.

2. Tourism-Linked Real Estate – Coastal regions such as Kep and Kampot are emerging boutique resort markets.

3. Satellite Cities and Suburban Growth – Sub districts like Chbar Ampov and Prek Pnov benefit from urban sprawl.

4. Distressed Project Opportunities – Oversupply in borey housing estates may provide discounted entry points.

Key Risk Factors

Real estate in Cambodia offers promising returns, but investors must recognize the risks that could undermine profitability or long-term value. Below is a clearer breakdown of the most critical risks:

1. Regulatory & Legal Uncertainty (Severity: 8/10) – Land ownership restrictions and unclear titles create risks of disputes and policy shifts.

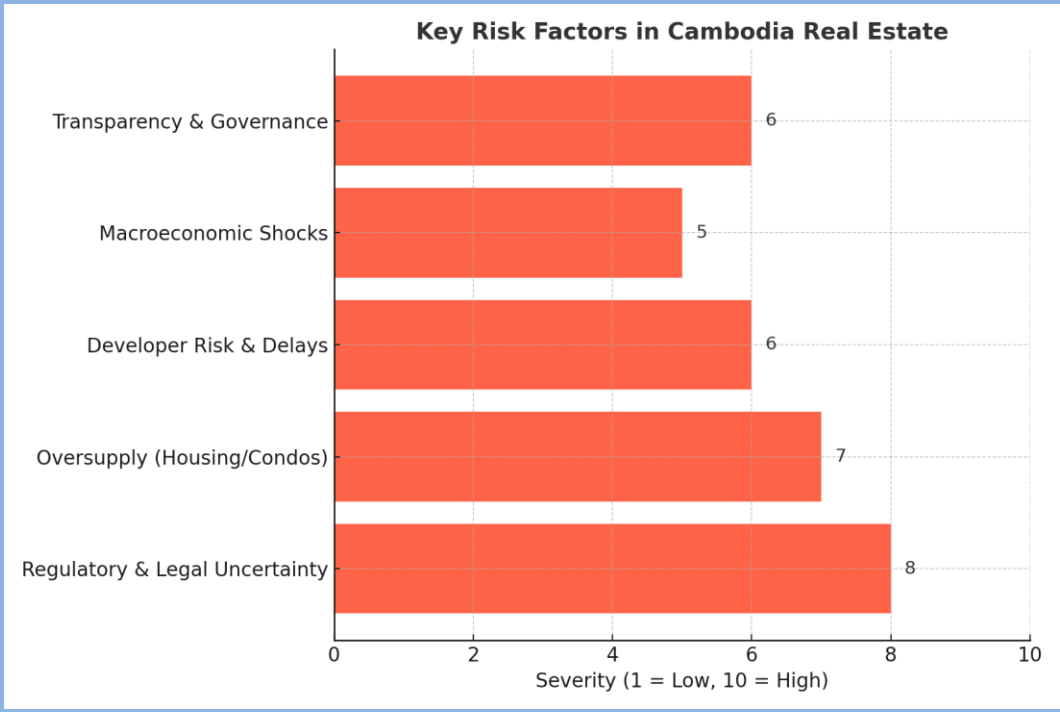
2. Oversupply in Certain Segments (Severity: 7/10) – Overbuilding in borey housing and condos could suppress prices and demand.

3. Developer Risk & Project Execution (Severity: 6/10) – Some projects stall due to lack of financing or weak developer capacity.

4. Macroeconomic & External Shocks (Severity: 5/10) – Heavy reliance on foreign capital makes the market sensitive to global downturns.

5. Transparency & Governance Issues (Severity: 6/10) – Corruption and opaque approvals add costs and uncertainty.

Figure 3. Key Risk Factors in Cambodia Real Estate (Severity Scale 1–10)



Strategic Recommendations
To capture upside while mitigating risks, investors should:

1. Focus on Mid-to-High Segments – stronger absorption rates and less oversupply risk.

2. Target Infrastructure Corridors – land near airports, highways, and canals will appreciate faster.

3. Vet Developers Thoroughly – work only with firms that have proven track records.

4. Diversify by Location – balance Phnom Penh assets with coastal or suburban growth zones.

5. Adopt Long-Term Horizons – quick flips are riskier than buy-and-hold strategies.

Conclusion

Cambodia's real estate sector is not a uniform "gold mine" but it does contain pockets of golden opportunity. The interplay of economic growth, rental yields, infrastructure, and untapped coastal and suburban markets creates strong reasons for optimism. At the same time, risks tied to regulation, transparency, and oversupply require careful management.

For investors willing to balance boldness with prudence, Cambodia may represent one of the most compelling yet often overlooked real estate stories in Southeast Asia.

Article 4: Global Entrepreneurship and Its Impact on Less-Developed African Nations

Mr Sean Parshad

Introduction

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is entering Q4 2025 with a mix of promise and volatility. Macro forecasts now point to real GDP growth of roughly 5% in 2025, with the World Bank projecting ~5.1% and the IMF ~4.7%, reflecting cooling mining output but resilient non-mining activity and moderating inflation after mid-year peaks.

Policy Whiplash in Critical Minerals: From Export Ban to Quotas

Yet for small and medium enterprises, the backbone of jobs outside the dominant mining sector operating conditions remain exacting. Two forces frame the moment. First, policy whiplash in critical minerals: after a seven-month freeze, Kinshasa will end the cobalt export ban and shift to quotas on 16 October 2025, a regime that caps shipments at 18,125 tonnes for the rest of 2025 and 96,600 tonnes annually in 2026–27. Second, security and governance frictions in the east bank closures, currency shortages, and rebel levies continue to distort markets and raise costs. Together they demand more disciplined risk, finance, and logistics strategies than at any time in recent years.

Finance Bottlenecks: The Persistent Credit Gap

Finance remains the most cited bottleneck. Formal bank credit is scarce and expensive; collateral thresholds remain out of reach for many firms. The legal doorway to innovative finance crowdfunding and guarantee mechanisms exists on paper but is still in early rollout, meaning most SMEs must assemble patchwork capital stacks from internal cashflow, trade credit, and project-linked facilities. Notably, donor-backed programmes are proving their value: the World Bank's MSME support effort created 6,012 businesses and 14,926 full-time jobs by September 2025, while participating firms reported sharp gains in sales and income evidence that well-designed de-risking and capability support can move the needle in fragile settings.

The Productivity Penalty of Informality

The productivity penalty from informality remains high. Firms that try to formalise often face overlapping national, provincial, and municipal charges and uneven enforcement—factors that erode margins and make forecasting hazardous. Recent World Bank analysis urges a rethink of tax incentives and administration to protect stability, growth, and equity an agenda with direct implications for medium-sized companies that straddle formal value chains and provincial realities.

Localised Supply Chain Disruptions in Conflict Zones

In North Kivu and Ituri, mid-2025 saw supply chains severed, banks shuttered, and ad-hoc levies introduced conditions that forced cash-heavy operations, inventory pile-ups, and route diversions. A July Doha track produced a declaration of principles between Kinshasa and M23, and regional de-escalation signals are visible in markets beyond the DRC; but the on-the-ground business risk remains highly local and fluid. SMEs should plan for corridor-by-corridor variability and keep contingency routes (and cash buffers) live.

Cobalt Quota Regime: Implications for SMEs and Midstream Players

The shift from a blanket ban to quota-managed cobalt exports is intended to stabilise prices, tighten traceability, and nudge in-country processing but it also re-prices risk for mid-stream traders, logistics providers, and service SMEs tied to mining clusters. Analysts expect tighter balances by 2026 as quotas bite, potentially lifting prices but also amplifying volatility if administration is uneven. Medium enterprises should treat quota allocation, documentation, and schedule risk as core variables in cash-flow planning and contract design for 2026–27.

Financial Inclusion and the Digital Finance Opportunity

Financial inclusion is improving from a low base. The newest Global Findex (2025) shows continued global gains in account and savings behaviour, and Sub-Saharan Africa's mobile-money leadership remains intact per GSMA's 2025 industry report. In the DRC context, that means the plumbing for mobile-enabled credit scoring, merchant payments, and supply-chain finance is strengthening even if unevenly across provinces. Builders should target digitisation of receivables and payables first, then layer insured inventory finance and purchase-order-backed lending as data exhaust accumulates.

Conclusion

Strategic priorities for the next 12–18 months include: diversifying sources of finance (bank lines, trade finance, mobile-money credit, pilot crowdfunding), progressive formalisation (clean digital bookkeeping, tax IDs, phased audits), route redundancy and inventory planning to manage corridor shocks, minerals-adjacent contract clauses to handle quota risk, and operational digitisation (cloud accounting, e-invoicing, mobile collections). These measures can help SMEs mitigate risk and capture growth in a high-complexity market.

Article 5: Sri Lanka's New Beginning: Why Entrepreneurship and Education Must Go Hand in Hand

Dr Sean Pereira

Introduction

I write these reflections not just as an observer of Sri Lanka's economy but as someone deeply committed to the transformative power of international education. Over the years, I have worked with students across borders — in Asia, Europe, and beyond — helping them expand their horizons and prepare for global opportunities. When I look at Sri Lanka today, under a new government and standing at the threshold of renewal, I see not only economic recovery but also the chance to embed entrepreneurship at the heart of its national story.

From Collapse to Possibility

Sri Lanka's recent past has been turbulent. The 2022 debt crisis left the country scarred, households uncertain, and businesses fearful. Yet as we enter 2025, there is a different mood. Growth has returned (around 5% in 2024), inflation is under control, and the new administration has declared a bold commitment to reform and digital modernization. Initiatives like the GovPay platform and the Digital Identity programme are more than policy milestones; they are signals that Sri Lanka is ready to embrace innovation as a driver of recovery.

Education as a Global Connector

For those of us who believe in education as a global connector, this is inspiring. Education does not stop at classrooms; it thrives when linked to entrepreneurship, technology, and problem-solving. If the government sustains this trajectory, Sri Lanka can become not just a recovering economy but a Launchpad for ideas with international reach.

Entrepreneurial Openings

In my conversations with young Sri Lankan graduates, I notice a hunger for opportunity. Many have the skills, creativity, and global awareness to build meaningful ventures, yet they hesitate. The barriers are familiar: limited funding, regulatory hurdles, and the lure of migration to wealthier economies.

But this is precisely why now is the time to act. With the government's pivot toward digital infrastructure and foreign partnerships, sectors such as fintech, agritech, tourism technology, and clean energy are opening up. These are industries where local challenges meet global relevance — the perfect ground for entrepreneurial growth.

The Education–Entrepreneurship Bridge

As someone who champions international education, I see a clear alignment: entrepreneurial ventures can provide young people with the practical context for their learning, while international education can equip them with the global perspective needed to scale beyond borders.

Sri Lanka has always exported talent. Too often, however, this talent leaves permanently, fueling the brain drain. A smarter strategy would be to anchor that talent through entrepreneurial ecosystems at home while still connecting them to international education networks. Imagine graduates who study abroad but return to launch startups in Colombo or Jaffna, supported by government-backed incubators and international investors. That is how education and entrepreneurship can reinforce each other.

Global Partnerships and Ecosystem Support

I believe international universities, development partners, and private investors have a role to play. Joint research programmes, cross-border incubators, and exchange initiatives can plug Sri Lanka's entrepreneurs directly into global value chains. In this way, the nation can turn its outward-looking educational tradition into an engine for economic resilience.

What Must Change

For this vision to take root, two shifts are essential:

1. The government must clear barriers. Streamlined business registration, predictable taxation, and consistent digital regulation are crucial. Entrepreneurs must feel supported, not hindered.
2. Education must be re-imagined as entrepreneurial. Curricula that integrate problem-solving, innovation, and global market awareness will prepare students to create jobs, not only seek them.

A Personal Commitment

As someone who has dedicated a career to promoting international education, I feel a responsibility to highlight this moment. Entrepreneurship is not just an economic activity — it is a mindset that can restore confidence, empower youth, and link Sri Lanka to the wider world. Education and entrepreneurship together form the twin pillars of national renewal.

Conclusion

Sri Lanka is standing at the edge of a rare opportunity. If the government continues its reformist course, if investors look beyond short-term risks, and if educators like myself push for global partnerships that are inclusive and future-focused, the island can step forward with confidence.

The crisis showed us what collapse looks like. The years ahead can show us what reinvention feels like. For me, and for anyone invested in the power of education to shape economies, this is a moment we cannot afford to miss.

Article 6: Entrepreneurship, Tradition, and Trust: How Datuk Syed Hafeez Chishty Built a Legacy in Singapore's Muslim Wedding Catering Industry

Ms N Bindu

Introduction

In Singapore's bustling wedding economy, the Muslim catering segment stands out as one of the most entrepreneurial and fiercely competitive. It's a space where heritage meets innovation, where family businesses evolve into professional brands, and where customer trust can make or break decades of work.

Few embody that spirit better than Datuk Syed Hafeez Chishty, Executive Chairman of Naazreen Group, whose journey reflects both business acumen and community commitment. With over thirty years of experience, Datuk Chishty has turned a modest kitchen venture into a respected name synonymous with quality, service, and reliability.

"Entrepreneurship Isn't Just About Profit, It's About Purpose"

"The Muslim wedding market is not just an industry; it's a responsibility," Datuk Chishty begins. "When families trust us with their big day, they're not buying food they're buying peace of mind."

He describes how the field has evolved from informal home-based catering to full-scale event operations with logistics, décor, digital marketing, and branding. "We're no longer just cooks; we're entrepreneurs. We manage people, technology, and emotions all in one day."

From Kitchen to Company: Competing Beyond Food

Competition, he notes, has intensified with younger, tech-savvy entrants entering the market. "Everyone can cook a decent biryani now," he smiles. "But not everyone can deliver consistency, service, and trust."

Naazreen Group's edge lies in its organisational discipline such as SOPs, temperature-controlled vans, real-time delivery tracking, and a customer-service culture built over generations. "A successful wedding caterer thinks like a business leader," he explains. "You need systems, not just seasoning."

He believes entrepreneurship is not about doing everything differently, but about doing the essentials better every single time. "Reputation is built on reliability. When couples know they can depend on you, price becomes secondary."

Balancing Innovation and Identity

Innovation, he insists, must serve meaning. “We modernize, but we don’t lose our roots,” Datuk Chishty says. “We might introduce fusion appetizers or live-grill stations, but the essence remains Malay-Indian, the taste remains familiar.”

For him, culinary entrepreneurship means respecting the market’s emotional connection to food. “Taste is memory,” he explains. “People remember who fed them well. That’s our brand story.”

Digital Disruption and Opportunity

Social media has added new dynamics to the competition. “In the past, we relied on word of mouth; today, our clients find us through Instagram,” he says. “A single viral post of a buffet line can bring 20 new enquiries. At the same time, one poor photo can damage your image.”

Naazreen has turned this challenge into opportunity, embracing digital marketing and online engagement. “We respond personally to messages, share behind-the-scenes reels, and show transparency. Authenticity online builds credibility offline.”

A New Generation of Conscious Clients

Datuk Chishty has noticed a growing sense of social awareness among younger couples. “They ask about food waste, portion control, and even our community contributions,” he says.

Naazreen Group has adapted by planning portions carefully and donating safe surplus food to mosques and charities. “Entrepreneurship, to me, means evolving with the values of your market. You cannot grow if you ignore what matters to your clients.”

The Competitive Landscape: Three Types of Players

He outlines the current ecosystem:
1. The heritage caterers (trusted names with community roots and long-standing clientele)
2. The boutique innovators (creative teams offering themed, high-end concepts)
3. The digital newcomers (social-media-driven players who work lean and adapt quickly)

“The future belongs to those who blend all three , the stability of heritage, the creativity of boutique, and the agility of digital,” Datuk Chishty observes. “That’s real entrepreneurship.”

Legacy Through Leadership

Asked what keeps him motivated after decades in business, he smiles. “Every wedding is a

new challenge. Every satisfied client is a success story."

He pauses, then adds quietly, "Entrepreneurship isn't just about growing a company. It's about growing people , your team, your clients, your community. When you treat your work as service, success follows naturally."

Under Datuk Syed Hafeez Chishty's leadership, Naazreen Group has become more than a catering company; it is an entrepreneurial model of trust, innovation, and resilience. In Singapore's crowded wedding industry, it continues to prove that the best business strategy is authenticity and the most sustainable ingredient is heart.

British Universities in India: Global Entrepreneurship or Academic Overreach?
Dr A.K.DON

Introduction
In recent weeks, the British higher education sector has made headlines with plans to open campuses in India, a move heralded as the next frontier in global education. For policymakers, this is an entrepreneurial masterstroke: British universities, admired for their heritage and credibility, entering one of the fastest-growing education markets in the world. Yet as an academic who also studies entrepreneurship, I see a deeper question emerging: is this global expansion a bold act of educational entrepreneurship, or an overextension that risks diluting both mission and meaning?

The Entrepreneurial Opportunity
From an entrepreneurial standpoint, the logic seems sound. India represents both scale and demand. With over 40 million students in higher education and millions more aspiring to university access each year, the market opportunity is undeniable. A British degree even delivered locally still carries significant brand prestige among India's upwardly mobile middle class.

For universities constrained by domestic funding caps and increasing dependence on international student fees, India offers a new growth avenue. Instead of competing for students abroad, institutions can meet them where they are at home. This aligns with entrepreneurial thinking: go to the customer, don't wait for the customer to come to you.

Moreover, the National Education Policy (NEP 2020) has opened regulatory doors for foreign collaboration, signalling India's intent to globalise its tertiary sector. This makes the environment more conducive to innovation, transnational partnerships, and new business models 2+2 articulation routes, joint degrees, and research hubs linking British intellectual capital with Indian entrepreneurial energy.

The Market Paradox
However, entrepreneurship thrives not merely on opportunity but on understanding context. India's education market is unlike any other, vast, diverse, price-sensitive, and dominated by strong domestic players. Universities such as Delhi, Mumbai, and the IITs have decades of cultural credibility and alumni networks that shape professional hierarchies.

For a foreign entrant, even one bearing the British seal, success is not guaranteed. The brand advantage that British universities enjoy globally can quickly erode if local execution falters. Fees that seem moderate by UK standards may still exclude most Indian households. The perception of elitism or "imported superiority" can easily emerge, especially if institutions fail to localize curricula or engage with regional realities.

Entrepreneurial ventures often stumble when they underestimate market complexity. For British universities, the temptation to rely on brand equity rather than market empathy may prove costly. A "franchise mindset", exporting existing programmes without adapting pedagogy, pricing, and content, risks producing an academic product that feels alien, detached, and unsustainable.

Profit Motives and the Purpose Dilemma

Entrepreneurship, in its truest sense, creates value through innovation, not extraction. When universities cross borders, they carry a dual responsibility: to remain financially viable and to uphold the academic ethos of knowledge creation and social good. Yet, the global education industry now sits at the intersection of learning and commerce.

The question is not whether British universities should expand but why they are expanding. If the motive is primarily to diversify income streams in a post-Brexit economy, the risk of "academic profiteering" becomes real. Education ceases to be an act of nation-building and becomes a balance-sheet strategy.

There is also a philosophical contradiction: institutions that teach entrepreneurship must themselves act entrepreneurially but responsibly. Authentic entrepreneurial leadership balances innovation with integrity. It builds sustainable ecosystems, not short-term ventures. If British campuses in India fail to embed local partnerships, faculty collaboration, and community engagement, they will replicate the pitfalls of many corporate expansions that prized scale over soul.

Re-imagining the British Brand

The most successful entrepreneurs are those who re-imagine rather than replicate. For British universities, this means re-imagining what British education can mean in a post-colonial, digital, and entrepreneurial India. The opportunity is not merely to sell degrees but to co-create new knowledge systems, incubate start-ups, and link students with global innovation networks.

By positioning themselves as entrepreneurial universities catalysts for Indian creativity and global collaboration, British institutions can redefine the meaning of transnational education. That demands humility: working with Indian academics as equals, investing in joint research centres, and developing curricula rooted in local challenges such as sustainability, fintech, or social enterprise.

Success will depend less on brand nostalgia and more on ecosystem building. The true differentiator will be agility, co-creation, and impact not architecture or imported prestige.

A Call for Responsible Global Entrepreneurship

As British academia ventures abroad, it must remember that entrepreneurship without

ethics is exploitation. Profit is not a dirty word, but purpose must remain its compass. The best entrepreneurial ventures whether in business or education grow by creating mutual value.

If British universities see India merely as a market, they will commodify learning and erode trust. But if they see it as a partner, they can co-shape the future of global higher education. The goal should not be to colonise content but to democratize excellence to share the best of British innovation while embracing Indian ingenuity.

The success of these campuses will therefore depend not on how many students they enrol, but on how many lives they empower and how authentically they embody the entrepreneurial spirit they so often teach.

Conclusion

The entry of British universities into India represents one of the boldest experiments in academic entrepreneurship in recent history. Yet, the outcome will depend less on the grandeur of campuses or the weight of the brand, and more on whether these institutions practise what they preach innovation with integrity.

True entrepreneurship is not about replication; it is about renewal. If British universities use this opportunity to re-invent learning models, foster bilateral research, and empower local innovation ecosystems, their presence in India will symbolise progress. But if the motive is reduced to balance sheets and brand expansion, it risks becoming an echo of past colonial patterns exporting prestige instead of co-creating knowledge.

The challenge, then, is to prove that British higher education can be entrepreneurial without being exploitative, global without being imperial, and profitable without losing its purpose. India does not need another foreign emblem; it needs genuine partners in learning. For Britain, the success of this venture will not be measured in numbers, but in the depth of its respect for the idea of education as a shared human enterprise.

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