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# AFRICA INFACT

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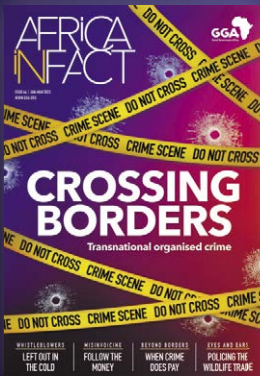
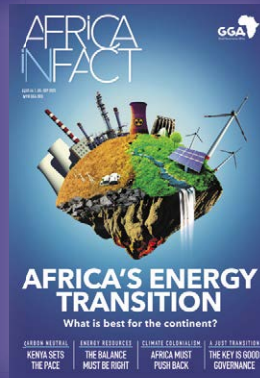
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## ISSUE 71

Good Governance Africa is a registered non-profit organisation with offices in Johannesburg (South Africa), Lagos (Nigeria), Accra (Ghana), Dakar (Senegal), Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) and Harare (Zimbabwe).

We aim to improve governance performance across the continent; to inform and persuade the policy community that transparency and accountability are the basic building blocks of successful development; to strengthen the rule of law; and to build an active citizenry that institutionalises constraints on executive power.

Our publications serve to further these goals. Opinions expressed are those of the individual authors and not necessarily of Good Governance Africa.

**Africa in Fact engages with writers and readers across the continent. For editorial queries contact the editor, Susan Russell, at [susan@gga.org](mailto:susan@gga.org)**

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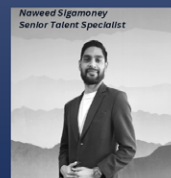
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# A word from our founder

It gives me great satisfaction to know there is a special edition of *Africa in Fact* to coincide with the 10th anniversary celebration of Good Governance Africa that includes a gathering of the executive directors and other staff from all four of GGA's African centres. A decade ago, GGA started from nothing, and we had to learn if the organisation could make a difference in helping the continent to reach its potential.

It gives me even greater satisfaction that I am now confident, with the encouragement GGA has received from funders, both from within Africa and across the globe, that the organisation is at a point where it is able to help African governments improve governance and attract the investment that will make the continent the most successful of all before the turn of this century.

The original thinking to establish GGA started in 2001 when I put together several leading thinkers from various walks of life. The outcome of our discussions was the belief that unless Africa could improve its governance, it would continue to fail to provide the climate necessary to build businesses to provide jobs, improve education, and meet all the other needs of a rapidly growing population that was falling behind the rest of the world.

Unlike some continents, Africa is blessed with all the resources that, if properly developed, can sustain the wellbeing of its growing populations. In the not-too-distant future, the population is expected to grow from the present 1.3 billion to 4 billion. So, what were the solutions to help Africa out of its mess and muddle? The answer lay in improving governance, which touches nearly everything, and unless this was improved, growing disaster was inevitable.

We had much to learn in building an entirely new organisation and in establishing centres in four different regions and cultures: Southern Africa,

Ghana, Nigeria, and Ethiopia. Now, in light of this experience, GGA is convinced that nine main centres are required, led by professionally trained management from their regions.

What GGA has learnt is that corruption is a far greater challenge than was imagined at the outset. Of great concern has been the failure of political will on all continents to implement the provisions of the 2003 United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC), a legally binding international instrument that has been ratified by 187 countries.

However, GGA has been greatly encouraged to learn of the successful work being done to establish an International Anti-Corruption Court (IACC). In this regard, I would like to mention the dedication of a group of very good people led by Judge Mark Wolf in the US and Judge Richard Goldstone in South Africa, who have spent more than 10 years working on a treaty that will establish the IACC – in communication with many of the world's leaders who have been appalled at the damage corruption has caused to Africa's developmental efforts.

There is no doubt that if corruption can be significantly reduced on all continents, the growth of the world will be significantly improved, and with the support of an expanded GGA, from four to nine centres and from 50-1,000 people, Africa will become a very successful continent, too. We have complete confidence that if GGA expands in a well-managed and orderly way over the next 10 years, the organisation will attract the right funders from across the globe who will help GGA succeed in this endeavour.

I am sure that the people of Africa will respond to the many challenges ahead and will also make it happen.

**Best wishes**  
**Robert Rose**



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## CONGRATULATIONS, GOOD GOVERNANCE AFRICA, ON 10 YEARS OF EXCELLENCE!

At Typo Printers, we are proud to celebrate a decade of partnership with Good Governance Africa (GGA). For the past 10 years, we have had the honour of being GGA's printers of choice, supporting their mission to strengthen governance and improve lives across the continent.

Through dedication, collaboration, and shared values, we have built a strong and lasting relationship that exemplifies excellence. We are proud to have contributed to GGA's impactful work by delivering high-quality print materials that reflect their vision.

Here's to many more years of success  
and continued partnership!



# Foreword

Since its launch in 2012, *Africa in Fact* (AIF), GGA's quarterly publication, has served as a mouthpiece for good governance in Africa. In a continent with so much potential but is constantly stymied by bad governance and bad leadership, the publication has added tremendous value, by giving voice to millions of Africans and drawing attention to the issues that affect them daily. This it does through quality articles by some of the continent's most credible writers, writers who have the best interests of Africa and its people at heart. AIF has ensured that these voices consistently reach decision-makers and opinion makers who, in turn, help to influence public policy.

I came across AIF for the first in one of the slow lounges at OR Tambo International Airport years before I joined GGA. I was attracted first by the quality and attractiveness of the cover page. As I opened its pages, I was further engaged by the clarity and quality of the articles and I've been hooked ever since. Every time I travelled via OR Tambo, I made sure to collect a copy of the publication. This amplified my yearning to know more about the issues it covered. You can imagine how joyful it was for me to join GGA and meet the people behind AIF, the staff who plan, coordinate, write, edit and sub-edit these articles. It is amazing to watch colleagues working so hard to produce such a great contribution to the knowledge economy.

On 2 October this year, GGA celebrates 10 years of existence. While planning the celebration, we felt we needed an issue of AIF dedicated to some of the best articles it has published over the years. It is

amazing how the articles and the issues they raise remain relevant as South Africa moves into a new trajectory under the Government of National Unity. That said, AIF's 10th anniversary publication takes a pan-African approach, highlighting some of the issues affecting the entire continent.

Going forward, AIF is a key piece of GGA's new strategy of expansion into other parts of the continent. We have positioned the quarterly as a strategic tool through which the leadership of our continent might be encouraged to implement good governance and to improve government effectiveness, while ensuring that citizens' lives are improved, and they can hold their governments to account. This is what our great continent needs at this point: Governments that care about people. Governments that use the resources at their disposal to improve the lives of poor people. Governments that create conducive environments for businesses to thrive.

AIF not only raises the complex problems facing our continent but also puts a spotlight on examples of good governance. We will continue to use these pages to share great stories and best practices. We want governments to see GGA as a solutions seeker and provider as well as a contributor to the improvement of governance. The publication will continue to be a platform for good quality thought leadership pieces that generate public debate and inform policies in ways that will ensure good governance finally becomes entrenched in our beautiful continent.

**Lonwabo Patrick Kulati, CEO, GGA (SARO)**



# A decade of amplifying Africa's voices

This special issue of *Africa in Fact* celebrates the 10th anniversary of our mothership, Good Governance Africa (GGA). Over the past decade, *Africa in Fact*, as GGA's flagship publication, has become a consistent contributor to the conversation about governance, policy, and development on the African continent. To mark this milestone, we have departed from our regular format to publish an anthology of selected articles from our archive of 70 issues of AIF.

Choosing a necessarily small selection from the archive has been difficult. Our authors have explored a wide range of issues, from governance and public policy to economic development and social justice. The result has been a body of work that not only reflects the complexity and challenges of African governance but also highlights the resilience, creativity, and determination of the people who call this continent home.

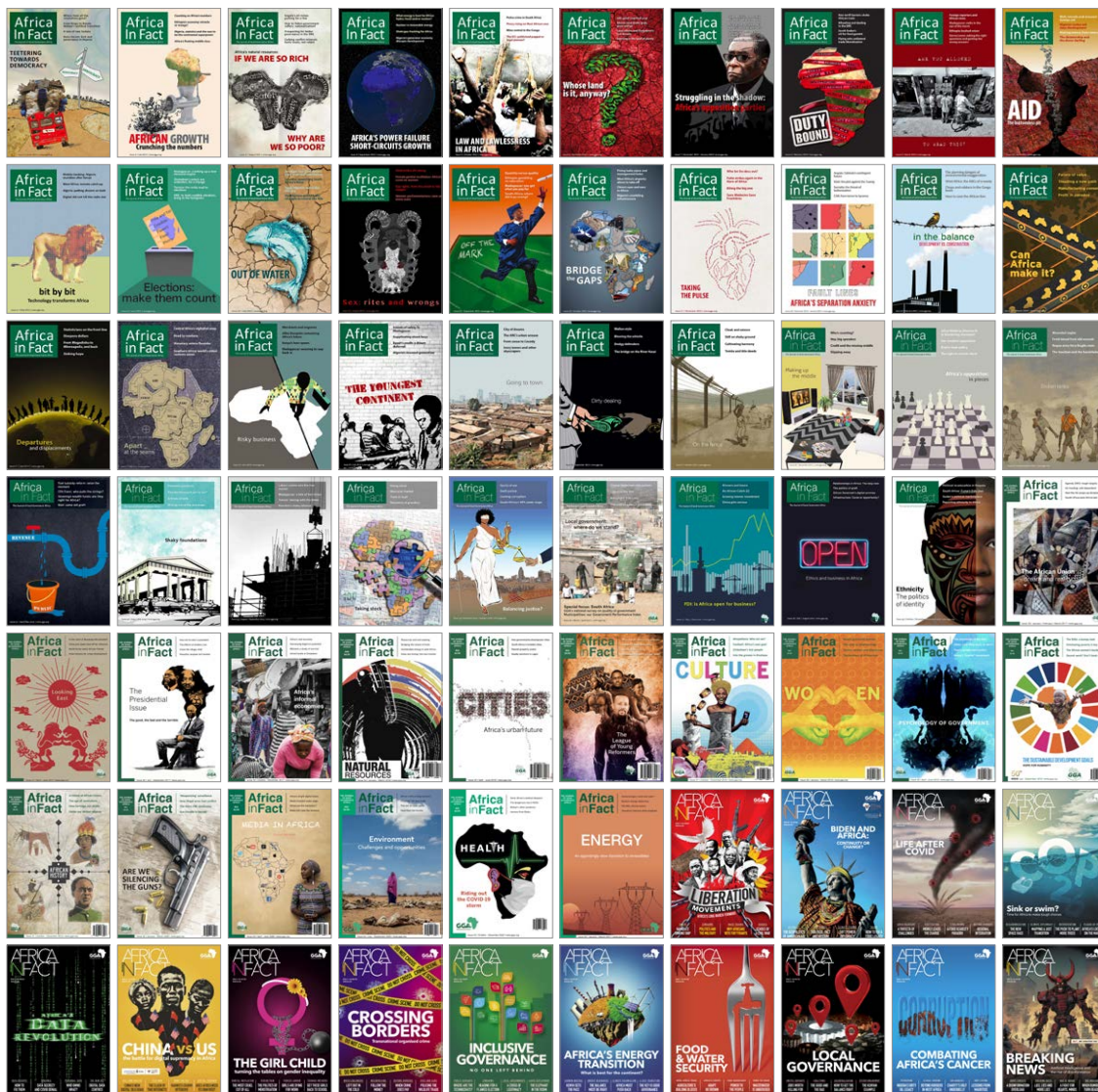
In deciding what to include in this anniversary anthology, we used the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a broad frame to guide our selection. The SDGs represent a globally recognised set of priorities that require a solid foundation of good governance if they are to be achievable. However, even with this framework, the process was far from straightforward. So many of the articles we have published over the years are deserving of another read, and narrowing down the selection inevitably meant that some important pieces had to be left out.

However, what was essential to our selection process was to maintain the unique editorial mix

that has always defined *Africa in Fact*, which since its launch has aimed to strike a careful balance between in-depth analysis, forward-thinking policy ideas, and on-the-ground reporting. We still believe this combination is key to understanding the complex realities of governance in Africa, so it was important that the final selection reflected the breadth of topics we have covered, and captured the distinctive pan-African voice that has always been at the heart of our editorial vision. We hope that in revisiting these stories, readers will gain a renewed appreciation for the progress made in African governance over the past decade, as well as the challenges that remain.

At this point, it is necessary for me to acknowledge the work done by my predecessor, Richard Jurgens, whose efforts to find a pool of contributors – including academics, journalists and policymakers – from across the continent have greatly enriched our pages. In particular, Richard's patience in mentoring young writers over the past decade, some of whom now also contribute articles to the world's leading media organisations, has left AIF in a strong position to make a powerful contribution to GGA's expansion over the next decade. We are proud of the role AIF has played in fostering debate and supporting progress on our continent, and we are equally proud of the relationships we have built with our contributors and readers along the way.

So it is that this issue of *Africa in Fact* is a celebration of the work we have done together over the past 10 years, and a reminder of the enduring importance of informed, independent long-form



journalism in the governance space. AIF is fully committed to supporting GGA’s growth strategy and to amplifying the voices of everyone working to improve governance and development across Africa. We hope you enjoy revisiting these articles, and we look forward to continuing the journey together in the years ahead.

As we celebrate this milestone, we extend our deepest gratitude to our contributors, readers,

and supporters who have been with us on this journey. It is their commitment to good governance, accountability, and justice that has made *Africa in Fact* what it is today. We look forward to continuing this work in the years to come, with the same dedication to fostering dialogue, promoting transparency, and driving meaningful change across Africa.

**Susan Russell – Editor**



# THE FIRST EDITION A CONTINENT IN TRANSITION

By John Endres

A growing chorus of voices is heralding a surge of prosperity and good governance in Africa: the World Bank believes that “sub-Saharan Africa’s economic growth is poised for acceleration.” The consultancy Ernst & Young has started publishing “Africa Attractiveness” surveys. *The Economist* revised its often-cited opinion of Africa from “hopeless” in 2000 to “hopeful” in 2011.

Indeed there are signs for hope. After a relentless rise in the number of people living in extreme poverty in Africa in the 1980s and into the early 2000s, the figure started declining. In 2008 it fell by 12m to 47% of the population – the first time that fewer than half of Africans have been below the poverty line. Eight African countries have GDPs per head higher than that of China and in 15 countries it is higher than that of India. Africa’s strong economic growth is expected to continue.

There have also been improvements on the governance front. The number of successful coups per decade has declined from about 20 between 1960 and 2000 to 10 between 2000 and 2012. Multi-party democracy has become the norm. Regular elections have become commonplace. Governance has become a watchword with the establishment of initiatives such as Global Integrity (1999), the Mo Ibrahim Foundation (2006), Tony Blair’s Africa Governance Initiative (2009), and now Good Governance Africa (GGA, 2012).

If everything is improving, then what is the purpose of GGA and its peers? It is to stabilise gains

where they have been made and – more importantly – to work towards improvements where they are still lacking. Recent coups in Mali and Guinea-Bissau, six rulers who have been in power for more than a quarter century, and not a single African country scoring higher than “borderline” on *Foreign Policy* magazine’s Failed States Index means there is much work left to be done. On the economic front, not only are the positive growth rates coming from a low base, but all too often, the benefits of increased income are going to a very small part of the population, a consequence of corruption and bad governance.

*Africa in Fact* will regularly highlight African governance themes. It is meant to equip decision-makers with information and insights that help make them more effective in business, government or other activities. In this first issue, we look at recent political transitions in various African countries – in some cases moving one step forward and two steps back, but in others developments are more positive. We hope that you will enjoy our first issue and look forward to receiving your feedback. [GGV](#)



*Africa in Fact*, Issue #1,  
June 2012

Photo: Michele Spataro / AFP





**ABOVE:** Children run through a corridor filled with smoke from a cooking facility inside an unfinished structure at the NSPS internally displaced persons (IDPs) camp in Adwa, Tigray region, in July, 2024.



A young child wearing a pink hoodie and a knitted hat is walking away from the camera, carrying a white plastic water jug. The child is in a slum area with a chain-link fence in the foreground and various structures and debris in the background. The overall scene is one of poverty and urban deprivation.

# Festering slums or vibrant centres?

Africa's cities groan under the weight of urbanisation

By Anton Ferreira

**A**frica stands at a crucial juncture as its cities swell with a tide of humanity – a tide that promises vast opportunity but threatens to become a tsunami of misery.

The sprawling slum of Khayelitsha outside Cape Town is a stark example of the desperate conditions in which the majority of the continent's urban population lives. Despite being in one of sub-Saharan Africa's most successful economies, half of the slum's 407,000 residents live in makeshift hovels built with cast-off sheets of corrugated iron.

Erected cheek-by-jowl in a low-lying area prone to flooding, these shacks offer little protection from the elements. The stink of raw sewage fills the air, gaunt dogs scarred by mange scavenge what they

can, and litter collects in wind-blown drifts along the muddy tracks that serve as streets.

Khayelitsha has become notorious for attacks by “vigilante” groups on people suspected of crimes. News reports tell of mobs killing young men accused of stealing items like cell phones. The police appear incapable of maintaining law and order.

Just 20km away in suburbs like Camps Bay and Clifton, international celebrities and jet-setters party in spectacular mansions in some of the world's most sought-after real estate.

The striking contrast between rich and poor is a pattern repeated in cities across sub-Saharan Africa – islands of affluence surrounded by oceans of poverty.

As one measure of African deprivation, the





**ABOVE:** A young girl on her way home after buying a plastic bottle of paraffin for cooking and heating in June, 2016 in Khayelitsha, South Africa.

United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) says a study in 2008 showed that 22 million urban Africans without toilet facilities routinely defecated in the open.

UN-Habitat, in its ‘The State of African Cities 2010’ report, estimates that the continent’s current population of one billion will double by 2050 and that 60% of those people will live in cities, as opposed to 40% now. Lagos, Nigeria, will have overtaken Cairo, Egypt, as Africa’s biggest city by 2015 with an estimated 12.4 million people – double its population of just 20 years ago. Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo, will be the second most populous city in sub-Saharan Africa in 2015, with 10.7 million people. Luanda, Angola, and

Khartoum, Sudan, will be vying for third place with about six million people each.

While questions have been raised about the accuracy of the UN projections, there is widespread agreement that African governments need to focus far more attention than they do now on managing the teeming multitudes in their urban centres.

With improved infrastructure and effective governance this concentrated human capital could help lift countries out of poverty, but history shows a more likely scenario could be bigger slums and deeper chaos.

UN-Habitat says governments on the continent need to act quickly to be ready for predominantly urban populations.





Photo: Marissa W. de la Riva/Getty Images

“Since cities are the future habitat for the majority of Africans, now is the time to spend on basic infrastructure, social services, and affordable housing, stimulating urban economies and generating much-needed jobs,” the report said.

Researchers warn that the attention national governments bestow on the problems of African cities is conspicuous by its absence.

In a publication from the African Centre for Cities (ACC) at the University of Cape Town, Professor Edgar Pieterse and his colleagues write: “We would strongly suggest that the dominant policy response to the deepening crisis associated with urban growth and expansion is inertia.”

Most political leaders refuse to accept that their societies are urbanising “at a rapid and irreversible pace,” Pieterse says. “This widespread denial, both tragic and dangerous, creates a public policy vacuum that leads to unregulated and unmanaged processes of surreptitious urbanisation.”

Researchers believe that the essential first step is to reform property tenure systems in urban areas. One of the main causes of slum creation is that the poor live precarious existences in homes they do not own, on land over which they have no rights. They cannot afford to buy or rent property through formal



Photo: David Hanson/Getty Images

channels, so they resort to squatting on whatever vacant land they can find on the peripheries of cities.

“The urban poor who live in informal settlements must be recognised and afforded security in our cities,” Pieterse says. “If the urban poor are protected from forced evictions and extortion, they are more likely to prioritise the education of their children.”

He describes a “virtuous circle” in which residents of shack cities, assured of the security of tenure, shift their focus from mere survival to growing small-scale enterprises and making a greater contribution to the urban economy. “This will generate demand for more services and finance,



**FAR LEFT:** A view over the shacks of Khayelitsha, on the Cape Flats in Cape Town, South Africa.  
**BELOW FAR LEFT:** Boys stand under a shelter of a Khayelitsha spaza shop, in June 2016.  
**LEFT:** Raw sewerage runs out from communal toilets in Khayelitsha, Cape Town, in March 2020.

which in turn has the potential to grow the tax base for infrastructure development,” he writes. “But this begins by fundamentally changing mindsets among political and administrative leaders – a task more difficult than it seems.”

Pieterse and his colleagues argue that it is essential to empower slum-dwellers and the rest of the urban poor if African cities are to be made to work.

“The most urgent priority is to create an incentive system for the urban poor to organise themselves effectively to advance their own interests,” they write. They envisage groups of slum residents pooling what little savings they might have – along with their knowledge, expertise and social connections – as a way of leveraging their resources on the principle that a community working with a common goal can achieve more than individuals could on their own.

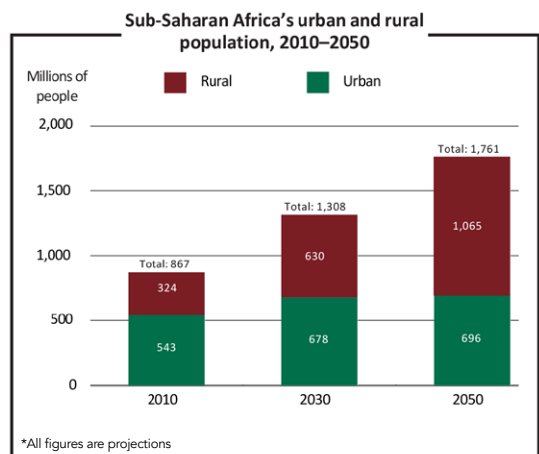
The ACC researchers recommend that governments create unskilled jobs linked to infrastructure installation and maintenance and environmental activities like recycling and waste removal. They also say more attention must be paid to data collection and analysis.

The confusion over data is writ large in the debate over the very figures cited by the UN for the size of African cities and the pace at which they are growing. The UN largely bases its calculations on censuses conducted by national governments,

but some researchers question how accurate such calculations can be.

Deborah Potts, a human geography researcher at King’s College in London, notes that census information in Africa is often problematic or contested, and the definition of what constitutes an “urban” area differs from country to country. “Demographic data do not corroborate the received wisdom about rapid urbanisation in sub-Saharan Africa. The evidence in many countries indicates an increase in the urbanisation level of only about 1% per decade,” she writes in the Africa Research Institute publication *Counterpoints*.

“The Democratic Republic of Congo, said to have the third-largest population in sub-Saharan Africa, has not conducted a census since 1984,” Potts says.



Source: United Nations, 2010





Photo: Fanny Neau-Kabre / AFP

“This renders population figures and projections for Kinshasa little more than guesswork.”

In West Africa, the Africapolis demography project – affiliated with the French Development Agency (AFD) – uses satellite images combined with data gathered on the ground to estimate population sizes and comes up with very different figures to the UN’s.

A case in point is the capital of Burkina Faso, Ouagadougou. The UN calls this Africa’s fastest-growing city, saying its population was 1.9 million in 2010 and will balloon by 80% to 3.4 million by 2020. Africapolis, however, gives more modest figures of 1.4 million and 1.8 million respectively. Given that UN agencies say the city’s growth is fuelled by natural reproductive increase, rather than migration from other areas, the Africapolis figures appear on the face of it to be more reasonable.

Nevertheless, no one disputes that sub-Saharan Africa is becoming more urbanised, with much of the growth occurring in centres with populations below half a million people.

Also writing in the ACC publication, AbdouMalik Simone says urban managers should take advantage of the very qualities that make African cities such vibrant centres of activity and commerce.

“Clearly, urban Africa’s historical strengths have centred on adaptability and resilience,” he says.

“These strengths are not always, or even usually, efficient in conventional terms, and they counter assumptions that government must order, structure and control.”

With the IMF forecasting economic growth of more than 5% for most of sub-Saharan Africa this year, the continent is shrugging off its basket-case image, thanks at least in part to the commodities boom. But analysts say it could do much better if it fixed its cities.

Those who see the cup as half-full, rather than half-empty, include Monitor, the US-based corporate consultancy. “Cities today generate most of the sub-continent’s wealth, with many thriving despite obvious challenges,” it says in a 2009 report.

Cape Town, again, is a good example. Despite the benefit of a solid tax base in the relatively well-off suburbs, municipal authorities perennially complain that they cannot dramatically improve conditions in slums like Khayelitsha without more help from the National Treasury.

Ivan Turok, deputy executive director at South Africa’s Human Sciences Research Council, said in a recent article in South Africa’s *Business Day* newspaper that investment decisions in transport, electricity, water, sanitation and land use would affect whether sub-Saharan cities became more productive.





**FAR LEFT:** Ouagadougou, capital city of Burkina Faso.  
**LEFT AND BELOW:** Construction and traffic in the financial centre of Kinshasa, DRC.



of slums in Africa’s major cities is to focus on developing smaller urban centres in rural areas, where people can find work in the processing of agricultural products, for example.

“If you look at Africa in the next 20 or 30 years, the jobs will come from the agricultural sector in value addition,” she said in an interview with the *Financial Times* website This is Africa. “This is why you need rural growth nodes, small urban centres, which then become a major source of employment so that people do not have to come into the slums.”

Potts says sub-Saharan Africa needs “massive investment in industries which collectively employ hundreds of thousands of low-skilled people” – like the textile factories of Asia – if it is to sustain economically favourable urbanisation.

The virtuous economic circle of urbanisation leading to increased productivity and greater consumer demand is not working as well in Africa as it is in Asia, she says.

“Economic liberalisation and attendant crises rendered sub-Saharan Africa unable to compete,” she says. “Global competition was forced upon towns and cities before most governments had moved beyond the earliest stages of establishing an industrial and manufacturing base.” [GGI](#)

Countries that seemed to be getting it right included Botswana and Rwanda, Turok said in an interview with Good Governance Africa. “The fact [that] these are quite small countries, in which the cities are obviously very significant strategically, may help.”

Countries that were not getting it right were Zimbabwe and Angola, he added. “Both have been very tough on rural migrants settling in their cities. In both cases political power bases lie outside the cities.”

Pieterse agrees that some governments regard urbanisation as “something bad or undesirable. This attitude arises from the particular blend of national liberation ideologies that accompanied the post-colonial era.” These ideologies, he says, romanticised the notion of returning to the land. “Many governments and former liberation movement political parties hold a deep disdain for urban life and the ‘modern corruption’ and defilement of pure African identities found there.”

Anna Tibaijuka, a former executive director of UN-Habitat, believes one way to slow the expansion



*Africa in Fact*, Issue #2, July 2012



# DEVELOPMENT SPUTTERS IN NIGERIA'S GENERATOR ECONOMY

By Joseph Adeyeye

**A**t night, Nigeria's commercial capital, Lagos, is a study in contrast. Half of this West African city's homes are swathed in tropical darkness. The other half are lit by the city's only reliable source of power – petrol and diesel generators.

As it is in Lagos, so it is in the rest of the country. Across Nigeria, privately-owned generators serve as alternatives to the sputtering state electricity firm, the Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN).

“An estimated 60 million residents use generators of varying sizes. In the last year, average residential expenditure in fuelling power generators climbed to an all-time high of about \$13.35 billion per annum,” Frank Jacobs, a senior official of the Manufacturers Association of Nigeria told *Vanguard*, a national daily.

A recent study by the Nigerian Customs Service, which awarded Nigeria the dubious honour as

the continent's biggest importer of generators, says private entities spend \$8 billion to import generators each year.

Such is the ubiquity of generators in this country of 160 million people that experts have argued that its constellation of privately-owned diesel and petrol generators produces more electricity than all the state-owned plants.

In 1999, the country's power plants generated a measly 1,500 megawatts (MW) at their peak, failing to meet a national demand of 4,500MW. Conversely, experts estimate that petrol and diesel generators produced 2,400MW.

A little over a decade later, Nigeria's population had risen by tens of millions and demand was oscillating around 20,000MW. Supply from the public mains in 2010 was at best marginal (about





**ABOVE:** The newly renovated energy generation plant, operated by Egbin Power Plc, in Lagos, Nigeria, in August 2015.

2,500MW). Independent sources estimated that private generators could provide a whopping 28,000MW of electricity.

Millions of Nigerians rely on the country's ageing national grid that is served by three hydroelectric and six thermal plants with a total generating capacity of 5,951MW. However, years of neglect, poor maintenance, corruption and bad governance have stripped the power plants' capacity.

Nigeria's electricity infrastructure declined during the 1970s when the oil boom pushed up the country's real exchange rates which then drove up imports, throttled the manufacturing sector and strangled the country's formerly strong culture of maintenance.

As Nigeria's population exploded in the following 20 years, the demand for electricity also

soared, but investment in infrastructure shrank. A study by a Nigerian law firm, Kusamotu & Kusamotu, would later show that between 1989 and 1999, no major investments were made in the power sector. By the turn of the 21st century, only a quarter of the country's 79 individual units were generating power.

The energy sector's travails transcend generation. Electricity travels long distances in Nigeria, moving through cables strung over huge expanses of Sahel desert and heavy forests. Theft and decay often go unnoticed. When theft is detected, investigations are rarely conducted. When decay is discovered, repairs are often long in coming. The result: substantial watts of electricity are lost in transit. Recently, the Transmission Company of Nigeria, the country's national electricity distributor, announced that more



than 30% of energy produced at power stations was lost during transmission.

Across Nigeria, blackouts are the rule rather than the exception. Sustained power cuts run from days into weeks and in some areas into months. The Council for Renewable Energy, a Nigerian non-governmental organisation, estimates that the country loses \$797 million to power outages annually.

The effect of Nigeria’s power crisis on its development is deleterious. A 2010 government report highlights the link between socio-economic development and the availability of electricity.

“Over the past two decades, the stalled expansion of Nigeria’s grid capacity, combined with the high cost of diesel and petrol generation, has crippled the growth of the country’s productive and commercial industries,” according to the report. “If this situation were to persist, the cost by 2020 in terms of lost GDP (gross domestic product) would be in the order of 20 trillion naira (\$130 billion) every year. It has stifled the creation of the jobs which are urgently needed in a country with a large and rapidly growing population; and the erratic and unpredictable nature of electricity supply has engendered a deep and bitter sense of frustration

that is felt across the country as a whole and in its urban centres in particular.”

Manufacturers and service companies lament that huge expenditure on alternatives to the country’s undersupplying mains perennially raises production and other costs. In recent years, as manufacturing concerns have struggled to cope with the high costs of production, several factories have closed and businesses have relocated to Ghana, Nigeria’s better-managed western neighbour.

Telecommunications, the country’s second biggest sector after oil and gas, has been hit hardest.

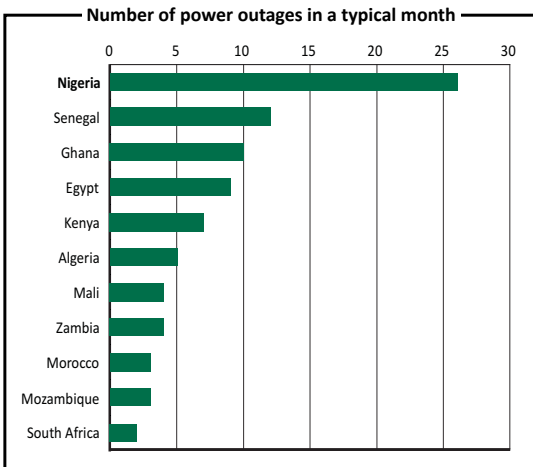
“Self-provision of power supply is expensive,” the former head of MTN Nigeria, Ahmad Farroukh, told a gathering in Lagos in 2007. “We spend close to 700m naira [\$4.4 million] on diesel per month.” All the operators in the country use two sets of generators, dubbed master and slave, to ensure smooth, non-stop operations, he added. An industry source estimates that 9,000 generators power cellular base stations throughout the country.

At the bottom of the distribution chain, consumers complain that corruption compounds the problem of insufficient energy. At a recent consumer forum, Lagos resident Akin Adeyemi railed that state power firm officials would not provide him with an electricity meter that he had purchased.

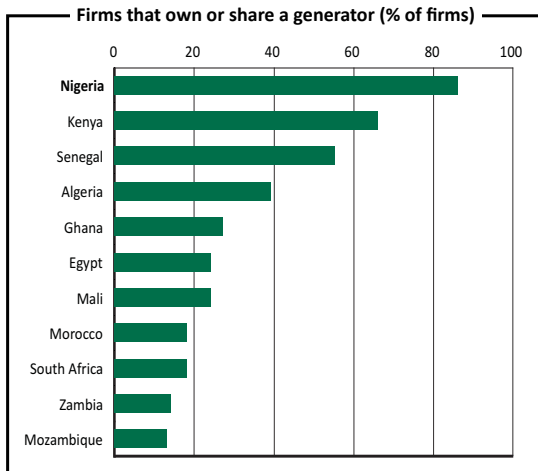
“These people are terrible,” Mr Adeyemi said. “I paid for a meter but they won’t give it to me. They put me on [an] estimated bill. Every month I get ridiculous bills. I can’t even count the number of times I have been to their office. Really, [I] am tired,” an evening paper, *PM News*, quoted him as saying.

What should Nigeria do to escape this bind? The World Bank suggests pumping \$300 million per year into the power sector for the next 10 years. President Goodluck Jonathan’s government has also touted a 350 billion naira (\$1.93 billion) super grid as a panacea.

Funding is not the primary problem. The country’s power failure persists because successive governments have failed to plan adequately and



Source: World Bank, retrieved August 22nd 2012  
 Comparisons between countries are based on 2007 data, the most recent available for Nigeria. The countries shown are the only African countries for which data are available.



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tackle corruption. In the past decade, Nigeria has spent almost \$20 billion to revamp its electricity.

In 1999, the administration of former President Olusegun Obasanjo set the rather ambitious goal of leap-frogging Nigeria into the league of the world’s 20 leading economies by 2020. The plan was to increase capacity to 100,000MW each year.

The government ordered scores of thermal power plants and then discovered that the state gas firm had sold several years’ supplies in advance. Eight years later, generation had increased only by 600MW, up from 2,000MW.

In the twilight of Mr Obasanjo’s administration, it was discovered that 13 imported electricity-generating thermal barges could not leave the Lagos port because planners had not factored in the special equipment needed to transfer them upland. Later, a parliamentary investigation would reveal that most of the funds budgeted for power projects ended up in the pockets of the politicians, legislators and technocrats.

Currently, Nigeria is in the throes of yet another reform bid: a contentious privatisation drive that is bitterly opposed by the unions. The Jonathan administration must find ways to meet the demands

of the unions, whose stubbornness has stalled the privatisation programme for years.

The Jonathan administration has split the former power monopoly, PHCN, into a transmission firm, 11 power-generating companies and six distribution companies. To attract foreign investors, tariffs have been raised by more than 80% and funds have been released to pay off the former monopoly’s 34,000 workers.

Little will be achieved, however, if Nigeria does not tackle the corruption that has crippled the sector for decades. At the moment, there is little to deter corrupt officials from stealing the massive funds that the government is pumping into the sector.

While there are no silver bullets, experts agree that the Nigerian power problem can be fixed. The government, working with multinational companies, must maintain gas supplies to the country’s new thermal power plants. Insufficient gas supplies are pushing some of the new thermal plants to operate far below capacity, while a recently purchased plant has not even been fired up at all.

Indeed in March, when generation dropped by 900MW, Nigeria’s minister of power, Bart Nnaji, blamed insufficient gas supplies. Experts have said that a more efficient gas delivery system would add 1,500MW to the national grid.

Finally, Nigeria’s eight power research institutes should focus on developing affordable, alternative energy sources. A long-term power strategy could include subsidies for community initiatives that harness renewable energy. One day, clean and cheap power could light up the other half of Lagos at night. [GGTV](#)



Africa in Fact, Issue #4, September 2012

# UGANDA'S MUSEVENI KEEPS OPPOSITION ON A TIGHT LEASH

Yoweri Museveni, in power since 1986,  
is still holding on

By Mark Schenkel

**W**hen Uganda celebrated 50 years of independence on October, its president, Yoweri Museveni, promised to “deepen democratic governance”.

Just the opposite took place: as Museveni, 68, delivered his nationwide televised speech, dozens of riot police barred his main political adversary, Kizza Besigye, 56, from leaving his home. On Uganda’s golden jubilee, its opposition leader was effectively under house arrest.

The incident illustrates Museveni’s increasing authoritarianism towards his political opposition. After 26 years in power, he is Africa’s fifth longest-ruling president. Human Rights Watch, Freedom House, the International Crisis Group and others document rising cases of police brutality towards the regime’s adversaries, attacks on independent journalists and restrictions on non-governmental organisations.

Uganda is not turning into an outright dictatorship. Political parties remain legal and Uganda holds presidential and parliamentary elections every five years (the next ones

**ABOVE:** Uganda's President Yoweri Museveni waits to welcome the president of Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) Felix Tshisekedi prior to his arrival at the state house in Entebbe, Uganda, in November 9, 2019.





Photo: Sumy Sadumi / AFP



**RIGH:** National Resistance Army (NRA) leader Museveni during his first cabinet meeting after being sworn in as president of Uganda, in January 1986.

**BELOW:** Museveni (R) arrives at an election rally in Kampala.

are due in 2016). The country still benefits from a vibrant and critical press. Though GDP growth per capita remained below 4% because of Uganda’s rapid population growth, this East African nation is considered one of the continent’s top economic performers with average real GDP growth of 7.7% between 2000 and 2010, according to the World Bank.

Nonetheless, the space for political change is narrowing. Aili Mari Tripp, professor of political science at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in the United States (US), defines Museveni’s government as a “hybrid” regime: one where political competition exists but under unfair conditions. Paul Omach, a political scientist at Uganda’s Makerere University, agrees. “Museveni oversees parallel structures within government and State House that make sure he wins the elections and stays in charge,” Omach says.



Museveni relies increasingly on patronage and the police to keep his grip on power, Omach explains. He has nearly doubled the number of government districts, from 60 in 2001 to 110 today, thereby creating additional political posts whose holders can be bribed to boost his local support. Museveni spent a “particularly high” amount of money on campaigning and outright vote-buying



**Population:** 33m  
**GDP per capita (2010):** \$1,149  
**Average real annual GDP growth (2000-10):** 7.7%

Regime type	hybrid	
Freedom rating	partly free	
Freedom of the press	partly free	
Participation	5.0	(10=best, 0=worst)
Voice and accountability	-0.54	(2.5=best, -2.5=worst)
Failed states index category	alert	rank: 20 (177=best, 1=worst)
Scheduled elections	2016	presidential and parliamentary





Photo: Isaac Kasamani / AFP



**ABOVE:** Kizza Besigye, Uganda's leading opposition leader and presidential candidate, stands outside the sunroof of a car and flashes the "V for victory" sign to supporters during an election rally in Kampala, in February 2016.

**LEFT:** Kizza Besigye arrives at court before his trial for treason in Nakawa in Kampala on May 18, 2016.

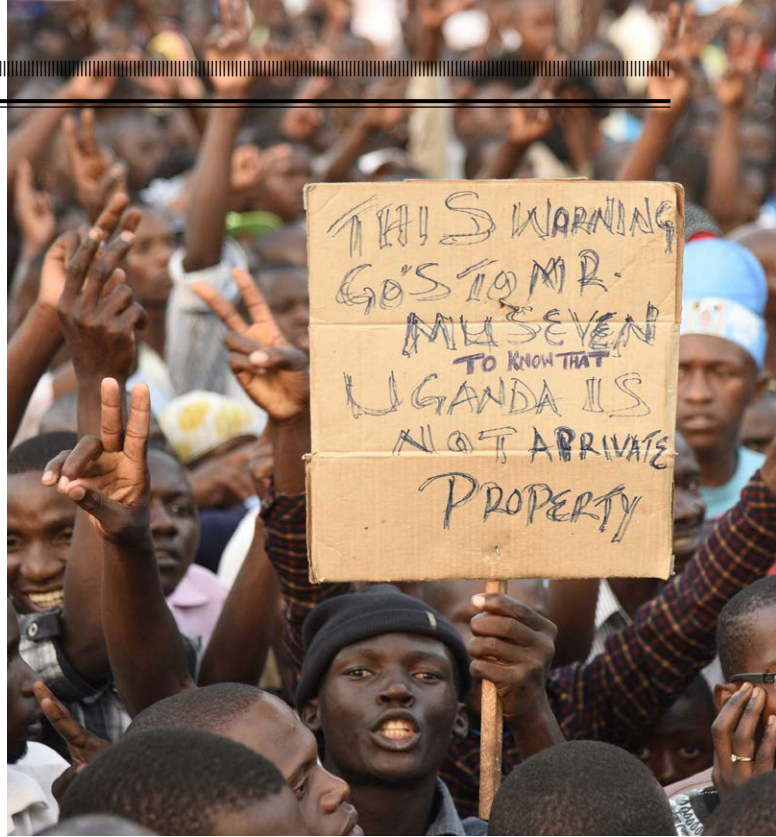
before the last elections in February 2011, claims Joel D. Barkan from the Centre for Strategic and International Studies in the US. There is also growing suspicion that the police are out to frustrate the opposition through random arrests.

Paradoxically, the opening up of space for the political opposition was instrumental for Museveni's strategy to remain in office. From his rise to power in 1986 until 2005, Uganda lacked a legal opposition. The ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM) was supposed to function as an

all-inclusive umbrella encompassing politicians from all persuasions who would compete on the basis of personal merit instead of ethnic loyalty. This "no-party" system, Museveni argued, was to prevent the re-emergence of the divisive, tribal, multiparty politics that allegedly paved the way for the bloodshed under the former presidents Milton Obote and Idi Amin between 1966 and 1986.

This changed in 2005 when the NRM-dominated parliament allowed Ugandans to vote for the reintroduction of multi-party politics. Uganda, Museveni said, had become politically mature. In reality, Omach argues, Museveni was more concerned about appeasing the growing number of critics – many from within his own party – who denounced the government's increasing cronyism





**ABOVE:** President of Uganda and Chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Yoweri Museveni attends the closing session of the 19th Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Non-Aligned Movement in Kampala, in January 2024.

and corruption. One prominent critic was Besigye, Museveni’s personal physician during the liberation struggle and then a government minister and an army colonel before quitting the NRM.

Museveni’s multipartyism defused some of the criticism towards government. More importantly though, he used the move as a bargaining chip for lifting presidential term limits, thus staying in office. “Museveni knew very well that he could safely open up the political space because the newly-established opposition would not be able to operate effectively, given the president’s extra-parliamentary ways to retain his hold on power,” Omach says.

The first multi-party elections in 2006 proved that regime change through the ballot box was going to be difficult. Besigye – by now leader of the opposition party Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) – spent most of his time in court contesting trumped-up charges. After losing elections again in 2011, Besigye opted for an extra-parliamentary strategy. Together with the advocacy group Activists 4 Change (A4C), he launched demonstrations in the capital, Kampala, against the steep rise in the cost of living and bad governance. In April 2011 at least nine

protesters died in street battles with the police. A year later authorities outlawed A4C. The group has since resurfaced as For God and My Country.

“Besigye basically says: ‘If you don’t allow us to strive for political change through parliament then you only leave us with the option of doing it by creating chaos and making this country ungovernable,’” Omach says. It is a risky strategy as many tradespeople and shop owners in Kampala dislike the violence and disorder, analysts say, even if they blame the police for using excessive force.

The opposition lacks an alternative vision and is divided. Many FDC politicians are former NRM members who have fallen out with the ruling party. Ugandans suspect that these politicians act more for personal gain than out of patriotism. Ahead of last year’s elections, the FDC teamed up with four other parties, including the late Milton Obote’s Uganda People’s Congress. The coalition soon collapsed.

The opposition’s weaknesses partially explain why Museveni won 68% of the vote against Besigye’s 26% in 2011. Still, some hold out hope that political change can come through the ballot box.

Angelo Izama, a Ugandan writer and political



Photo: Isaac Kassamany / AFP

Photo: Isaac Kassamany / AFP

analyst, praises Besigye for creating “a political opposition within the existing system, first by pushing Museveni to re-introduce multi-party politics, then by putting pressure on government through street protests. Change comes about gradually. At least we are not a one-party state anymore.”

By making government appear as if it is not entirely in control, Besigye’s street protests have contributed to a growing political awareness among Ugandans. “The more people see what’s going on, the less tolerant they become of the current way of staying in power,” Izama adds.

“The stories about corruption and mismanagement put pressure on the bureaucracy and even create opposition within the NRM,” he says. That is especially true for the younger parliamentarians who hardly identify with Museveni’s nearly 30-year-old claim of having brought peace and stability to Uganda.

Omach, however, fears that Museveni and his narrowing circle of loyalists will not relinquish

**ABOVE:** Supporters of main opposition presidential candidate Kizza Besigye from the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) party, protest during a political rally in Wakiso District, in Kampala, in February 2016.

power easily. He does not rule out a Zimbabwe-like scenario: a liberation president undoing his own achievements and careening towards oppression. “Ultimately, this may bring renewed instability,” Omach says.

With Besigye set to step down as the FDC leader, Omach hopes that a new opposition leader will refocus on bringing about political change through parliament instead of popular protests. The main contestants are Nandala Mafabi, the current FDC leader in parliament, and Mugisha Muntu, a former military officer and NRM member. “Both Muntu and Mafabi tend towards the parliamentary way ... with Muntu seeming to me more elitist,” Omach says, while “Mafabi also knows how to play the streets.” [GGY](#)



*Africa in Fact*, Issue #7, December 2012 – January 2013



# CHILD BRIDES DIE YOUNG

The scourge of early and forced marriage

By Anthony Kamba

**E**melda Juan has packed a lifetime into less than two decades. The daughter of subsistence farmers, she grew up in a village in southern South Sudan, a hilly and sparsely forested area. At 14, her parents sold her for seven cows to a man more than twice her age, a 37-year-old village shopkeeper. She then got pregnant. After her husband could not look after her and their baby girl, she moved to the capital, Juba.

Now 16, Juan is a single mother without an education, earning her living as a house cleaner, on wages that barely feed her and her 11-month-old daughter, Mercy-Emelda. “I had to stay at home to look after my younger brothers but my parents had something else in mind for me and here I am now,” she said, shaking her shoulders while her infant wailed.

Juan’s mother and father are like many other parents in the developing world, especially Africa, who consider their daughters second-class citizens and see them as potential sources of income. They sell their daughters in marriage, often before their 18th birthday and often against their will. In so doing, they deprive their daughters of an education, a chance to learn skills and earn an income. They

**ABOVE:** Eight-year old Sudanese girl Ashjan Yousef bites a chair as she has her photo taken at the national court in Khartoum on October 13, 2014. A court in the Sudanese capital's twin city of Omdurman annulled the marriage of Ashjan who was wed at the age of five to a man in his 40s.





Photo: Ebrahim Hamid / AFP





« Je ne sais pas comment on fait des enfants. Mais elles deviennent enceintes et elles le gardent dans leur ventre. Puis, elles accouchent, et un bébé apparaît. »  
TEHANI, MARIÉE À L'ÂGE DE SIX ANS, YÉMEN

أنا أصغر، كيف يستحب الأطفال، إلا أن النساء يجعلن... يحتفظن داخل بطونهن و  
مؤتمن ولدان، ثمهنى تزوجت عن سن السادسة اليمن

Le mariage précoce expose les filles à de multiples risques en matière de santé sexuelle et de reproduction. Les jeunes femmes sont particulièrement vulnérables psychologiquement à l'entrée des épouses précoces, les conséquences du mariage précoce (traumatisme, dépression, etc.) sont plus élevées que pour leur famille.

Souvent mariées à des hommes plus âgés, les jeunes épouses doivent affronter leur fertilité et elles sont confrontées à des relations sexuelles précoces, fréquentes et forcées, peu respectueuses de leur corps et de leur bien-être. Elles souffrent également de la pression de procréer des enfants et de donner naissance à un garçon, ce qui est souvent la condition sine qua non pour leur famille. Elles sont très vulnérables à l'abus des conjoints, à la violence sexuelle, à l'abandon et à l'infanticide. Elles sont également confrontées à des risques de complications (et à des conséquences graves de la mortalité de la mère). En Asie du Sud et en Afrique subsaharienne, la prévalence est de 14,5%.

Même si le mariage précoce affecte les services de santé sexuelle et de reproduction, bon nombre de filles mariées de jeunes sont confrontées à des problèmes de santé sexuelle et de reproduction, ce qui peut entraîner des complications graves et même la mort.

Les adolescentes sont particulièrement vulnérables à l'abus sexuel, à l'abus physique et à l'abus psychologique. Elles sont également confrontées à des risques de complications (et à des conséquences graves de la mortalité de la mère). En Asie du Sud et en Afrique subsaharienne, la prévalence est de 14,5%.

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condemn their daughters to a life of poor health, often filled with violence. In addition to schooling, they are denied their reproductive rights, freedom of movement, and the right to consensual marriage.

In the developing world, one in seven girls is married before her 15th birthday – some as young as eight or nine, according to a Human Rights Watch (HRW) report released in March 2013. In central and West Africa, two out of five girls are married under the age of 18. Like Juan, most of these girls are poor, uneducated and come from rural areas, according to the report.

Of the world's 10 countries with the highest prevalence of child marriage, nine are in Africa: Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Chad,

Guinea, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Niger and South Sudan, according to UNICEF, the UN children's agency. The tenth country is Bangladesh.

In South Sudan, 42% of women were married before their 18th birthday, according to the 2010 South Sudan Household Health Survey. UNICEF reported in January this year that 52% of women between the ages of 20 and 24 in South Sudan were married before 18.

Many communities in South Sudan see child marriage as a way to protect girls from pre-marital sex and unwanted pregnancy, which tarnish a family's honour and may diminish the value of a future dowry. The *Sudan Tribune* is filled with horror stories of girls rebelling against these forced

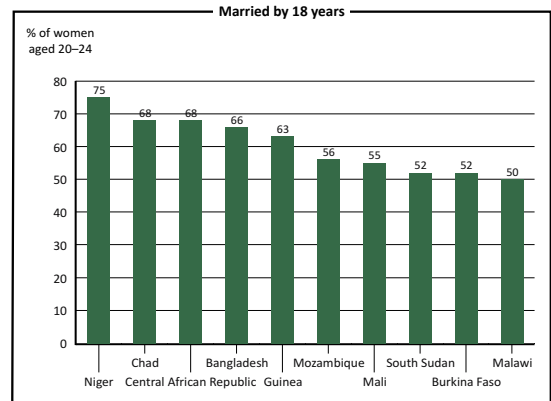


ABOVE: A Moroccan woman looks at photographs of underage brides during an exhibition by Stephanie Sinclair at the Mohammed V theatre, in Rabat, in December 2013.

Photo: Ebrahim Hamidi / AFP

marriages. For example, Nyikada Ngoki, 17, from Lakes state in central South Sudan, shot herself dead in October 2010 after a forced marriage. Akoey Barach, 18, from violence-torn Jonglei in eastern South Sudan, did not want to marry an old but rich man who owned many cows. Instead, she eloped with her poor but young boyfriend. In February 2011, her parents beat her to death with sticks.

The practice of selling girls is more common in the cattle-keeping communities of South Sudan. But it is also practised by farmers such as the Balanda tribe in South Sudan's north-western state of Western Bahr El Ghazal. They consider a girl marriageable at the age of 13, when girls begin to menstruate, said Alexander Lupo, a clan



Source: UNICEF

leader in the Darajat residential area of Wau, the state's capital. "If anybody is found playing around with her there will be trouble," he added. It is not uncommon to see 14-year-old girls at the village market with babies strapped on their backs in kitenge fabric, colourful wax-print cloth.

Juan's parents scrape by on \$385 a year growing cassava and groundnuts in a small village about 60km south-west of Juba. After three years of primary school, Juan dropped out to marry and has since forgotten how to read. Her father used the money from the sale of her dowry's seven cows, about \$4,900, to pay for the school fees of her three younger brothers.

South Sudan does not keep records on the number of girls who drop out of school due to pregnancy or early marriage, but most experts agree that it must be high. "Child marriages account for the high illiteracy rates in the country as only 6% of girls complete the full primary school cycles," said Dr Priscilla Nyang, South Sudan's deputy minister of gender, child and social welfare.

Research shows that a lack of education condemns girls and their future children to poverty. An analysis by the World Bank office in South Sudan released on April 11 this year criticised the government for not committing enough of its budget to education. In 2011 the government allocated 4% of its total budget of 5.9 billion South

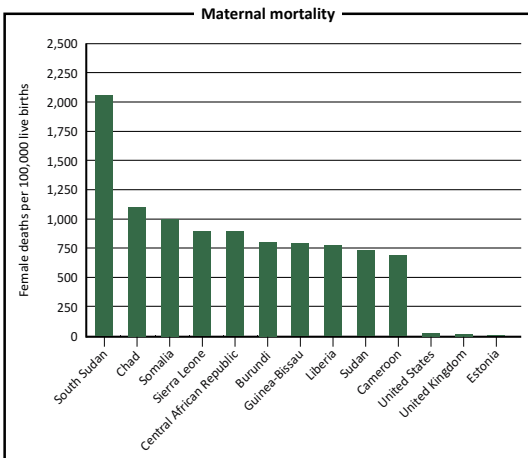


Sudanese pounds (\$1.9 billion) to education. However, only about half of the allocation was actually disbursed. Kimo Adiebo, an economist at the World Bank, said this small expenditure also led to high illiteracy and curbed girls' chances of finding work.

Child marriages not only deprive girls of schooling but also destroy their health. Complications related to pregnancy and childbirth are the main cause of death among adolescent girls aged 15-19 in developing countries, according to the HRW report. "Girls aged 15 to 20 are twice as likely to die in childbirth as those in their 20s, and girls under the age of 15 are five times as likely to die," HRW reported.

South Sudan has the world's highest maternal mortality rate (Estonia the world's lowest), with about 2,054 deaths per 100,000 live births, according to its health ministry. The UN Development Programme (UNDP) reported in 2012 that a woman in South Sudan has a one-in-seven chance of dying during her lifetime from pregnancy-related causes.

Most of these complications are a result of smaller, undeveloped pelvises and birth canals in these immature girls. In poor countries like South Sudan, where most child marriages take place,



Sources: CIA World Factbook; South Sudan's health ministry  
The maternal mortality rate (MMR) is the annual number of female deaths per 100,000 live births from any cause related to or aggravated by pregnancy or its management (excluding accidental or incidental causes).



clinics and emergency obstetric services are scarce. Currently, there is only one qualified midwife per 30,000 people in the country, according to the UNDP.

Child marriage is dangerous for infants, too. Babies born to girls under 18 have a 60% greater chance of dying before their first birthday than ones born to women over 19 years of age, according to a 2012 report by Save the Children, a charity. Juan said that she named her daughter Mercy-Emelda because she believes her healthy birth was a sign of God's compassion.

South Sudan's child marriage rites may stem from ancient traditions, but its practice today can also be blamed on the country's poorly-defined and contradictory laws as well as the government's weak execution and enforcement of them. The world's youngest nation, just two years old, has a constitution that defines a child as anybody below 18. Though this document also prohibits forced marriage, it does not specify a minimum age for wedlock.

The South Sudan Child Act of 2008 prohibits subjecting children to negative and harmful practices that affect their health, welfare and dignity. It also protects female children from exploitation, sexual abuse and gender-based



violence, including rape, incest, and early and forced marriage. Though it also lays down a jail term of seven years for abusing a child, the police and the courts lack the political will, as well as adequate skills, infrastructure and equipment, to apply the stipulated punishment.

An independent commission is currently reviewing the constitution, including its provisions on marriage. Paleki Mathew, director of the South Sudan Women Empowerment Network, is calling for the constitution to include a legally-protected minimum age for marriage. This NGO has been seeking consensus on this subject through a series of workshops held throughout the country.

“We have gone to states and gathered different recommendations for the minimum age for marriage,” Mathew said. “Some people are even asking that it should be 18 and others are saying it should be 25.” International human rights standards set 18 as the minimum age of marriage.

Child and forced marriage is a gross violation of a girl’s right to childhood, according to Fatuma Ibrahim, a UNICEF official in South Sudan. “The only way to end this harmful cultural and social practice is through collective efforts from everyone

in the society, right from grass roots level to the policymakers’ level,” she said.

The HRW report asks South Sudan’s president to declare zero tolerance on child marriage. The NGO also provided a long list of recommendations including: encouraging tribal communities to regulate the traditional practice of dowries by making sure women are consulted; raising awareness of the harm caused by child marriage and the benefits of delayed marriage and child-bearing; improving the training of lawyers, public prosecutors, judges and the police on gender-based violence, including child marriage.

If some of these measures are adopted, maybe Mercy-Emelda will grow up in a country where women have rights: to education, choosing their marital partners and deciding if and when to have children. [GGTV](#)



Africa in Fact, Issue #14, August 2013



# FIRE AND BRIMSTONE

## Is Julius Malema good for democracy?

By Rian Malan

“Today was a great day for democracy,” said Julius Malema. It was August 21, 2014 and the portly commander-in-chief of the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) was talking to a TV crew outside South Africa’s National Assembly, an “august chamber” whose decorum had just been shattered by Malema and his comrades, 24 young black men and women sporting red overalls and matching industrial hard hats.

South Africa’s parliament is a venerable institution, established in 1853. One does not wear boots and overalls in such a place. Nor does one cheek the presiding officer, refuse to shut up when ruled out of order or hammer one’s desk with a red miner’s helmet while chanting, “Pay back the money!”

As the entire world now knows, the money in question was the R246 million (about \$22 million) used to upgrade the private rural residence of President Jacob Zuma in Nkandla, in KwaZulu-Natal.

Public Protector Thuli Madonsela had ruled that some of this expenditure went beyond what was needed to protect the president and that he should refund a portion of the money spent.

At the start of question time on August 21, Democratic Alliance (DA) opposition leader Mmusi Maimane rose to inquire about Zuma’s position on another matter, only to receive an airy brush-off: the matter had been referred to the appropriate committee, Zuma said, and therefore, the question was not really a question. Maimane nodded and sat down again.

This was par for the course in an assembly where Zuma’s African National Congress (ANC) has been dominant for two decades: opposition parties demand accountability; ANC leaders ignore them.

Then Malema leapt to his feet to ask about Nkandla. Within seconds, the game had changed. “We want a date when we will get the money,” he thundered. “We are not going to leave this house





**ABOVE:** Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) leader Julius Malema speaks to journalists after being ordered to leave the parliamentary chamber during President Jacob Zuma's State of the Nation address in Cape Town, in February 2016.

before we get an answer!" Lesser fighters leapt up behind him, shouting "Where's the money?" Other members of parliament (MPs) rose up too, and pandemonium ensued.

"I will throw you out if you don't listen!" shouted the speaker, Baleka Mbete. Struggling to make herself heard above the noise, she ordered the sergeant-at-arms to evict Malema's rabble. But they stood their ground, jeering, hammering on their desks and chanting insults. In the end, Mbete declared an adjournment and called the riot police, who seemed unsure as to what law had been broken, if any. According to Malema, there was also an attempt by ANC staff "to beat us up but we barked at them and they disappeared because they are cowards". He and his red squad remained in their seats until the uproar died down and then left of their own volition.

The man at the centre of this electrifying piece of guerrilla theatre was born into desperate poverty

in 1981 and raised by his grandmother, a domestic servant in the northern town of Polokwane. He joined the ANC at age nine, and became president of the ANC Youth League 18 years later. In a country where nearly half the population is under 25, the youth league has always been a springboard to greater things for ambitious young men. Malema was clearly one of those, an aggressive hustler who constantly drew attention to himself by staking out positions to the left of his party's leadership. Nationalise the mines, he declared. Seize white-owned farmland without compensation. Fulfil the promise of the Freedom Charter by taking over banks and monopoly industries.

By 2011 Malema had become such a threat to his elders that they booted him out. Political obituaries were written but Malema secured funding from anonymous kingmakers. He came back in 2013 as the founder of the Economic Freedom Fighters, a political party billed as an "army of the poor".



Photo: Suljith Weegels / AFP

Despite a late start, the EFF won 6.35% of the vote in this year’s general election – enough to send 25 fighters to mau-mau the National Assembly.

After the “Battle of Question Time”, Malema declared that he had made history. “There has never been opposition since 1994,” he said, referring to the date Nelson Mandela became president. “Today was the first time the ANC saw it.”

Well, not really. From its first day in power, the ANC has faced opposition from mature politicians skilled at duelling with points of order, committee manoeuvres and procedural technicalities. These rites made sense in Britain, from whence they came. But in South Africa, the ANC’s unassailable majority rendered them largely pointless. Consistently returned to power with at least 60% of the vote, the ruling party was always able to control parliamentary committees, outvote challenges and shield leaders like Zuma from hostile scrutiny.

This idyll has now ended, according to Malema. “(The ANC) has met a real match,” he said. “We are here to make them run for their money.”

This was vintage Malema. “JuJu”, as he is known to friends, is a charismatic populist in the tradition of Juan Peron of Argentina, Hugo Chávez of Venezuela and perhaps Idi Amin of Uganda. He

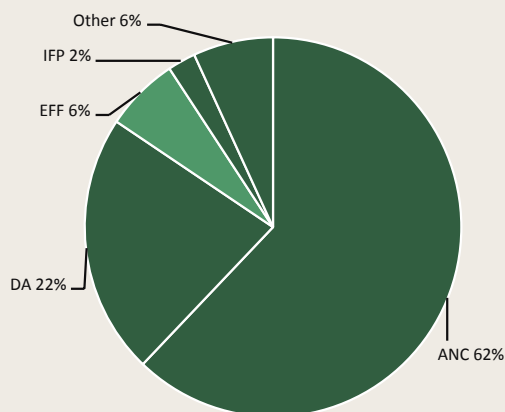
is short and heavy, with a shaven head and bulldog jowls. When he says, “We are not going to be bullied by the ANC,” you believe him. And when he adds, “If they are looking for a fight in the streets, we are ready,” you believe that too.

But is he really the champion of democracy he claims to be?

There is no doubt that millions of South Africans were thrilled to see someone standing up to

### New kid on the block

South Africa’s election results, 2014



Source: Independent Electoral Commission





**FAR LEFT:** Economic Freedom Fighters leader Julius Malema (C) peeks through barbed wire as thousands of EFF supporters are prevented from entering the constitutional court compound where judges heard a case over public money spent on President Jacob Zuma's private house, in February 2016.

**LEFT:** Malema and his EFF party members leave parliament as President Jacob Zuma attempts to give his state of the nation address in Cape Town, South Africa, in February 2016.

government and demanding an explanation for at least one of the myriad corruption scandals currently facing us. Equally pleasing was the spectacle of smug ANC leaders growing incandescent with rage as they assailed Malema's followers as "hooligans" beset by "infantile disorders".

The result was extraordinarily enthusiastic press coverage. News24's Georgina Guedes gushed that Malema was doing a "brilliant" job. Eusebius McKaiser of *The Star* found him "very impressive". Gareth van Onselen of *Business Day* compared Malema to the DA's parliamentary leader, and found Maimane desperately lacking: "Does [Maimane] set the oppositional agenda? Is he the most forceful leader, the most charismatic? Do his words command attention and his actions necessitate change? The answer to all these questions seems to be a resounding 'no'.... Maimane is the glow of a dying ember; Malema is a blowtorch."

In short: only Malema is tough enough to stand up to and defeat the mighty ANC.

Maybe so. But what then? Malema is quick to condemn corruption these days, but during his Youth League heyday, he was pork-barrelling with the best of them, miraculously acquiring houses, cars and a farm on his modest Youth League stipend.

(South Africa's tax authorities have confiscated most of these assets; and Malema has yet to stand trial for the allegedly rigged tenders that financed them.)

Malema is also quick to present himself as a staunch constitutionalist. "The rot has eaten away the government of this country," he said earlier this year. "The only thing left for us is the constitution. Let us protect it with everything we have."

Another fine sentiment, but does he really believe it?

Malema's very first appearance in South African newspapers involved a student protest in downtown Johannesburg that degenerated into looting and violence. According to his biographer Fiona Forde, his campaign for the ANC Youth League presidency relied heavily on intimidation. Back in 2007, when he and Jacob Zuma were still allies, he famously declared himself willing to kill on behalf of the president. There is implied violence in his support for Zimbabwean tyrant Robert Mugabe, and in his depiction of whites as "thieves who should be treated as such". In September 2014 he was at it again, threatening to take up arms if the ANC used violence to block his rise to power.

"This man is a democrat? I certainly hope so," says Anthea Jeffery. "But I wonder. Democrats



**ABOVE:** Julius Malema leads a march of the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) to the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) to protest the banning of their election campaign advert in April 2014.

Photo: Gian Luigi Guercia / AFP

usually argue with their opponents, rather than threaten to kill them.”

Jeffery is head of policy research at the Institute of Race Relations, a think-tank. Like many South Africans, she was hugely amused by Malema’s mau-mau campaign, which has turned “pay back the money!” into a catchphrase gleefully deployed against all manner of dubious characters by South Africa’s stand-up comedians. On the other hand, she feels the media has overstated Malema’s significance.

“The wily old guard of the ANC saw Julius coming a mile off and began stepping up their own radical rhetoric,” she says. “They saw that Julius was trying to challenge from the left, but they had their own leftist prescriptions to counter this. Unlike Malema, they also had the power to start translating these ideas into law.”

In a new book titled *BEE: Helping or Hurting?*, Jeffery tracks this process back to 2011, when the ANC first suspended Malema. She shows how it gained traction at the ANC’s 2012 national conference in Mangaung, where Zuma famously announced that the second phase of the South African revolution was about to begin. The rest of the media reported his speech and fell asleep. Jeffery, almost uniquely, kept her eye on the ball, tracking radical policy proposals as they moved into draft bills and, in most cases, into measures since

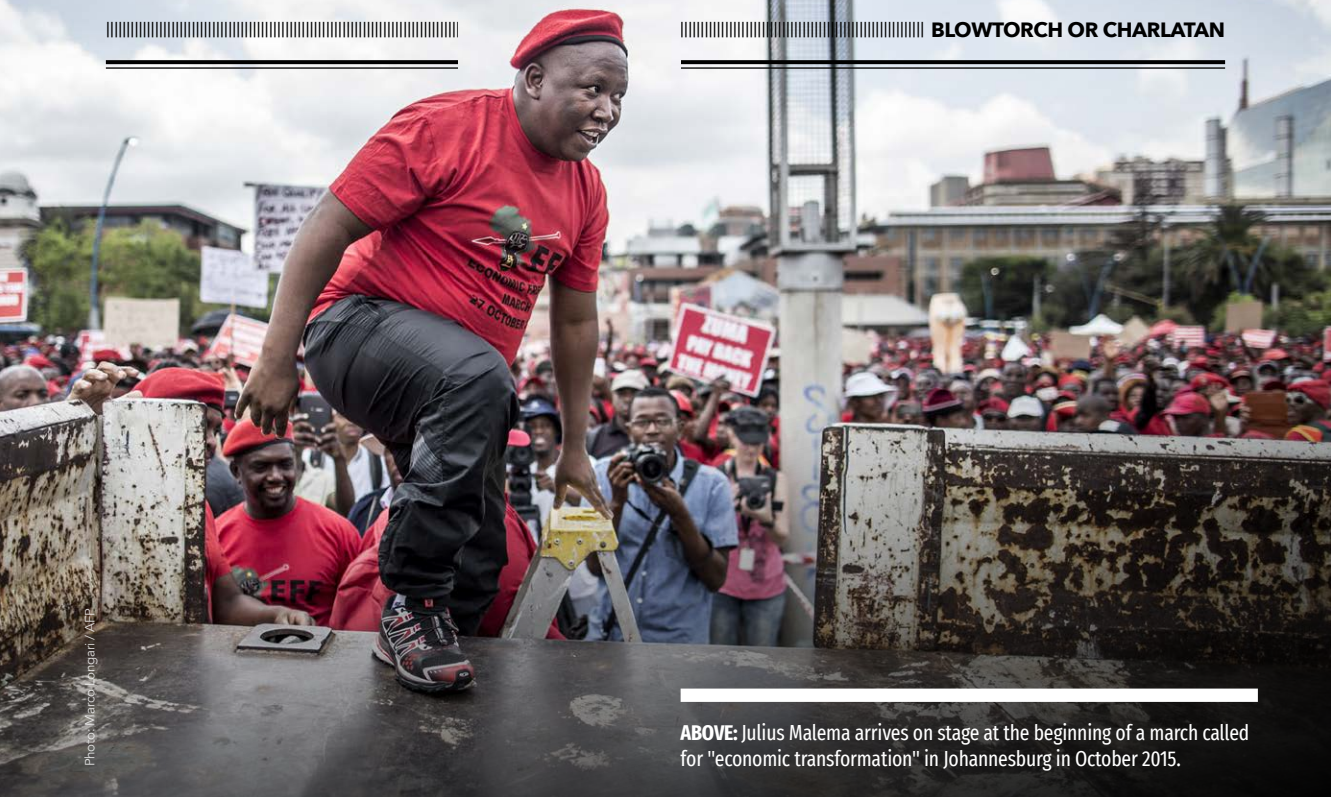
adopted by Parliament, if not yet signed into law by the president.

According to Jeffery, it is naïve to believe that the ANC remains committed to the National Development Plan (NDP), a programme whose moderate precepts were warmly applauded by the World Bank, the IMF and foreign investors. She believes the party has quietly abandoned the NDP and is poised to move rapidly leftward, a move that could render Malema irrelevant.

Since Jeffery’s analysis is not exactly conventional wisdom, sceptics might wish to suspend judgement until they have read her dissection of the 2013 Protection of Investment Bill, which strips foreign investors of the right to appeal to international arbitrators if the South African government seizes their assets. Or the 2013 Mining Amendment Bill, which allows the government to take control of oil or gas fields developed by private companies and pay whatever compensation it pleases. Or a new land reform proposal that requires farm owners to give up 50% of their land, effectively without compensation.

Also of interest is the draft 2013 Expropriation Bill, which empowers thousands of officials at all three tiers of government to expropriate property of virtually any kind. This should be read alongside the aforementioned Investment Bill, which seeks to allow the government to do so without compensation –





ABOVE: Julius Malema arrives on stage at the beginning of a march called for "economic transformation" in Johannesburg in October 2015.

provided that they are acting as “custodians” for the previously disadvantaged masses.

This would in theory enable the state to confiscate your business as “custodian” and then invite blacks to apply to run it without paying you anything. The process could be expedited if the property on which your business stands is subject to a land claim. So it is perhaps not coincidental that the ANC has recently re-opened the land claims process and expects to receive close to 400,000 new claims over the next five years.

Lay these ANC laws alongside the EFF’s manifesto and it becomes clear that any ideological differences between the parties are less significant than the rivalry between their respective leaders. This clash produces showers of sparks, but does the outcome really matter? If Malema wins, South Africa will become a socialist people’s republic, devoid of economic growth and foreign investment. If Zuma prevails, ditto. If the nation is to avoid this fate, we have to look for salvation elsewhere.

Since June 2014, when the EFF made their parliamentary debut, the Democratic Alliance has taken a public battering simply for being itself –

a sober, hardworking party staffed by MPs and researchers whose heads are perpetually buried in dull position papers and whose leader, Maimane, is a politician in the suave Barack Obama vein; a thoroughbred alongside Malema’s dray horse. It irked me to see him belittled simply because his manners are better than Malema’s. Would we really prefer a blustering charlatan?

At the last election, the DA won the support of about 23% of the electorate. With majority support in the white, coloured and Indian communities and three-quarters of a million black voters, the DA is the only truly multiracial party in South Africa. With 89 members of Parliament, it is also the only party whose embrace of rule of law and at least relatively free enterprise seems to offer an alternative to policies presently dragging South Africa into deepening crisis. [GGN](#)



*Africa in Fact*, Issue #29,  
December 2014 – January 2015



# AFRICA'S CATCH-22

Political violence denies countries  
the investment they need

By Brian Klass

Photo: Spencer Platt/Getty Images



**ABOVE:** A member of the Egyptian military stands at a roadblock in the district of Giza the morning after the first democratically elected President Mohammed Morsi was ousted from power and put under house arrest in July 2013.

Conflict in Africa can result in economic devastation that lingers on far beyond the last crack of gunfire, because aid and trade matter more to the continent's economic growth than they do to others. The loss of international partners – and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in particular – can drain an African country of its economic lifeblood for years after a coup d'état or a civil war. International ventures are naturally risk averse, and foreign investment is inherently volatile. For investors in Paris, Beijing, London or New York, nothing seems quite so risky in Africa as a group of men in uniform taking power, or rebels in convoys headed toward the capital. Uncertainty is a surefire way to steer international capital elsewhere – either to another corner of Africa, or to another region altogether. However, not all volatility is created equal. The damage wrought by political violence – and the

degree to which foreign direct investment flees bullets and bloodshed – is largely dictated by international responses to unconstitutional power grabs, coups and civil wars.

A country's geo-strategic importance, particularly as regards economic interdependence and security, is a critical determinant of whether violence and volatility will lead to a devastating loss of foreign direct investment and a prolonged economic recession. Certain types of countries suffer more from conflict than others. The current scholarly consensus is that middle-income democracies, for example, suffer more economic fallout from coups than do poor authoritarian states. In short: comparatively richer democracies have more to lose from an autocratic military takeover than poor authoritarian states. For the latter class of countries, by contrast, a coup can sometimes even



**ABOVE AND BELOW:** People dance and cheer at Tahrir Square, in Cairo, Egypt, the day after President Mohammed Morsi was ousted from power in July 2013.

improve the economic outlook. But these findings overlook a key variable that accounts for significant variation in the economic trajectories of post-conflict nations: how the international community – and western governments in particular – respond to conflict. This factor is particularly salient in the 21st century, since the international community has, at least rhetorically, affirmed a strong norm against coups and civil wars.

Since the end of the Cold War, international norms have shifted to uniformly oppose unconstitutional, and particularly violent transfers of power. This also became a regional norm in writing, as the African Union’s main prohibition against “unconstitutional change of government” was codified in the Lomé Declaration in July 2000. African countries that experience coups are likely to face regional and international isolation. In research recently conducted for One Earth Future, an anti-conflict think-tank based in Denver, Colorado, Jay Ulfelder and this author found evidence that the reactions of western governments to conflict in



other countries can create self-fulfilling economic prophecies. In some cases at least, there is evidence that the economic fortunes of a country after a coup, civil war, or an unconstitutional change of government may be largely dictated by international actors – particularly major powers in the West. Western governments may choose to isolate a country that has succumbed to a military takeover or a rebellion.

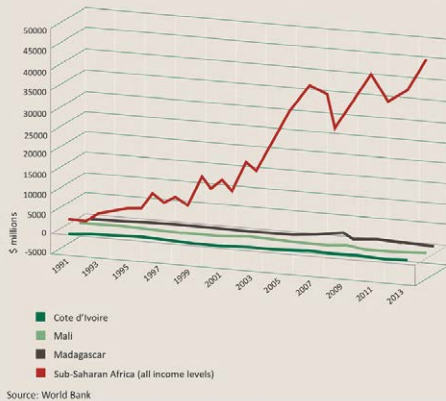
Isolation reduces international support for an





Photo: © Getty Images

Cote d'Ivoire, Madagascar, Mali and Sub-Saharan FDI, net inflows 1991 - 2013 (BoP, current \$US)



Source: World Bank

illegitimate regime or an illegitimate rebel group that has taken power. Such isolation is based on the presumption that governments installed by unconstitutional means will find it hard to find allies or investors. In turn, prospective coup plotters or rebels may be deterred. But reinforcing the anti-conflict message with diplomatic and financial isolation comes at a cost: the economy concerned is likely to experience a severe downturn. On the other hand, western governments can take a “business as

**ABOVE:** Soldiers of the Egyptian army stand guard in front of the headquarters of the Egyptian Republican Guard in Nasr City, in July 5, 2013.

usual” approach. They may use scathing rhetoric and call for a return to civilian government or to an end to a rebellion while not pursuing meaningful policy shifts with regard to the country concerned – be it aid, trade, or foreign direct investment. In such cases they may determine that a severance of ties is out of the question for short-term security reasons, or because they favour stability over a competing concern for democracy. In these cases, an economy is less likely to be affected. These diplomatic responses are not random.

They are carefully constructed with reference to geopolitics. Unfortunately, sub-Saharan Africa is in the geopolitical periphery. As a result, some countries outside of the region may receive more favourable diplomatic treatment in the wake of political violence, thereby ensuring continuity or even an increase in FDI. Government signals



ABOVE: A young Ivorian sells newspapers commenting on the coup d'état of President Henri Konan Bedie by General Robert Guei, a former army chief of staff, in December 1999.

provide an important cue to investors, particularly when sanctions are involved – as they often are – with post-conflict, and particularly, post-coup governments. For example, an obscure and rarely enforced 1961 law explicitly forbids the US government from providing “any assistance to any country whose duly elected head of government is deposed by a military coup or decree”. In practice, however, the law is selectively applied. The military takeover in Egypt in 2013 was surely a textbook example of a coup d'état. Yet, challenged on this, a US State Department spokesperson said that the 1961 law did not require a “formal determination” as to whether a coup had taken place in Egypt, and that it was not in national interest to make such a determination.

US FDI to Egypt actually increased by 17% between 2013 and 2014, from \$4.1 billion to \$4.8 billion. Sub-Saharan Africa rarely gets this kind of treatment. The continent is home to far fewer western geo-strategic priorities – with the exception, perhaps,

of anti-terrorism cooperation in the Sahel region. Recent scholarship has shown that perceptions of African stability need to be built up over many years, but can be destroyed by a single event, such as a coup or a civil war; and government responses regularly prime FDI responses. Also, the reputational risks to western firms of doing business in a place that is diplomatically isolated often cause firms to look elsewhere. However, international responses to African conflict can be comparatively less damaging if the country concerned serves western economic interests in some way. Côte d'Ivoire's 2010-11 post-election civil war, in which about 3,000 people died, created immense uncertainty. The country had just emerged from another civil war, so a pattern of political violence existed.

Yet FDI fell by only 16% after the conflict, and rebounded quickly. Why? Well, Côte d'Ivoire produces 40% of the world's cocoa. Americans and Europeans want cheap chocolate, whether there's a civil war or not. Foreign investors respond to African





**ABOVE:** General Robert Guei (C), who seized power in the Ivory Coast, poses for photographers with his newly named transition government in Abidjan in January 2000.

Photo: Issouf Sanogo / AFP

conflict in the same way they make investment decisions more generally: their decisions are based on their perceptions of future returns. When investors put their money into a country that is closely intertwined with western interests, or the interests of a major global power such as China, then they are more likely to be insulated from capital flight after an episode of political violence. The US is more willing to stick to its diplomatic commitments with Egypt, or other perceived lynchpins of geopolitical security, even if that has economic consequences, than with a country like Madagascar. Being on the international periphery, as most of sub-Saharan Africa is, virtually ensures that political conflict will drive international investment elsewhere.

In addition, unlike Chinese firms, western businesses are extremely hesitant to do business

in regimes that are being routinely condemned for human rights abuses, undemocratic governance, and political violence. This creates a Catch-22 effect: those countries that are least well-equipped to weather the storm of conflict are more likely to lose foreign investment, while countries that have sufficiently strong international partners are more likely to continue to receive investment. Africa, the most conflict-prone continent, is often punished most harshly by international investors when volatility strikes. [GGY](#)



*Africa in Fact*, Issue #37,  
May – June 2016

# CAPITAL GAINS

By Dianna Games

Photo: Michele Spataro / AFP



## Governments and multinationals must work together to stop illicit financial flows

**M**istrust between business and government is an abiding constraint on development in Africa. The African Union (AU) and other state-driven organisations often say the private sector should drive growth in African economies and that the continent's states should establish frameworks for business to succeed – but in reality, it hardly happens this way.

The AU and its member states see the state as being central to development. Meanwhile, big business, particularly western multinational corporations (MNCs), is often vilified in Africa as an exploitative and anti-development force – and a lingering legacy of colonialism. Two new reports by the AU and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) give this perception new impetus. A 2015 report, *Illicit Financial Flows from Africa*, conducted by a specially appointed AU high-level panel, points to MNCs as the main culprits in the illicit transfer of an estimated \$60 billion to \$80 billion out of Africa each year. The report says MNCs are to blame for about 65% of such outflows. It defines “illicit outflows” as money illegally

**ABOVE:** Flags of the member states of the African Union at the AU headquarters in Addis Ababa in February 2024.



**ABOVE:** South Africa's former president Thabo Mbeki, heading an AU panel on Darfur, addresses the media during a press conference in Khartoum, in April 2009.

Photo: Ashraf Ghazy / AFP

earned, transferred or used. This mainly takes place, it says, through tax evasion but also through transfer pricing, which involves moving taxable profits from high-tax to low-tax jurisdictions.

Another path is trade mis-invoicing, which involves deliberately misreporting the value of transactions to a country's customs service. Other culprits identified by the panel were criminals, who it said were responsible for an estimated 30% of such outflows, and corruption, which it said accounted for 5% of illicit outflows.

The report adds Africa's voice to global efforts to combat illicit flows. But illicit outflows are not a simple problem to solve, says Peter Draper, managing director at Tutwa Consulting, a South Africa-based firm that focuses on the regulatory and policy issues that affect businesses. Defining their components and measuring them is difficult, he told *Africa in Fact*.

Moreover, the world of global trade and investment involves multiple jurisdictions that allow legal loopholes and tolerate secrecy. It can

be difficult to track the beneficial ownership of a company or use of front companies to move money around the globe. Meanwhile, creative accounting and disclosure are facilitated by tax havens – some in Africa – and the lack of country-by-country reporting by MNCs. In Africa, capacity constraints and governance issues add to the difficulties involved in tracking and policing illicit outflows.

But given the benefits of investment from MNCs, solving the problems requires finding a balance between better policing of cross-border activities without compromising investment flows, says Draper. "Even if we don't agree on the figures, we can agree there is a big problem and that we need to find a way to solve it."

The narrative of MNC exploitation is also central in the ECA's 2016 report, *Investment Policies & Bilateral Investment Treaties in Africa: Implications for Regional Integration*. The report examines the prevalence, scope and value of bilateral investment treaties, and argues that Africans are victims of such treaties, which favour the interests of western nations.





**FROM LEFT:** Nick Binedell, anchor, Moeletsi Mbeki, political analyst, Roelf Meyer, South African politician and businessman, Mosiuoa Lekota, leader of COPE political party, John Steenhuisen, Democratic Alliance Chief Whip and Kallie Kriel, CEO of Afriform, attend talks "Nation in Conversation" at the Nampo Harvest Day Expo in Bothaville, South Africa, in May 2018.

**RIGHT:** Moeletsi Mbeki at the Nampo Harvest Day Expo.

Both reports stereotype MNCs and play to suspicions about the nature and drivers of profit, particularly where they are independent of government influence. Unsurprisingly, they have been welcomed by African leaders and continental bureaucrats, whose focus is usually on African-owned small and medium enterprises, rather than the large corporations and MNCs which they characterise as “enemies of development”.

In the AU high-level panel report, for instance, the head of the panel, former South African president Thabo Mbeki refers to the “aggressive and illegal activities” of MNCs, suggesting that corrupt Africans are simply victims of their well-resourced activities. But to demonise global business is to create an environment that is hostile to capital. Companies will prefer to keep their money in business-friendly jurisdictions if they can. It follows that the AU and its members are themselves partly to blame for the malaise.

There will always be companies that take advantage of weak institutions and corrupt



governments. But many MNCs, particularly those bound by international conventions and onerous compliance requirements, prefer to operate in environments where the rules are clear and the laws and policies are upheld by strong institutions.

Governance is still highly personalised in Africa and therefore subject to “capture” by competitors and policy makers. Company tax revenues are often misdirected to personal or politically expedient projects. In turn, many in the private sector – including MNCs – do not trust governments to serve their interests. Their investments can involve high risk levels, including operating in high-cost and inefficient markets and in unpredictable policy environments.

Moeletsi Mbeki, a South African political

economist, says in the modern world, capital is highly mobile and will always seek good returns and receptive environments. “When you restrict investment opportunities, capital moves elsewhere, illicitly or otherwise,” he told *Africa in Fact*. African governments focus on redistributing wealth rather than creating it, he argues. This, he says, is a colonial hangover – an attempt to rectify historical injustices by “eating” rather than investing. The result is the creation of anti-investment environments that “perpetuate the poverty of African economies”.

Africa must stop money leaving the continent, certainly. But it must also maximise revenue generation within the continent. Take the case of mining. The sector, dominated by MNCs, has been a key driver of growth but its potential contribution has been undermined by a trust deficit between MNCs and governments. Governments believe mines have massive wealth that they are determined to conceal or externalise illegally, says Dr Greg Mills, director at the Brenthurst Foundation, based in Johannesburg, South Africa. Meanwhile mining concerns complain that the politicians who set the rules do not understand the long-term and cyclical nature of their business, nor the levels of risk they face.

African governments tend to play to popular public pressure to extract more and more out of mining companies based on short-term needs rather than engaging the industry as a long-term developmental partner, Mills adds. “Yet the overall health of the sector is intrinsically in the interests of government, not just for reasons of long-term revenue, jobs and the prospects of industrialisation, but because many governments hold a direct stake in mining operations.”

The AU has set up initiatives and structures in recent years to connect with business. Key among them is the African Mining Vision, adopted in 2009 to chart a roadmap towards the transparent, equitable and optimal exploitation of mineral resources in Africa. The AU is also working with

the New Partnership for Africa’s Development on several initiatives, including the Continental Business Network, an advisory platform focused on infrastructure.

But the level of distrust between the public and private sectors remains a constraint on the success of such initiatives. Continental bureaucrats seldom understand the on-the-ground realities of doing business in Africa, preferring to concern themselves with the big-picture rhetoric of African development that dominates continental debates. Meanwhile, business leaders do not always have time or willingness to participate in long conferences that yield little result. Most just want governments to set fair rules and regulations, create a level playing field and reduce the risks and costs of doing business.

The mistrust malaise is not helping efforts to develop Africa. Indeed, it is having the opposite effect and it is probably one of the key drivers of illicit outflows from Africa to other, possibly more friendly, jurisdictions. Companies with long-term plans involving Africa will likely welcome political initiatives to improve transparency and introduce new rules, as long as they are fairly and efficiently applied.

The problems of illicit financial flows are global, and solutions need to be global. This will take time. Meanwhile, the AU can change the nature of its engagements with MNCs. Casting MNCs as inherently exploitative or as criminal actors is simply lazy. Ignoring that their activities involve huge benefits in terms of tax revenue and employment, among others, is simply short-sighted. The AU should build partnerships with MNCs to encourage them to commit meaningfully to Africa’s future. [GGP](#)



**Africa in Fact, Issue #40,  
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# CARTOON

by Victor Ndula





Photo: Rodger Bosh / POOL / AFP

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**ABOVE:** South Africa's President Jacob Zuma looks on during the opening ceremony of the State Of The Nation Address (SONA), in Cape Town, in February 2017.



# THE PRESIDENT WHO WOULD BE CHIEF

Jacob Zuma's toxic legacy

By William Gumede

President Jacob Zuma's presidential style has undermined the South African constitution, the rule of law and rational policymaking. It has undermined the democratic idea of separation of powers between different spheres of government – the executive, legislature and judiciary. All this is because Zuma's personal, family and factional interests have overridden the public interest.

Unless checked, his presidential style will almost certainly accelerate South Africa's slide towards a failed state, a society more polarised along racial lines and the breakdown of the ANC itself.

How did this happen? How can it be that a country whose transition from minority-rule authoritarianism to democracy was celebrated all around the world, and whose founding constitution is regarded as one of the most enlightened ever penned, has declined to the status of a moral pariah all around Africa? To answer this question, we need to look critically at Zuma's presidency, and what he has done with it.

"Right now, to make a decision you need a resolution, decision, collective, petition. Yoh! It's a lot of work," Zuma said last year, visiting a primary



**RIGHT:** African National Congress President Jacob Zuma (L) joins Zulu King Goodwill Zwelithini ka Bhhekuzulu (R) to honour the birth of Zulu warrior and founder of the Zulu nation King Shaka at Kwadukuzu, South Africa, in September 2008.

**BELOW:** Zuma (C) shares a joke with journalists outside the house of former South African President and anti-apartheid icon Nelson Mandela, in May 2011.

school in Tembisa, east of Johannesburg. He went on to joke that if he were a dictator of South Africa for six months, he would solve all the country’s problems. His remark was meant as a joke, Zuma-style, but it says much about the man’s views of governance, policy and decision-making. A number of key influences have shaped Zuma’s presidential style. The first is that he has adopted a traditional style of governance.

One ANC youth leader has described Zuma’s presidential style as that of a traditional African “chief”, in that he has used the office of the presidency to distribute state patronage to allies, friends and family. On this view, the president, as head of state, is everybody’s chief, including the country’s several kings.

An old-fashioned customary view would have it that public property is communal property, which is controlled by the chief in the interests of the community. However, in practical terms, this has often turned out to mean that a chief controls public property essentially at *his own behest*. Indeed, in South Africa today some traditional leaders and chiefs use communal land – which, on a customary view, they should govern in consultation with the community – as their private property, claiming that this is sanctioned by “culture”.



Similarly, Zuma appears to believe that as uber-chief, all state property, funds and jobs are his to control in his own private interest. For instance, the chief is entitled to live in bling – to show his or her status. That is one reason he still maintains that he did nothing wrong in spending R246 million of public money on his private home in Nkandla, even though a finding by the public ombud found that he had breached the constitution in his attempts to avoid being held accountable.

On the old-fashioned customary view, the chief is also never publicly challenged. In his quarrels with Julius Malema, the former leader of the ANC





**ABOVE:** President Jacob Zuma attends the opening ceremony of the 16th Ordinary Summit of the African Union in January 2011, in Addis Ababa.

Youth League, the issue that most outraged Zuma was the fact that Malema refused to stick to the dictum, that “once a king (Zuma) has spoken, no one can speak”.

Furthermore, the chief isn’t accountable to “his” people. It’s the other way around: the people are dependent on the largesse of the chief; the chief is the law. In the same way, Zuma has rarely allowed himself to be held accountable by the ANC, by parliament or by democratic institutions or by ordinary voters. His view is apparently that the courts, parliament and judiciary must bend to the will of the chief.

Secondly, Zuma’s formative work experience in the ANC’s intelligence and underground structures has clearly shaped his approach to presidential management. Zuma’s most important two posts in exile were as chief of ANC intelligence and head of underground structures. And he manages his presidency as if he were the chief of

a liberation movement’s intelligence operation or underground structures.

In the ANC intelligence and underground structures in exile, consultation occurred only among the top leadership, ostensibly for security reasons; lower-level members were simply expected to listen and obey. The ANC’s intelligence wing was certainly the most shadowy, secretive and heavy-handed organ of the party in exile. Under Zuma, a similar culture of operation appears to have infused the South African state and the ANC. Journalist Ranjeni Munusamy has described Zuma’s securitisation of government as an “undercover state”.

Zuma controls all the intelligence, police and security services through his appointments of pliant candidates to top positions. Some worked under him in the ANC intelligence and underground structures, while others worked in the apartheid services. In quite a number of cases, he has appointed people who lacked any relevant qualifications for the role.



Instead, his appointments emphasise one quality: their personal allegiance to him. Zuma political appointees are personally indebted for their jobs to him, and therefore serve him personally, rather than the interests of the public. They are expected to compromise themselves in his defence or to bend the rules in his favour, so linking their personal futures with that of the president.

Baldwin Ngubane, the recently-resigned chairman of Eskom, is a case in point. A close ally of Zuma, the president recycles him from one state entity to another. He was chairperson of the embattled South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) before moving to Eskom, and both organisations were mired in scandal under his watch.

This approach also means that the same people are appointed to key positions in a game of rotation, because the president trusts them. Brian Molefe, another confidante of the president, was recently reappointed as CEO of Eskom. He had resigned a few months after being implicated in dodgy relations with Zuma's business associates, the Gupta family,

in former Public Protector Thuli Madonsela's state capture report.

Under the Zuma presidency, the intelligence, police and security services have been used to fight internal ANC party battles. Zuma is said to have fired former finance minister Pravin Gordhan on the basis of an "intelligence report" that alleged that Gordhan was plotting with foreign governments, companies and business leaders – so-called "white monopoly capital" – to unseat Zuma.

State Security Minister David Mahlobo afterwards denied that the intelligence services were responsible for the report. Yet the fact that Zuma saw fit to produce a report, of whatever provenance, suggests that he continues to operate in the cloak-and-dagger manner of an intelligence chief.

Thirdly, Zuma has made populism a dominant strand of the ANC. Populism in the political dimension is an "anti-status quo discourse that simplifies the political space by symbolically dividing society between "the people" (as the underdogs) and "its Other", according to the Latin American scholar





Photo: Gianluigi Guercia / AFP



Photo: John Weasels / AFP



Photo: Rajesh Jantila / AFP

**FAR LEFT:** Two local South African newspapers which defied government threats and published pictures of President Jacob Zuma's private home, which was controversially revamped using \$20 million of taxpayers' money.

**TOP LEFT:** Newly appointed South African business group (BUSA) president, Brian Molefe, speaks in May 2008, at the BUSA headquarters in Sandton.

**TOP RIGHT:** A protester holds a placard reading "Jacob Zuma must go" during a march in April 2017.

**LEFT:** Convicted businessman Shabir Shaik addresses the media at the Durban High Court in June 2005, after being found guilty and sentenced to an effective 15-year term on three counts of fraud and corruption charges about his ties with then Deputy President Jacob Zuma.

Francisco Panizza. The “Other” that is supposedly in “opposition” to the “people” can be symbolised as a “dominant” political or economic class or an ethnic group or political party that is “deemed to oppress the people and deny their rights”.

On this view, populism is “indelibly associated with the theatre of the crowds” and “personalist” leadership. As part of this, it makes use of simplistic economic analysis, and urges the use of the state for redistribution, which often includes nationalisation programmes. Populist movements often claim to want to “restore” or establish “public order” and “traditions”, the latter often projected in distorted or conservative forms.

Zuma has tried to deflect criticism of his failure in government, and of his alleged corruption and personal misbehaviour, by claiming that “white monopoly capital”, “clever blacks”, and “third forces” are opposed to his attempts at “radical economic transformation”, supposedly meaning transferring wealth from whites to blacks. Zuma’s former ally Blade Nzimande, the general secretary of the South African Communist Party, has said that Zuma’s narrative of “white monopoly capital” and “radical economic transformation” had become rhetoric that allows the Zuma group to enrich themselves.

Zuma’s frequent calls for “traditional” resolutions of “African” disputes is classic populism.

Populist leaders often say one thing in public, but practise the opposite behind closed doors. So it is that anyone who criticises Zuma’s hypocrisy is either a black person wanting to be white, or a white imperialist – another classic populist response to critical analysis.

Commentators often say that Zuma is seeking to abolish democratic institutions, including parliament, the judiciary and civil society, but he has mostly used them to entrench his loyalists in power. He has used them as an extension of his patronage networks, benefiting allies and their families.

In South Africa, patterns of corruption are increasingly sophisticated, with legitimate institutions, laws, policies and rules used as covers for self-enrichment. Corruption is increasingly carried out through what appear to be “normal”, “standard” and “credible” processes.

Such corruption is particularly prevalent in countries in transition, whether from colonialism or authoritarianism, or in South Africa’s case, from apartheid. In such countries the rules of the game are changing, contested, new, unclear or not yet settled, and the rule of law is not universally embraced.

Countries in transition often implement economic policies, described as “reforms”, which produce market distortions. These include laws focused on redistribution that favours a particular group, such as black economic empowerment. As part of all this, state-owned companies are often privatised cheaply, and sold to well-connected politicians and business leaders.

In many cases, the state procures products and services from companies under rules that compel redress of one form or another. Moreover, the rules are then manipulated to ensure that select business people or politicians and companies said to represent previously disadvantaged communities, gain state contracts.

In other cases, the state provides companies or business people with funding, creates favourable business conditions for them, or protects their trading or mining licences. For example, the state might exempt certain businesspeople from universal public rules, such as environmental regulations. Democratic institutions and state-owned enterprises (SOEs) are run in such a way as to appear to abide by “normal” rules, while laws, policies and social rules are manipulated for the convenience of the well-connected. The senior management structures of public offices, key democratic institutions and SOEs are packed with carefully chosen individuals

who are in on the deceit, or prepared to look the other way, or simply too incompetent to identify corruption or other forms of misgovernance. The ANC’s policy of “cadre deployment”, according to which loyalists are appointed to key posts regardless of their actual suitability for the role, is a clear example of this.

With such people in place, the rules covering further appointments are skilfully manipulated. Nominations are called for, vacancies advertised for public positions, interview panels put together. Applicants who are not in on the deceit never make the short list. Quality candidates will learn that

**In South Africa, patterns of corruption are increasingly sophisticated, with legitimate institutions, laws, policies and rules used as covers for self-enrichment.**





**ABOVE:** President Jacob Zuma (R) shakes hands with newly appointed Minister of Finance David Van Rooyen (L) after a swearing in ceremony as the new South African Minister of Finance in December 2015 at the Union Buildings in Pretoria.

their CVs did not arrive on time, or given some other seemingly “legitimate” reason for their failure to make the short list.

Zuma has not achieved all of this on his own. The ANC under former President Thabo Mbeki was close to becoming a state in which the party’s leaders, members and supporters saw the state as belonging to the party. This phenomenon has only been deepened under the Zuma presidency. Zuma’s contribution has been to turn it all into a ‘partyarchy’ – that is, a party dominated by entrenched regional, ethnic, generational-or even class-based groups and their networks.

Zuma allows the different factions, networks and regions of the ANC to run their fiefdoms almost independently as long as they remain loyal to him personally. For example, the so-called “Premier League” of provincial premiers Ace Magashule (Free State), David Mabuza (Mpumalanga) and Supra Mahumapelo (North West) – are deeply loyal to Zuma. In return, they are allowed to run their own provinces as little fiefdoms, giving out tenders to loyalists, using public resources to marginalise critics and manipulating policies to enrich themselves.

Within the ANC, Zuma’s presidential style is based on trying to please the competing factions, networks and regions within the ruling ANC-Cosatu-SACP tripartite alliance. Above all, he takes no firm decision that might alienate any influential group, and tells each group what they want to hear.

Zuma only takes a firm decision when he needs to defend his personal interests. These include trying to escape current or future prosecution on charges of corruption, defending his family business interests or dealing with the aftermath of further revelations of his personal indiscretions.

As regards day-to-day governance of the country and his party, the president’s catch-all style means that he rarely makes a difficult policy decision. Instead, he will make a pronouncement in the broadest terms. This approach includes even situations that require decisive policy interventions, such as questions of foreign policy, economic growth and dealing with corruption.

The different factions of the ANC-led tripartite alliance have often supported him because they thought they had his support, given that he had appeared to agree with them in meetings. This is



Photo: Mujahid Safodien / AFP



Photo: Wilco Schreijer / Bloomberg via Getty Images/magashule

why they often announce their own policy stances as official after meeting Zuma, even though other factions might have diametrically opposed policy positions. Not surprisingly, this results in total confusion over what the real government policies are.

No one in government, in the ANC or in any external organisation knows what the government's real policies are. This has led to paralysis at the heart of the South African government. The president's misleading rhetoric, and the resulting double-talk in the political space, mean that those who devise or implement policies do not have adequate information available, or the wrong information, to do so effectively.

The same goes for potential new investors. If they do not know the government's policies, and cannot find out what they are, they might simply withhold their investments.

Even government planners are confused, because the information they get from politicians makes it very difficult for them to allocate resources efficiently. Government officials are often forced to second-guess the government's policies, which causes implementation paralysis. Senior civil servants will be reluctant to implement policies they are not sure are backed by the president or influential politicians in the ANC. It could be career-ending.

Since there is no certainty about policies, those

**TOP LEFT:** African National Congress Secretary General Ace Magashule (L) and ANC deputy Secretary General Jessie Duarte address the media ahead of the 106th anniversary of the ANC in January 2018.

**ABOVE:** Cyril Ramaphosa, South Africa's deputy president embraces newly elected president of the ANC, David Mabuza, during the party's 54th national conference in December 2017.

with enough money can pay to have policies that favour their interests and see them implemented. Meanwhile, government leaders make outrageous promises, even if they know that the resources, capacity or detailed plans to make them possible are not available. Their promises create expectations among ordinary citizens, even though there is little chance that they will be acted on.

Confronted with burning issues, such as the 2016 "fees must fall" student protests, Zuma often opts for delay. Such situations would demand immediate decision, but a particular solution might alienate one of the alliance factions.

Instead, Zuma sets up task teams, appoints committees and establishes commissions, often composed of members from all the alliance factions. These teams take so long that the initial problem may have been forgotten by the time they announce their conclusions. Often they come up with vague solutions because they must please every faction.





**ABOVE:** North West Premier Supra Mahumapelo and President Jacob Zuma during the unveiling of a monument dedicated to Zuma at the Groot Marico site in October 2017.

And they often consist of the “usual suspects” – the same individuals who had failed to deal with the issue in the first place.

In some cases they include individuals from the president’s inner circle who are part of the entrenched status quo, paradigm and mindset, and therefore unlikely to suggest fresh ideas or viable solutions. Aside from that, they do not inspire the kind of public confidence that might have gone to credible individuals from outside the president’s inner circle of influence. This approach allows the president to look as if he is acting decisively, without actually coming to a decision.

Zuma’s questionable personal behaviour, decisions and dealings have deeply divided the ANC. They have also split the governing ANC-SACP-Cosatu tripartite alliance and unleashed protests from civil society and opposition parties. His destructive presidential governing style has led to the break-up of Cosatu, the formation of the opposition Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), and may push the SACP to stand as an independent party in the 2019 national elections.

To escape prosecution for more than 783 charges of corruption, Zuma desperately needs to ensure that his ex-wife Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma succeeds him. If she becomes president, she will likely protect him from prosecution, and help to secure the wealth that

Zuma, his family and allies have obtained through their involvement in state capture.

Even if Zuma secures the election of his ex-wife as his successor, the ANC may lose the 2019 elections, because the perception will be that she is his proxy. In that case, the opposition parties that win that election might well prosecute him.

If Dlamini-Zuma wins, ANC opponents of the Zuma/Dlamini-Zuma axis could breakaway and form a new party. If Cyril Ramaphosa – the ANC and South African deputy president, and strong contender – wins, the Zuma/Dlamini-Zuma faction could break away. Aside from the damage he has done to the country, Zuma might also bring about another break-up of Africa’s oldest liberation movement.

Such has been the legacy of the Zuma presidency. [GGV](#)

*An extract from the State Capacity Research Project report, **BETRAYAL OF THE PROMISE: HOW SOUTH AFRICA IS BEING STOLEN**, by South African academics*



**Africa in Fact, Issue #42,  
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# AFRICA'S REAL ECONOMY

**In the absence of alternatives,  
most jobs are informal**

By Kate Meagher

**W**idespread recognition that the informal economy is expanding rather than declining across the developing world has drawn growing attention to measuring its size. Owing to myriad measurement problems and divergences in definitions and methodologies, efforts to measure the size of national informal economies and to derive regional averages should be treated as orders of magnitude rather than as hard numbers.

Despite their limitations, these measurement efforts are valuable because they highlight the contemporary significance of informality, and have played a key role in putting the informal economy back on the development agenda after a period of relative neglect during the 1990s, when many felt that liberalisation had made the informal economy obsolete. In the case of sub-Saharan Africa, recent efforts to measure and compare the size of informal economies have had a particularly dramatic effect on development policy debates.

Table 1 presents 2017 statistics from the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the World Bank, showing that, across the developing world, the informal economy now accounts for over half of the non-agricultural labour force, and for over one third of gross national product (GNP). In

Africa, these figures rise to nearly three quarters of the non-agricultural labour force, and nearly 40% of GNP.

In addition to being larger than the formal economy in terms of employment, Africa's informal economy is growing rather than shrinking in the face of economic growth. Some 80-90% of new jobs are created in the informal economy, while the formal economy has been contracting in most African countries. Far from being replaced by the formal economy over time, the African informal economy is rapidly becoming the "real economy".

The huge size of Africa's informal economy suggests that we need to look at its internal dynamics to understand its growth. However chaotic the continent's economy may seem, such a large informal economy could not operate at all without some form of internal organisation. An informal economy that caters for such a vast share of African populations must develop networks and institutionalised patterns of organisation to prevent society from grinding to a halt.

The fact that African informal economies are so large relative to the formal economy also raises questions about where the real regulatory power lies on the continent. When the informal economy



Table 1. The size of informal economies in various regions

Region	% of Non-agricultural employment	% of GNP
Africa	72.8	38
Asia	60.7	19
Latin America and Caribbean	49.7	35
OECD	-	13

Source: Schneider 2010; ILO 2017

becomes larger than the formal economy, does it become the dominant regulatory force in the economy? Does the size of the informal economy alter the relationship between the informal economy and the state? Does it make informal regulation the norm, and formality the aberration?

Understanding African informality requires an awareness of how the size and organisation of informal economies on the continent have been shaped by historical factors. A closer look at these economies reveals important differences between different parts of the continent with regard to the size, composition and complexity of the informal economy. These differences have been shaped not only by contemporary variations in the regulatory context, but also by distinctive historical experiences during the pre-colonial, colonial and post-independence periods.

A key influence of the pre-colonial period relates to the presence of centralised states or large-scale religious systems, both of which served as frameworks for the organisation of long-distance trading networks and indigenous commercial institutions capable of operating across communal and ethnic boundaries.

Economic historians have detailed the existence of well-developed centralised states in West Africa, including the Asante and Hausa states, and to a more limited extent in East Africa, in the centuries before colonialism. These states provided both the resources and institutional support for the development of markets, commercial institutions and long-distance trading networks.

Large-scale religious systems, including Islam and a range of indigenous oracular religions also played a central role in the development of indigenous economic networks and large-scale commercial institutions in pre-colonial West as well as East Africa. In stateless societies such as the Igbo of West Africa, and the Somali of East Africa, oracular religions were key to the emergence of

regional trading systems in the former, while Islam underpinned the development of long-distance trading networks in the latter.

Colonialism created a new layer of influences on the development of informal economic organisation. The impact of colonialism reinforced the greater scale and complexity of informal economic networks in West Africa, while suppressing such development in much of central, East and southern Africa.

The economist Thandika Mkandawire argues that West Africa's cash crop economies – Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Togo and Uganda – tended to be more permissive of indigenous economic activity. Meanwhile, the labour reserve economies of southern Africa and parts of East Africa, and to a lesser extent, the concession economies of central Africa took extensive measures to suppress indigenous economic activity that might compete with wage labour.

According to Mkandawire, in colonial labour reserve economies – including Angola, Kenya, South Africa, Namibia, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland and Mozambique – measures were taken to block alternative sources of income that might compete with the wage economy. These measures included disruption of peasant agriculture, job discrimination, criminalisation of informal activities by Africans in the urban areas, political regimentation of Africans, migration control, etc.

By contrast, concession economies – the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Congo-Brazzaville, Gabon, Central African Republic, Rwanda and Burundi – relied on more brutal methods such as forced labour and plunder until late in the colonial period.

In the post-colonial period, regulatory attitudes set during the colonial period tended to persist. In some cases, subsequent events, such as long civil



wars in Mozambique and Angola, or particularly severe economic collapse in Zambia and more recently in Zimbabwe, have shifted southern African economies toward higher levels of informal activity than were characteristic of other economies with similar histories.

Drawing on ILO figures largely from the 1990s for informal activity as a share of the non-agricultural labour force, Mkandawire shows that levels of informal activity averaged 58% in West Africa, 49% in central Africa and only 19% in southern Africa. Despite the expansion of informality across the continent, more recent figures bear out a higher level of informality in West Africa than in East and southern Africa.

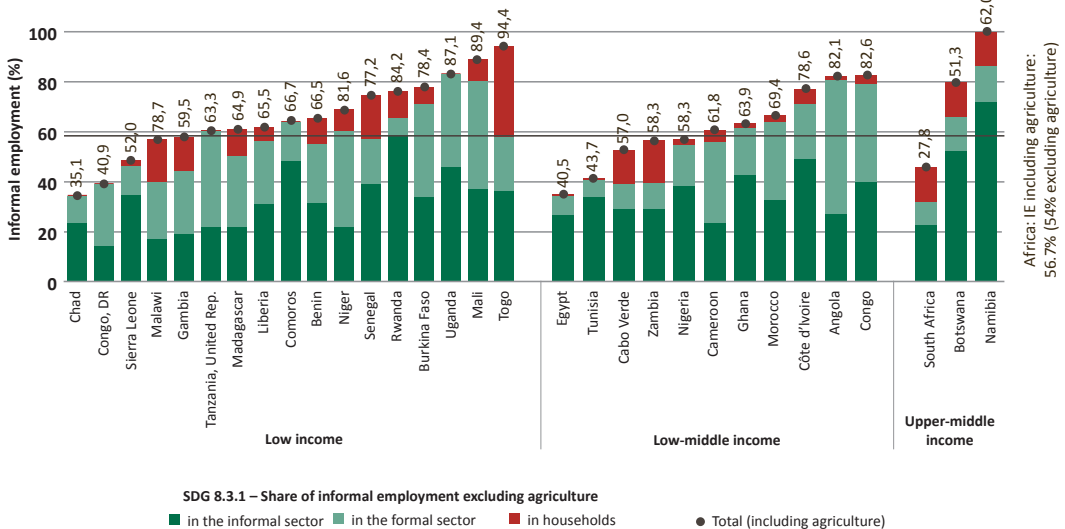
With appropriate caveats about the precision of these figures, and the large number of countries for which data on levels of informality is unavailable, recent measures of informality as a share of the

non-agricultural labour force average over 65% in former cash crop economies concentrated in West Africa, and fall to 35% in the former labour reserve economies concentrated in southern and East Africa. There is insufficient data to calculate an average for former concession economies.

In the contemporary era, globalisation and economic reform have exerted more uniform influences among African countries, precipitating rising levels of informality across the continent. While historical differences in patterns of informality persist, contemporary push-and-pull factors shaping the expansion of informality have become more similar across countries and sub-regions within sub-Saharan Africa.

Researchers Henrik Huitfeldt and Johannes Jütting have identified four key drivers behind the contemporary expansion of informality. These are: slow employment growth in the formal

**Informal employment in Africa: Employees**



Source: ILO Forthcoming. Women and men in the informal economy. A statistical picture. Third Edition.

ILO calculations are based on household survey micro-datasets. In order to allow comparisons and the calculation of global and regional estimates, a harmonised definition of employment in the informal sector and of informal employment was applied systematically to each of the 31 African countries considered here and for which microdata were available. In line with the ILO resolution concerning the measurement of employment in the informal sector, Fifteenth International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS), Geneva, 1993, the informal sector is defined on the basis of the institutional sector, the final destination, the absence of registration or of a complete set of accounts. Alternatively, the size of enterprises combined with the place of work and, for employees, the absence of contributions by the employer to social security, were used as proxy criteria. Following the ILO, guidelines concerning a statistical definition of informal employment, Seventeenth International Conference of Labour Statisticians, Geneva, 2003, informal employment is defined as follows: i) among own-account workers and employers the formal or informal nature of employment depends on the formal or informal nature of the economic unit; ii) among employees, informal employment is defined by the absence of social security gained through employment (via employers and employees contributions) or, in case of missing information, by the absence of entitlement and effective benefit from both annual paid leave and paid sick leave; iii) all contributing family members are in informal employment.

economy, the restructuring of labour markets under liberalisation and globalisation, inappropriate formal sector regulations and competitive pressures to reduce costs.

This list of drivers tends to obscure the real dynamics of informal expansion. The reference to “slow employment growth” glosses over the active erosion of formal employment precipitated by market reforms, which has undermined employment generation through public sector retrenchment, de-industrialisation and import liberalisation. In the process, the restructuring of labour markets through liberalisation and globalisation has triggered an informalising “race to the bottom” with regard to wages and labour protection.

The third driver, inappropriate regulation, has been shown to be relatively unimportant to the expansion of informality in Africa and across much of the developing world. Greater deregulation of developing economies over the past two decades has been accompanied by expansion rather than contraction of informality.

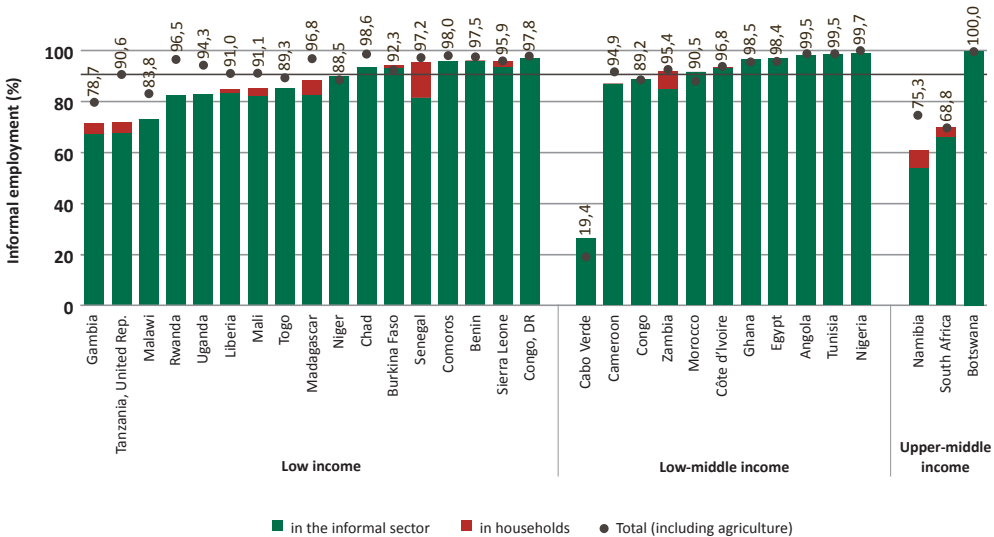
In the context of Latin America, William Maloney noted the “paradox of a relatively flexible labour market accompanied by a very large informal sector”.

The fourth driver, competitive pressures driving down costs, is relevant, but has been exacerbated by liberalisation, globalisation and labour market deregulation.

The resulting picture of push-and-pull factors militates against the notion of informal sector expansion as a “voluntary” process. The image of voluntarism and choice presented by Maloney and others is not borne out by evidence from African countries. In particular, the widespread phenomenon of “straddling” – which refers to holding a formal sector job and carrying out one or more informal activities on the side – tends to undermine the notion of informality as a rejection of formal sector conditions.

Similarly, the idea that the desire to evade taxes pushes people into the informal economy is weakened by the fact that most informal actors pay a range of formal as well as informal taxes. Local

**Informal employment in Africa: entrepreneurs (employers and own-account workers\*)**



Africa: IE including agriculture:

Source: ILO Forthcoming. Women and men in the informal economy. A statistical picture. Third Edition.

\* Self-employed limited to entrepreneurs (employers and own-account workers). Contributing family are by definition in informal employment whatever the nature of the enterprise.



government taxes are often collected by officials in the markets where informal actors operate or by sending revenue officers physically to other places of informal activity, making evasion difficult.

In some countries, decentralisation has also led to the delegation of collection of higher levels of taxes to local government authorities. Moreover, many informal actors pay a range of informal taxes, such as association fees, security levies to vigilante groups, and extra-legal levies for other forms of service provision (for instance, road repair and access to electricity). The idea that informality allows people to avoid taxes is a misrepresentation of reality.

In the African context, the major drivers of informality are less about choices to avoid unwanted taxes and regulations, and more about a lack of alternatives. Far from opting for informal employment, most Africans entering the informal economy are pushed by a lack of formal sector opportunities, as a result of global competition and the active downsizing of formal employment in the face of draconian economic restructuring. Across Africa, informal economic expansion is a product of massive public and private sector retrenchment, contracting access to land, as well as de-industrialisation and enterprise collapse in the context of liberalisation, devaluation and high inflation. The resulting escalation of unemployment and collapse in real incomes has led to a mass influx into informal activities as people struggle to survive in the absence of alternative employment or social safety nets.

Another restructuring-induced push factor involves the collapse of real wages, even among those who remain in formal employment. This has resulted in the intensification of “multiple modes of livelihood”.

On the one hand, multiple modes involves hanging onto formal jobs where possible while starting up an activity in the informal sector, such

as informal taxi driving, trading, or selling services after hours. On the other, it includes the entry of previously non-employed household members, such as wives and dependants, into the informal labour market to make ends meet.

The pressures of economic restructuring have created two further push factors, including the weakening of markets for African formal sector firms, and consequent pressures to cut costs. Owing to the collapse in domestic purchasing power, weak export shares and the intensification of import competition, markets for many African domestic firms have all but collapsed.

Finally, the instability and unpredictability of formal institutions in the context of economic reforms has also operated as a push factor. In the face of incessant reforms in the formal economy over a period of three decades, many African economic agents have withdrawn into the informal economy where institutions are less subject to drastic and unanticipated changes.

Banking sector reforms and attendant bank failures in Nigeria, for instance, have frightened many successful informal operators out of the formal banking sector.

Constant reforms in regulations and tax regimes, rather than the regulations and taxes themselves, have also forced formal operators into the informal sector, where conditions are more predictable.

The negative influence of the changing regulatory environment was noted as long ago as 1999, when Poul Ove Pedersen and Dorothy McCormick observed that “continuous changes in rules and regulations and their inconsistent enforcement create an instability in the economic system which is not supportive of long-term investment”. While the informal economy has increased risk and instability for African consumers owing to the lack of legal protection and quality control, it currently represents a sphere of greater institutional predictability for many informal entrepreneurs.

Just as the push factors are more about compulsion than choice, the pull factors of African informal employment are more about default options than attractions. The fabled “ease of entry” of the informal sector is certainly a pull factor in that sense, since it only applies to the low-cost, low-income segments of the informal economy where livelihoods are most precarious.

More lucrative activities tend to have higher capital and skills requirements, and also involve informal institutional factors that limit entry, such as membership in associations or access to credit networks. As a result, women and the poor tend to be concentrated in saturated activities at the low-income end of the informal economy, rather than moving into activities with higher income potential.

A further pull factor involves the creation of new opportunities within the informal sector. Middle class demand for informal sector goods and services as formal options become unaffordable, and limited industrial sub-contracting to informal firms, have created a more skilled and lucrative niche within the informal economy.

In addition, the collapse of public services has opened up opportunities for informal service providers, including tutors, water sellers, and vigilante and private security services.

Foreign investors and multinationals have also contributed to pull factors into informality by drawing on Special Economic Zones (SEZs),

labour brokers, and Bottom of the Pyramid (BoP) initiatives to create new informal rather than formal employment.

A final pull factor involves greater access to business support services and economic institutions in the informal economy. The social embeddedness of informal economic institutions makes them more predictable and accessible to African business actors, particularly those who lack the levels of literacy and the contacts to access formal skills training and business services.

However, this does not mean that the quality of informal services is better, only that they are more accessible. Levels of credit available through informal mechanisms are often too low for significant enterprise investment, particularly in the case of rotating credit groups. Similarly, the technical quality of informal skills training has become inadequate even for the needs of informal actors.

The composition and institutional organisation of African informal economies reflects the historical and contemporary factors outlined above. Contemporary statistical data indicates that African informal economies have the highest level of informal self-employment, accounting for 67% of informal employment (Table 2).

Conversely, levels of informal wage labour are comparatively low. While informal wage labour accounts for 48% of informal employment in other regions, it constitutes only 33% of

**Table 2: Composition of informal employment in developing countries**

Region	% Self-employment	% Wage labour	% of women's non-agricultural employment	% of children 5-14 years engaged in child labour
Sub-Saharan Africa	67	33	47	41
Latin America and Caribbean	52	48	47	9
Asia	52	48	43	12

Source: Vanek et al. 2014; UNICEF 2012; ILO 2010, Asian Development Bank 2015.



informal employment in Africa. These statistics mask significant variation between West and southern Africa.

In West Africa, where informal entrepreneurship and large-scale trading networks have had more room to develop, informal wage labour tends to be below 20%, while in southern Africa and Kenya, levels of informal wage employment average over 50%, according to research by Jacques Charmes published in 2009.

Table 2 also reveals that women comprise 47% of informal employment in Africa. But 76% of African women working outside of agriculture earn their living informally due to lack of opportunity, making women highly over-represented in informality. Research shows that this is associated with female poverty rather than with increased income opportunities.

Africa also has the highest share of child labour in the world, with an incidence as high as 41% of children between 5 and 14 years of age. Child labour is particularly pronounced in West and central Africa, where apprenticeship institutions are stronger, informal employment of children in mines is widespread and domestic labour often involves younger girls than is common in southern and East Africa.

Understanding the contemporary dynamics of informal employment in Africa requires moving beyond the statistics to an understanding of the institutional organisation of informal employment. The institutional factors fall into three broad categories: institutions governing informal self-employment, those governing informal wage employment and new forms of informal employment arising from globalisation.

With regard to informal self-employment, the key factor to note is that informal enterprises do not constitute a mass of atomised operators. They are embedded in informal social and business networks through which they organise skills training, credit

and business activities. These include ethnic and religious networks, rotating credit societies, informal trade associations and friendship or “old-boy” school networks.

This kind of informal self-organisation is referred to as “informalisation from below”. In some cases these informal economic networks are local, but in parts of Africa they have also had a regional and even international reach since colonial times or earlier.

Informal economic organisation underpins the effectiveness of informal actors in seizing new opportunities for self-employment, such as informal service provision in the face of collapsing public services. This informalisation of public services constitutes a kind of “poor man’s privatisation”.

The institutional organisation of informal wage employment is quite distinct. It involves apprentices and wage workers in informal firms, both casual and long term. These workers are increasingly linked to informal employers through wage relations rather than kinship or family ties. Informal wage employment absorbs those without the capital to start their own activity, comprising a growing share of informal actors who may never become independent.

Finally, new forms of organisation arising from globalisation include the transnationalisation of informal livelihoods, and informal employment in global commodity chains.

The transnationalisation of informal livelihoods refers to the increasing international reach of informal economic networks. The cross-border trading networks of the 1970s have been increasingly globalised. Ethnic and religious trading networks of West, East and even central Africa have penetrated deep into Europe, North America, and Asia since the 1990s.

Africa’s globalising informal economies are dominated by legal goods and services, including textiles, electronics and remittances. This “globalisation from below” links structurally adjusted African consumers into global markets via

informal traders, and links informal manufacturing clusters into parallel commodity chains that produce and trade goods under the radar of the global economy.

Compared to other regions, informal employment in Africa is dominated by low-skilled, low-income activities with very limited connections to formal sector firms. This would tend to suggest that African informal employment offers little to the formal economy except unfair competition and a drag on productivity.

While these problems do exist, the increasing intertwining of the formal and informal economies, even in Africa, suggests that the informal economy offers some benefits to the formal economy as well. These benefits appear to relate largely to a search for cheap and flexible labour. Increasing practices of sub-contracting between formal and informal firms are blurring the boundary between informal self-employment and informal wage labour.

The growth of formal sector distributive sub-contracting to street traders, and outsourcing of ancillary services – canteen services, uniforms, repairs – to informal enterprises is turning informal

enterprises into cheap labour for formal sector firms.

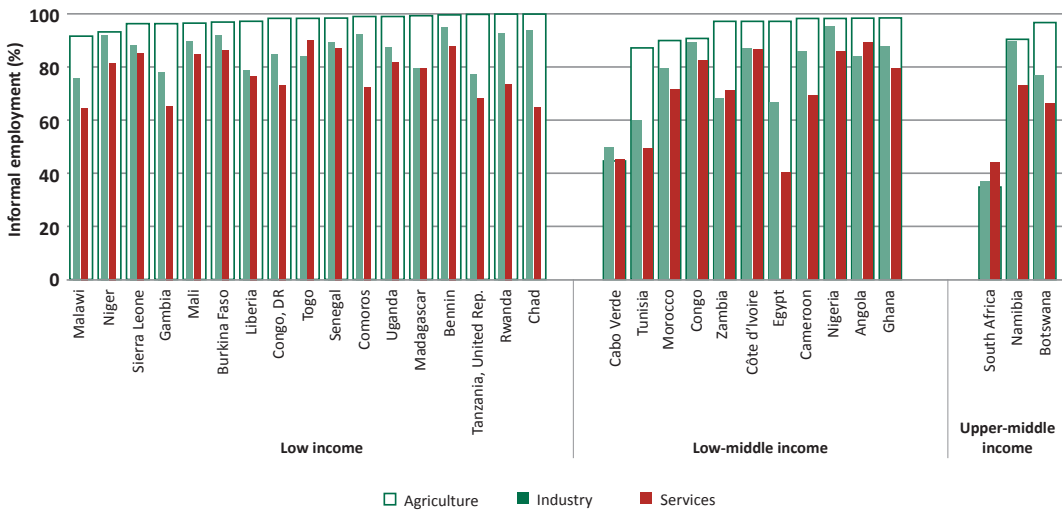
Sub-contracting between privatised urban service providers and informal water or waste services in poor areas is another means of turning informal firms into cheap labour for privatised service providers.

From this perspective, informality acts as a boost to formal sector productivity rather than a drag on growth.

Jütting and Juan R de Laiglesia, among others, have argued that expanding informality represents a “broken social contract” between society and the state. However, more questions need to be asked about how the social contract was broken, and what kind of measures are appropriate to reintegrate society and the state in the political and economic conditions of contemporary Africa.

Two different forms of relations between the state and the informal sector are evident in Africa, which have important implications for the future of the social contract. The first can be characterised as “instrumental”, involving a mutual evasion of responsibilities, as the state tries to shift the costs of reforms onto the informal economy and informal

The sectoral dimension of informality: Africa (% informal employment)



Source: ILO Forthcoming. Women and men in the informal economy. A statistical picture. Third Edition.



actors try to use public goods without paying a full range of taxes.

This form has become dominant in many African countries. While contemporary literature is very clear about the negative effect of this instrumental relationship on state fiscal and regulatory capacity, there is less attention to its negative effect on the organisational and absorptive capacity of the informal economy.

Declining incomes, social fragmentation and conflict are all indications of the unravelling of informal economic institutions under the strain of their “instrumentalisation” by donors, the formal sector, and the state. Moving down this path is leading to the destruction of the legendary resilience of African informal economies, increasing the vulnerability of societies to conflict, criminality and social collapse.

A second form of state-informal sector engagement can be characterised as “synergistic”. This involves the informal sector filling gaps in employment, social welfare and service provision in return for state investment in improving popular welfare and informal productive capacity. Properly synergistic relationships between the informal economy and the state can be found in many parts of east Asia.

There are also a number of countries in which the informal economy contributes to social integration and public investment in ways that have stabilised societies that would otherwise have disintegrated in the face of extreme economic pressure. Important examples include Senegal, a highly informalised but relatively stable democracy, and Somaliland, where the informal economy has contributed to reconstituting a state where even international efforts have failed.

Addressing the expansion of informality in sub-Saharan Africa requires attention to the specific nature of African informality. This includes a more highly informalised labour force than any other

region, a predominance of self-employment over informal wage labour, a limited generation of new economic opportunities through globalisation, and the highest incidence among all regions of especially vulnerable sources of labour, including women, children and migrants.

Attention to locally appropriate models for rebuilding the social contract is vital to any measure to reduce informality. Current suggestions for rebuilding state-society relations through taxation and social protection offer a model more appropriate to societies with a high share of informal wage labour.

In many parts of Africa, where the bulk of the informal economy involves self-employment rather than informal wage labour, enterprise support and constructive linkages with the formal sector is key to reintegration with the state. An offer of pensions and unemployment benefits will do little to improve productivity, livelihoods or state legitimacy.

Where high levels of informal self-employment coincide with the weak bureaucratic capacity of former cash crop economies, as in West Africa, the organisational demands of workable social protection arrangements are more daunting than in southern Africa. Understanding the organisational realities of African informal economies, at the level of informal activities and in relations with the state and formal private sector, is vital to coming up with viable solutions to mounting poverty and precarious livelihoods. [GGP](#)

*This is an edited version of a paper first presented at REPOA's 19th Annual Research Workshop held at the Ledger Plaza Bahari Beach Hotel, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania; April 09-10, 2013*



**Africa in Fact, Issue #43,  
July – September 2017**

Most sub-Saharan cities are ill prepared for rapid population growth

# BRAVE NEW

**F**or decades to come, sub-Saharan Africa's economic and social future will be shaped by one of the most important megatrends on the continent: urbanisation. Closely interlinked with demographic and economic trends, urbanisation is likely to shape politics in sub-Saharan Africa too.

The urban agenda has gained immense traction over the past years, both on the continent and globally. The notion that cities cannot make positive contributions to development is now largely outdated. Making cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable, as stipulated by the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, will be necessary if sub-Saharan Africa is to become more prosperous. However, this is also an extremely ambitious task.

Sub-Saharan Africa's urban transition is in full

swing; its urban population is the fastest growing globally. In less than 20 years, every second person in the region is likely to live in a town or a city, matching the current global situation. A third of sub-Saharan Africa's countries – including South Africa, Nigeria and the Congo – have already crossed that threshold.

In the best case, urbanisation will help surmount some of the structural hurdles that continue to hold back sub-Saharan Africa's prosperity. In the worst case, it will compound them. Most likely, the future will be a mixed picture, reflecting the diversity of sub-Saharan African countries, in particular their demographic and economic baselines as well as their quality of governance.

With 2035 as our time horizon, we can



**ABOVE:** An aerial view of Johannesburg as seen from the 51st floor of Ponte City tower, in Hillbrow, Johannesburg, in May 2021.

# WORLD

By Julia Bello-Schünemann

explore the following questions. What are the key characteristics of urbanisation in sub-Saharan Africa, and what does the future hold? Is the urban transition likely to translate into increased prosperity? And lastly, what should urban governance look like to capitalise on the opportunities that urbanisation brings about?

All the forecasts referred to in this article are based on the International Futures (IF) system (version 7.29). This is a large-scale, long-term, highly integrated modelling software programme housed at the Frederick S Pardee Center for International Futures at the Josef Korbel School of International Studies, at the University of Denver.

Sub-Saharan Africa is expected to account for close to a quarter of global urban population

growth over the next 15 years. Its urban population is growing at an even faster annual rate than its population overall, at around 4% as compared to about 2.5%, respectively, in 2017. By 2035, more than 810 million Africans will live in cities and towns of different sizes. These include megacities with more than 10 million inhabitants, large cities with between five and 10 million inhabitants, medium-sized cities and smaller cities and towns. This is 348 million more urban citizens than today, or the equivalent of the combined current populations of Nigeria, Ethiopia, Angola and Mali.

By 2035, over 40% of sub-Saharan Africa's urban population is expected to live in West Africa. With more than 60% of West Africans living in urban areas by then, West Africa will be Africa's most



urbanised region, surpassing North Africa. Central and southern Africa are forecast to cross the 50% urban population threshold before 2030, with central Africa leading the transition. East Africa/the Horn is the only region in sub-Saharan Africa that will remain predominantly rural in the longer term.

Natural urban population growth, or the predominance of births over deaths in urban areas, is the single most important driver of sub-Saharan Africa’s rapid urban population growth. The historical evidence shows that families living in urban areas have fewer children than families living in rural areas.

Yet, in sub-Saharan Africa, widespread poverty – as expressed in terms of income, as well as access to education and access to healthcare – means that fertility rates have remained high, including in cities and towns. Over time, fertility rates in urban areas will drop, but the fact that the number of extremely poor Africans is set to increase over the coming decades suggests that this might not happen quickly.

The second most important driver of urban population growth in sub-Saharan Africa is rural-urban migration, followed by cross-border inward migration. People tend to leave rural areas because of poor service provision, changing weather patterns, land pressures and natural disasters, as well as to escape violence and large-scale



conflict. Between 2009 and 2016, the Boko Haram insurgency in north-eastern Nigeria, for example, has displaced an estimated 1.5 million people. The city population of Maiduguri, the capital of Borno State, may have more than doubled, to two million, due to the influx of internally displaced people.

With Lagos, Kinshasa, Johannesburg, Luanda and Dar es Salaam, sub-Saharan Africa will be home to five of the world’s expected 41 megacities by 2035. Next in line are Ouagadougou, Addis Ababa, Bamako, Dakar, Ibadan and Kano. Megacities in Africa – and in the developing world more generally – are growing at absolute rates unprecedented in history. Lagos, for example, is estimated to add an average of about 700,000 people every year. If the





Photo: Etoran Plancher / AFP

**FAR LEFT:** Scenes of the capital cities of Luanda, Angola and Dakar, Senegal.  
**LEFT:** Lagos, the economic capital of Nigeria.

current trend holds, by 2035 close to 30 million people could live in Nigeria’s commercial capital, turning it into the largest megacity on the entire continent. Kinshasa could have a population of close to 24 million, followed by Dar es Salaam with over 13 million.

Megacities merit attention because they tend to absorb a significant share of national populations and are key drivers of their countries’ economic performance. They will therefore connect Africa to the global economy. However, the majority of Africa’s urban population lives in relatively smaller cities and towns, which are expanding incredibly fast as well.

Most of sub-Saharan Africa’s cities are ill-prepared for such rapid and dramatic population increases. The provision of land, finance, physical and social infrastructure, and other critical services, is bound to be a challenge, not least because of the massive backlogs that already exist.

Urbanisation in sub-Saharan Africa is not synonymous with economic development. In the western context, urbanisation followed industrialisation and the ensuing economic diversification. However, sub-Saharan Africa is urbanising, but it is not industrialising. Urban population growth is outpacing economic development, precisely because of the lack of

employment creation in higher productivity segments of the region’s economies. According to the World Bank, on average, up to 60% of the urban job market in sub-Saharan Africa is estimated to be informal.

Most sub-Saharan countries will see a tremendous increase in their share of the working-age population (aged 15 to 65 years) over the coming decades, particularly in urban areas. This is a potential economic booster. However, to translate this into economic development, any additional workers will need skills and productive jobs, and both are scarce. The prevalence of low-wage jobs in the informal sector is directly connected to the challenge of providing services for all from a small tax base, because most households are limited in their ability to pay for services.

Sharp income inequalities in many cities also mean that the contribution of economic growth to poverty reduction is limited. Africa has more urban poor than any other world region. New research from the World Bank indicates that poverty could be urbanising. And even though future improvements in urban poverty reduction are likely, the sheer number of urban poor in sub-Saharan Africa is expected to increase. This also implies that the number of people who will lack access to services such as clean water and improved sanitation is likely to increase dramatically. The 2016 African Economic

Outlook report predicts that Africa could see its slum population triple by 2050.

Uncontrolled, rapid urbanisation in the context of pervasive poverty, inequality, large youthful populations and lack of economic opportunities does not bode well for the future sustainability of Africa’s towns and cities. Unplanned, overcrowded urban settlements populated by marginalised youth could become hotbeds for violence, particularly in lower-income informal areas.

Indeed, urban areas are increasingly the *locus* for political violence in Africa. African urban areas have seen a considerable rise in the number of riots and protests occurring there.

With increasing levels of urbanisation, Africa’s urban constituencies are becoming increasingly important politically. In South Africa’s Gauteng province, for example, according to the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project at the University of Sussex, people took to the streets more than 1,900 times between January 1, 1997 and September 1, 2016 – more often than in any other current or emerging African megacity. On the other hand, terrorism in Africa to date is concentrated in rural rather than in urban areas.

It should be emphasised that the governance of African cities is incredibly complex. Local governments often have many responsibilities, while they lack the political power and resources to

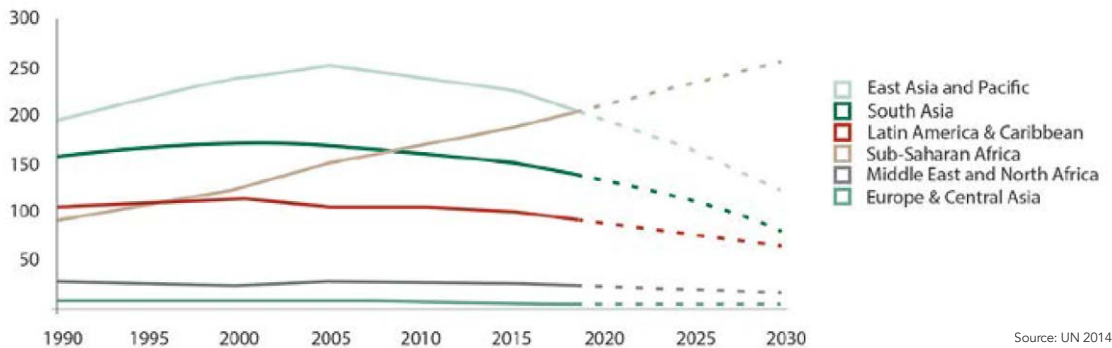
act on them. Across the continent, increasing levels of political conflict with higher levels of government is due to the fact that cities are typically the base of opposition political parties.

Generally, the nature of national and urban governance – understood as the ability of governments to effectively formulate and implement sound policies, as well as the quality of national and urban planning – will greatly influence whether urbanisation contributes to sub-Saharan Africa’s transformation.

Ad hoc urban governance, which serves the interests of the few who are wealthy at the expense of the many who are poor, is widespread across the continent. This approach will not lead to sustainable urban futures. Growth that does not benefit the poor is likely to exacerbate existing inequalities.

Countries and cities with healthy economic growth prospects, a reasonable regulatory environment, good planning and strategic investments in key sectors, such as physical and social infrastructure, are well placed to capitalise on the urban transition. Higher population density, combined with the economies of scale that are possible in urban areas, will mean that providing public services is more cost efficient than in rural areas. Investing in economic diversification, skills, and providing productive employment opportunities for a growing urban workforce, is

**Urban poor population, 1990 - 2030**



Source: UN 2014



key to promoting less unequal and therefore more sustainable urban futures.

Policymakers need to find approaches that combine interventions that improve peoples’ lives in the short-term with strategic investments that target longer-term returns and ensure sustainability. Propping up the informal sector with ad hoc measures, for example, might have short-term livelihood benefits, but it is unlikely to solve structural economic problems.

Effective urbanisation would drive broader industrialisation and economic structural transformation by providing a favourable business environment where companies can realise economies of scale and share knowledge easily. Similarly, services-led growth, by encouraging innovation and developing the skills of the urban labour force, would increase the supply of modern services to Africa’s growing urban middle class. This could also help attract more foreign direct investment to African cities by incentivising investment in well-connected urban corridors.

Urbanisation is not a silver bullet for sustainable economic development. However, the majority of respondents to an expert survey of country economists of the African Development Bank and the United Nations Development Programme, carried out by African Economic Outlook 2016, see urbanisation as an opportunity for their country and not as a risk.

Currently, we are seeing increasing momentum for countries to manage urbanisation in ways that support more inclusive and therefore more sustainable development outcomes. This momentum should also open channels for much-needed urban financing. [GGY](#)

This article is based on African Futures Paper 20 *African Urban Futures*, Julia Bello-Schünemann and Ciara Aucoin, published by the Institute for Security Studies in November 2016.

Urban population as percent of total population, history and forecast

	Sub-Saharan Africa	Nigeria	DRC	Burundi	South Africa
2000	30.72	34.84	58.70	8.246	55.75
2001	31.14	35.67	59.15	8.461	56.53
2002	31.55	36.51	59.61	8.682	56.87
2003	31.96	37.36	60.07	8.908	57.28
2004	32.39	38.21	60.53	9.139	57.72
2005	32.83	39.07	60.99	9.375	58.20
2006	33.27	39.94	61.43	9.617	58.72
2007	33.73	40.82	61.89	9.864	59.28
2008	34.21	41.70	62.34	10.12	59.88
2009	34.70	42.59	62.78	10.38	60.51
2010	35.20	43.48	63.23	10.64	61.19
2011	35.70	44.36	63.67	10.91	61.92
2012	36.09	45.23	64.10	11.19	62.70
2013	36.60	46.09	64.54	11.47	63.52
2014	37.12	46.94	64.96	11.76	64.40
2015	37.74	47.78	65.38	12.06	65.36
2016	38.33	48.86	66.18	12.29	66.40
2017	38.93	49.97	66.97	12.52	67.43
2018	39.53	51.08	67.75	12.75	68.46
2019	40.14	52.20	68.52	12.99	69.47
2020	40.75	53.33	69.28	13.24	70.49
2021	41.37	54.45	70.02	13.49	71.51
2022	41.99	55.59	70.74	13.75	72.52
2023	42.61	56.72	71.46	14.02	73.52
2024	43.24	57.86	72.16	14.29	74.52
2025	43.88	59.01	72.87	14.58	75.52
2026	44.52	60.14	73.58	14.88	76.51
2027	45.16	61.28	74.29	15.18	77.50
2028	45.81	62.41	74.99	15.50	78.45
2029	46.46	63.53	75.69	15.82	79.39
2030	47.11	64.64	76.38	16.15	80.31
2031	47.76	65.74	77.06	16.49	81.21
2032	48.41	66.83	77.72	16.84	82.10
2033	49.07	67.91	78.38	17.20	82.96
2034	49.72	68.95	79.02	17.56	83.80
2035	50.38	69.98	79.65	17.93	84.60
2036	51.03	70.98	80.26	18.30	85.38
2037	51.68	71.96	80.86	18.69	86.12
2038	52.32	72.91	81.44	19.08	86.82
2039	52.96	73.84	82.00	19.48	87.49
2040	53.59	74.74	82.54	19.89	88.12

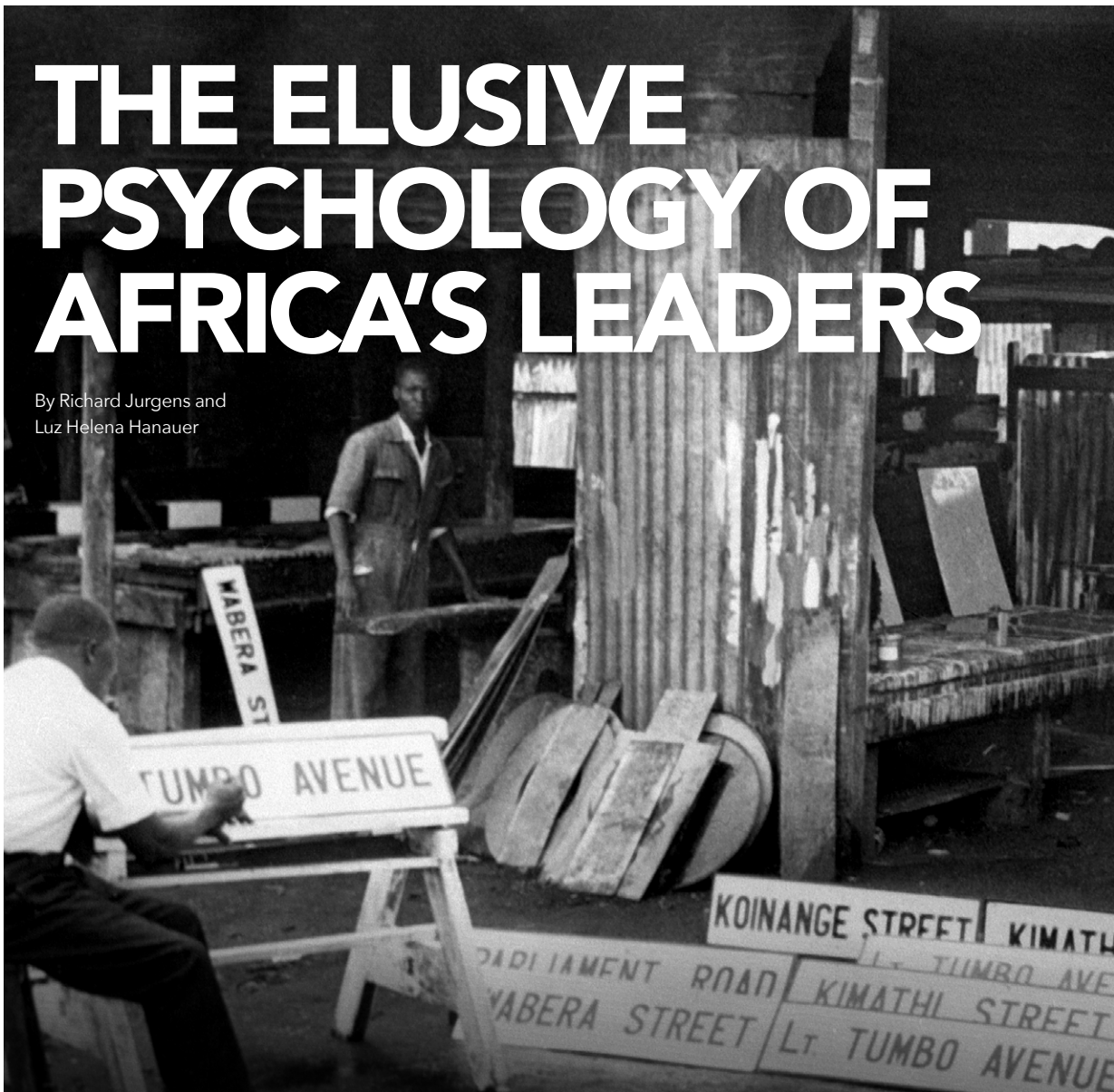
Source: IFs, v 7.29, historical data from United Nations World Urbanization Prospects



Africa in Fact, Issue #45, April – June 2018

# THE ELUSIVE PSYCHOLOGY OF AFRICA'S LEADERS

By Richard Jurgens and  
Luz Helena Hanauer



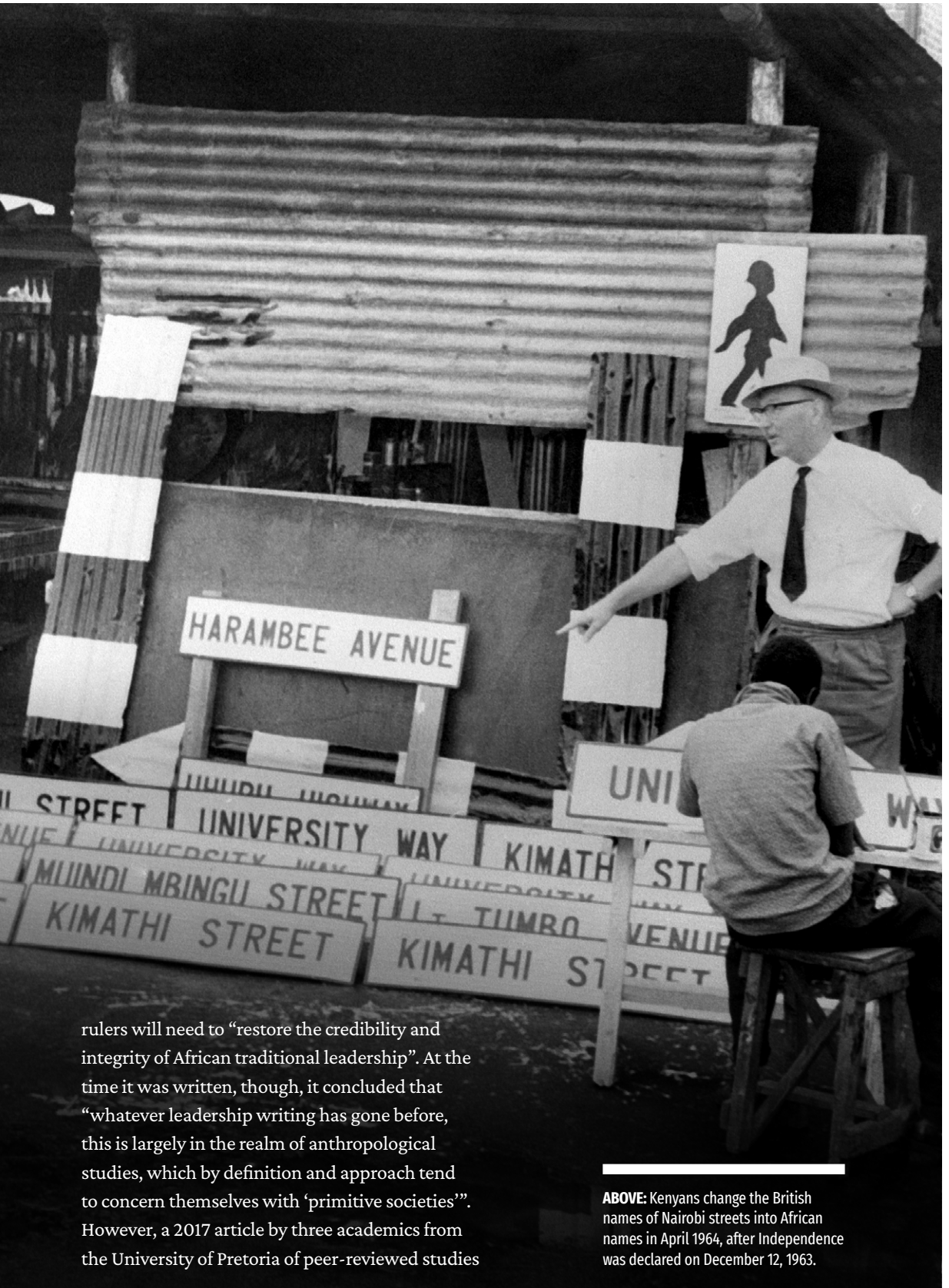
**There is a notable lack of specifically psychological studies of African leadership**

**A**mong contemporary black leaders in Africa there is a “widely shared belief ... that it is time for Africa to produce leaders with the requisite capacity for high performance and moral impact to ensure that the people of the continent secure their fair share of opportunities in the twenty first century”, according to an undated Foundational Report on the concept of leadership prepared at some stage after 1994 for

senior leaders of the ANC, South Africa’s ruling party. Remarkably, the report set out to “identify among South Africa’s multi-ethnic communities, the group or groups with a leadership model or system that comes closest to representing the ideal effectiveness ‘x-factor’”.

Given the failures of so many African governments in the earlier post-colonial period, the Foundational Report suggests that future





rulers will need to “restore the credibility and integrity of African traditional leadership”. At the time it was written, though, it concluded that “whatever leadership writing has gone before, this is largely in the realm of anthropological studies, which by definition and approach tend to concern themselves with ‘primitive societies’”. However, a 2017 article by three academics from the University of Pretoria of peer-reviewed studies

**ABOVE:** Kenyans change the British names of Nairobi streets into African names in April 1964, after Independence was declared on December 12, 1963.

Photo: AFP

that African authors were interested in were: leadership and management, leadership and gender, leadership styles, leadership and African values and political leadership. Meaningful research on the psychological aspects of African leadership is, at present, virtually non-existent.

A psychological understanding of African politics can at present, then, only be arrived at indirectly in the glimpses of it we have in the work of other disciplines, such as history, anthropology and political studies. For example, African statesmen have often argued that they have to contend with a (post) colonial inheritance. Most African countries consist of distinct geographical areas and diverse populations that were artificially yoked together by colonial projects, they say. This has rendered the constituencies which they represent easily fragmented, making divisive politics, with all its underlying ulterior motives, impossible to avoid. This view accords remarkably well with dependency theory, according to which Europe's underdevelopment of Africa left a structural inheritance of inequality that is impossible to escape.

Zimbabwe is a case in point. ZANU-PF, its ruling party, is now largely regarded as a project of Shona domination, with most of the party's senior officials belonging to that grouping, according to Clifford Mabhena in a 2014 article in the *Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*. Moreover, competition for power within the ruling party is often a matter of affiliations to Shona clan affiliations, as Owen Gagare argues in *Africa in Fact 39*. On the other hand – although far more rarely – an inheritance of group dynamics can be the



occasion for an ideological denial of their existence. Infamously, Rwanda's politics have been shaped by hostilities between its Tutsi minority and Hutu majority, culminating in the genocide of 1994. Yet its ruling party, the RFP, is widely regarded as Tutsi-dominated, though Paul Kagame's government officially denies the existence of ethnic groups, as Marie Béatrice Umutesi argues in a 2006 article in the *Journal of International Affairs*.

Zimbabwe represents an extreme case of the more common pattern throughout sub-Saharan Africa: the lack of a specific vision of what a state should look like in a country comprising several, or many identities. This impedes efforts to create wealth and restore dignity to previously colonised populations.





Photo: AFP

Post-colonial African governments' evident disdain for their constituencies, except at election time, expresses a fairly common pattern, too, across the sub-Saharan region. Between elections, governments appear to govern mainly by various strategies of rent extraction, supported by tactics of containing their citizens and distracting critics.

“Containment” of citizens relates, in the first place, to policies that result in underdevelopment, which hinders citizens' capacities both to engage with their polities and to pursue life choices that benefit society, such as opening businesses. Development, of course, involves many factors, which include the rule of law, improving education, widening access to health services, building infrastructure and providing efficient governmental services. Despite many continental agreements and expressions of intent, meanwhile, African governments' achievements during the post-colonial period have been patchy at best.

For example, while African countries' spending on education improved from just above 3.5% of GDP in 1999 to about 4.5% of GDP in 2015, that relative improvement was only marginally larger than the world as a whole for the same period (4.18% to 4.814%), according to a 2014 report by the African Center for Economic Transformation. Meanwhile,

**TOP LEFT:** Malagasy president Philibert Tsiranana is welcomed by a crowd, on April 12, 1960 in Antananarivo, on his return from France and after signing independence agreements between France and Madagascar.

**FAR LEFT:** Côte d'Ivoire president Felix Houphouët Boigny (R) and Senegalese President Léopold Sédar Senghor parade in an official car, on August 10, 1961 in Abidjan, during the first Côte d'Ivoire Independence day anniversary.

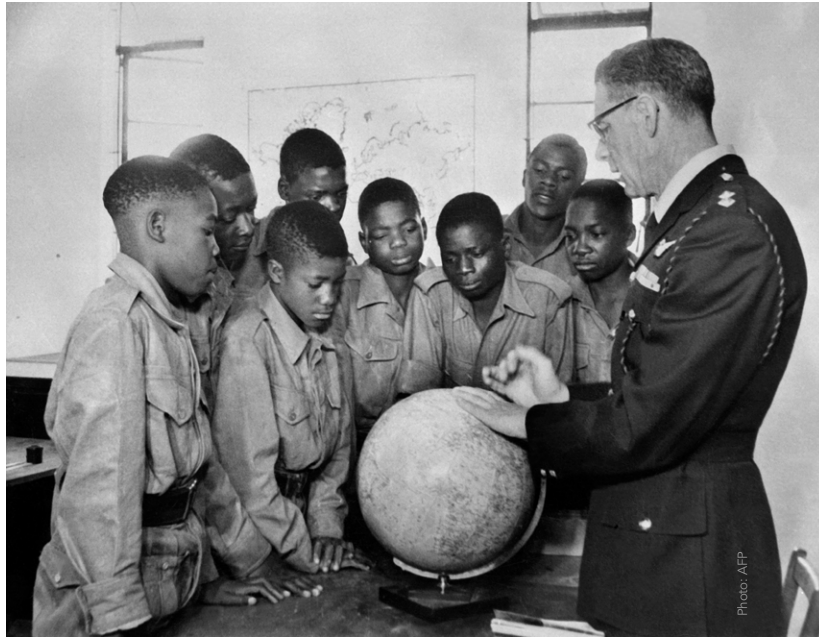
**ABOVE:** Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, gives a speech for the proclamation of the independent Tanzania, in Dar es Salaam, on December 13, 1961.

according to a 2015 study by the Africa-America Institute, The State of Education in Africa, sub-Saharan countries spent about \$1.5 trillion on public education, while North America spent \$32 trillion and Europe some \$24 trillion annually. It follows that sub-Saharan countries would have to invest proportions of their GDP some orders higher than their counterparts in other regions to begin the process of clawing back their educational deficits.

Seen like this, the challenges of development might look virtually insurmountable. Yet as noted in the above 2014 report, other developing countries, the “earlier transformers” – Brazil, Chile, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, South Korea, Thailand and Vietnam – began their trajectories with similar deficits and have succeeded in eradicating them or

**RIGHT:** Cadets in former Rhodesia take part in a geography lesson at Inkomo centre, near Salisbury, formerly the capital of Zimbabwe, in August 1962, after Africans were allowed to become officers in the Rhodesia-Nyasaland Federation army.

**FAR RIGHT:** Robert Mugabe and Joshua Nkomo, leaders of the Zimbabwe Patriotic Front, hold a conference in London with British politicians to discuss the future of the independent state of Zimbabwe, formerly the British colony of Southern Rhodesia.



are in the process of doing so. Policies inevitably involve choices among priorities. As Egbe Ojong Tandu and Mary Anyie Tandu argue in a 2017 paper on Africa's underdevelopment, the "bazaar mentality of African leaders ha[s] starved the continent of the necessary funds for development". Whether conscious or not, the lack of serious attempts to narrow developmental deficits results in populations that are less threatening to political elites and therefore can be contained.

A second major tactic frequently employed by African governments is that of distracting critics from the realities of their governance. This is not a new phenomenon. As the Ghanaian-born academic George Ayittey pointed out in a 2005 article, the "externalist doctrine" which "totally absolve[s] the leadership of any responsibility for the mess in Africa" has been around since the 1960s, soon after the independence of many African countries. One of Africa's longest-reigning dictators, Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe, often blamed the results of his own failed policies on external factors, among them "greedy western powers, the IMF, the Asian financial crisis and the drought", as Ayittey puts it. Within Africa, most of his support came from a coterie of political mavericks who had normalised

the unacceptable through the frequent use of force against their own citizens.

By the end of the twentieth century, Ayittey argues, African citizens' attitudes to their leaders had reached a new nadir. He quotes an unemployed Kenyan, speaking in 2002: "All these people [African leaders and elites] do is talk, talk, talk. Then if they do get any money from the wazungu [white men], they just steal it for themselves. And what about us? We have no food. We have no schools. We have no future. We are just left to die." Ayittey detected a growing gap between African leaders and the people they governed, with the "leaders increasingly insecure, sensitive, repressive and less responsive to the wishes of society" and the people increasingly regarding the state "with fear, suspicion and cynicism", and as "no longer legitimate or relevant in their lives".

The "externalist" pattern of locating responsibility elsewhere was designed to appeal to the collective sentiments, irrespective of their rationality. This phenomenon is far from unique and not exclusively African, but on this continent it is part of a specific recipe for holding onto power: a chauvinist tribalism mixed with a dogmatic rejection of "imperialist and colonialist" influences. The privileges of the





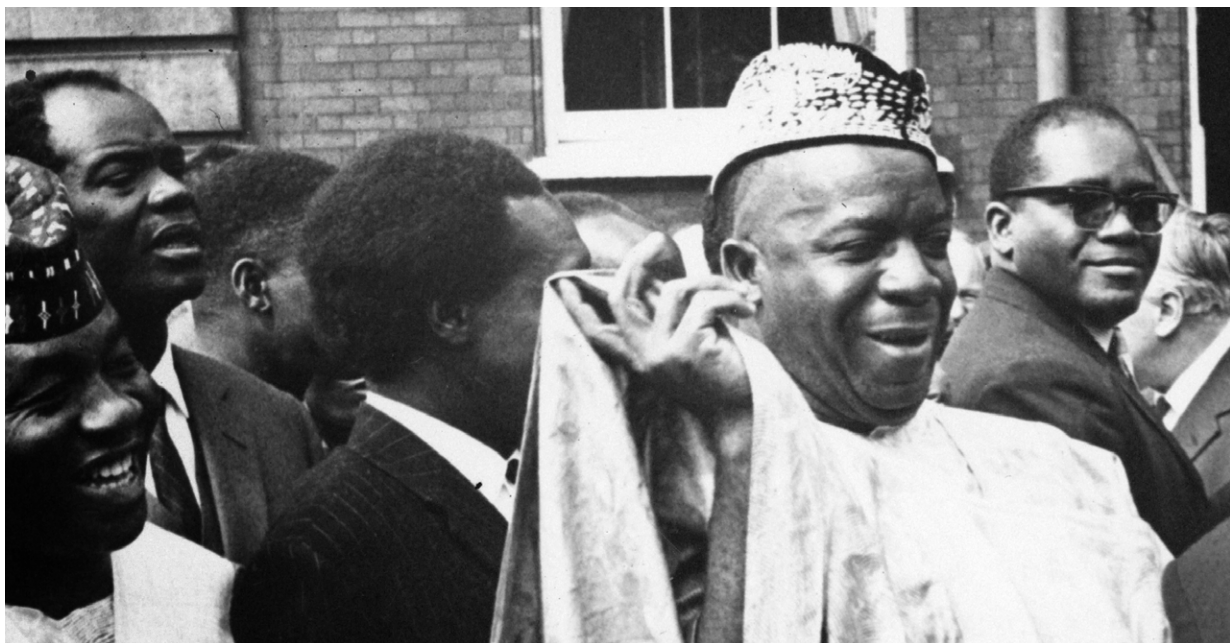
Photo: Hilton-Deutsch Collection/CORBIS/Corbis via Getty Images

new elites are defended by a disingenuous political correctness that publicly claims hostility to the West while privately enjoying its services and consumer goods. Platforms for the acknowledgement of past dignity deprivations and compensatory development are denied to outsider groups.

African leaders often complain about an uneven economic playing field that shuts them out of the mainstream global economy. In outline, this is a version of dependency theory. Yet, just as often, their governments are quite prepared to exploit the world trade system for their own purposes. A good example is Lesotho's use of its status as a Least Developed Country (LDC), which entitles that country to pay zero duties in its importing markets. In fact, Lesotho's textiles are produced entirely by Chinese capital, labour and equipment. This defeats the purpose of LDC protection and sends the profits out of Africa. Basothos, meanwhile, are denied the real jobs and investment that the LDC provisions are meant to promote. The only locals who benefit are connected members of the elite, and that in the form of kickbacks, which are, relatively, small change.

Approaches to governance based on the "externalist" justification can look like a mixture of indolence, ignorance and ineptitude, and probably these factors do play a role in Africa's failures of governance. But looked at more closely, the "externalist" deflection is often used as a rhetorical and psychological tool that helps African elites in their use of their public roles to pursue their private interests. Ideology often plays a merely instrumental role in African leaders' strategies of power hoarding – the ever-popular anti-western stance, for example. Though it might appear lazy and superficial, it plays on a deep understanding of political landscapes, collective insecurities, historical inheritances, socio-economic aspirations, emotional biases and cultural sensitivities.

Africans' approval of their leaders – even when they are to all intents and purposes apex predators of their societies – appears to have slightly increased over the past 20 years, as reflected in figures provided by Afrobarometer, a pan-African research network. In a 1991/2000 survey in 11 countries, some 29.1% of the Africans surveyed said they "trusted



the president a lot”, while in a 2018 survey of 31 countries (including the previous 11), some 35.3% affirmed the same view. This represents an apparent 6.2 percentage point increase in approval for the continent’s presidents over the period.

However, these averages conceal wide disparities. Africans’ approval of their presidents varies widely between countries. In the 2018 survey, it was 21.8% in South Africa (a new, contested democracy), as compared to 61.8% in Tanzania (effectively, a one-party state). Moreover, even the increased figure compares unfavourably with the 42% of citizens of OECD countries who said they trusted their governments in 2016, according to a 2017 OECD report – a figure which itself represented a decline of some three percentage points after the 2008 global financial crisis.

So to some extent, the “externalist” deflection works. However, it is likely to face serious challenges. Most African countries have moved to a form of democracy (either formal or real), and this is creating expectations of better governance. Africa’s middle class is growing and with it the economic and social requirements of people who see themselves as contributors to the common wealth through production, job creation and taxes.

**LEFT TO RIGHT:** Sir Albert Margai, Prime Minister of Sierra Leone, Kwame Nkrumah, President of Ghana, Dr Hastings Banda, Prime Minister of Malawi and Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, Prime Minister of Nigeria, at Marlborough House in London for the opening of the annual Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference, 17th June 1965.

Moreover, technological advances, specifically the Internet, are allowing people to access more information and combine in more effective interest groups than ever before. Greater urbanisation is also providing citizens with more networking opportunities and contributing to their greater awareness of the more abstract values central to national governance.

Yet these developments are also exposing cracks in leadership capabilities, the quality of public administration, inconsistencies in the rule of law and breaches of basic liberties. These problems, in turn, are revealing the need for a transformation of the implicit social contract that has been operative in African nations. They are compelling African citizens to observe and evaluate their leaders and their governance structures more critically, and, in particular, to ask questions about the motives behind the behaviour of their public servants. A





Photo: Keystone/Hulton Archive/Getty Images

kleptocratic state in which the greed of a small elite creates economic mayhem and generates armed conflict is less sustainable in the current Africa than it was just a few decades ago, when a country like Sierra Leone was brought to its knees by the malice of its leaders.

The word “malice” might look too strong here, but some sort of evaluation of this sort must spring to mind when the ideological and policy claims of many African leaders are put alongside their actions and achievements and those of their governments.

It is at this point that Ayitteh’s argument that the externalist arguments about the causes of Africa’s governance crises are largely a quasi-ideological smokescreen and that an “internalist” critique, according to which the most important causes lie mostly within the nature of African governments and how they run their countries’ affairs, becomes important. As he puts it: “This school of thought maintains that while it is true western colonialism and imperialism did harm Africa and continues to do so, Africa’s condition has been made immeasurably worse by such internal factors as misguided leadership, misgovernance, systemic corruption, capital flight, economic mismanagement, declining investment, collapsed infrastructure, decayed

institutions, senseless civil wars, political tyranny, flagrant violations of human rights, and military vandalism.” Explanations for some of these aspects at least have generated a vast literature over the decades, including studies in dependency theory and Marxist or Marx-inspired studies. More latterly, studies in development theory and postmodernism have urged the importance of nuance with regard to previous structural accounts that appeared to deny agency to African political actors. But, as earlier noted, there is a notable lack of specifically psychological studies of African leadership.

One reason for this lack can be located in an ongoing debate about the place of psychology in the context of African, or more generally black history. In a 2018 article, for instance, Kevin Cokley and Ramya Garba review developments in black psychology, which they identify as a discipline that challenges “the hegemonic paradigms and racist beliefs perpetuated by Eurocentric approaches to psychology”. In a parallel attempt to outline a specifically African psychology, Augustine Nwoye in a 2015 article argues that an African psychology would represent “a psychology of rehabilitation ... that will derive anchor, not in comparing Africans and Europeans, but rather in people’s everyday needs,

epistemologies, and world view”. He goes on to argue that an African psychology would, in particular, take account of Africans’ fundamentally communitarian world view, as opposed to the individualistic world view of western or Eurocentric psychology.

Ongoing attempts to re-orient the discipline have, then, resulted in forms of academic protest and “engaged scholarship” that pitch themselves against supposedly “western” psychology. However, rather problematically, this enterprise can be, and often is, framed in ways that do little justice to the object of criticism. Nwoye, for example, holds that Eurocentric psychology is dominated by a “mechanistic or machine-model of human mental life” and that it is based on obsession with quantification. This ignores the very real contributions of figures such as Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung and Jean Piaget, among many others. Moreover, there are serious questions about whether an approach to the discipline is aided by such approaches to identity-based theory. “Some psychologists don’t want to talk about ‘groups’ because it brings back apartheid-era discourses of difference,” says Dr Wahbie Long, a lecturer in psychology at the University of Cape Town. “On the other hand, decolonisation discourse within psychology is obsessed with difference. So there’s a paradox if ever there were one.”

Substantive and specifically African studies of the psychology of leadership on the continent must therefore await the outcome of theoretical and ideological debates. For glimpses of the psychological aspects of this subject, we must still turn to studies in other areas. In a 2008 study, Tom Kelsall, argues, for example, that the frustrations

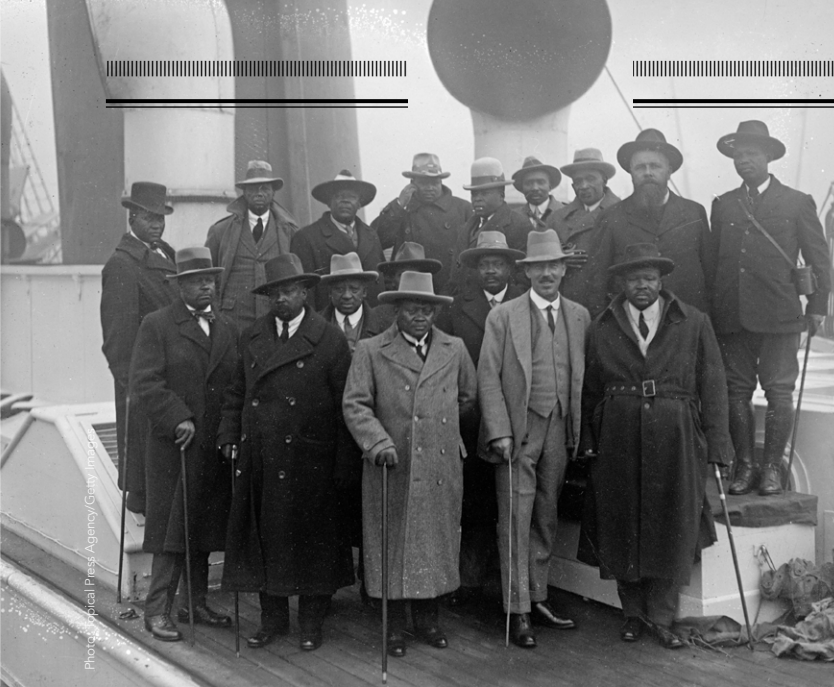


Photo: Evening Standard/Hulton Archive/Getty Images

of western donors and international agencies with Africa’s poor record of governance are, in part, a result of their own failure to understand “the grain of African ways of doing things”. His study is an example of a new trend among non-African academics to re-orient African studies along lines that take the continent’s long history much more seriously and, in particular, to understand emerging African governance styles as, in part, a continuance of deep traditions. On this view, the so-called Big Man phenomenon can be understood as a rigidification of long-standing traditions of governance by colonial rule that have been exploited by post-colonial elites, as argued by Mahmood Mamdani in a pioneering 1996 study, recently updated (and reviewed in this journal).

The postmodern approach is exemplified in another path-breaking 2000 study by Jean-François Bayart that argued that Africa’s relationship with the rest of the world has been informed by modes of agency (“formalities of action”) that have been used to exploit an often very unequal situation. These modes he identifies as “coercion; trickery; flight; mediation; appropriation and its opposite, rejection”. By deploying some of these types of action, African leaders and their governments have acted in ways that demonstrate an agency that was long discounted by thinkers in a long Hegelian





**FAR LEFT:** Mantšebo (second left), the regent of Basutoland (now Lesotho), aboard a passenger liner, on October 8th 1958, is accompanied by members of her delegation that sought self-government in Basutoland, including Chief Leabua Jonathan (far left).  
**LEFT:** Basuto (Sotho) chiefs, including Griffith Lesothodi Moshesh, on board the *Briton* at Southampton in Hampshire, in October 1919.

tradition that saw the continent as a whole excluded from, and peripheral to, world history. But for our purposes, the most significant aspect of his study is its (implicit) use of notions that can be accorded a specifically psychological interpretation.

Firstly, Bayart analyses the history of Africa's relationship with the rest of the world in terms of its "extraversion", as he puts it, by which he means a tendency to seek external support for internal struggles, by whatever means available. The term is in fact borrowed from Jungian psychology, where it means, very broadly, a tendency to seek validation and satisfaction from sources external to the self. Secondly, his presentation of one of his formalities of action, trickery, derives from similar sources. Trickery, he says is a quality which allows a person to "manipulate hostile forces which are too powerful to be confronted directly, but which can be turned to good account in spite of their hostile nature". He goes on to point out that the character of the trickster features prominently in African folklore, and to suggest, in passing, that "the truly hybrid character of so many [African] presidents represents the most up-to-date version of such a type". In this suggestion we have, perhaps for the first time, an indication of a specifically psychological understanding of the personalities of many of Africa's "Big Man" leaders.

We return to the word "malice". With regard to the example of Lesotho mentioned above, we might wonder what specifically psychological characteristics would allow a civil servant to seek rents on top of the salary they earn in a country of high unemployment. In the same way, we can ask what kind of personal mentality is involved in the massive, so-called "grand" corruption that has plagued the continent, and which has held back its development. The historical, anthropological and political aspects of this problem have been studied at length. The psychological aspects, however, still await serious study. Bayart's image of the Big Man as "trickster" is, perhaps, a good start. Like other archetypes, the figure has tremendous potential as an explicator and exemplar of a certain type of human personality on the continent.

As he points out, this figure, as others, has deep roots both in African traditions and contemporary society. Familiar tricksters include "those picaresque individuals who are the true pioneers of modern Africa ... smugglers, diamond diggers, currency changers, fraudsters and simple migrants ... who find ways of evading laws, frontiers, and official exchange rates." Others, again, include "practitioners of illegal immigration, the drug trade and fraud on a larger scale". The figure of the trickster is not always controversial in these

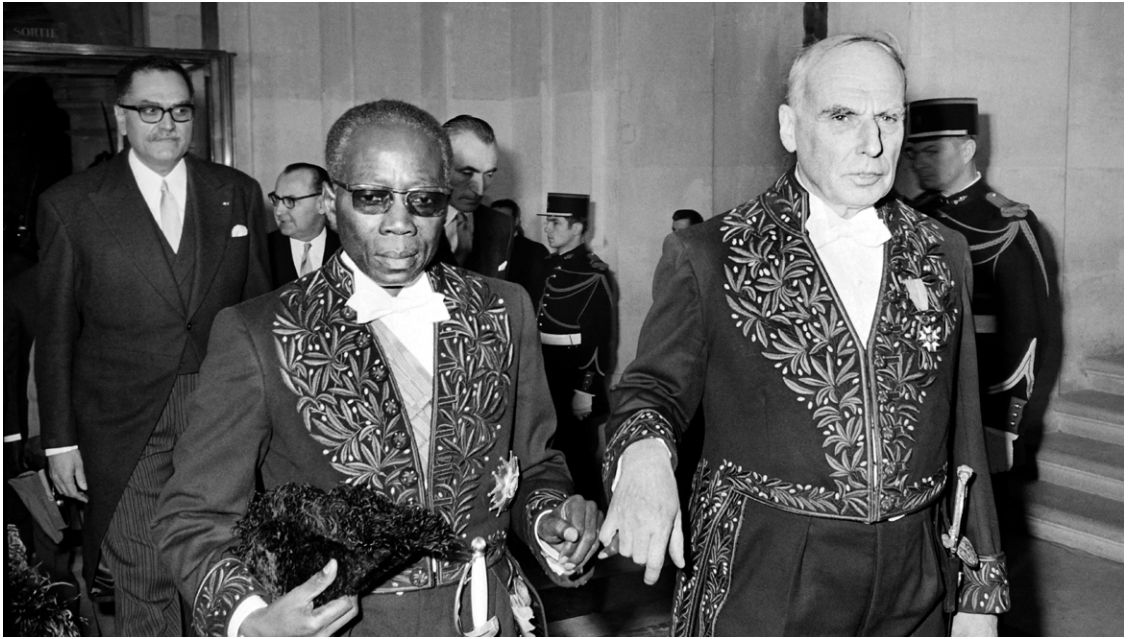


Photo: AFP

senses. Sometimes, indeed, some of our most revered statesmen have themselves been tricksters of a kind. The Senegalese leader Léopold Senghor, for instance, features in that country’s national imagery as “the prototype of the astute politician ... the political version of the léék, the hare of Wolof folklore whose cunning is legendary”.

The Foundational Report compiled for the ANC was a perhaps unparalleled effort of an African political party to get to grips with a formidable, age-old problem and to locate it in the broad stretch of human cultures and history: the question of what constitutes effective leadership, and how to recognise or educate good leaders. Yet the effort was largely in vain. As it turned out, Jacob Zuma was the epitome of the trickster, Big Man problem the party thinkers were trying to solve. Such people, it would appear, are simply not amenable to the intellectualisations of “clever” people, whether black or not. For them the issue, if there is one, is simple. Representatives of the “common people”, comedians, have been pointing this out for aeons.

In an ancient Greek play, for instance, a slave questions a politician about his job. “I’m supervisor general of all things here, public and private too.” The slave says: “A great profession, that. What did

**ABOVE:** Senegalese president, poet and politician Léopold Sedar Senghor (L) is conducted by receiver René Poirier (R) during the ceremony for his admission as a new member of the Academy of Moral Sciences and Politics, in Paris, December 1969.

you do to qualify for it?” The politician answers: “I wanted it.” Fast forward two and half thousand years, and we find Victorian dramatist WS Gilbert reflecting a similar view when he has a duke celebrating his own elevated station in life: “The work is light, and I may add, it’s most remunerative.” And moving forward another hundred years or so, we find Nigerian protesters using humour to express their dissatisfaction with Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida’s military dictatorship. “IBB = 419”, their slogan went, indicating that his claim to democratisation was nothing less than another Nigerian scam. [GGT](#)



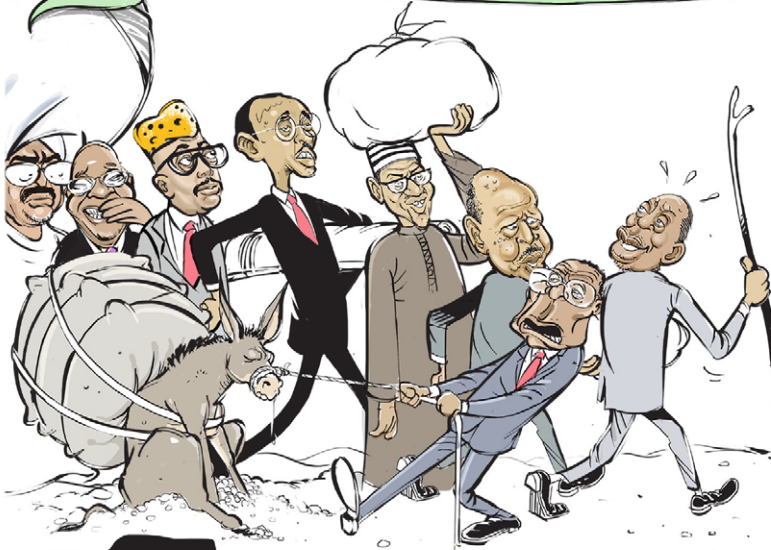
*Africa in Fact*, Issue #49, January – March 2019



# CARTOON

by Victor Ndula

African Union: the good, the bad, and the ugly!

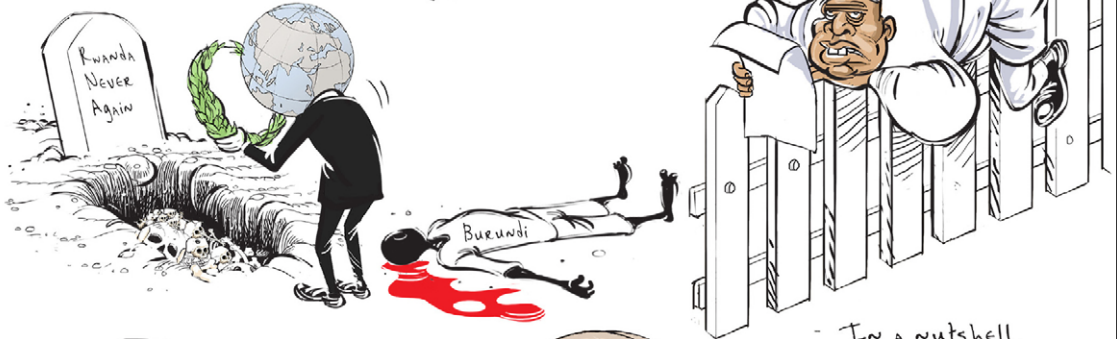


## The Good

We now speak with ONE VOICE; WE ARE THREATENING to walk out of the ICC en masse to the (com)promised land. This is unprecedented unity!

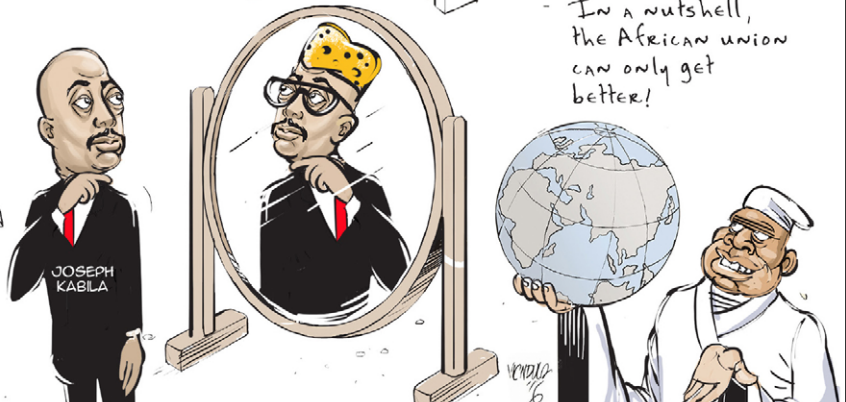
## The Bad

We condemn in the strongest terms foreign intervention in Africa's crises. We want homegrown solutions; we like doing this from our usual fence-sitting position.



## The ugly

We take great exception when our member state leaders are branded as dictators; we are democratic and follow the will of the people.



**BELOW:** The opening session of the second Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Summit in New York City in September 2023, ahead of the 78th UN General Assembly.

**2023**  
THE HALFWAY MARK

# BLUEPRINT FOR A BETTER PLACE

Are the SDGs attainable?

By Ronak Gopaldas





On the 25 September 2015, 193 countries adopted 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the UN, which would come into force on 1 January, 2016. The goals, which seek to eradicate poverty, hunger and inequality, to achieve universal access to health care, clean water and sanitation, education and decent work, and fundamentally make the world a better place for all who inhabit it, were set to be achieved by 2030, representing an ambitious 15-year time frame for

their implementation. Nearly three and a half years since its adoption, it is worth reflecting on how much has been achieved, and whether changing global political and economic dynamics still provide a conducive backdrop for the realisation of these ambitions.

The world is a different place now than it was in 2015. At the time, world growth was a robust 3.5%. Chinese and American growth rates hovered at 7% and 3% respectively, while GDP growth in

sub-Saharan Africa had expanded by 5% just the year before. Moreover, world growth was expected to continue accelerating over the coming decade. It was a time to be optimistic and to set ambitious goals. Today, however, the outlook for global growth is less sanguine. Achieving the SDGs is contingent on a foundation of robust economic growth, but growth looks increasingly fragile. Chinese growth has been decelerating for some time, and concerns of an outright recession in the US and the increasingly fractured European Union (EU) are mounting. Moreover, the past three years have seen the rise of greater unilateralism, growing trade friction, escalating geopolitical tensions and increasing levels of disillusionment at the status quo. The seeming rise of populist politics, on both the right and the left, is both a product of this disillusionment and an obstacle in the way of overcoming it. Where then does this leave Africa in its quest to radically improve the lives of the continent's population?

In short, in a far more precarious position. For one thing, Africa relies heavily on commodity based trade. Concerns over slowing economic growth have seen most commodity prices plateau at best, as demand for the raw commodities that fuel Chinese infrastructure development begins to wane. This presents increasing risk for the fiscal positions of many African states, which partly rely on commodity trade revenue to finance many of their sustainable development goal projects. Fiscal constraints have been further hampered by several unforeseen natural disasters across Africa, among them droughts and cyclones. These appear to be mainly the product of climate change, and, indeed, climate

action is the 13th of the 17 development goals. Slowing growth in developed markets leaves less headroom for donor countries to increase aid and funding to Africa's emerging markets, which also depend heavily on donor funding for the implementation of their development goal initiatives.

That is not to say that the SDGs are impractical or unattainable, but rather that they are aspirational. Indeed, in former years many sceptics said the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) adopted in 2000 were unrealistic. Yet the proportion

of people living in extreme poverty globally fell from nearly 50% in 1990 to 14% in 2015. In the same 25-year period, the proportion of child deaths halved. This is progress by any measure. However, the progress was uneven, with greater strides made in Asia. Africa's lack of progress was papered over by headline figures. Currently, more than half of the people living in extreme poverty – those who subsist on less than \$1.90 a day

– live in Africa. This is an increase of nine million people since 1990. The World Bank estimates that if this trend persists, 90% of the world's population living in extreme poverty will be in Africa. A 2018 report by the Sustainable Development Goals Center for Africa acknowledges that the continent "faces substantial challenges in achieving the SDGs".

According to the centre's dashboard, the biggest challenges are in the areas of health, infrastructure, peace, justice and strong institutions. The report found that more than 80% of the African countries surveyed in the report received a poor mark (red on the dashboard) on all of these metrics. It noted that there had been limited, if any progress on 13 of the 15 goals that are tracked. African leaders

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**The World Bank estimates that if this trend persists, 90% of the world's population living in extreme poverty will be in Africa.**

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are acutely aware of the challenges the continent faces. In 2013, the African Union (AU) embraced its own Agenda 2063, which involves a much longer-term and perhaps more realistic timeframe for achieving development around the continent. Agenda 2063 seeks to achieve goals closely aligned to the resolution on the SDGs that the UN adopted two years later. Agenda 2063 seeks to realise a prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth, an integrated and politically united continent defined by good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law.

Achieving these aspirations, if realised, will lay the foundation for greater strides in achieving the 17 SDGs, but they will require resolute political will, extensive structural reform and an unwavering adherence to, and respect for, democratic rule. In what is becoming an increasingly fractured world, perhaps the most important thing in progressing the sustainable development goal agenda would be to start with the final SDG, goal 17, which deals with partnerships. As global growth slows, African countries will have to rely more on each other, rather than on intercontinental trade and international donor funding. And while the dream of realising all the sustainable development goals by 2030 grows more distant, a great deal can be achieved by improving the lives of Africans through African knowledge-sharing partnerships in areas such as innovation, science and technology, infrastructure development, agriculture best practice, education and youth empowerment.

These are low-hanging fruit that are relatively easy to implement, and which are far less bound

by fiscal and funding constraints. Another quick win would be the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), which would significantly reduce the cost of doing business on the continent, but also improve the ease of doing business. It would free up much-needed capital among Africa's private sector, which should be the engine of continental growth. Public Private Partnerships (PPPs), which have received very little focus in the past, are going to be ever more critical

in unleashing growth drivers in Africa. With governments facing reduced fiscal headroom, the private sector is an important ally in the quest to achieving the sustainable development goals. In this arena, the sole function of African governments and policymakers must be to develop an environment conducive to investment, economic and policy stability, and growing business confidence.

In short, governments must be the foundation on which the private sector can build and do the heavy lifting. Policy certainty and stability,

the reduction of red tape, and an investor-friendly environment would be the catalyst for a virtuous growth cycle, ultimately raising tax revenue and making the realisation of the SDGs more attainable. Without a united public and private sector drive, there is unlikely to be meaningful economic and societal growth. [GGTV](#)

**As global growth slows, African countries will have to rely more on each other, rather than on intercontinental trade and international donor funding.**




**Africa in Fact, Issue #50,  
January – March 2019**

# SLOW BUT MOVING

The 17 SDG goals are being institutionalised across Africa

By Osita Agbu





**T**oday, the world is faced with developmental problems, many of which are global in nature and require concerted action to address. These problems can be expressed as goals and targets that need to be resolved in the interest of peace and security, attainment of human security and the survival of humankind. These goals could be political, social, economic or cultural. Examples include the desire of the international community to reduce poverty globally, mitigate climate change and promote universal primary education (UPE).

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) represent the most concerted attempt to address cross-cutting issues such as these. To appreciate the ramifications of the SDGs, it is necessary that we briefly revisit the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which the international community identified and declared as important international development goals in 2000. Following the Millennium Summit UN in 2000, some 191 UN member states and at least 22 international organisations

committed themselves to helping to achieve the MDGs by 2015.

The MDGs included eight goals with measurable targets and clear deadlines aimed at improving the lives of the world’s poorest people. The eight goals aimed to: eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; achieve universal primary education; promote gender equality and empower women; reduce child mortality; improve maternal health; combat HIV/AIDs, malaria and other diseases; ensure environmental sustainability and develop global partnerships for development. But critics of the MDGs complained of a lack of proper analysis and justification behind the chosen objectives, pointing to a lack of measurements for some goals or difficulties in measuring them, as well as uneven progress in their implementation.

Developing countries, mainly in Africa, saw more than 50% of development assistance going to debt relief, disaster relief and military aid, rather than substantive development. Even before they were terminated in 2015, governments and organisations set out to improve upon the performance of the MDGs. Hence, in 2012, the UN secretary general established a task force that brought together more than 60 UN agencies and international organisations to work on sustainable development in line with a “post-2015 UN Development Agenda”.

The SDGs are a set of 17 “global goals” with 169 targets. These goals and targets cover a broad range of sustainable development issues that include ending poverty and hunger, improving health and education, making cities more sustainable, combating climate change and protecting the oceans and forests. Outlined in paragraph 54 of

the UN Resolution A/RES/70/1 of September 2015, the SDGs are officially known as Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The UN-led process aimed at formulating them involved 193 member states and global civil society. These goals constitute the post-2015 and 2030 development agenda.

“The SDGs are all about development of every individual in the world,” says Dr Ronald Kayanja, director of the United Nations Information Centre in Lagos, Nigeria. Governments all over the world are expected or encouraged to do the following: translate the 17 Goals, 169 targets and 304 indicators

as applicable into national legislation, develop a plan of action, allocate a budget for its implementation and be open and search for partners. Given that such tasks require considerable resources, poor countries are likely to need the assistance of richer nations, while coordination is crucial at international level.

It is estimated that achieving

the SDGs will cost between \$2 and \$3 trillion over the 15-year period between 2015 and 2030.

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals are: end poverty in all its forms everywhere (SDG 1); end hunger (SDG 2); ensure health and well-being (SDG 3); quality education (SDG 4); gender equality (SDG 5); clean water and sanitation (SDG 6); affordable and clean energy (SDG 7); decent work and economic growth (SDG 8); industry, innovation and infrastructure (SDG 9); reduced inequalities (SDG 10); sustainable cities and communities (SDG11); responsible consumption and production (SDG 12); climate action (SDG 13); life below water (SDG 14); life on land (SDG 15); peace, justice and strong institutions (SDG 16) and partnerships for goals (SDG 17).







Photo: Tony Kamukama / AFP

While all the goals are important, African countries appear to be paying more attention to SDG 1 (ending poverty), SDG 2 (ending hunger), SDG 5 (gender equality), SDG 13 (climate action) and matters relating to SDG 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions). This is evident from a content analysis of the SDG Index and Dashboards report presented by the Sustainable Development Goals Center and Sustainable Solutions Network for 2018. Although extreme poverty has been cut in half since 1990, more than one in five people still live on less than \$1.25 per day. As we know, poverty is more than the lack of income and resources. People live in poverty if they lack basic services such as health care and education, while also experiencing hunger, social discrimination and exclusion from decision-making processes.

Gender inequality plays a significant role in perpetuating poverty and its risks. Women face potentially life-threatening risks from early pregnancy and frequent pregnancies. This could undermine the quest for education and a better income. Poverty also affects age groups differently,

with children most seriously affected, because poverty undermines their education, health, nutrition and security, and negatively affects their emotional and spiritual development. On climate action, it is clear that climate change and its impact on our environment need to be addressed by regulating emissions and promoting developments in renewable energy. The UN seeks to address this issue through so-called financing for development and by hosting conferences that bring major parties together.

We should note that development and climate are linked, particularly as regards poverty, gender equality and energy. The main UN body responsible for climate issues is the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which aims to encourage the public sector to take the initiative in minimising (or mitigating) the negative impact human activities have on the environment. On the whole, there has been some convergence of the MDGs and SDGs, especially as regards eradicating poverty, promoting gender equality and fostering environmental sustainability. Coincidentally, these



Photo: Rajeshwanti / AFP

are critical goals for many African countries. Looking at Africa's Agenda 2063 and the SDGs, we see that it is possible to align measures of continental integration to the metrics in SDG Goal 17, making it possible to compare regional and country performance on SDGs.

Indeed, an AU-UN Framework for the Implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was signed in January 2018. This agreement aims to ensure that both institutions undertake joint activities and programmes for the effective implementation, tracking and reporting of both the 2030 Agenda and the 2063 Agenda, according to the 2018 Sustainable Development Goals Center report. It would appear that African countries are lagging behind in implementing SDGs, but we also observe that SDG goals are being quite strongly institutionalised around the continent. The executive branches of several African countries have embedded the SDGs in their national development strategies. In a 2018 survey of 11 African countries carried out by the SDG

Center and the Sustainable Development Solutions Network, it was found that 90% of these had already aligned their national strategies with the SDGs, and 70% had an action plan to implement the SDGs.

These countries included Morocco in North Africa; Benin, Ghana and Senegal in western Africa; Kenya and Rwanda in eastern Africa; Cameroon and Gabon in central Africa; and Namibia, South Africa and Zambia in southern Africa. North African countries such as Morocco and Tunisia ranked highest on the implementation average index score. Relative to sub-Saharan Africa for instance, the North African countries performed better on poverty (SDG 1) and energy access (SDG 7). However, gender equality (SDG 5) is still a problem in this region. In respect of trends, it appeared that North Africa was on track to achieve the SDG goal on poverty, with the exception of Libya, which was regressing. In East Africa, infrastructure development is the main challenge facing the region, followed by health (SDG 3), and peace and justice (SDG 16).

The best performing goal for this region is





**ABOVE:** Activists lift a banner demonstrating against poverty and climate change during the annual meetings of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank Group (WBG), in Marrakesh on October 12, 2023.

Photo: Fadel Semma / AFP

climate action (SDG 13), followed by inequality (SDG 10). This region also appears to be making progress on gender equality (SDG 5) and economic growth (SDG 8). In Rwanda, for example, a governmental steering committee and a national partnership group leads implementation of SDGs. Their work has been much enhanced by aligning their interventions with *Imihigo*, or performance contracts, while targets and indicators were derived from various national plans, including the Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRS). So far, they have evaluated 160 of the 232 SDG indicators, of which only 89 were found to be relevant to the Rwandan context.

In southern Africa, the main challenge is health (SDG 3), followed by poverty (SDG 1) and infrastructure (SDG 9). Progress has been made on quality education (SDG 4), sustainable cities (SDG 11) and climate action (SDG 13). Mauritius is the best-performing country overall. It is important to note that this region surpasses all other regions on partnerships for the goals (SDG 17), mainly

because of impressive performances by Mauritius and Mozambique. However, South Africa is also doing well on gender equality and infrastructure development. West Africa generally returns an average performance, with some countries performing fairly and others, including Nigeria, not doing well. Ghana is a high performer because it has embedded the implementation and monitoring of MDGs in its presidential office, which provided a good base for the same approach to SDGs.

The country's SDGs coordinating structure is spearheaded by three institutions: the SDG Implementation Coordination Committee (ICC), the High-Level Inter-Ministerial Committee and the National Technical Steering Committee. The Ghana Statistical Service has identified 62 SDG indicators that it already produces, another 63 indicators that it could produce with improvements to existing data, and a further 30 indicators for which it has no data, according to the SDG Center. Nigeria showed some progress in improving quality education (SDG 4), with a net primary enrolment rate of about

64.1%. However, its performance on ending poverty (SDG 1), climate action (SDG 13) and gender equality (SDG 5) are unimpressive. For example, the number of women aged 20 – 24 that are married or in a union before the age of 18 is still significant and has implications for gender equality.

The percentage of seats women hold in the national government of the 4th Republic is still about 5.6%. For barrister Ebere Ifendu, chairperson of Women in Politics Forum (WIP), this means that women are poorly represented in national government. “This is because there is no internal democracy in political parties, with the result that women are unable to come out as candidates,” she told *Africa in Fact*. In 2015 for instance, only 12 out of 360 members of the House of Representatives were women. In fact, it was against a backdrop of failure to attain the MDGs in 2015 that the government and other stakeholders decided to take the implementation of the SDGs more seriously. Hence, Nigeria established the office of the senior special assistant to the president on SDGs, which is a carry-over from the approach to MDGs under the presidency. In addition, there is the House and Senate committee on SDGs, as well as an

inter-ministerial committee on SDGs, established to coordinate engagement with ministries, departments and agencies.

Furthermore, there is also a private sector advisory group, and a civil society strategy group, on SDGs. With all this array of institutions, and with the appropriate funding, Nigeria is expected to improve its performance in the near future. Central Africa as a region appears to have the lowest average performance with regard to performance on SDGs. Health (SDG 3) and peace and justice (SDG 16) are the main challenges facing the region, followed by energy (SDG 7) and infrastructure (SDG 9). The region has performed poorly in partnership and regional integration (SDG 17). It has, however, made progress in climate action (SDG 13), life on land (SDG 15) and inequalities (SDG 10). Gabon and Cameroon are its best performers, according to the SDG Center. Nigeria’s case demonstrates that the road to achieving SDGs in Africa will not be smooth. The Boko Haram insurgency is ravaging the northeast, while intercommunal clashes between herders and farmers are destabilising the central region.

The manufacturing contribution to Nigeria’s gross domestic product (GDP) has been below 10%







Photo: Ahmad Gharabi / AFP

for more than three decades, according to a 2015 study by Oyebanji Oyelaran-Oyeyinka, a former director of the regional office for Africa of the UN Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat). Nigeria needs strong democratic institutions able to withstand intermittent assaults on their integrity. These issues, in addition to proper funding, need to be resolved if the SDGs are to be achieved in Nigeria. On the other hand, SDG implementation is succeeding at different levels in different regions. Even within a region, some countries are out-performing others in certain sectors. As we have seen, countries have also had to determine which SDGs are of more relevance to their economies and societies. Comparisons of this kind serve to provide us with a broad view of the state of affairs, but they do not necessarily show which countries are doing better than others. It follows that countries should be assessed mainly by their performance in relation to the goals and targets for SDGs that they themselves identify as strategic priorities.

Yet the essence of the SDGs as a universal template for human development cannot be denied. Efforts at institutionalising SDGs across the continent do indicate commitment, and to that extent also a basis for the realisation of selected SDG goals and targets. Note, however, that SDG goals must be examined from the perspective of specific targets, as John Baaki, Programme Manager at Women Environment Programme (WEP) Nigeria, observes. “Every agency must have a plan that tallies with the SDG targets, and the plan must be tied to a budget.” It is this approach, coupled with an enabling environment, that represents an effective overall approach to achieving the SDGs in Africa – and indeed, in other parts of the world. [GGV](#)

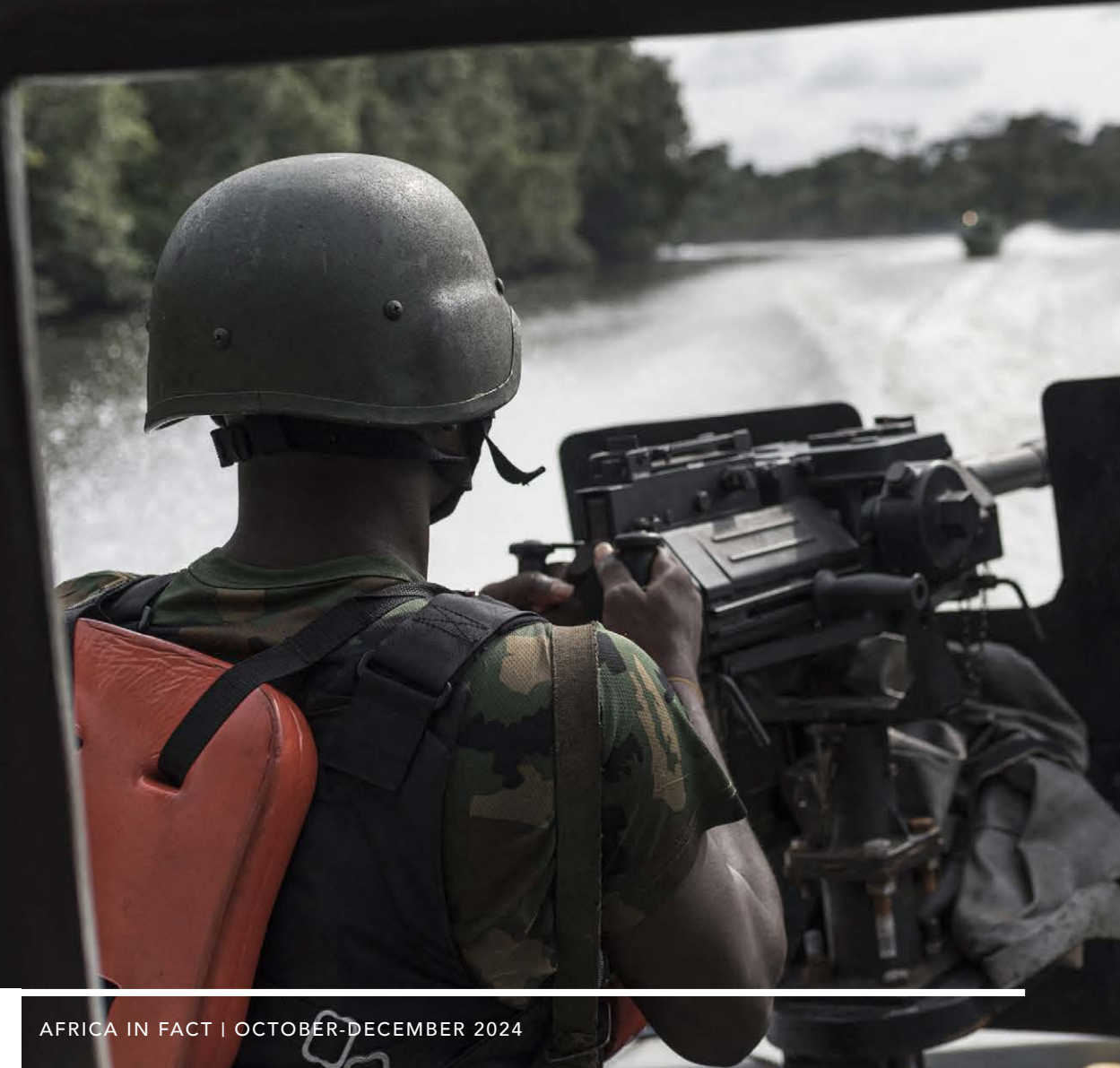


Africa in Fact, Issue #50, January – March 2019

# NIGERIA AND MILITARY RULE

The role of unfettered access to oil cash

By Ebenezer Obodare





Until the return to civil rule in 1999, the military was in power in Nigeria for a combined total of 28 years. And, as is perhaps to be expected from a society that had languished for so long in the grip of military rule, Nigerians (or is it just the Nigerian elite?) have developed a love-hate relationship with soldiers. Their despotism was barbaric – as seen during General Sani Abacha’s rule from 1993-1998. Their barbarism is seared into the public imagination and preserved for popular culture in music and urban lore. Yet, paradoxically, few condemnations of the political class were ever complete without an allusion to the need for a “strong man”, a corrector with a horsewhip. Material experience of military rule notwithstanding, the myth of the man on horseback – the exacting but benevolent agent who rides out of the barracks to set a wayward political class straight – maintains a puzzling grip on the Nigerian mind. There are signs that this myth is decreasing in appeal.

Indeed, the decline in its influence is arguably the main achievement of Nigeria’s democratic decades since the generals went back to their barracks. This is not the same thing as saying that people are totally happy with their lot under democratic rule; as a matter of fact, most recent polls show a worrying level of disenchantment. Nevertheless, the more distant the experience of military rule, the greater has been societal reconciliation to the reality of democracy as the only game in town. Broad criticisms of capitalist democracies have become louder and more trenchant across the western world over the past decade. The 2008 economic crisis brought the western elites’ pursuit of their own interests, often to the detriment of everyone else’s, under an intense spotlight. Similarly, Nigeria’s elite is often accused of hijacking the democratic process. Such criticisms take on especial resonance in the Nigerian context when seen

**ABOVE:** A Nigerian soldier on the back of a gun boat surveys a creek for illegal oil refineries during a patrol in April 2017, in the Niger Delta region near the city of Warri.

Photo: Steffen Heunis / AFP



**ABOVE AND RIGHT:** Abandoned and sabotaged oil wells leaking crude oil.

Photo: Lionel Healy / AFP



in the light of the country's socio-economic and political characteristics. Among these is the rightly belaboured fact that Nigeria is a petro-state. In petro-states, economic power ultimately flows from a barrel of crude oil.

This incentivises the political class to put the imperatives of cartel politics before the needs of domestic civil society. Political scientists agree that unfettered access to oil cash was a key factor in the character and duration of military rule in Nigeria. Unaccounted oil revenue gave an impetus to political centralisation. Civil society argued that decentralising power (if at first only on paper) would bring opportunities to reimagine the state. The first aim was to reduce the country's dependency on oil. Ultimately, though, the aim was also to prise the state from the clutches of a predatory elite. It is questionable whether these goals have been achieved. Yet the lessons about the protean character of elite politics couldn't be clearer. The spectre of elite power still stalks the Nigerian political landscape. Nigerian elite power is still based on simultaneously exploiting and deepening the crisis of under institutionalisation.

Yet, as a quick survey of the democratic process over the past 20 years shows, harping excessively on the elite's cogency and power underestimates (i) the extent to which elite and popular politics fuel and feed off each other; and (ii) the extent to which elite-subaltern interaction exists at the mercy of powerful cultural forces. Some evidence of this can be found

in the (so far unsuccessful) campaign to stamp out corruption from public life. In his inaugural speech as president of the newly inaugurated Fourth Republic in May 1999, Olusegun Obasanjo described corruption as "the greatest single bane of our society today" and expressed regret at "the full-blown cancer it has become in Nigeria". Instructively, even as he promised in the same address to tackle corruption "head-on at all levels", Obasanjo also predicted that "the beneficiaries of corruption ... will fight back with all the foul means at their disposal". As it happens, Obasanjo was right on both scores – about the level of Nigeria's moral improbity, and about the capacity of corruption to take the fight to its enemies.

Given the new president's clear determination to stamp out corruption, it comes as no surprise that one of the most important (and for the same reason, most controversial) achievements of his administration was the establishment in 2003 of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) under the leadership of Nuhu Ribadu. For anti-corruption activists and the general public, the EFCC was the institutional symbol of a deep-seated desire to see the ogre of corruption finally slain. Ribadu carried out the commission's brief with gusto. For a brief spell, fear of the EFCC was the beginning of wisdom among the political class. But this golden era would prove to be short-lived, as the EFCC was gradually undermined by accusations that it was nothing more than a sinister plot



trained on the heart of the opposition. Some have argued that Ribadu's campaign was tilted against the opposition elite. But the real issue is that, as Obasanjo had predicted, corruption fought back with a vengeance.

By the time of the Umaru Yar'adua and Goodluck Jonathan (2010-2015) administrations, the EFCC was politically neutered, just another feature of Nigeria's vast bureaucratic landscape. A detailed analysis of the reasons behind the EFCC's political emasculation is beyond the scope of this analysis. What deserves mention from the perspective of this synopsis is, first, the light it throws on elite politics in the country, and second, the questions it poses about effective mechanisms for tackling corruption. It would be a mistake to assume that corruption and its politics are the business of the elite alone. If there is one overarching insight from the drama of corruption and the anti-corruption campaign in Nigeria, it is the extent to which the state, the political elite and the wider public are almost equally implicated. Corruption is not the only arena in which progress has been tenuous. The Nigerian state also remains impervious to reconstruction. To be sure, it is not quite the uncivil state of old, thanks in part to new democratic constraints.

But it can still be heavy-handed: the casual molestation of private citizens by state officials is still par for the course in many urban spaces. And that is because, as mentioned earlier, the state's almost exclusive access to the levers of oil revenue

gives it the prerogative. Even so, it is a state that is now largely demystified, particularly from the perspective of total control over the means and methods of violence. The ruling elite's reaction to the Niger Delta and Boko Haram insurrections respectively exemplifies this demystification. Though short-lived, the presidency of Umaru Musa Yar'adua will at least be remembered for one thing – the proposal, in 2009, that Niger Delta militants, who had battled Nigerian troops to a standstill and endangered oil production, should be given a general amnesty. His successor, Goodluck Jonathan – no doubt sensing an opportunity to do well by his Ijaw co-ethnics – ran with the scheme and put additional flesh on its bones.

To put things in perspective: we have seen the Nigerian state punishing Ken Saro-Wiwa's middle class resistance with a judicial hanging, and then offering an olive branch to elements who had repeatedly blurred the distinction between resistance and criminality. What explains the federal government's change of tactic? One view, charitable in regards to the state's intentions, holds that the later embrace of amnesty was dictated by a desire for peace in the troubled region, so that oil production could proceed. Another view holds that the military, after years of chronic disinvestment



ABOVE: People walk past the site of a vandalised petrol pipeline in eastern Nigerian village of Onicha Amiyi-Uhu in June 2003.

Photo: Utomi Ekeji / AFP



**ABOVE AND RIGHT:** Worshippers of the Nigerian Pentecostal church Salvation Ministries attend a Sunday service at their church headquarters in Port Harcourt, southern Nigeria.

Photo: Yasuyoshi Chikhi / AFP

and corruption, has lost its monopoly on the use of violence. This became tragically clear with regard to the Boko Haram insurgency. The military has struggled to muster the force, technical wherewithal and logistical savvy required to dislodge insurgents who moved rapidly to impose themselves on vast territories across the north-eastern states. That there is a Nigerian democracy at all to evaluate is due mainly to a resurgent civil society.

Following the cancellation of the 12 June, 1993 presidential election by the military regime of Ibrahim Babangida, who held power from 1985 to 1993, Nigeria descended into a political crisis from which arguably it did not fully emerge until the return to democratic rule in May 1999. The cancellation was rightly seen as a move designed to keep the military in power. It set the stage for a showdown between the state and civil society that would dominate the next six years. Although civil society would be beaten down, especially during the Abacha era (1993-1998), the successful 1999 election and the restoration of civilian rule suggested that civil society had effectively won the war. Yet that wave of civil activism did not last long. First, even before an unprecedented coalition of workers, students, journalists, professionals, religious groups and prodemocracy activists achieved its overarching goal of defeating the military, ideological and personal fractures started to pull it apart.

Second, as the military withdrew into the barracks, leaving a vacuum of sorts and opening up new spaces within the state, many civil society activists went into politics to implement policy ideas that they had previously canvassed. Third, the world in which civil society activists had campaigned for the restoration of democratic rule in the early 1990s was radically different from that in which the new civilian regime awoke in 1999. It was a world that would change even more fundamentally as the 20th century gave way to the 21st. During the Fourth Republic, Nigerian universities became a hotbed of intermittent strikes and trade disputes. According to one estimate, some 1,281 working days, or about four years, were lost to various strike actions called by the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) over this 20-year period. ASUU's declining influence since then is emblematic of the decline of trade unionism in general. The Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), once a key ally of the intelligentsia, emerged from the military era distinctly the worse for wear, its heroics during the struggle against military despotism a distant memory.

Both ASUU and the NLC had been veritable redoubts of expertise and progressive activism. Their continuing travails, combined with changes in the structure of the media (for instance, the rise of digitisation and the emergence of media owners and proprietors with no apparent links to the traditional





elite) created a notable breach in the emergent public sphere. Religious politics has also been of consequence in the democratic era. Indeed, the inauguration of the Fourth Republic coincided with the ascendance of Pentecostalism as the dominant form of Christianity. Not only is Pentecostalism currently the most visible and most ebullient expression of Christianity, its impact on other Christian denominations, the Islamic competition, and the domain of popular culture in general, has been nothing short of profound. Pentecostalism has affected both state and civil society in almost equal measure. In the first place, some of the most influential political figures in the Fourth Republic have been self-confessed Pentecostals.

Furthermore, politics in the Fourth Republic has been more or less superintended by powerful Pentecostal pastors, who have combined with powerful politicians to create an uber theologicopolitical elite. To this extent, Pentecostalism has been an unwitting stabilising force for Nigerian democracy. The Pentecostal elite, which is strategically positioned between state

and civil society, is contributing to nascent power formation by producing and disseminating spiritual “texts” (for example, prophecies) that ground events in metaphysical frames beyond the reach of democratic politics and institutions. On balance, Pentecostalism has outflanked Islam, its historical rival, for political power and influence. Both Pentecostal presidents, Obasanjo and Jonathan, wore their religious identity on their sleeves – the latter more opulently than the former. Both Muslim presidents, Umaru Musa Yar’adua (2007-2010) and Muhammadu Buhari (2015 - ), were forced to make political moves that implied recognition of the power of Pentecostalism and the Pentecostal elite.

When Pentecostal pastors themselves are not running for office, they have a say in who does. Since 1999, Nigeria has alternated between spells of surplus and scarcity in tandem with the rise and fall of oil prices. Overall, the state has failed to steer the economy away from reliance on a single commodity that is subject to extreme price cycles. This remains the country’s Achilles heel. The Nigerian state as we know it would not exist without oil revenue. Given that oil rents are still so important in gaining access to power, politics tends to take on aspects of warfare. Politics is the only game in town, and it is played on a winner-takes-all basis. Short of a drastic rethinking of its economic fundamentals, political competition in Nigeria is destined to remain a lethal business. It is a real question how long Nigerian democracy can survive if the country’s economy continues to splutter. The good news is that few people now think that the man on horseback holds a magic wand. [GG+](#)



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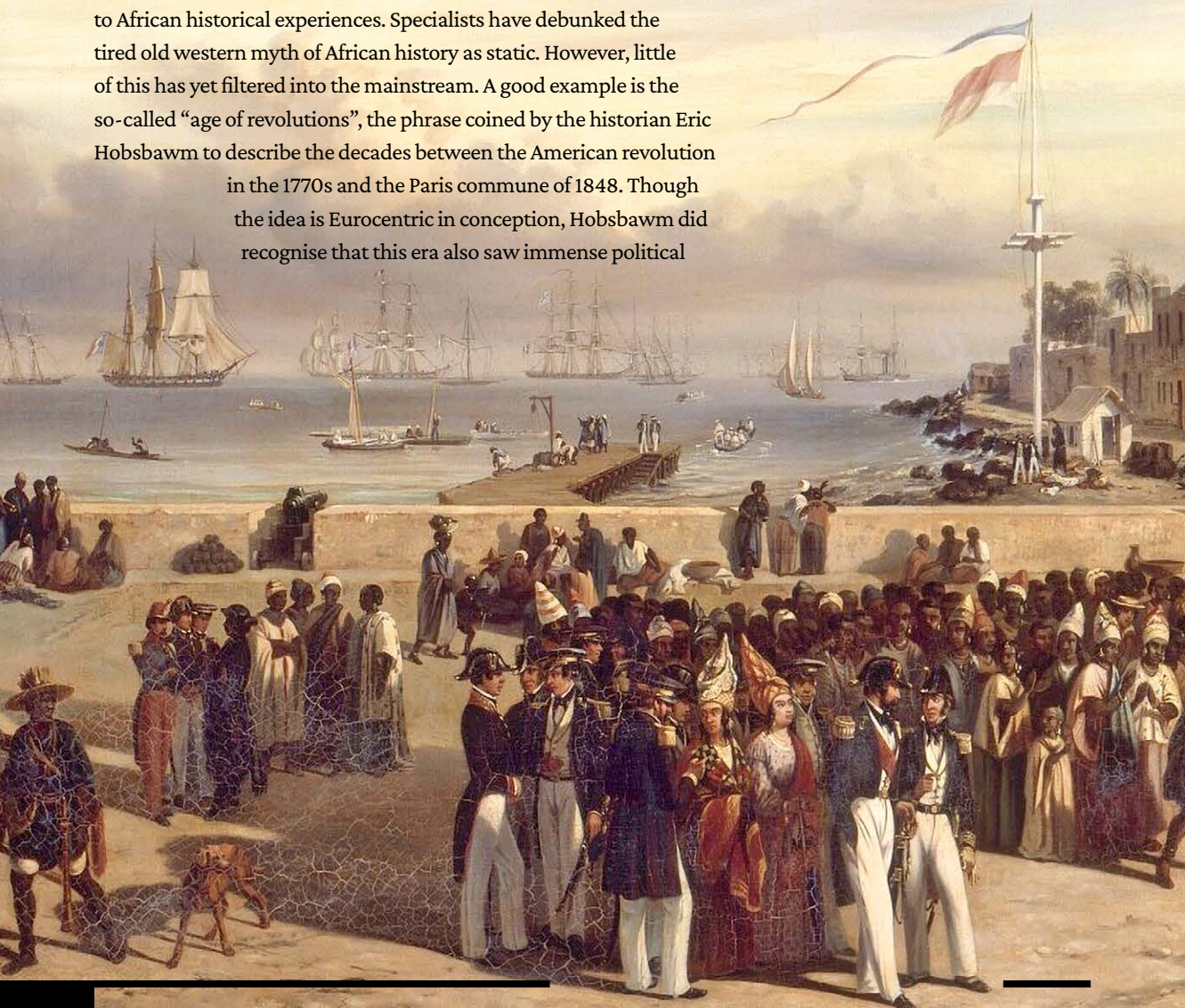


# ALTERED STATES

## A broader view of African history

By Toby Green

One big difficulty historians of Africa face is the need to articulate historical changes in African experience through language accessible to a wide audience. Communicating widely means using concepts which are generally understood – yet these are usually Eurocentric, and not ideas which relate specifically to African historical experiences. Specialists have debunked the tired old western myth of African history as static. However, little of this has yet filtered into the mainstream. A good example is the so-called “age of revolutions”, the phrase coined by the historian Eric Hobsbawm to describe the decades between the American revolution in the 1770s and the Paris commune of 1848. Though the idea is Eurocentric in conception, Hobsbawm did recognise that this era also saw immense political





upheavals in Africa. However, few historians have followed his lead.

African actors and societies were deeply connected to the Age of Revolutions. The way to approach Eurocentric concepts such as this may be not to discard them, but rather to expand their application to the world far beyond Europe, thus globalising historical concepts that are often used very narrowly. Connections between Africa and the world have been longstanding and usually grounded in reciprocal relationships. Indeed, they were already deep-rooted during the Age of Revolutions; by the late 18th century, many parts of Africa had had global links for centuries. East Africa was initially the best connected. As early as 150 BC, Chinese sources suggest the arrival of ambassadors from what is now Ethiopia. The Chinese connection

to eastern Africa was significant. Chinese porcelain and grave goods have been found in Kilwa (Tanzania) and Madagascar from around 1,000 AD, brought by the dhow trade.

Dhows, and then camels, also brought traders from Basra in Iraq to do business in the Saharan region of the Fezzan, a desert region in what is now south-western Libya, in the 13th and 14th centuries. Meanwhile, West Africa did not take long to catch up. The mai (king) of Borno in north-eastern Nigeria first performed the haj to Mecca in the 11th century, and was followed by his successors, most famously by Mansa Musa of the Mali empire in the 1320s. An annual caravan of pilgrims would travel from Mali to Mecca during the 14th century. In the 15th and 16th century, Jolof ambassadors from Senegambia lived in Portugal, alongside those from



Painting: Edoilard-Auguste Nouvieux (1811-1867)



the kingdom of Benin in southern Nigeria. Looking north, meantime, annual caravans of pilgrims would leave Timbuktu for Mecca well into the 18th century. Thus, by the eve of the American Revolution (1775-83), societies across Africa were globally connected.

Many African rulers had diplomatic envoys placed abroad. From the 16th century, Kongo, in northern Angola, often sent envoys to the Vatican. Dahomey – now the republic of Benin – sent frequent envoys to Brazil and Portugal from 1750 onwards. Borno, an independent Muslim kingdom that existed from the 8th century until the late 19th century, had regular diplomatic ties with the Ottomans in what is now Turkey. African rulers and people both shaped and were influenced by the rising tide of revolutionary movements that spread across the world from the 1770s onwards. Though the American revolution is much more famous, a movement of equal significance crystallised in Arabia during the 1770s. This was the Salafi Islamic reform movement, led by Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhāb, which would ultimately lead to the uniting of much of Arabia under the Ibn Saud family. The movement began in the 1740s, bringing in increasing numbers of followers.

By the 1770s, its influence was very strong and new leaders and followers joined all the time, including West Africans. Constant trading and migration to and from northern Africa had long influenced the growth of Islamic communities in West Africa. However, West African Muslims were

Sufis, and now their journeys as pilgrims to Arabia brought about a reorientation of Sufi tenets along the lines of the Salafiya movement. In the 1790s, a movement of Islamic reform began in north-western Nigeria, led by a preacher called Uthman dan Fodio. This saw the establishment of the Sokoto caliphate,

which dominated politics in the northern half of Nigeria throughout the 19th century. Gradually, an Age of Revolutions spread through West Africa as increasing numbers of people converted to Islam. This was a way of escaping enslavement; Muslims could not be enslaved by Islamic armies. It was also a way of escaping the control of warrior aristocracies practising African religions, who were often deeply embroiled in the trans-Atlantic slave trade.

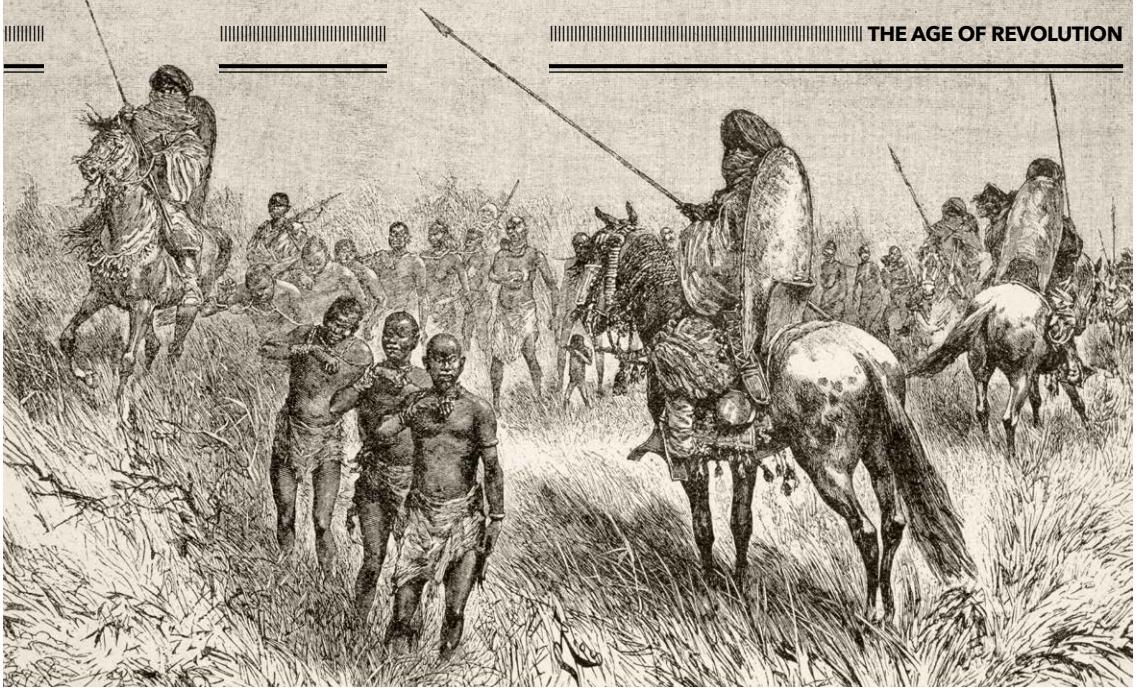
This African Age of Revolution was therefore driven by the desire to overthrow an outdated aristocracy – just as the European Age of Revolution. It expressed the aspirations of a growing underclass keen to grasp the opportunities offered by expanding trade, and its desire to escape the influence

of the slave traders. Just as there were reciprocal exchanges linking eastern and central Africa with the Mediterranean and Arabia, so were there linking West Africa with the Americas. Dahomey's diplomatic links with Brazil were grounded in shared trading interests and, increasingly, the flow of Africans back and forth across the Atlantic. By the late 18th century, slaves from Dahomey who had managed to earn enough money to buy their freedom in Brazil began to return to their homeland





Photo: Kean Collection/Getty Images



in West Africa, bringing altered forms of religious practice, music and culinary life. Products from Dahomey such as cloth and kola nuts could be bought in the markets of Salvador da Bahia in north-eastern Brazil.

Many of the Fon people who returned to Dahomey acted as agents and traders in the growing trans-Atlantic trade, which had opened new markets for consumers on both sides of the Atlantic by 1800. Traditionally, historians have seen the connections between Africa and the world in this era as grounded exclusively in the Atlantic and Saharan slave trades. Of course, these were significant. Yet if they are placed in a much deeper context, a much fuller picture of the continent's history emerges. The growth of diplomatic links, the rise of consumer and trading classes, and also the frustration which these classes experienced at the excesses and corruption of their aristocracies, all led to a wide ranging revolutionary movement, which took hold of much of central and western Africa from 1800 onwards. Thus, Africa was experiencing its own age of revolutions just as the bourgeois revolutions against the European aristocracy were taking hold in Europe and America. The impact of these interconnections grew year by year.

By 1823, military expansion by the Sokoto

caliphate founded by Uthman dan Fodio led to the fall of the Yoruba empire of Oyo in southern Nigeria. Slaves rushed to convert to Islam and then attacked the property of their former masters, seeing the new movement as an opportunity to reverse decades of inequality. This in turn precipitated huge changes in Dahomey, which was a tributary to Oyo. West Africa's revolutionary era was just as much a matter of overturning an old, reactionary elite as was Europe's. Africa's 18th century is still often understood as characterised by the violence of the slave trade and a growing inequality in economic exchanges with the wider world. However, a deeper look at the continent's history shows African actors taking decisive roles in driving forward the revolutionary changes which have come to characterise this period of history as a whole. A broader view of history thus shows Africa and Africans as decisive actors in shaping global changes both inside and outside the continent. [GGT](#)



*Africa in Fact*, Issue #51,  
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# THE FIERCEST BATTLE

South Africa's media played a pivotal role in exposing a corrupt president

By Marcel Gascón Barberá

**W**hat is it to be an “African journalist”? Working in African countries can mean operating in challenging conditions, with limited resources and sometimes restrictive political environments. African media have been shaped by their histories – as colonial, revolutionary or post-independence presses, as state broadcasters, as community or development projects. To make this possible in South Africa, for example, public institutions were captured through aggressive “cadre deployment” practices, a policy of the ruling African National Congress (ANC) that has seen many key technocratic and managerial positions in the civil service and the state-owned enterprises going to political cronies within the ruling party, and which has reportedly helped to render key law-enforcement agencies impotent. Although they might have pursued their personal interests with the straightforwardness of a medieval court, Zuma and his cronies understood the importance of information in a modern democracy. Control over mass media was central in their quest for unchecked power.

With the ANC in charge of virtually all the relevant governing bodies, elections were the biggest threat to their hegemony, both in the national institutions and within the ruling party. It must therefore





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**ABOVE:** News reader Tshepang Motsekuoa makes a test broadcast for the new SABC News International in July 2007.

Photo: Alexander-Joe / AFP

have seemed of capital importance to the Zuma faction within the ANC to keep the masses oblivious to their corrupt practices. The most obvious vehicle for any government to achieve this would be the public broadcaster, which is is often under (in) direct state control and which usually enjoys a large audience in the population. The latter is particularly true in South Africa, a highly unequal society where millions have no access to the internet or other sources of information, and instead have to rely on the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC). Some form of political control over public broadcasters is not a serious issue in countries where the relative independence and stability of other institutions, including media authorities and privately-owned media operations, helps to prevent party-political or partisan broadcasting.

But it is probably true to say that the SABC, which was started by the apartheid regime, has never been an example of independence from



Photo: Darren Stewart/Gallo Images

government interference. “In South Africa, 22 million people have the SABC as their only source of news,” veteran radio journalist Foeta Krige told *Africa in Fact*. “If a political party can control the SABC, they control what’s going out to a huge part of the electorate.” And it was here that one of the fiercest battles for media freedom of that period happened. It was fought by the SABC 8, a group of journalists who in May 2016 refused to follow orders to leave violent anti-government protests out of the daily news bulletins. Krige was one of them. As punishment for standing up to Zuma’s enforcers,

BELOW: South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) headquarters in Johannesburg.



Photo: Stephane De Sakutin / AFP



## THE COSTS OF THE ZUMA YEARS

State capture has seen South Africa subjected to gigantic costs to the national economy and the country's reputation. No final figure is available, and perhaps never will be, of the direct economic costs, but some of the indications are telling. The phenomenon of state capture began with former President Thabo Mbeki's administration in the mid-1990s, when it was introduced as the ANC's official policy of "cadre deployment", or the placing of politically connected individuals in key posts. Over time, the approach came to be associated with, and then rebranded as "radical economic transformation" by Jacob Zuma's supporters within the ruling party. Zuma's first term as president began in 2008, and his presidency was terminated at the end of 2017, when he narrowly lost a leadership contest within the ANC to current incumbent Cyril Ramaphosa.

In 2007, the year before Zuma took power, the country had a R9.5 billion surplus; in last year's budget, the country had a debt of R246 billion, according to a March 2019 report by South African news outlet biznews.com. In December 2015, after Zuma suddenly fired finance minister Nhlanhla Nene some R378 billion was wiped off Johannesburg Stock Exchange shares, taking with it some 148,000 jobs. In March 2017, South African bonds and listed companies lost R506 billion when Zuma summarily fired two other finance ministers, Pravin Gordhan and Mcebisi Jonas, according to the same report. Between 2012 and 2017, foreign direct investment in the country declined by 41%, from \$4.5 billion to \$1.3 billion. Investors were reluctant to commit to the country because of an "underperforming commodity sector and political uncertainty", according to the World Investment Report 2018.

According to an October 2018 report by Bureau of Economic Research, South Africa's GDP in that year had declined by between 10 and 30% below projections since 2008, and some 500,000 to 2.5 million jobs had not been created. Meanwhile, state-owned enterprises have been struggling to survive in the post-Zuma years. The national power utility, Eskom, declared the world's best power utility in 2003, currently has a debt of an estimated R500 billion – a figure so large that commentators, including members of the government, say it may threaten the economy. The national airline is in business rescue after decades of government bailouts,



while Denel, an arms manufacturer, and Prasa, the national railroad agency are in fiscal intensive care. The Zondo Commission, on state capture, which began its work in August 2018, has yet to conclude. In July last year, Gordhan, since appointed public enterprises minister, revealed that some 3,000 forensic reports had been compiled on the SOEs since 2017 when the indications of the true extent of state capture first emerged.

Zuma's association with the Guptas appears to have allowed the Indian-born businessmen influence over government policy and appointments, and given them access to large, corruption-driven lucrative government tenders. Gordhan is reported to have said that the Guptas may have succeeded in stealing as much as R50 billion from the state. They have fled the country, with reports suggesting that they are in Dubai, with which the South African state is reported to be negotiating an extradition treaty. Zuma denies any responsibility for the actions of the Guptas, although he has also defended them as "friends", or for the dramatic decline in the country's economy under his watch, accusing critics of mounting a political campaign against him. Meanwhile, calculating the direct costs of Zuma's presidency to the country can be difficult, given that such budget items are often well hidden in government accounts.

However, according to a 2012 report by Gareth van Onselen on Politicsweb, a South African news outlet, in 2012 Zuma's presidency – including his salary, accommodation, support for his wives and the costs of an army medical unit in permanent attendance – were about R1.5 billion annually. That figure, which van Onselen regarded as conservative, was equivalent to about 31,275 jobs, calculated at the national average salary of that year of R47,964, according to figures by the School of Economic and Business Sciences at the University of the Witwatersrand.

the SABC 8 were fired and threatened for months by faceless thugs who echoed the government's discourse on critics. As part of this, they claimed that SABC 8 whites were agents of imperialism and that their black and Indian colleagues were useful idiots or despicable déclassé sell-outs.

Through the justice system and the processes of public participation in parliament, and by mobilising public opinion, the SABC 8 eventually regained their jobs, got the censorship orders revoked and exposed the rot at the institution. Their actions initiated the fall of one of the most toxic characters of the Zuma cohort: former SABC boss and censor-in-chief Hlaudi Motsoeneng. But the group's victory was achieved at great personal cost to the group. One of its members, Suna Venter, was threatened and spied on. Her apartment was broken into. The tyres of her car were slashed and the brake cables of the vehicle cut. She was shot at twice while driving. On one occasion, she was taken out of her bed at night, waking up hours later tied to a tree on a Johannesburg hilltop. She died in June 2017, reportedly as a result of the stress of the campaign of threats and violence against her. Zuma's exploitation of the media was not limited to the public broadcaster. Using public money, his administration facilitated the launch of *The New Age* newspaper and news channel ANN7, two private outlets that aimed to feed their audiences with pro-government propaganda.

This also benefited their owners – the infamous Gupta brothers who massively enriched themselves and some Zuma family members at the expense of the South African taxpayer. More subtle were the Zuma government's manoeuvres to manipulate journalists into helping to discredit honest officials who refused to be intimidated or bought off. In 2014, journalists at the *Sunday Times* were fed false information about a unit within the South African Revenue Service (SARS) that was supposedly operating outside the law. This narrative, which



Photo: Alexander Joe / AFP



ABOVE: Former SABC COO Hlaudi Motsoeneng testifies at the commission of inquiry into state capture in September 2019.

Photo: xxxxxx

was apparently initiated within the Zuma camp, was legitimised and propelled by the *Sunday Times* in several front-page stories. It discredited some of the country's most capable public servants and permitted the government to act against a legitimate anti-tax evasion unit that threatened illicit businesses belonging to the president's cronies. The information was subsequently revealed to have been a hoax and the "rogue unit" saga succeeded in casting doubts on the credibility of investigative media.

Several testimonies point to the hand of the secret services behind the scheme to discredit the SARS unit. Although they have no definitive proof, Krige and his SABC 8 colleagues suspect





Photo: Roger Boehm / AFP

state intelligence was also behind the anonymous threats and attacks on them. The use of the security agencies to interfere with the media is not new in post-apartheid South Africa. One of its finest investigative journalists, amaBhungane's Sam Sole, was told in 2009 "by people from within the intelligence community" that the secret service was recording his phone calls. "We laid a complaint with the Inspector General of Intelligence, but they took a couple of years to get back to us," Sole tells *Africa in Fact*. "They didn't even say if we were monitored or not. All they said was: 'we did an investigation and nothing illegal was done.'" The evidence he was looking for emerged in 2015, when Zuma filed court papers to oppose the official opposition's bid to have criminal charges against him reinstated in a matter relating to the 1990s arms scandal, during which Zuma was reported to have been paid by a foreign arms company to represent its interests.

Attached to his lawyer's affidavit were transcripts of conversations Sole had with a senior prosecutor while the journalist was working on an investigation. Zuma's team said the evidence

**ABOVE:** Thousands of people march through Cape Town's city centre, to the South African Parliament, to call for the president to step down on April 7, 2017. The protest came after South African President Jacob Zuma dismissed widely respected South African Minister of finance, Pravin Gordhan in a cabinet reshuffle.

showed that the senior prosecutor's conversation with Sole supported their claim that the charges against the applicant had been orchestrated by his political rivals. "We used that to launch a challenge to the surveillance legislation [under which he was spied on]," Sole recalls. On 16 September, 2019 a ruling of the High Court in Johannesburg declared sections of the Regulation of Interception of Communications and Provision of Communication Related Information Act (Rica) unconstitutional, arguing that it gave excessive powers to spymasters to the detriment of citizens' privacy, as well as compromising the right of journalists to keep their sources confidential. However, Sole's experience of being bugged contributed to the success of one of the greatest feats in the history of South African

journalism. In early 2017, anonymous whistle-blowers sent South African online publication Daily Maverick what appeared to be a trove of e-mails and documents from the command centre of the Gupta business empire.

“When we handled the Guptaleaks we were extremely careful not to let anybody know what we had, and what we were doing,” Sole recounts. Instead of securing a huge scoop by keeping the information for his paper, Daily Maverick’s editor-in-chief Branko Brkic “immediately” contacted his colleagues at amaBhungane to seek assistance. He had previously worked with them and knew about their “expertise” in investigating corruption in general and the Gupta’s dirty businesses in particular. “I’d have betrayed South Africa’s future if I’d seen it as an opportunity for myself,” Brkic told *Africa in Fact*. Sole praises Brkic’s “very mature and responsible” decision to invite them to work together when the Daily Maverick realised “they didn’t have the capacity to deal with something this big on their own”. Brkic deems the work that followed “a testimony of a collaboration well done”. As South Africans would find out later, the impressive cache of secrets Daily Maverick received revealed the extent of the Gupta family’s influence over the government and how they were using it to obtain contracts with state companies.

Conscious of how damaging the information was for some of the most powerful people in the country, Brkic, Sole, his fellow amaBhungane journalist Stefaans Brummer and the small group of people who had access to the files only discussed the matter face to face and worked on computers

not connected to the internet. “If they had prior knowledge, we would have been vulnerable to search and seizure and so on,” Sole points out. “So that experience with surveillance was important in making us very careful.” By being “very careful” Sole and his colleagues were also protecting the whistle-blowers. The Daily Maverick and amaBhungane only started publishing the so-called Guptaleaks months after they received the material.

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**‘When we handled the Guptaleaks we were extremely careful not to let anybody know what we had, and what we were doing.’**

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“It took us quite a while to get going, because we first had to essentially raise money to take the whistle-blowers to safety,” Sole says about the “discreet” process involving several sectors of society that made their relocation abroad possible. With South African state institutions such as the National Prosecution Authority (NPA), the Hawks, an elite investigation unit, and parliament under Zuma’s iron grip, it was the private media that took on the task of keeping those in power accountable.

The Guptaleaks and other media investigations played a vital role in fostering the civic mobilisation against Zuma that forced many, even within the ANC, to speak out against the president’s abuses. This process eventually led to the ANC recalling Zuma before the end of his term following his camp’s defeat at the party’s elective conference. It might be said that independent journalism has not influenced the political course of other African countries on the scale it has done in South Africa in recent times. Apart from a better-established private media and a stronger civil society, South African journalists had in their favour an independent judiciary capable of ruling against the government. The substantial impact journalistic investigations had in putting an





**ABOVE:** Prominent Angolan human rights activist Rafael Marques de Morais.

Photo: Ampas/Reuters/AFR

end to Zuma’s corrupt administration owed a great deal to the culture of dissent within the ANC, whose way of electing its leaders ultimately prevented the institution of a potentially autocratic Zuma dynasty in power. “In other countries the presidency would have had a much more hands-on control over other institutions,” notes Daily Maverick’s Brkic. Indeed, in African countries where authoritarianism holds sway, journalists have been convicted and jailed by subservient judges.

In Angola, for instance, investigative journalist Rafael Marques de Morais was handed a six-month suspended jail sentence in 2015 for criticising politicians who supported the regime. De Morais’s persecution was pugnaciously contested by the country’s thriving civil society. Yet despite the magnitude of the scandal he revealed, then-President Eduardo dos Santos remained the unchallenged leader of the ruling MPLA until he stepped down when he chose to retire in 2017, after 38 years in power. Similar situations have been reported in recent years in countries such as Zimbabwe and Cameroon, where journalists have been threatened, attacked, arrested and charged for criticising their authoritarian governments or informing about their abuses. Sadly, such events are emblematic of the state of things in many African

countries. In the absence of effective mechanisms to enforce democratic laws and processes, politics is often determined by force, and governments are able to abuse state security structures and resources with impunity.

But as Ntibinyane Ntibinyane, co-founder of Botswana’s INK Center for Investigative Journalism, pointed out in a 2018 article, examples of valuable investigative work are abundant in the rest of Africa, with new media outlets, often constituted as non-profit organisations and funded by individual and international donors, increasingly setting the agenda. In 2018 alone the Global Investigative Journalism Network identified 10 outstanding investigative stories produced by African journalists – including revelations of human rights abuses, corruption, information data breaches, sexual violence and gross state negligence in Ghana, Zimbabwe, Uganda, Malawi, Cameroon and Kenya among other countries. [GGTV](#)



*Africa in Fact*, Issue #53,  
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# SLAVING OVER A HOT STOVE

Cooking is a health hazard for the rural poor

By Barnabas Thondhlana



**A**s COVID-19 wreaks havoc across continents, an unfashionable killer silently and stealthily chokes the life out of thousands of poverty-stricken women and children in Africa and south-east Asia.

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that in sub-Saharan Africa alone, 600,000 people lose their lives every year from indoor air pollution. Beyond these staggering numbers are the faces of women and children who bear the burden of indoor air pollution, from cooking and lighting.

Indoor air pollution is the norm where firewood and charcoal remain a popular choice of fuel amongst households. The UN Environment Programme estimates that wood fuel and charcoal alone account for 40% of energy use in Africa. These glaring statistics have contributed to a



Photo: Reuters/Anadolu Agency



mushrooming of enterprises and job creation but also deforestation and a health hazard that is an invisible killer among populations.

In fact, according to a May 2019 report by international development aid agency Hivos, cooking with charcoal and firewood sources still accounts for four million premature deaths a year, and puts significant strain on already stressed forest resources. It is also the single largest source of greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs).

Africa's energy poverty index, now at 620 million people with no access to electricity according to the International Renewable Energy Agency (IREA), is a social and economic tragedy inhibiting development.

In Kenya, an over-reliance on biomass led to environment legislation in 2018 placing heavy restrictions on cutting down trees and charcoal production but which, unfortunately, has had little effect on reducing indoor pollution.

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)'s George Mwaniki says indoor air pollution causes an estimated 4,000 premature deaths every year in Zimbabwe alone. "Wood is the main fuel used for cooking and heating and accounts for 64% of the energy mix in Zimbabwe," Mwaniki says.







Photo: Simon Maita / AFP

“In rural Zimbabwe, 80-90% of people are heavily dependent on wood fuel, and they light their homes with kerosene.”

The WHO says the majority of households that use solid fuels burn them in open fires or simple stoves that release most of the smoke into the home.

Leah Lunga has few options when it comes to preparing meals. “We use charcoal for cooking as there are now no trees for wood in our area,” Lunga, who lives with her daughter-in-law and three grandchildren, said from her one-roomed house in Epworth, some 25 km east of the capital, Harare. “We buy our charcoal from traders who import it from Zambia, as it burns longer but has more smoke. I already suffer from breathing problems, but I am sure I will survive.”

As observed by Curtin University professors Krassi Rumchev and Jeff Spickett et al in a study titled ‘Indoor air pollution from biomass combustion and respiratory symptoms of women and children in a Zimbabwean village’, published in 2007, the rural areas of developing countries are particularly reliant on biomass for cooking and heating, exposing them to high levels of pollutants associated with a range of respiratory symptoms. Exposure to this pollution



heightens the risk of childhood pneumonia and contributes to lung cancer, strokes, heart disease and pulmonary ailments.

The study investigated domestic exposure to carbon monoxide (CO) and respirable particles (RSPs) in association with respiratory symptoms among women and children in 48 households. It found that indoor levels of CO and RSPs exceeded WHO air quality guidelines in more than 95% of kitchens. Almost all the women (94%) had respiratory symptoms, while the figure was 77% for children.

“Clean”, more fuel efficient cookstoves have been identified as one of the four key domains for global investment, with a particularly strong potential to transform the lives of girls and women.

Girls and young women who cook over fuel-efficient stoves will spend less time gathering fuel and cooking food, which gives them more time to pursue educational and work opportunities. Other direct benefits of switching to fuel efficient cookstoves include safety: girls and women are less exposed to the risk of physical and sexual violence, a reality when they are forced to scavenge for firewood.

A collaboration between UNICEF and GOAL – an international humanitarian response agency established in Ireland more than 40 years ago, which supports Zimbabwe’s rural poor – has piloted the use of fuel efficient cookstoves as a cleaner and

environmentally friendlier method of cooking. To date, UNICEF says it has reached more than 3,000 households with this programme.

However, a 2016 Hivos/World Future Council report points out that while more efficient stoves remain an important interim solution that has delivered impressive results in certain countries, they are not a long-term or truly sustainable solution to the challenge of cooking. As an alternative, clean cooking technologies must be “environmentally, socially, as well as economically sustainable to be considered truly sustainable in the long-term”.

One alternative, biogas – the process of producing energy by fermenting waste – is gaining in popularity around the world as a way of reducing reliance on fossil fuels, cutting deforestation and providing cheap, reliable and easy-to-produce local energy. It has proved an attractive alternative in rural areas, beyond national power grids, where animal dung is plentiful, but firewood is becoming harder to access.

Despite the benefits, a \$3 million project to roll out biogas across Zimbabwe, set up by the government in partnership with development organisations SNV and Hivos International, has had a low take-up in most rural areas. Over the past five years, about 40 digesters have been built on farms





Photo: Franck Ffe / AFP

and at institutions, along with about 250 home units – well short of the project’s aim of 7,400 home digesters by 2020.

“Biogas is cleaner energy compared to charcoal,” says Wimbiso Simbi, an environmental specialist with the Southern African Research and Development Centre. “The generation of biogas reduces the soil and groundwater pollution as it diverts waste from landfill, and leads to improvements in the environment, sanitation, and hygiene.”

On the wider continent, the Africa Biogas Partnership Programme (ABPP), launched in 2009, initially had a target of providing more than 500,000 people with access to clean biogas energy. Implemented by Hivos East Africa and SNV, ABPP’s story has been simple: building a commercially viable market for the adoption and upscale of biogas in countries that have been most affected by climate change.

In response to emailed questions on the status of the programme, the ABPP’s director, Wim van Nes, said: “ABPP was terminated by the end of March 2020. But a total of 72,354 household digesters have been installed under this programme, providing

access to biogas (clean energy) and bio-slurry (potent organic fertiliser) to about 362,000 people.”

The stories from this initiative have been encouraging: Burkina Faso’s government is leading an alliance in West Africa to have countries in the Sahel region adopt biogas for clean cooking; in Uganda, Tanzania and Ethiopia, bio-slurry has been commercialised as a significant component of organic farming, while Kenya has become a leader in providing an enabling environment where the private sector can partner with government to uphold quality standards in the maintenance of biogas plants within households.

While it is difficult to change existing behaviours, and clean stoves are often abandoned in favour of traditional methods, there is now growing support for clean cookstove projects that have the potential to help save hundreds of thousands of lives. [GGV](#)



*Africa in Fact*, Issue #56,  
January – March 2021





Photo: Alexis Huguet / AFP



# THE LAWLESS THIRD

Self-rule and tradition challenged state attempts to deal with Covid-19

By Michael Schmidt

**T**he lack of access to healthcare during the COVID-19 pandemic experienced by millions of Africans as a result of living in ungoverned, under-serviced, rebel-controlled, or poorly supported alternatively administered regions, raises a unique set of problems for governments, donor agencies, and healthcare professionals combating the novel coronavirus. The sheer scale and persistence of this problem has caused many decision makers at country and international levels to turn a blind eye to it – with the unfortunate result being the avoidance of the duty of care in this troublesome so-called “lawless third” of the continent, about 34% of the continental land mass incorporating all of Libya, half of Algeria, much of the Sahara and Sahel, northern Nigeria, the Horn and a crescent of the African Forest Belt.

However, the people living in these zones deserve equitable access to universal healthcare

**ABOVE:** A central African woman carries water from the river to the refugee site of Ndu, Bas-Uele Province, Democratic Republic of Congo in January 2021.

including adequate COVID-19 testing and treatment. These conditions are far more widespread in Africa than is usually acknowledged by the authorities, though concentrated in the Sahara, Sahel, and Forest Belt regions. As such, they are deeply marked by traditional modes of nomadic livelihood that clash directly with state attempts to curb the spread of the coronavirus. Nevertheless, there have been a variety of responses to the challenge posed by the pandemic in these regions, some of them remarkably positive. Regions that fall entirely outside the ambit of governments' abilities to respond to the virus largely embrace those that fall under the control of separatist groups or rebels.

Regions that are under-serviced fall into three, sometimes interlinked, categories: those difficult to reach because of their remoteness or rugged terrain; poor rural areas, which under-resourced governments battle to serve, even under normal conditions; and those from which state services, including healthcare, are deliberately withheld or restricted because their populations are viewed as

hostile to the central state. However, notable cases of viable alternative healthcare administrations are those of two states with contested legitimacy: the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR), which occupies the eastern third of the Moroccan-ruled territory of Western Sahara, and Somaliland, a Horn of Africa republic that seceded from the north of Somalia.

Governments direct few resources, including healthcare, to remote and rural provinces because of their sparse and nomadic populations. But very low average population densities should not be taken as an indication that people do not gather, socialise and interact in significant numbers in certain zones of the Sahara and Sahel. Notably, people cluster and move around bodies of water like Lake Chad (two million people within a 100 km radius of the lake's centre, and 13 million within a 300 km radius) and along the Nile River (a density of up to 1,165 people/km<sup>2</sup> along the river's lower course through Egypt), as well as along the ancient trade routes that traverse the region. Of relevance to COVID-19 is the



Photo: Alexis Huguet / AFP





**ABOVE:** A UNICEF social mobiliser uses a speaker to carry out public health awareness of the COVID-19 coronavirus at Mangateen IDP camp in Juba, South Sudan, in April 2020.

Photo: Alex McBride / AFP

Accountability International is aware that the statistics that are presented to the Africa CDC or other regional/continental/global organisations on which we base our scorecard grading (for COVID-19) are not without some problems and can thus not always be taken at face value. Firstly, on a country-by-country basis, we need to have an understanding of the robustness of each country's reporting mechanisms (are they adequately funded, comprehensive, and statistically sound?). Next, we need to recognise that in rare cases, the temptation of governments to improve their public image by under-reporting the impact of the pandemic may prove too strong: this is clearly the case with Tanzania that dangerously ceased reporting on 9 May 2020, but there may be other less obvious examples that involve under-reporting rather than a total refusal to provide data. Lastly, a pre-existing lack of data, particularly on key populations, undermines an adequate understanding of the impact of the pandemic on the most vulnerable and marginalised.

potential for viral transmission at these points and along these routes.

Also, some rural population distributions are counter-intuitive: for example, the Ouargla province of Algeria and the Tombouctou province of Mali – both remote Saharan desert regions – have high focal population distributions, meaning their rural populations are densely clustered in small settlements, ideal for COVID-19 transmission given that these settlements are linked by poorly monitored/controlled nomadic travel. The African Forest Belt – home to many rebel groups – though mostly sparsely populated, also boasts zones of dense population.

Examples include the strife-torn Lake Kivu basin in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, which has a density of over 400 people/km<sup>2</sup>: while government only controls half of the North Kivu province bordering the lake's western shore, the rest is controlled by a patchwork of numerous guerrilla

groups. Sparseness of law enforcement, resource allocation, and healthcare access has enabled rebel groups to operate with relative impunity and gives them an opportunity to legitimise themselves by offering the populace alternative services, including healthcare. But this is a rarity: insurgencies usually disrupt and overstress already fragile healthcare infrastructure. An example is north-eastern Nigeria, which already had inadequate clinics and too few healthcare workers before the jihadist Boko Haram insurgency began in 2009.

This general picture of lawlessness or fragmented authority imposes some unique circumstances under which the COVID-19 pandemic has been faced across many parts of Africa, but there are instances of stable yet alternate (and thus often unrecognised) territorial authorities with aspirations to formal government and state status. At either extremity of this supposedly “stateless” third of the continent lie the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (administered by a government recognised by 40 out of 193 UN member states, 20 of which are AU members) and Somaliland (administered by a government recognised by only three UN member states, two of them AU members).

Regardless of whether the international community recognises these states, in reality they are only “unadministered” in the view of the central governments in Rabat and Mogadishu which lay claim to them; in most other respects, they fall under conventional functioning administrations, which provide healthcare to their citizens. Where diplomatic recognition does count, however, is whether these contested territories are able to access

adequate COVID-19 testing, and donor or funding partner healthcare support. Pandemic statistics reported by the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) derive from recognised governments only.

In addition, the World Health Organization (WHO) has no official coverage of either territory by its Regional Office for Africa (AFRO). Within SADR’s zone, on 19 March, the Sahrawi government

announced its implementation of COVID-19 countermeasures, including the closure of borders with friendly neighbours Algeria and Mauritania. It also created quarantine areas, and the imposition of a “stay-in-your-tent” lockdown policy. On the one hand, this indicates a seriousness by the Sahrawi authorities to exercise their duty of care, but the remoteness and relative poverty of their territory meant that when these measures were implemented, healthcare workers had “just 600 pairs of gloves and 2,000 masks for a population of between 180,000

and 200,000 people”, according to a Euronews report on 20 April last year.

The only reliable reporting appears to be by the UN mission in the region, MINURSO, which “maintains constant liaison with the Moroccan government, POLISARIO and Algerian government to share information and coordinate action”. Its last report, dated 5 June 2020, states: “There have been no new cases in the Tindouf Governorate (of Algeria) since 10 May and still no cases to date in the Sahrawi refugee camps or in the Territory East of the Berm”, the embankment that marks the border with Algeria. “The lone death from COVID-19 in Tindouf Governorate remains the only fatal case

**In addition, the World Health Organization (WHO) has no official coverage of either territory by its Regional Office for Africa (AFRO).**





Photo: Alexis Huguet / AFP

in MINURSO's area of operations." The report, however, gave no number of positive cases for the SADR-occupied portion of Western Sahara.

On the extreme east of the continent, the widely unrecognised state of Somaliland, which in 1991 broke away from Somalia – itself without a fully functional or authoritative government and state since then – has likewise posed a problem for tracking the progress of the virus, and for attempts to combat it. The internationally recognised government of Somalia in Mogadishu announced the first positive COVID-19 case on 16 March 2020 and suspended international flights in response, later followed by the suspension of domestic flights. It also tried to prevent the importation of khat (the leaf chewed for its mildly narcotic effects) as a means to limit socialising amongst people.

But Mogadishu's grip on authority is tenuous at best. By mid-August last year it could only claim to control the capital and some of the larger

cities of the south. The result has been that the official government is unable to enforce any travel restrictions by road. Also, the situation is bedevilled by drought, locust storms, flash floods, traditional contestation between six major clans, and some 2.6 million people internally displaced due to conflict. Somaliland reported its first two positive novel coronavirus cases on 31 March 2020, six days after closing its land borders and ordering incoming airline crews and passengers to be quarantined for two weeks. On 26 March, it had diverted all developmental funding into combating the pandemic.

Khat establishments were closed, mosques issued with social distancing guidelines, social gatherings outlawed, and 574 prisoners pardoned and released, but the crucial lifeline of flights to Ethiopia was maintained. To date, the Africa CDC's figures have not differentiated between separatist Somaliland and Somalia (including Puntland),



**ABOVE:** Agents of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) perform a temperature check as part of COVID-19 measures at the entrance of a refugee registration site in Ndu, Bas-Uele Province, Democratic Republic of Congo, in January 2021.

Photo: Alexis Huguet / AFP

with 2,860 positive cases of whom 90 had died as of 25 June 2020, although it appears Mogadishu is counting Somaliland in its reporting to the Africa CDC and WHO. Somaliland separately reported on the same date a total of 681 cases of whom 28 had died. On 15 July, Somalia reported 3,083 cases of whom 93 had died, with Somaliland the following day reporting 807 cases of whom 29 had died.

Lacking its own testing facilities, the breakaway state has been sending abroad to get test results. COVID-19 aid is being sent via Mogadishu – which politically and practically undermines Hargeisa (the Somaliland capital): in late April, the European Union (EU) donated €27 million to Somalia, of which €10 million was officially earmarked for Somaliland. Yet it was subsequently reported that Somaliland had been entirely cut out of the aid. On

23 June, Hargeisa announced the lifting of all anti-COVID-19 measures – though social distancing and the quarantining of virus-positive people entering the country remained in force.

The government did not give reasons for reopening the country, but it is likely that it could no longer bear an economic shutdown without external aid. Lastly, we must deal with the fact that some regions in many African countries are deliberately under serviced by central governments because of their perceived hostility to the incumbent political leadership. Such pre-existing ethnicised healthcare access inequalities are only amplified under COVID-19. For example, in Burundi, the aftermath of the genocidal civil war between a Tutsi-dominated army and Hutu rebel groups from 1993-2005 has seen the authorities enforce 60% Hutu/40% Tutsi



ethnic quotas on the staffing of foreign NGOs, including in the healthcare sector.

Human Rights Watch noted: “On 1 October 2018, authorities suspended the activities of foreign non-governmental organisations (NGOs) for three months to force them to re-register, including new documentation stating the ethnicity of their Burundian employees.” The disruption put many healthcare projects months behind schedule, while some NGOs, wary of how the ethnicity data might be misused, exited the country entirely – all of which has undermined Burundi’s COVID-19 response. On 12 May 2020, the Burundian government declared *persona non grata* the WHO’s country director and some of its health experts who were critical of underreporting of data on the pandemic.

On 10 June, President Pierre Nkurunziza, who had refused to take strong measures against COVID-19, died of a heart attack rumoured to have been brought on by the virus. Denial of healthcare in remote borderlands is most often practised against migrants, refugees and other non-citizens, even under COVID-19 quarantine. An example of this is from Ethiopia, where a Reliefweb update on the pandemic warned that “Internally Displaced persons (IDPs) living in congested and unsanitary collective centres, spontaneous and planned sites, rental accommodations or shared shelters with relatives in host communities are particularly vulnerable to COVID-19.”

Complicating the issue is that most undocumented migrants, including asylum seekers, cross international borders often knowing nothing

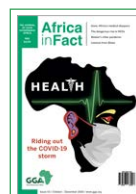
about the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, the UN’s International Organisation for Migration (IOM) reported that just over half of all migrants attempting the dangerous crossing into the Gulf states from Somalia via war-torn Yemen had not heard of COVID-19. An urgent starting point is for all armed groups – state or rebel – to allow international healthcare agencies to do their work

in remote and conflict torn areas unhindered. In addition, the international community needs to immediately put human lives above diplomatic considerations and provide direct assistance to SADR, Somaliland, and any other contested regions where the rulers of which, regardless of their official status, have demonstrated their administrative capacity and resolve to fight the pandemic.

Lastly, African administrations and their international supporters must pay significant attention to the most vulnerable population groups languishing in poor, remote, and under-serviced

areas across the continent, key populations most threatened by the novel coronavirus. Only by adhering to universal healthcare commitments can we advance equitable access to all, establishing a legacy of robust care well after the current crisis is over. [GGV](#)

## Denial of healthcare in remote borderlands is most often practised against migrants, refugees and other non-citizens, even under COVID-19 quarantine.



*Africa in Fact*, Issue #55,  
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# A POLITICAL CONSTITUENCY – OF SORTS

Will African cities recognise the  
vital role of informal traders?

By Terence Corrigan and Nicholas Lorimer

Photo: Marco Longari / AFP





**ABOVE:** Informal vendors complain to a South African Police Service (SAPS) officer as they gather outside a municipal office building in Braamfontein, Johannesburg, in April 2020, as they try to obtain a permit for working during the 21 days national lockdown that started on March 27, 2020, in an attempt to halt the spread of COVID-19.

**B**y the beginning of July 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic had gripped the world, shutting down much of what had previously been taken for granted. Perhaps more significantly, it had laid a deep sense of trepidation on the world.

On the fifth of the month, police raided the Jambanja, Unit L, market in the town of Chitungwiza in Zimbabwe. This had become commonplace: the authorities had instituted lockdown measures that severely restricted activity, and informal traders had been blamed for spreading the disease. The vendors attempted to salvage their stock and evade arrest, but the police action was especially aggressive. Boarding his vehicle, vendor Samson Chamunorwa Zharare suffered a bullet wound to his leg. He was dumped at a hospital, where the leg was nearly amputated.

Zharare's fate was emblematic – if hyperbolically so – of the plight of much of the continent's informal sector under COVID-19. The

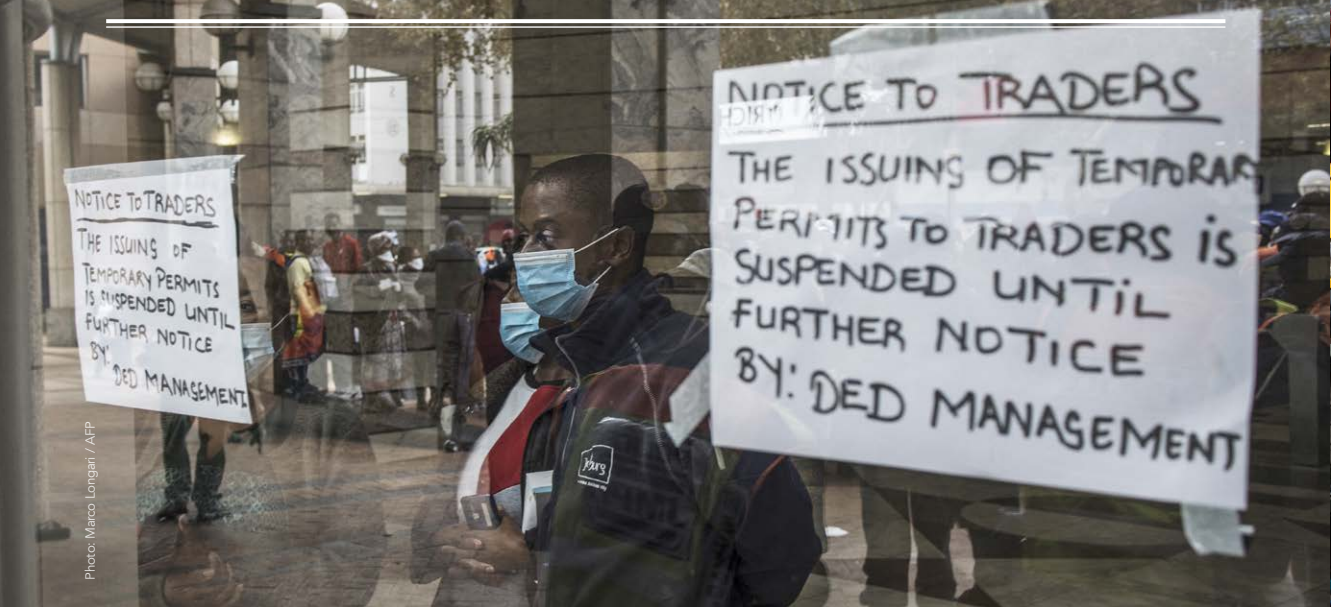


Photo: Marco Longhi / AFP

demolished stalls and bullets fired in Chitungwiza were matched elsewhere, for example, as bulldozers smashed stalls at the Redlight market in Payneville in Liberia, or in reports of soldiers flogging errant traders in Nigeria.

All of this came atop the damage to livelihoods that many traders endured as a result of the measures taken to combat the virus – particularly the “lockdowns” that restricted movement and activity. These limited the number of customers who could be served, limited the space that traders could operate in, and limited trading hours – or in some instances made it illegal to trade at all, as was the case in Zimbabwe. As many informal traders survive off their daily income and have scant savings, even short periods of enforced inactivity can result in financial ruin.

Samuel Waweru, secretary of the Nairobi Informal Sector Confederation, gave *Africa in Fact* a flavour of this: “Immediately the epidemic was declared in the country, the government initiated strict health protocols, most of which were not favourable to the sector – especially the curfew and the lockdowns. Social distancing was impossible to

practice. The higher costs of sanitisers, water and so on were not affordable, which led to harassment and confiscation of wares, leading to arrests on the streets and working spaces.” These circumstances have taken a toll on traders’ personal lives, too.

Africa’s informal sector is a significant contributor to the continental economy. A study by Leandro Medina and Friedrich Schneider – of the International Monetary Fund and University of Linz respectively – put the size of the informal sector in sub-Saharan Africa at an average of some 39% of GDP between 1991 and 2017 (34.4% over the past decade). Across countries, the informal sector’s contribution ranges from close to 57% in Nigeria, 56% in Tanzania and 54% in Zimbabwe at the higher

end, to 31% in Cameroon, 30% in Lesotho and 27% in South Africa at the lower end. Yet even the latter set of estimates, bespeaking relatively smaller informal economies, points to huge volumes of economic activity taking place outside the regulation of the continent’s state institutions.

Perhaps more important than the scale of the economic contribution of the informal sector is that it underwrites the

### GDP contribution of the informal sector:

- 57% in Nigeria
- 56% in Tanzania
- 54% in Zimbabwe
- 31% in Cameroon
- 30% in Lesotho
- 27% in South Africa





livelihoods of millions of households. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) has put employment in sub-Saharan Africa's informal sector at some 66% of the total, excluding agricultural employment. Among women and young people, informal sector employment is the overwhelming mode of economic participation; four young people are employed in Africa's informal economy for every one in the formal. For women as a whole, the proportion is only slightly lower.

Traders, of course, comprise only one element of this informal economy, but it is a crucial one. Not only are the barriers to entry relatively low – providing a realistic opportunity for millions of people to have a chance at economic activity – but informal trade is the nutritional lifeline of most of the continent's population. This is the case not least in Africa's burgeoning cities, which embody the discordant confluence of rapidly growing prosperity and deep-seated economic retardation.

Danielle Resnick of the International Food Policy Research Institute in Washington DC has written that, "In many African cities, the informal economy has long been the linchpin of food security for the urban poor. Despite the trend of supermarket expansion in the region, the urban poor continue to depend heavily on informal markets and street vendors for daily purchases, and use supermarkets only periodically for bulk purchases of staples. Most of the eggs, fish, meat, and milk sold to the poor in urban Africa are from informal markets. In countries such as Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, Mali, and Uganda, 80% to 90% of raw milk is purchased from vendors or small-scale retailers. More broadly, a survey of more than 6,000 households in low-income neighbourhoods in 11 African cities found that 70% of urban households regularly purchase their foods from the informal market or street vendors."

Given the importance of informal trading, what explains the hammering the sector received across so much of the continent during the pandemic? Why, when already fragile economies were pushed to the brink, jeopardising the livelihoods of its



Photo: Badru Katumba / AFP

traders and the communities they served, did many governments choose to compound this by acting with an iron fist against them?

Streetnet, a global organisation advocating for the rights of informal traders pointed out to *Africa in Fact* that such harassment – sometimes violent and, given the high proportion of women doing this work, with a distinctly gendered aspect – is not a new phenomenon. Rather, “it is a persistent issue that intensified during the pandemic”.

Indeed, the relationship of the African state and its informal economy has long been a complicated and contested one, especially in the case of the continent’s cities.

Africa’s cities are largely an inheritance of the colonial past. Built (or developed) as centres of administration and commerce, their function was typically to sustain and service a relatively small elite. For the most part, they were not set up to handle mass migration, nor was an industrial base developed that might have absorbed such an influx.

Africa’s cities are the continent’s statement of modernity. They are countries’ windows on, and showcases to, the outside world. In many respects, they are the *locus* of political and economic power, both for long-standing political and bureaucratic elites and the growing middle class.

The presence of informal economies sits



Photo: Badru Katumba / AFP

ambiguously and unambiguously in this environment, and the trader – the “street trader” – is one of the most visible signifiers of this. Most obviously, their activities challenge the conception of order that is assumed to be a natural corollary of the modern world. Their visibility on the African streetscape sends a powerful aesthetic message about the state of the continent’s urban centres, and the ability of the state to enforce its will. Periodically, officialdom acts.

Prior to the pandemic, informal traders in various urban centres had been subjected to crackdowns on the grounds of public order. In 2018, for example, the then minister of Kampala Capital City Authority (Uganda), Beti Kamywa, announced a crackdown thus: “The public has a duty to abide





Photo: Zinyange Auntenry / AFP

by the set regulations. We cannot have a well-organised city with everybody ignoring laws.”

Similar justifications have been invoked in other contexts, such as a crackdown on traders in Zambia in the wake of a cholera outbreak in 2017.

Official hostility towards informal trading is compounded by the hard reality that enforcement of policy puts it in the hands of compromised institutions and their agents. Traders may make a meagre income, but the goods they sell, and the cash they have on hand, nevertheless attract covetous and abusive officials. Human Rights Watch has documented the freewheeling and extortionate behaviour of Angola’s security forces in implementing unsympathetic policies in a 2013 report, ‘Take That Filth Away’: Police Abuses Against Street Vendors in Angola. Although the abuse of traders is typically not lethal, in early 2020 a police officer was convicted of killing a mother of three during a raid on a Luanda market.

Foreign traders, who may or may not be lawfully in the host country, are particularly vulnerable to abuse.

On top of this, political sentiment sometimes comes into play. Informal traders constitute a political constituency of sorts. State attitudes

and actions towards informal traders, as Danielle Resnick has argued, depend on the specific political and institutional arrangements in a given context. Where they are regarded as inclined towards the political opposition, repression follows.

This goes back generations. In one notorious case, following the 1979 coup that brought Flight Lieutenant Jerry Rawlings to power in Ghana, a campaign was launched against the country’s market women, who were accused of undermining the country, profiteering and so on. In 2005, informal traders in Zimbabwe were targeted by a vengeful government in its Operation Murambatsvina (‘Move the Rubbish’) – which was widely held to have been intended as punishment for opposition-inclined urban communities.

Sally Roever, the international coordinator of Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO), a United Kingdom-based body bringing together organisations representing women in the informal sector, commented at a recent webinar: “The state, national governments and local governments are common sources of violence; vested interests of intermediaries, money lenders, property owners, landlords, those sorts of actors, are often identified by workers in our network as sources of violence; criminal actors, even fellow workers, people’s own household and community, and also the general public. So, there is a whole range of sources of violence that affect informal workers.”

The COVID-19 crisis presented a once-in-a-generation opportunity for governments to impose controls on their societies, with a respectable rationale for doing so. But this expanded latitude held the potential to be used to pursue objectives other than the safeguarding of public health. These would frequently extend pre-existing policy.

Liesl Louw-Vaudran of the Institute of Security Studies wrote of the dangers of this in Africa, as the continent’s democratic life had been on a



Photo: Baardi Kaumba / AFP

concerning track: “This is increasingly difficult on a continent where the space for civil society is shrinking. Now the pandemic has given security forces and authoritarian governments free rein – out of sight of opposition parties and human rights defenders – to prey on citizens, especially those who disagree with them.”

She wrote this in June 2020. The following month Samson Chamunorwa Zharare was shot in the Jambanja market.

For many of the continent’s informal workers, the pandemic compounded an already difficult situation. But perhaps their accumulated experience prepared them for this, and they did what was possible under the circumstances. An important part of this was the mobilisation of existing traders’ organisations. Streetnet reports: “It has been very challenging, but yes, informal traders had no option other than adapting. Not only adapting, but in many cases being the first responders to support members of their own organisations. Informal traders have taken an active role in raising awareness of health risks and prevention measures, going as far as monitoring and disinfecting markets. They have also



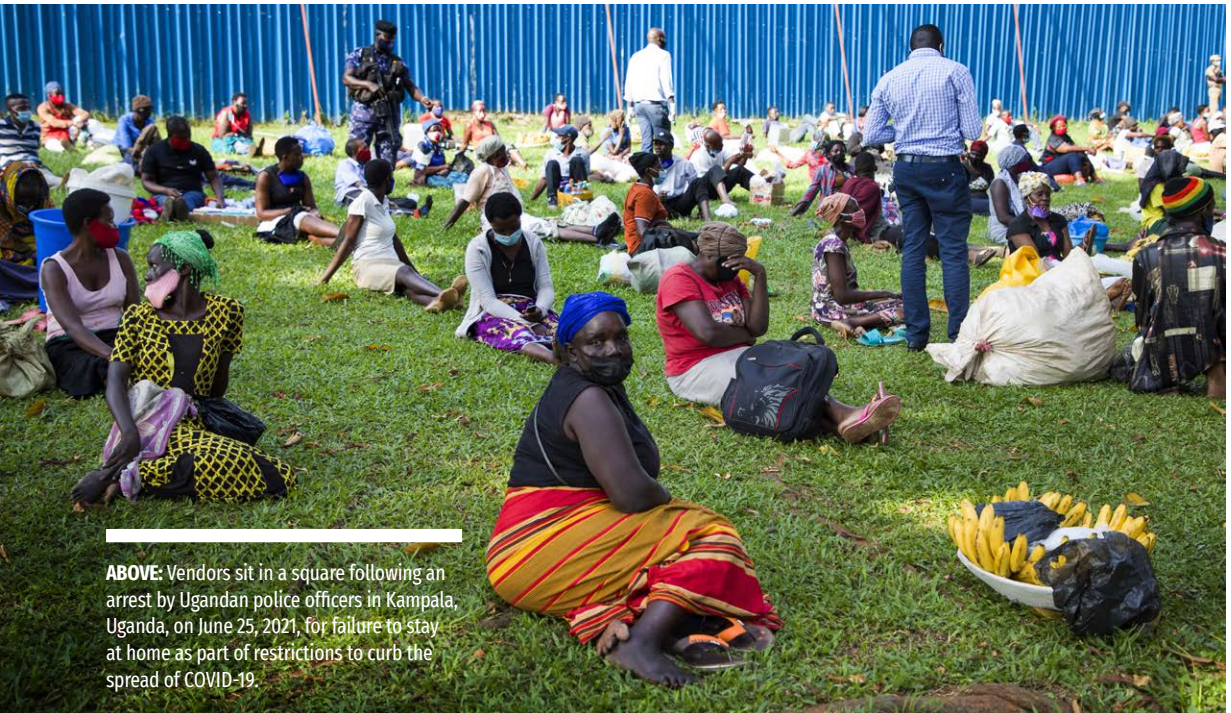
Photo: Ernest Kasumba / AFP

developed advocacy initiatives and fund-generating activities for the survival of their members.”

The strengthening of traders’ organisations could be an important step in the creation of lobby groups, which could begin to push lawmakers towards a more sympathetic posture towards this sector of the economy that has traditionally been poorly represented in the corridors of power.

Additionally, the pandemic forced some governments to accept the important role that many informal traders play in providing everyday goods and in supporting low-income families. In Sierra





**ABOVE:** Vendors sit in a square following an arrest by Ugandan police officers in Kampala, Uganda, on June 25, 2021, for failure to stay at home as part of restrictions to curb the spread of COVID-19.

Photo: Badru Katumba / AFP

Leone, for example, the government recognised the role informal traders could play in enforcing health regulations and helped them to establish stores that complied with the new regulations. In Ghana, the government stepped in to mitigate risks in markets by regularly disinfecting them.

This is far from universal. In South Africa, a study of the impact of COVID-19 and government support programmes in the country – carried out by the business research group SBP – argued that aid schemes were often geared to the highly controversial goal of formalising informal trading. Interestingly, in 2013 a Licensing of Businesses Bill was introduced, which would have demanded licences for pretty much all commercial activity. The continuities are clear and depressing.

It is fair to say that the position of informal traders in Africa’s cities remains marked by contradictions. Samuel Waweru describes the situation in Kenya as being largely more of the same. Despite the rhetoric about social distancing, he notes the irony that people continue to be arrested and transported in vehicles where such distancing is impossible. Informal traders remain vulnerable

to fines and harassment. On the other hand, new draft legislation – dating from before the pandemic – would introduce a more agreeable regime for informal trading. The pandemic and pending elections have, however, delayed its passing.

Perhaps most importantly, to use Streetnet’s formulation, it is important that African governments “recognise the critical role informal worker organisations have played in the COVID-19 relief effort and must play in recovery.”

Ultimately, this is the keystone of the future for informal traders. Will the cities that they serve accept their permanence and the critical role they play? Or will they see in the COVID-19 pandemic an opportunity to exclude them further? The case of Samson Chamunorwa Zharare is a reminder that the latter option is an uncomfortable possibility. [GG9](#)



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Photo: Christophe Archambault / AFP

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**LEFT:** An X-ray of the abdomen of a drug mule containing several capsules of cocaine (small egg-size balls behind the zip and trousers' button) which were ingested to cross borders.

# WHEN CRIME DOES PAY

By Issa Sikit Da Silva

**M**arianne\*, a woman from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) living in Nairobi, hosts two young women, one from Uganda and the other local, in her apartment in one of the Kenyan capital's middle-class suburbs. From her cellular phone, Marianne shows her guests photos of “some stuff” her overseas customers are willing to pay a fortune for.

After the meeting, Sheila\*, from Uganda, agrees to talk exclusively to *Africa in Fact* behind Marianne's back and on condition that she does not disclose the nature of the merchandise. “We are leaving for Kampala (Uganda) tomorrow to meet our suppliers and get the stuff out. Marianne is our boss; she wants it as soon as possible because apparently her buyers are ready and have even made a down payment,” she says.

Though the nature of the “stuff” was not disclosed, a research paper published in September 2022 by Project ENACT, titled

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‘Living on the edge: women and organised crime in East Africa’, says a wide range of goods – from drugs and arms to wildlife and extractives – is trafficked within East Africa and beyond, driven by a complex web of socioeconomic and political factors across the region.

Sheila and her Kenyan friend, who has not been named, joined what she describes as a “fraternity of sisters helping sisters” in 2021 and this would be their third trip to Uganda as “stuff” carriers. “I’m only 23 and I still want to study at university if I make enough money from this business,” Sheila told *Africa in Fact*. “I was working and saving money little by little, but the COVID-19 pandemic struck, and the company went out of business.”

Asked if she was aware of the consequences she would face if caught smuggling illegal goods, she brushed the question aside. “When life and the country you were born in do not give you a legitimate platform to earn a living, you are left with no choice but to try other means, illegal though they may be. I’m just doing it because there is nothing else to do. It’s not easy but I prefer not to focus on the negativity. Anyway, by this time next year, I will be at college.”

*Africa in Fact* understands that Sheila’s Kenyan friend is a trained nurse who was duped by two women, a Tanzanian and a Kenyan, posing as overseas employment brokers.

Sheila recounts: “I don’t know how much she gave them, but it was a lot of money. Those women made her sign fictitious contracts for a so-called well-paying nursing job in Australia. After that, they called her to say that they would come to

fetch her to take her to the airport, but they never called again and have since disappeared from the face of the earth. All her savings went down the drain. Women these days have become heartless for money.”

The ENACT report mentioned above confirms that “organised crime often provides the only available economic opportunities for poverty-stricken women in East Africa. It is a means both of survival and of agency and empowerment. Globally,

the involvement of women in organised crime has been more widely recognised in the past 10 to 15 years.

“Moving beyond a focus on women as the victims of organised crime, studies have shown that they play a variety of roles within criminal networks that are often dependent on the sociocultural contexts in which the networks operate. Their roles include those of low-level mules and recruiters, as well as crime syndicate bosses and trafficking madams,” ENACT’s report noted.

Information gathered on the ground by *Africa in Fact* revealed

that Marianne, a trafficking madam and single mother of two, was brought to Kenya in 2010 from the DRC, with the promise of travelling to Canada via Nairobi. But she never reached her destination, let alone saw Jomo Kenyatta International Airport. She became the “wife” of the man who was supposed to take her to Toronto, who fathered her two children and disappeared.

However, she has since rebuilt her life.

“I know her very well,” an informant told *Africa in Fact*. “She used to be miserable. But I can see now she is okay, renting an expensive house in the

**‘Women are good at overcoming challenges they might face during these dangerous trips’**





Photo: Narinder Nanu / AFP

**ABOVE:** Indian Special Task Force (STF) personnel escort an alleged heroin smuggler, a Ugandan national, as she is presented to the media in Amritsar in July 2018. Indian authorities recovered 1kg of heroin after arresting the suspect.

suburbs, driving a nice car, and sending her kids to private school. That one, she likes money too much and is some sort of a jack-of-all-trades, including acting as a broker for minerals smuggled out of eastern Congo. I would not be surprised if she is involved in drugs and arms trafficking. The war in Congo will not stop as long as crime syndicates based in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania have a lot of cash to pay for anything precious that comes out of Congo. Of course, these crime syndicates usually do it on behalf of overseas bosses who ship the stuff afterwards.”

Blessed with nearly 140 million hectares of rainforest, which comprises anything from endangered wildlife to timber, crude oil and a variety of untapped minerals, the DRC is one of the world’s richest nations in natural resources.

John\*, a former illegal trader who did everything from supplying Burundian, South Sudanese and Congolese young girls to Kenyan and Ugandan brothels, selling pangolins, ivory, coltan and gold

(fake and real) to European and Asian businessmen, says: “I visited Congo twice when I was doing this business, and all I can say is that country is a natural paradise. If one can manage to bring good, rare stuff to Uganda and Kenya, there is money to be made. I know many people who have become rich from illegally trading stuff from Congo.”

John insists that the transnational illegal trade is an ideal occupation for women. “Women are good at overcoming challenges they might face during these dangerous trips,” he says. “They can use their bodies to brave all sorts of obstacles, and they are less harassed by border and customs officials, as well as the security forces. These officials focus on men and let women pass freely. Besides, most female cross-border traders flirt with border, customs, and security officials, to help them pass with anything unhindered.”

Colette, from DRC, who has been involved in East Africa’s cross-border trade for the past 10 years, says: “When you start this business, the first thing

you do is to get yourself a boyfriend working at the border post. He can be anybody, a cop, a soldier, a customs official, anybody working at the border. If you are going across three border posts, you must make sure you flirt with three border officials.

“This way, your business is covered because you become untouchable, and you can bring in anything you want, legal or illegal.

Asked if getting involved in illegal business did not scare her, Colette replies: “From where I’m standing, I can tell you that every cross-border business is tainted with illegal practices. Illegal stuff pays well and makes you prosperous very quickly.

“The temptation is too much. There are people in a particular country who have some very good stuff but they don’t know how to get it out of the country. And even if they manage to take it out, where will they sell it? So, they often contact female cross-border traders because they know that we are fearless and we have the right connections. And when you look at the value of the stuff, you tell yourself this is it.”

Another cross-border trader, Rose, a university graduate, says the involvement of women in transnational organised crime is no longer about poverty, but the shift of power towards the so-called soft gender.

“Women’s economic empowerment has reached another level,” she says. “Today’s women are brave and willing to take risks, and do anything men have been doing since the creation of this world. For too long we have been seen as good for nothing and

treated like second-class citizens, but not anymore because we have decided to take our destiny into our hands.

“White people call it organised crime, but we black women, hustling day and night to feed our families and stop our dependency on men, we call it

organised business. A group of brave and courageous women from different nationalities coming together to make things happen, and it’s happening because we are all in the quest for financial independence,” Rose says.

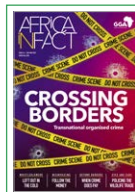
According to the authors of the ENACT report already quoted, despite their subordinate socioeconomic status and lack of decision-making authority, African women are often considered managers of their households and are responsible for providing food, water, health services and education for their families, often from very limited resources. This puts pressure on them to find

irregular sources of income, they point out.

“While men may make an active decision to join an organised criminal network, women may have little choice but to become complicit in illegal activities as their primary, and often only, means of livelihood,” the report says. [GGT](#)

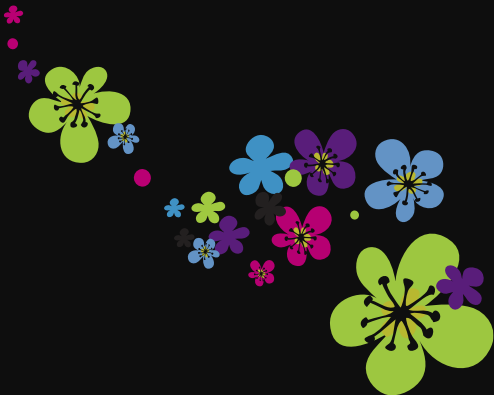
\*Some names have been changed.

**‘From where I’m standing, I can tell you that every cross-border business is tainted with illegal practices. Illegal stuff pays well and makes you prosperous very quickly.’**



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