

# AfricaRenewal

August - November 2018

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## FREE TRADE AREA A NEW DAWN FOR AFRICA



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startups on the rise**

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opportunities & challenges**



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Cover photo: *Graphic depicting trade in Africa.* Africa Renewal

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**"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."** Nelson Mandela

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Following the unveiling of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement in Kigali, Rwanda, in March 2018, Africa is about to become the world's largest free trade area: 55 countries merging into a single market of 1.2 billion people with a combined GDP of \$2.5 trillion. In this edition, we examine the benefits and challenges of a free trade area for countries and individual traders.



FREE TRADE AREA

## Africa set for a massive free trade area

Experts say the African Continental Free Trade Agreement is a game changer

BY KINGSLEY IGHOBOR

The shelves of Choithrams Supermarket in Freetown, Sierra Leone, boast a plethora of imported products, including toothpicks from China, toilet paper and milk from Holland, sugar from France, chocolates from Switzerland and matchboxes from Sweden.

Yet many of these products are produced much closer—in Ghana, Morocco, Nigeria, South Africa, and other African countries with an industrial base.

So why do retailers source them half-way around the world? The answer: a patch-work of trade regulations and tariffs that make intra-African commerce costly, time wasting and cumbersome.

The African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA), signed by 44 African

countries in Kigali, Rwanda, in March 2018, is meant to create a tariff-free continent that can grow local businesses, boost intra-African trade, rev up industrialization and create jobs.

The agreement creates a single continental market for goods and services as well as a customs union with free movement of capital and business travellers. Countries joining AfCFTA must commit to removing tariffs on at least 90% of the goods they produce.

If all 55 African countries join a free trade area, it will be the world's largest by number of countries, covering more than 1.2 billion people and a combined GDP of \$2.5 trillion, according to the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA).

*(From left) African Union chairperson and president of Rwanda Paul Kagame, president of Niger Mahamadou Issoufou and African Union Commission chairperson Moussa Faki Mahamat at the launch of AfCFTA in Kigali in March 2018.*

Office of President Paul Kagame

The ECA adds that intra-African trade is likely to increase by 52.3% by 2020 under the AfCFTA.

Five more countries signed the AfCFTA at the African Union (AU) summit in Mauritania in June, bringing the total number of countries committing to the agreement to 49 by July's end. But a free trade area has to wait until at least 22 countries submit instruments of ratification. By July 2018,

only six countries—Chad, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Ghana, Kenya, Niger and Rwanda—had submitted ratification instruments, although many more countries are expected to do so before the end of the year.

Economists believe that tariff-free access to a huge and unified market will encourage manufacturers and service providers to leverage economies of scale; an increase in demand will instigate an increase in production, which in turn will lower unit costs. Consumers will pay less for products and services as businesses expand operations and hire additional employees.

“We look to gain more industrial and value-added jobs in Africa because of intra-African trade,” said Mukhisa Kituyi, secretary-general of the UN Conference on Trade and Development, a body that deals with trade, investment and development, in an interview with *Africa Renewal* (see page 6).

“The types of exports that would gain most are those that are labour intensive, like manufacturing and agro-processing, rather than the capital-intensive fuels and minerals, which Africa tends to export,” concurred Vera Songwe, executive secretary of the ECA, in an interview with *Africa*

*Renewal*, emphasizing that the youth will mostly benefit from such job creation.

In addition, African women, who account for 70% of informal cross-border trading, will benefit from simplified trading regimes and reduced import duties, which will provide much-needed help to small-scale traders.

If the agreement is successfully implemented, a free trade area could inch Africa toward its age-long economic integration ambition, possibly leading to the establishment of pan-African institutions such as the African Economic Community, African Monetary Union, African Customs Union and so on.

### A piece of good news

Many traders and service providers are cautiously optimistic about AfCFTA’s potential benefits. “I am dreaming of the day I can travel across borders, from Accra to Lomé [in Togo] or Abidjan [in Côte d’Ivoire] and buy locally manufactured goods and bring them into Accra without all the hassles at the borders,” Iso Paelay, who manages The Place Entertainment Complex in Community 18 in Accra, Ghana, told *Africa Renewal*.

“Right now, I find it easier to import the materials we use in our business—toiletries,

cooking utensils, food items—from China or somewhere in Europe than from South Africa, Nigeria or Morocco,” Mr. Paelay added.

African leaders and other development experts received a piece of good news at the AU summit in Mauritania in June when South Africa, Africa’s most industrialised economy, along with four other countries, became the latest to sign the AfCFTA.

Nigeria, Africa’s most populous country and another huge economy, has been one of the holdouts, with the government saying it needs to have further consultations with indigenous manufacturers and trade unions. Nigerian unions have warned that free trade may open a floodgate for cheap imported goods that could atrophy Nigeria’s nascent industrial base.

The Nigeria Labour Congress, an umbrella workers’ union, described AfCFTA as a “radioactive neoliberal policy initiative” that could lead to “unbridled foreign interference never before witnessed in the history of the country.”

However, former Nigerian president Olusegun Obasanjo expressed the view that the agreement is “where our [economic] salvation lies.”

At a July symposium in Lagos organised in honour of the late Adebayo Adedeji, a onetime executive secretary of the ECA, Yakubu Gowon, another former Nigerian leader, also weighed in, saying, “I hope Nigeria joins.”

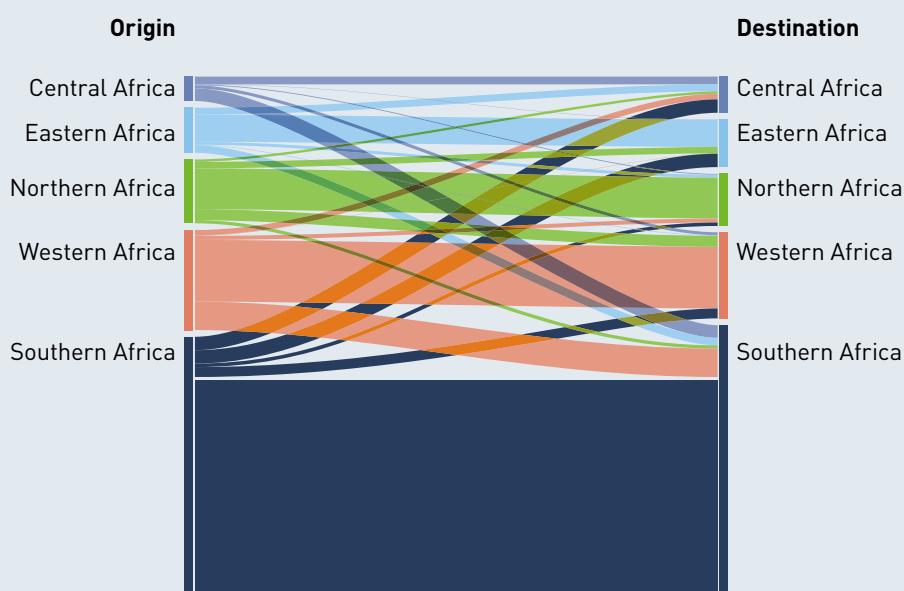
Speaking at the same event, Ms. Songwe urged Nigeria to get on board after consultations, and offered her organisation’s support.

Last April, Nigerian president Muhammadu Buhari signalled a protectionist stance on trade matters while defending his country’s refusal to sign the Economic Community of West African States-EU Economic Partnership Agreement. He said then, “Our industries cannot compete with the more efficient and highly technologically driven industries in Europe.”

In some countries, including Nigeria and South Africa, the government would like to have control over industrial policy, reports the Economist, a UK-based publication, adding, “They also worry about losing tariff revenues, because they find other taxes hard to collect.”

While experts believe that Africa’s big and industrialising economies will reap

## Mapping intra-Africa trade flows



Source: World Trade Organization



the most from a free trade area, the ECA counters that smaller countries also have a lot to gain because factories in the big countries will source inputs from smaller countries to add value to products.

The AfCFTA has also been designed to address many countries' multiple and overlapping memberships in Regional Economic Communities (RECs), which complicate integration efforts. Kenya, for example, belongs to five RECs. The RECs will now help achieve the continental goal of a free trade area.

Many traders complain about RECs' inability to execute infrastructure projects that would support trading across borders. Ibrahim Mayaki, head of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the project-implementing wing of the AU, says that many RECs do not have the capacity to implement big projects.

For Mr. Mayaki, infrastructure development is crucial to intra-African trade. NEPAD's Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA) is an

*Kenyan president Uhuru Kenyatta (top) and Ghanaian president Nana Akufo-Addo signing the AfCFTA.* Office of President Paul Kagame

ambitious list of regional projects. Its 20 priority projects have been completed or are under construction, including the Algiers-Lagos trans-Saharan highway, the Lagos-Abidjan transport corridor, the Zambia-Tanzania-Kenya power transmission line and the Brazzaville-Kinshasa bridge.

The AfCFTA could change Africa's economic fortunes, but concerns remain that implementation could be the agreement's weakest link.

Meanwhile African leaders and development experts see a free trade area as an inevitable reality. "We need to summon the required political will for the African Continental Free Trade Area to finally become a reality," said AU Commission chairperson Moussa Faki Mahamat, at the launch in Kigali.

## AfCFTA Countries

(by mid-July 2018)

### Countries that have ratified

- Rwanda
- Ghana
- Kenya
- Chad
- Niger
- Eswatini (formerly Swaziland)



### AU Member States that have signed the agreement

- Angola
- Algeria
- Benin
- Burkina Faso
- Burundi
- Cameroon
- Cape Verde
- Central Africa Republic
- Chad
- Comoros
- Congo
- Cote d'Ivoire
- Democratic Republic of Congo
- Djibouti
- Egypt
- Ethiopia
- Equatorial Guinea
- Gambia
- Gabon
- Ghana
- Guinea
- Kenya
- Lesotho
- Liberia
- Libya
- Madagascar
- Malawi
- Mali
- Mauritius
- Mauritania
- Mozambique
- Morocco
- Namibia
- Niger
- Rwanda
- Saharawi
- Sao Tome and Principe
- Senegal
- Seychelles
- Sierra Leone
- Somalia
- South Africa
- South Sudan
- Sudan
- Swaziland
- Togo
- Tunisia
- Uganda
- Zimbabwe



Source: African Union

# Africa has phenomenal potential for intra-continental trade

— Dr. Mukhisa Kituyi, UNCTAD Secretary-General

**F**orty-nine of Africa's 55 countries have signed the framework for the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) to create a single continental market for goods and services, with free and unfettered movement of businesspeople and investments. When at least 22 countries ratify it, the AfCFTA will officially come into force, potentially making the continent the largest trading bloc in the world. *Africa Renewal's* **Zipporah Musau** spoke with **Dr. Mukhisa Kituyi**, the secretary-general of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), on what countries stand to gain and what challenges to expect. Excerpts:

## FREE TRADE AREA

**Africa Renewal: What do you say about Africa's push for a free trade area at a time when some countries in the West are becoming increasingly protectionist?**

**Dr. Kituyi:** For Africa, a clear determination to expand trade among ourselves is an important step. Uncertainties in international trade increase the premium on regional intra-African trade. Secondly, what we have learned from the rest of the world is that even if there is populist protectionism, it is a short-term phase that we'll ride out. But for Africa to learn from the experience of East Asia and Latin America even as we wait for protectionism to end, we must build productive trading capacities through regional value chains. Africa trading among its component states strengthens its ability to trade. The experiences gained from that will deliver a greater market share internationally. Africa needs to build the capacity and structural transformation necessary to be a competitive international player. The creation of a continent with a free trade area is therefore an important step towards building, collectively, the competitiveness of African labour and African products internally and internationally.

**What are the three most immediate gains for an African country in a free trade area?**

All studies show that what Africa sells within Africa has more value added than what Africa sells to the rest of the world, which is mostly raw materials. That means intra-African trade creates more employment in the source country than Africa trading with the rest of the world. We look to gain more

industrial and value-added jobs in Africa because of intra-African trade. Secondly, it will build competitiveness, which you can then unleash onto the rest of the world. Thirdly, we will be removing domestic market distortions, which have been adding a burden to domestic consumers because of too much protectionism.

**Will the AfCFTA influence UNCTAD's approach in its operations in Africa? Will you, for example, deal with the continent as a single entity as opposed to individual countries?**

At a personal level, I was involved in designing the architecture for AfCFTA, so I've been working with this from day one. As an organization, UNCTAD has not only encouraged the AU to create a free trade area, but we have also been training negotiators for the regions and the countries. For example, we have been training the regional technical officers from ECOWAS [Economic Community of West African States] and SADC [Southern African Development Community] on service negotiations. What are the offers? What are the implications? What can you do? What should you not do? What are the remedial actions in case of a flood on certain services? This technical support to national negotiators has been a role we played before the AfCFTA, and we are intensifying it now as we prepare for the next phase, which is more attention to trade in services beyond goods, for building a continental common



marketplace for electronic commerce. So we are working with AU member states and organs to build capacity and translate the promise of the AfCFTA into actual economic gains.

**Tariffs alone are not the biggest impediment to intra-Africa trade. Poor infrastructure and the low level of manufacturing in some countries mean they don't produce a significant amount of finished goods to export. What is your take?**

Tariffs are not the only problem, that's a mainstream truth. There is a lot standing in the way of realizing the potential of intra-African trade. But the claim that we are producing similar goods is not true. Even neighbouring villages trade with each other. I come from a place near the border between Kenya and Uganda and I know from my early days that we traded with our neighbours. Africa trades quite a lot across borders. For example, there's a large market in West Africa for East African tea and coffee. There's a large market in East Africa for plantains and specialized nostalgia products out of West Africa. There's a large market for the creative industry, for example, Nigerian movies and music, in the rest of Africa. Africans have a phenomenal potential for intra-continental trade. Similarly, trade is not static. There is no law that says that a country like Tanzania, for example, must only trade in a certain set of products. Countries will always build capacities and opportunities, and innovators will bring in new products that you add into the marketplace. So diversification is taken in stride as trade deepens economic interaction.

**What about infrastructure challenges?**

True, we have a colonial extractive infrastructure, where you find a railway line is from Kasese in Uganda to the Indian Ocean port to transport copper for export. Integrative infrastructure is a critical consideration for intra-African trade, and I'm glad something is being done about that. Currently we have the Cape Town to Cairo road, which has been tarmacked up to Addis Ababa. There are other initiatives, like the Northern Corridor, and the Chinese are encouraging investments to build the road from Kampala to the Atlantic Ocean. I see the importance of the railway line from Dar es Salaam to Rwanda, and others. So the integrative infrastructure already being built today is going to be ready for the test of infrastructure challenges tomorrow.

**What then are the main challenges to intra-Africa trade?**

One of the main challenges to intra-African trade is the nontariff barriers. When there is a deficit of political goodwill, excuses are made to slow down trade. Many times, traders will reach the border and be told, "This product looks too old to be sold to us" or "The quality doesn't seem to be right," or "We cannot ascertain that this was made in your country." The absence of goodwill leads to the use of too many nontariff measures as excuses to slow down trade.

Cultivating goodwill requires that nontariff barriers are rolled back and trade is increased between African countries.

**Doesn't this affect women traders more?**

Last month I released a just-completed study in Nairobi on gender and trade in East Africa. It is true women have more than the usual challenges of cross-border trade. Sometimes they are victims of sexual abuse and harassment. Sometimes they are victims of the typical problems of small traders, because the architecture of East Africa integration defines a 40-foot container being transported from Dar es Salaam to Nairobi as regional trade, but a 20-kilo sack of maize is seen as "smuggled goods." Because the framers were catering to the interests of big business in the cities, they did not pay attention to the right of border communities and small-scale traders to cross the border. The inordinate trouble that women traders go through is basically because they are not a politically strong constituency that gets responses from the policymakers about regional trade. One of the things we have been pushing for is facilitating simplified procedures for cross-border trade and destigmatizing small-scale trade. These represent a major inhibition to the potential of regional trade and integration in Africa.



**One of the main challenges to intra-African trade is the nontariff barriers. When there is a deficit of political goodwill, excuses are made to slow down trade.**



**What should be done?**

Agreements have always been there, but there has not been sufficient mobilization of political goodwill to protect the interests of small-scale traders, specifically artisanal traders and women traders, in cross-border trade. It is not that they are breaking any law, but they are frustrated by officials behaving arbitrarily and acting with impunity.

**Trade agreements can take years for the impact to be felt. When, realistically, can all countries be expected to be on board and begin to implement the AfCFTA?**

If there is sufficient political goodwill, it can be done overnight. There is no reason why we would repeat the mistakes that have been done in other countries. We have to learn these processes within existing regional integration mechanisms and then scale them up. Scale up best practices.

**Are there any benchmarks to assess progress?**

We must ask, what are the areas of improvement? What are the issues being talked about on policy and operations? For example, I hope there will be more gender studies on integration and trade which can unlock the potential of women traders. Most small-scale traders in Africa are women, yet the structure of regional trade caters more to men than women. So we are holding back one of our most important facilitators. 



FREE TRADE AREA

# One-stop border post will boost trading

Southern African trader is cautiously optimistic about a free trade area

BY TONDERAYI MUKEREDZI

**A**s the marketing executive of Dairibord Zimbabwe, a stock exchange-listed exporter of food and beverages in Southern Africa, Tracy Mutaviri is looking forward to a bigger market share for her goods when the African Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) becomes operational.

The economies of scale of serving a larger market will mean her company can trade its beverages and food products beyond its current markets: Botswana, Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa and Zambia. The company may even begin to look at countries in West and East Africa.

Ms. Mutaviri is excited about the opportunities that a big market presents, particularly the benefits of standardized procedures for export. She is currently concerned about tariff and nontariff challenges to her business.

"We have mostly been affected by non-tariff barriers such as obtaining the necessary licences or permits for trading our goods. The process takes a long time, at

times as long as three weeks, and this affects export competitiveness," she told *Africa Renewal*.

Countries have their own individual standards, and exporters must meet each one, she says.

The African Union and the Economic Commission for Africa, two key players in the AfCFTA push, continue to assert that mechanisms will be in place to address these tariff and nontariff barriers.

Still, Ms. Mutaviri adds that cumbersome border documentation requirements and administrative and bureaucratic delays at ports of entry can mean delays of seven days or more. To expedite clearance, she suggests a one-stop border post to harmonise the export documentation process and expedite administrative processes.

*Customers shopping for groceries in a supermarket in Cape Town, South Africa.* 

The World Trade Organisation (WTO) says that a one-stop border post would integrate different border agencies into one that would, among other benefits, reduce transit times for traders and transporters. It will lead to an effective use of available resources and assets at a lower cost, as well as improved competitiveness of goods due to reduced processing times—which, the WTO assumes, will translate into reduced costs.

Particularly cumbersome is the process of getting the necessary sanitary and phytosanitary documents. Sanitary and phytosanitary measures are plant- and



Tracy Mutaviri,  
Marketing Executive of Dairibord Zimbabwe

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# Infrastructure key to intra-African trade

West African traders demand investments in roads, rails and telecom

BY EFAM AWO DOVI

**K**en Ukaoha knows something about infrastructure and intra-Africa trade. He is the founder and chief executive officer of Kenaux International Concept, a shoe and garment manufacturing company based in Aba, southeast Nigeria. Kenaux's products sell in Nigeria and other African countries, including Ghana, South Africa and parts of Central Africa.

## Infrastructure challenges

The poor state of infrastructure is the bane of Africans doing business within Africa, says Mr. Ukaoha, who is also the president of the Association of Nigerian Traders. Despite decades of common market agreements within the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), poor transportation continues to impede market access.

"We do not have railway to move merchandise from one country to the other. Sea-freighting goods is also a problem—the sea links are not there," Mr. Ukaoha told *Africa Renewal*, underscoring the need for domestic shipping lines that can transport goods across countries.

Mr. Ukaoha, who is also an expert in international trade law and globalisation, explained the difficulties in transporting goods among ECOWAS countries: "When I import raw materials like leather from Hamburg in Germany to Lagos in Nigeria, I pay 850 euros [\$986] for a 40-foot container. But the same container transporting our products from Lagos to Tema Port in Ghana costs 1,350 euros [\$1566]."

Road transportation, he adds, also presents challenges. "We don't have good roads, and in the mix of that, you experience a lot of hiccups along the route," including police and customs checkpoints, where bribery is common.

Even within countries, the state of infrastructure is so bad that business owners sometimes construct the roads leading to their factories, dig water boreholes or buy electricity generators for



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production. "All these make us uncompetitive," Mr. Ukaoha admits.

Speaking recently on the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA), Senegalese finance minister Amadou Ba affirmed the prospect of meaningful gains from the newly signed treaty.

"Our countries are individually and collectively committed," Mr. Ba declared, but he added a cautionary note that African policy makers must prioritize investments in regional infrastructure that catalyse integration and facilitate intracontinental trade.

In Ghana, Margaret Lartey, an Accra-based tomato trader, has firsthand experience moving goods by road among different countries. She buys tomatoes from different regions in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire to sell in Burkina Faso and is appalled by multiple police checkpoints on the road and extortion at the borders by police and customs officers.

In addition, transportation costs keep rising due to fluctuating fuel prices. "We used to transport a truck of tomatoes from Ghana to Burkina Faso for \$738, but this has gone up to \$843," Ms. Lartey grumbles.

**Tomato trader, Margaret Lartey, in a market in Ghana.** Efam Awo Dovi

"Construction of road networks, telecom and rail will dramatically open and expand markets and grow business," notes Mr. Ukaoha optimistically. "If we have a cost-efficient and easy way of moving goods from Ghana to Nigeria and other parts of the [West African] region, that will be a market of more than 350 million people."

## Weakness in financial system

Some business leaders, however, fear the border-free agreement could harm local industries.

Trade liberalization, Mr. Ukaoha points out, could be a "killer" because a flood of imports, even from other African countries, may dislodge the local industry. "Unrestricted imports do not allow local producers to grow."

Ultimately, Mr. Ukaoha is sceptical about AfCFTA. "We have ECOWAS, the Southern African Customs Union,

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# Trading while caring for people and planet

Compliance standards can protect ecosystems

BY RICHARD MUNANG & ROBERT MGENDI

**R**atifications are moving ahead, if slowly, on the newly signed African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA)—the world's largest free trade agreement (with the most member countries) since the founding of the World Trade Organization.

The African Union and its member countries hope that, among other benefits, a free trade area will improve Africa's economy.

For the 49 African leaders who have signed AfCFTA's framework agreement (by end of July), a free trade area offers hope for improving socioeconomic conditions on the continent. Africa's current economic indicators are not exactly stellar—low economic productivity, estimated to be 2000% lower than that of developed regions, is compounded by a lack of value addition to commodities in which the region holds a comparative advantage.

For example, because of low value addition, Africa earns a mere 10% of the total value of its agro-value chains. In the cocoa value chain (Africa produces 70% of the world's cocoa), only a dismal \$2 billion out of the more than \$100 billion in chocolate revenues annually returns to the continent.

Similarly, up to 90% of income from coffee goes to rich consuming countries, according to the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA). And the domino effect of job loss worsens the situation.

Low productivity exacerbates unemployment. About 12 million African youths join the labour market every year to compete for just three million new jobs. A huge population of jobless youth is a ticking time bomb, warns Alexander Chikwanda, Zambia's former finance minister, alluding to its potential to fuel unrest and political violence.

With few prospects for economic security, many young Africans have been

risking their lives crossing a dangerous Mediterranean Sea in search of better opportunities overseas. Many have died on the way, some are detained, and recent reports claim others are sold in modern-day slave markets.

Still, the huge and obvious problem is climate change, which is projected to shrink average income in the poorest 40% of countries (most of them in Africa) by a whopping 75% by 2030, according to a 2015 study by the University of California, Beckley, USA.

The study focused on the relationship between temperature and economic activities in countries, and found that climate change will exacerbate global inequality, which will be harmful to particularly poor countries.

## Africa's "machete"

"The path does not close for a man with a machete," says an African proverb, suggesting the AfCFTA could be the machete that catalyzes Africa's economy. If all 55 countries join, the free trade area will consolidate a market of 1.2 billion people with a combined GDP of \$2.5 trillion, according to ECA. The US business publication *Bloomberg* estimates the combined GDP at over \$3 trillion.

A free trade area could boost intra-Africa trade to 52%. That percentage could rise to 70% by 2022, a figure higher than trade within the European Union, currently at 65%.

The AfCFTA also includes a protocol for the free movement of people that will consolidate labour opportunities across the continent and put a brake on brain drain. Currently about 33% of Africa's skilled workforce is seeking greener pastures overseas.

At a glance, AfCFTA looks likely to create unprecedented demand that will drive local manufacturing and



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industrialization, particularly in the agricultural sector. An industrialized agricultural sector could become Africa's strategic growth engine and a tool to rapidly expand its middle class, currently estimated at 300 million.

Africa could rake in \$150 billion annually of value-added agro-produce, expand its economy, create thousands of jobs for the youth, mitigate carbon emissions and enhance its ecosystems' resilience to climate change, states the New Partnership for Africa's Development, the implementing arm of the African Union.

Overall consumer spending amounted to \$1.4 trillion in 2015, according to McKinsey & Company, a global management consulting firm, and business-to-business spending, including in agriculture and its ancillary sectors, would be \$3.5 trillion by 2025.

In a 2013 World Bank report titled *Growing Africa: Unlocking the Potential*



**Textile workers at a factory in Kampala, Uganda.**

© Alamy Stock Photo / Jonathan Rosenthal

of Agribusiness, the bank projects Africa's agribusiness could be worth \$1 trillion by 2030 if it expands Africans' access to capital, electricity, better technology and irrigated land to grow high-value nutritious foods.

But how do CFTA and its market opportunities ensure food-secure homes and increase economic productivity, wealth and the income of the ordinary citizen? How does it address climate vulnerabilities?

### Compliance standards

To achieve AfCFTA's goal of opening market opportunities, Africa needs to adopt compliance standards, experts say. Africa's disproportionate vulnerability to climate change underscores the need to ensure that the process of producing, marketing and supplying products meets certain standards and that it does not damage the ecosystems.

A compliance standard could ensure,

for example, that *attiéké*, processed cassava from Côte d'Ivoire, is marketed to Kenyan shoppers as pure, natural and grown without GMOs, chemicals or pesticides. A compliance standard could also ensure that ecosystems are not damaged during production and that processing and marketing create no harmful emissions.

At the 16th African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) in Libreville, Gabon, in June 2017, African ministers and policy makers called for increased investment in innovative environmental solutions and urged countries to adopt compliance standards on economic activities in environmental, energy and health sectors.

In response, the UN Environment, through its Ecosystems Based Adaptation

for Food Security Assembly (EBAFOSA) policy implementation framework, established and adopted by AMCEN, is providing technical assistance to countries adopting its compliance standards.

The EBAFOSA compliance standards are adapted from the International Organization for Standardization, a body that promotes worldwide proprietary, industrial and commercial standards to ensure that certified products are exported to other countries.

### Evaluation criteria

Under EBFOSA's compliance standards, experts evaluate agro-products along the entire supply chain—from on-farm production, processing and distribution to marketing—based on three criteria. The first is “climate and environment compliance,” a measure of the extent to which production relies on nature-based approaches that enhance ecosystems. The goal is to protect and enhance ecosystems.

“Climate and environment compliance” also involves powering processing with clean energy and using ICT-enabled marketing and supply chain activities to reduce high carbon emissions.

The second criterion is “health compliance,” meaning nature-based approaches are used in production.

The third criterion is “quality and safety compliance” along the production process and value chain.

Several African countries, including Benin, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Gambia, Ghana, Uganda and Zambia, are at various stages of adopting the EBAFOSA compliance standards, which will be a step toward creating an open market for healthy, high-quality and environmentally friendly agro-produce across the continent.

As Africa moves toward full ratification of AfCFTA, the EBAFOSA-promoted compliance standards represent a key item in the agreement's implementation toolbox. Socioeconomic transformation need not come at the expense of people or planet.

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*Dr. Richard Munang is UN Environment's Africa regional climate change programme coordinator and Mr. Robert Mgendi is UN Environment's adaptation policy expert. These are the authors' views, not those of their institution.*



TEXTILE TRADE

# Africa-made luxury loungewear takes on

A 30-year-old sets up 'Walls of Benin' to export finished high quality garments from Africa to

BY RAY MWAREYA

For centuries, unfinished materials for clothing manufacture—silk, cotton, hides—have been sold and shipped from Africa to the fashion capitals of the West, such as London, Paris and New York. In return, a small number of ready-to-wear clothes, cheap shoes and secondhand garments head back to Africa—at vastly marked-up prices or as charity donations.

Now an ambitious startup called the Walls of Benin, led by 30-year-old Chi Atanga, a man of Cameroonian descent born in Manchester, England, seeks to break with history by building factories in Africa that make sleepwear and loungewear—comfortable casual clothing that is stylish and sophisticated, suitable for “all night raves, boats, trains and jet planes,” according to the company’s website. Finished items are sold to high-end shops in Europe for their fashion-hungry clientele.

The brand name Walls of Benin refers to the world’s largest man-made structure, which was completed in the 15th century: a system of moats and ramparts designed to defend the ancient Kingdom of Benin, which is Benin City, the capital of present-day Edo State, Nigeria.

Mr. Atanga calls himself “chief evangelist,” instead of chief executive officer, of Walls of Benin, and says that the company’s goal is “to spread soft power through culture.”

## Taking on the Goliath

Mr. Atanga researched and designed the business plan for Walls of Benin. Buoyed by \$100,000 seed money from the Portuguese government and an apprenticeship with the Erasmus European Entrepreneur Programme, he was able to finance his dream. “Using his gift for networking, Mr. Atanga secured an investment from the Lunan Group, the team behind the well-known

brand Fiorelli,” according to [facetofaceafrica.com](#), an online publication.

He is now setting up production operations in a “special economic zone” outside the coastal city of Mombasa, Kenya’s second-largest city.

“Our concept is not about riding the stereotype, Africa-to-Europe, textile/raw materials value chain, but a new paradigm,” he declares. “Can we take on the Goliath Victoria’s Secret on lingerie in Africa?” he asks, and answers with a firm “Yes!”

How will it work? “Our business model is simple: we take the spirit of African print textiles and swap wax and heavy cloth for more luxurious and ecological fabrics,” he says. Kente, Ghana’s famous silk-and-cotton blend, is an example of an African fabric, while silk and Tencel are natural fibres with extra softness and moisture-wicking properties. “We feel fashion brands in top cities in Europe should manufacture some of their wares



Walls of Benin loungewear. □ Lara Jacinto

# big brands to Europe

in Africa and create jobs, and not merely export jeans, suits and other garments to Africa."

His first trip to Africa as an adult was to Ghana in 2014, and it was an eye-opener. "Everything was bright, vibrant and alive. It amazed me to see African print textiles everywhere. It dawned on me that this was a part of my heritage.

Currently, Walls of Benin operates from Kenya and Rwanda and it is importing silk and Tencel from Portugal. In April 2018, the company partnered with Wildlife Works, a wildlife conservation group based in Kenya, to launch an African production. The hope is to export luxury loungewear made of extra-soft silk and Tencel to Europe and elsewhere. The production is first of its kind on the continent.

Wildlife Works can manufacture a thousand loungewear items per week using digital screen prints. "From the east of Africa to the south of Europe, we are

building the value chain," enthuses Mr. Atanga. He believes that the loungewear fashion industry in Africa, once ignored, has a bright future.

Meanwhile, rapid changes are taking place on a continent that a top British supermodel once chided for not having a Vogue magazine. "Africa's fashion industry is right now super exciting! It is new, at the same time it is centuries old. We are talking about the 55 countries in Africa and huge diaspora populations with billions of dollars of spending power," says Mr. Atanga.

## Exciting times ahead

The rise of the middleclass in Africa and partnerships with established foreign brands help boost the fashion industry on the continent. In addition, the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), a US law that seeks to expand trade and investments with sub-Saharan Africa, "gives duty-free access to the US for selected sub-Saharan African countries," according to *African Business*, a leading publication on Africa. American companies are looking to invest in Africa's fashion industry.

Africans can tap into the \$12 billion US loungewear market through AGOA, which was recently extended to 2025, maintains Mr. Atanga.

His company helps to create jobs by working with eucalyptus farmers and other suppliers who produce raw materials. Eucalyptus pulpwood is industrially spun to produce fabrics that are breathable and cooling.

Also, a dozen local smallholder Kenyan cotton producers have received specialist textile training from Walls of Benin to spin and twist fibre into yarn, weave and knit the yarn into fabric, and bleach, dye and print the fabric to create fashionable sleepwear.

Why begin operations in Kenya? *Africa Renewal* asked Mr. Atanga.

"We chose Kenya because, along with Ethiopia, citizens know the value of a home-grown fashion industry. [These countries] have established training centres to educate indigenous entrepreneurs about diversifying into luxury garments."

Fashion giants such as Sweden's H&M also have their eyes on Africa's fashion industry. With support from Swedfund, the Swedish government's development financing arm, H&M is establishing a textile factory in Ethiopia that will create about 4,000

jobs. Mr. Atanga predicts that with wages rising, many Chinese textile companies will relocate to Africa.

"Monthly wages are rising to \$200 per employee in China, while it's about \$120 in East Africa," he says.

Mr. Atanga is pleased that some countries in East Africa want to ban the import of secondhand clothing. Rwanda already has. Tanzania and Uganda were considering the ban, while Kenya seemed poised to but later backtracked on its decision. Angered by the ban, the US is threatening to exclude such countries from AGOA eligibility status. The ban on used clothing "is a masterstroke," insists Mr. Atanga.

Also, relative political stability and the ease of doing business in East Africa is good for investors, according to the young entrepreneur. "In some countries, one must pay bribes to get the necessary business permits, and electricity supply is pitiful," he says.

Other challenges abound in the textile industry. "Although African textile has an annual value of \$4 billion, only 19% of it is branded. We lack adequate finance to patent and effectively secure our fabrics ecosystem. We also don't want women and children to spend 18 hours in factories while missing out on school," Mr. Atanga adds.

His mixed heritage is inspiring him to use Africa as a backdrop for his investments in the loungewear industry. As a young child he sold bonbons shipped from Cameroon on school playgrounds in Manchester. "I would add my own 'import tax,' because they were made in Cameroon. They were a little more valuable, being imported from Africa," he says, smiling.

"I knew that creating a brand that covers African-made loungewear for sale in Europe could be profitable. This drove me to Portugal to work with high-quality tradesmen, brands and garments, and to East Africa."

On the luxury price point for the pajama sets, he told *facetofaceafrica*, "We think at £195 [\$260] we are being fair. Silk is not cheap and we have taken a lot of time and effort to create a luxury product but at the same time keep the retail price accessible."

For now, Mr. Atanga is focused on his passion for making quality clothes in Africa and exporting them to Europe. "I want to create wealth in the fashion industry in an ethical way," he concludes. 

# China's 'Little Africa' losing its allure

A downturn in a Chinese city once bustling with African traders and brokers

BY FRANCK KUWONU



In a sweltering monsoon afternoon in Xiaobei, in Guangzhou, a city in southeast China, a group of young and middle-aged African men take positions up and down a street lined by shops, alert to the passing of potential clients. Not far from them, in an adjacent street, another group of Africans—three women and a man holding a child in his arms—huddle around bales of merchandise. As the sun slowly sets, the town square fills up with people.

"Welcome to Oversea Trading Mall," reads a neon sign in front of a midrise building overlooking the square. Posters

advertising different products and services are plastered on nearly all surrounding buildings.

This is Xiaobei, also known as 'Little Africa', in the central neighborhood of Guangzhou, China's megacity, where the Oversea Trading Mall is the main attraction for thousands of sub-Saharan African traders in search of good value merchandise. Guangzhou, nicknamed "Chocolate City" because of the large number of Africans living there, is a megalopolis with a population of 13 million.

Having dragged their bales to the edge of the square, three women and their male

**Traders from Africa buying goods in Xiaobei, China.** Gwenn Dubourthoumieu

companion try to negotiate fare with a taxi driver. Sensing a lack of progress in the negotiations, due perhaps to a language barrier, one of the African men gathered around the porch of a nearby shop steps in to facilitate the transaction.

"This is what we do," Magloire, an immigrant from Côte d'Ivoire, told *Africa Renewal*. "We are helping our brothers and sisters with their business needs." He was reluctant to give his full name.

Like Magloire, hundreds of Africans who live in Xiaobei and its neighborhood in Guangzhou see themselves as “brokers.”

As the capital city of Guangdong, China’s richest province and arguably its economic powerhouse, Guangzhou is famous for numerous wholesale markets and its annual International Canton Trade Fair.

Inside Xiaobei’s subway stations, on its streets and at the bougainvillea-adorned pedestrian overpass along the main road, Africans can be found speaking Arabic, Bambara, French, Portuguese, Lingala, Malagasy, Yoruba or Igbo—a reminder of the cultural diversity of this migrant community.

Until about three years ago, Xiaobei buzzed with business activity. Wholesale traders from sub-Saharan Africa regularly streamed in.

In the first nine months of 2014, for example, 430,000 people from sub-Saharan Africa entered or left the city’s border posts, according to official Chinese data.

“Booming China-Africa ties attract Africans to pursue dreams in Guangzhou,” declared China Radio International in 2015, summing up the growing movements of population and goods between the southern metropolis and several countries in Africa.

And just three years ago, local media pointed out the economic success of some of the migrants. A quick survey of residents of Little Africa showed that 2 out of 10 earned over 30,000 yuan (US\$4,800 at the time) a month, more than the average monthly income of local Chinese workers. The rest earn less, comparable to the earning of the average local Chinese worker.

But fast-forward to 2016, and Little Africa is losing its shine. “Commodity dip hits China’s little Africa,” the *Financial Times* reported in July of that year.

## Decreasing trade volume

After reaching \$215.91 billion in 2014, trade volume between China and Africa declined to \$127.97 billion in 2016. The trend would be reversed in 2017, with the total amount rising by 14.1% over the previous year. Yet the level remains below the 2014 peak.

Little Africa’s Chinese and African residents feel the pinch of the slump in trade, which has depressed the flow of traders from the continent.

Barry, a Guinean migrant who declined to give his full name, is a part-time student, a part-time electronics dealer and a smartphone repairman, alludes to an overall feeling of slow business. Around him and across the mall, many shops are closed at midday, while those that are open see few customers coming in.

A trader who used to attend to scores of buyers and sellers from Africa cuts a lonely figure arranging her displays of wigs, weaves and hair extensions while waiting for customers who now come in trickles.

Barry, Magloire and other Africans here blame the plight of Little Africa on an economic slump in Angola, Nigeria and Zambia, greater competition from Chinese importers based in sub-Saharan African countries, restrictive visa requirements and police crackdowns on undocumented workers.

“Angolans don’t come anymore,” laments Amadou from Mali. More Angolans than other countries’ nationals used to come to Xiaobei to do business, he explains. But the total number of sub-Saharan seasonal traders plummeted as the Angolans sharply reduced their business trips because of economic recession that led to a dip in demand for imported goods.

## Chinese in Africa

Amadou and Barry believe an appetite for cheaper goods is still there in African cities, but decelerating economic growth, even if temporary, has recently tamed local demands. African traders no longer find it cost-effective to travel all the way to China to purchase goods.

The change of fortune in Little Africa is also due to a growing number of Chinese entrepreneurs setting up shops in countries across Africa, the Hong Kong-based *South China Morning Post* reported in May of this year. The Chinese traders based in Africa benefit from low import duties and levies, which allow them to import from mainland China and to offer cheap goods to local markets.

The *South China Morning Post* reported the number of Chinese living in Ghana to be between 20,000 and 30,000, several thousand times the number residing there in the mid-1990s. “In just a decade, the flow of economic opportunity between

Africa and China is reversing as Chinese entrepreneurs sense greater possibilities offshore and Africans feel the squeeze on the mainland,” the paper remarked.

Local media in China once put the population of Africans living in Guangzhou at 100,000. Then at the height of the Ebola epidemic in 2014, local officials speculated, and the media report too, that up to half a million Africans lived in the city, stoking anxieties. But authorities were quick to debunk those figures, announcing the official number to be about 20,000.

Chocolate City residents routinely lament what they perceive as the heavy-handedness of the police in enforcing immigration laws—another reason for the population decline in Chocolate City.

“While a first-time entry visa is relatively easy to get, renewing the visa once it expires is anything but, compelling many in Little Africa to go underground. Those who overstay their visas are subject to heavy fines and detention if unable to pay.

Those who can enroll in school retain a legal right to remain in the country. “Some of the migrants enroll in school while doing odd jobs on the side,” Komlan Semanu, a West African diplomat, told *Africa Renewal*.

Barry, the part-time electronics repairman who is also a part-time student, is one example. “I’ll be going to class later in the afternoon,” he told *Africa Renewal*.

A growing number of Chinese entrepreneurs export directly to local African markets, cutting a big slice of the informal trade pie. And with authorities aggressively enforcing immigration laws, Magloire and other Africans ponder their futures in Little Africa.

Some are willing to ride out the slump and others will likely opt for greener pastures elsewhere. Many residents have set their eyes on Yiwu, a town, two hours by train from Shanghai. Dubbed the world’s capital of small commodities, Yiwu seems more hospitable than Guangzhou to many because, at least, the town is spared of constant police checks.

In sum, an economic downturn in sub-Saharan Africa, an increasing number of Chinese traders moving into the continent, tough enforcement of immigration laws in Guangzhou, among other factors, mean that for Africans in China, Little Africa is no longer the place to be. 

# Good governance is the solution to Africa's problems

— Prof. Eddy Maloka, CEO of the APRM

**U**nder the auspices of the African Union, African leaders established the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) in 2003 as an instrument for monitoring governance performance among member states. A self-monitoring instrument, APRM aims to foster the adoption of policies, standards and practices leading to political stability, high economic growth, sustainable development and accelerated regional and economic integration. *Africa Renewal's Zipporah Musau* sat down with **Prof. Eddy Maloka**, the CEO of the South Africa-based APRM Secretariat, to understand how they conduct their business. Here are excerpts:



#### **Africa Renewal: What is APRM's mandate and how does it operate?**

**Prof. Maloka:** We are a specialized agency created by African heads of state and governments to review each other as a way of strengthening governance. We are based in Midrand, South Africa. We send teams to member countries to compile comprehensive reports on governance. We focus on four areas: democracy and political governance, economic governance and management, corporate governance and socioeconomic development. But recently we were asked to also be a tracking instrument of the AU [African Union] on the state of governance in Africa.

#### **How many countries have signed up?**

We started in 2003 with just six members. Today we have 37 members, the latest being The Gambia. We have reviewed 20 countries so far, including Chad, Ghana, Kenya, Mali, Mozambique, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa and others. We have reviewed Kenya twice, and we have just completed the second review of Uganda. We have national offices in several member countries. We encourage new members to create a national APRM office to follow up on our work.

#### **While you have achieved some success, some countries are reluctant to join APRM. Why?**

The accession to the APRM is voluntary. Countries sign up at different times for different reasons. Namibia recently joined, and several countries, such as the Comoros, have written to join. We work with the pace of countries because being a member of the APRM comes with a responsibility. You must be prepared to open your house for APRM to look at how you are conducting business and give you suggestions on how to improve. Ideally, all AU members should be in APRM.

#### **Do countries believe that peer review is in their best interest?**

We always tell countries that APRM is not about finding faults, but that it is a platform to share best practices. For example, Uganda is one of the best models in the managing and integration of refugees. So our report would capture that, although we also highlight the challenges. After our review, some countries may realize that they need to create new ministries, or they may say, "We don't have enough women in parliament" or "We are not doing enough to fight corruption." So they take the necessary measures—institutional and sometimes legislative measures—to ensure that the issues raised in our report are used to strengthen governance in their countries.

#### **Do countries have the technical and financial capacity to implement your recommendations?**

Implementation is a sovereign decision. We do our best to work with the countries. We have a working group on best practices in national planning, co-chaired by South Africa and Uganda, to encourage countries to integrate our recommendations into their national and fiscal planning processes so that they can be budgeted for. We plan to also have targeted missions to assist countries to build capacity.

#### **Without an enforcement mechanism, how relevant will the organization be in the future?**

You don't need an enforcement mechanism; you don't need a "stick" because it's voluntary. When countries join APRM, they are putting on the plate the kind of responsibilities and obligations they are taking as a country. The current chair of the AU, President Idriss Déby of Chad, has requested us to set up a task force to address the issue you just raised. He wants to deepen the country reviews and for the heads of state and governments to focus on how to make these reviews more effective.

#### **APRM has been praised for its early warning system. Can you highlight a few instances where your early warning to countries may have averted a crisis?**

Well, APRM reports highlight some of the issues that require early response. But countries don't always respond early to those issues. For example, I was in Mali recently and everybody was saying that what happened there [fighting between government and rebels] had been predicted in an APRM report, yet the country didn't do much to implement recommendations. And there are other countries where the APRM report highlighted what could happen if certain actions were not taken. We become successful if we implement the recommendations; if we don't, we can only look back and regret.

#### **As part of the AU's reform package, APRM is also now involved in tracking progress in the implementation of Africa's Agenda 2063, as well as the Sustainable Development Goals. Are you up to the task?**

We have started work and will be releasing the first State of Governance [and Accountability in Africa] report in January 2019, and [will] launch it on the margins of the AU summit. On the SDGs, we don't have the exclusive responsibility. A lot of strategic planning work is being done in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia [AU headquarters]. We are coordinating with the other actors in the AU that deal with the SDGs and Agenda 2063 so we don't duplicate each other's functions. We are also talking to the UN.

#### **To measure progress, you need to access data. Yet up-to-date government statistics might not be readily available. How do you address this challenge?**

We do generate data ourselves, but the problem is we have not been managing our data well. We're now digitizing it under the African Governance Data-Hub and will link it up with our national offices to set up a one-stop shop on data—which can be updated and strategically harnessed and deployed. When we

review countries, one of the big challenges is politicized data, for example on unemployment rate. Workers' unions will give you a certain figure but the government will say, "No, it's less." Then the private sector will say something else. So you can get three sets of data on the same issue. At APRM we have a process to validate and verify data, but stakeholders, including the government, have to agree with the data.

#### **How does APRM engage the young generation?**

We are organizing with some of our partners a youth event in Namibia. We are creating a youth desk in our communications section and we are also linking up with universities. We have a group of young people working with us and we also have an internship program. I have recruited many young people who are doing an excellent job. So one of the things we have achieved is capacity building, capacity development and bringing the youth into the APRM. A contingent of youth from the AU will be joining the APRM in the next few months. We hope to integrate and use the youth in our review missions.

#### **Do your country reports highlight youth issues?**

At the country level, yes. If a country is not doing enough to address the plight of the youth, it will come up in the report and we will make recommendations. It is usually one of the crosscutting issues in our reports.



**You don't need an enforcement mechanism; you don't need a "stick" because it's voluntary. When countries join APRM, they are putting on the plate the kind of responsibilities and obligations they are taking as a country.**

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#### **What about gender equality and women's empowerment?**

It's also a crosscutting issue. We don't just confine women to socioeconomic issues, but also to the political sphere and the leadership. If we find that a country does not have enough representation of women in political offices, for example in parliament, we highlight it. The AU has set some targets, and if a country is not working hard enough towards achieving those targets, we say so in our reports. Following our reports, some countries take necessary measures to bring more women into leadership.

#### **What is your final message to African countries?**

It's clearly that good governance is the solution to the problems that we have on our continent. Peace and security challenges are largely the manifestation of governance challenges such as how we manage our elections. Even issues relating to terrorism, management of diversity, development and others are all about governance. Good governance in Africa is an enabler; there is a bottleneck if it's not there. So governance is key! Governance is the route for Africa to claim the century.



## ELECTIONS IN AFRICA

# The evolving state of African elections

Twenty African countries to elect their leaders in 2018

BY FRANCK KUWONU

**G**eneral elections could take place this year in at least 12 African countries. Despite myriad social and political reforms, a smooth handover from one leader to a new one looks uncertain in some of the 12 countries, with sectarian conflict predicted in close to half them.

**In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)**, a vast country the size of Western Europe and one of the biggest in Africa, in December of this year elections are scheduled for the presidency, members of the house of representatives and hundreds of local office holders.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres informed the Security Council in June 2018 that progress towards elections

has been made in the DRC, including redistricting. However, Mr. Guterres expressed concerns about the “distrust amongst political actors over several key issues, including the potential use of voting machines.”

Elections were initially scheduled for November 2016.

“The delayed elections in the DR Congo present formidable challenges,” said Rushdi Nackerdien, regional director for Africa at the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), last February. IFES is a nonprofit organization funded by the US government that supports emerging democracies in organizing elections.

Mr. Nackerdien informed the UN Security Council that “the public has low levels

of trust in the electoral institution, but high expectations that the ballot box will be a mechanism for reform and stability.”

The circumstances surrounding the DRC polls illustrate the continued challenges to holding free and fair elections across the continent. Disputes are common and unrest has also occurred.

**In February, Djibouti** elected representatives to their national assembly, **Guineans** voted for their local representatives and **Sierra Leoneans** chose a new president and parliamentarians. Around the same time, Egypt held presidential elections. In May, **Burundians** voted to amend their constitution.

**In Mali**, presidential elections were held on 29 July 2018 with the support



**Liberian political party supporters celebrate an election victory.** © UN /Albert González Farran

of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, which provided logistical support, including transporting electoral materials across the country, as well as helping to secure the polling stations. Observers reported a low turnout but, “overall, the elections were peaceful,” said Boubacar Keita, a spokesman for West Africa Network for Peacebuilding, a regional peacebuilding organisation that observed the elections. However, incidents of violence were reported in parts of the northern and central regions.

The central government has little control over vast swaths of the northern and central parts of the country, and implementation of a three-year-old peace accord aimed at ending conflict and restoring legal authority in these parts remains deadlocked. In this circumstance, only people living in government-controlled areas could safely vote.

**In Zimbabwe**, elections for president were held on 30 July. “The elections

Dates	Country	Election
23 Feb 2018	Djibouti	National Assembly
7 Mar 2018 & 31 Mar 2018	Sierra Leone	President, House of Representatives & Local
12 Apr 2018	Gambia	Municipal elections
1st Round: 26-28 Mar 2018 2nd Round: 24-26 Apr 2018	Egypt	President
6 May 2018	Tunisia	Local
17 May 2018	Burundi	Constitutional referendum
Apr 2018	Guinea-Bissau	National People's Assembly
30 Jul 2018	Zimbabwe	Presidential, Parliamentary, Senate & local elections
29 Jul 2018	Mali	President
Aug 2018	São Tomé & Príncipe	National Assembly, Regional & Local
Sept 2018	Swaziland	House of Assembly& Tinkhundla
Sept 2018	Rwanda	Chamber of Deputies
Sept 2018	Guinea	National Assembly
10 Oct 2018	Mozambique	Local
Oct 2018	Cameroon	President & National Assembly
Nov 2018	Chad	National Assembly & local
Nov 2018	Mali	National Assembly
26 Nov 2018	Madagascar	President and Parliament
Nov or Dec 2018	Mauritania	National Assembly
10 Dec 2018	Libya	President & Parliament
23 Dec 2018	DRC	President, legislative & provincial

[will] be credible, free, fair and transparent,” President Emmerson Mnangagwa had promised, ahead of the polls. About 44% of Zimbabweans had been concerned about the fairness of the electoral process, according to a poll by the Accra-based research network, Afrobarometer. Fear that the elections will be marred by violence had also heightened after an alleged assassination attempt on President Mnangagwa’s life in June. It is the first elections since Robert Mugabe quit power in 2017.

**In Madagascar**, the prospect of parliamentarian and presidential elections in December 2018 is in doubt following a dispute over parliamentary approval of new electoral laws. In June the Constitutional Court ordered the country’s president, Hery Rajaonarimampianina, to appoint a new cabinet to resolve the impasse.

“The intent of this government is to organize an inclusive presidential election whose results have to be accepted by all,” Mr. Rajaonarimampianina said in a televised speech after appointing the new ministers.

Newly appointed prime minister Christian Ntsay has vowed to conduct an “inclusive presidential election.” Yet even after the president has confirmed that the elections will take place in November, there is still uncertainty as parliamentarians squabble over electoral laws.

“There is nothing more urgent than the holding of peaceful, free, transparent and inclusive elections,” the chairperson of the African Union Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat, said in June. He was referring specifically to the Congo, but his call is easily applicable to other countries. 

# Youth: Getting ready for public office

Young Africans celebrate the first fruit of 'Not Too Young to Run' Campaign

BY LEON USIGBE



**W**ith few or no opportunities to emerge as candidates for elective offices—because they are too young or because they have limited experience—some young Africans are now actively campaigning for a reduction in the age limit for running for public office.

Young people “can no longer be spectators, cheerleaders and campaign merchants in the democratic process,” insists Samson Itodo, a Nigerian human rights activist and the executive director of the Nigeria-based Youth Initiative for Advocacy, Growth and Advancement (YIAGA Africa), a youth organization that promotes good governance, human rights and youth political participation. YIAGA has offices in The Gambia, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria and Sierra Leone.

Using YIAGA Africa’s platform, Mr. Itodo and other youths founded the Not Too Young to Run initiative in May 2016 to campaign for a reduction in the age limit on those vying for political office. The campaign’s slogan is, “If you’re old enough to vote, you’re old enough to run!”

The campaign receives financial and technical support from the Washington, D.C.-based National Endowment for Democracy and National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, the Democratic Governance for Development Project of the UN Development Programme and the Open Society Initiative for West Africa, based in Dakar, Senegal.

## Passing the bill

The Nigerian government last May ratified a constitutional amendment that reduced the age limit for state legislators and those in the federal House of Representatives from 30 years to 25 years, for senators and governors from 35 to 30 and for the president from 40 to 35.

Mr. Itodo said they fought hard to achieve the feat. “The main challenge was convincing legislators to vote in support of the amendment. Dislodging political inequality is an uphill task in a country like Nigeria,” he told *Africa Renewal* in an interview.

Campaigners began by enlisting the support of what the activist referred to

*Nigerian youth campaigning for a reduction in the age limit of those vying for office.*

as “change champions”—federal parliamentarians Tony Nwulu and Abdulaziz Nyako—who introduced the amendments in both chambers of Nigeria’s bicameral legislature—the Senate and the House of Representatives.



Even after both bodies approved the amendments in July 2017, two-thirds of 36 states' legislatures needed to approve before the bill could become law. At that point, Mr. Itodo recalled, campaigners deployed robust tactics. "Popularizing the campaign and galvanizing public action was tough. Social media helped us set the public agenda and mobilise young people to participate in the campaign."

After meeting with Mr. Itodo's team in April 2018, Nigeria's vice president, Yemi Osinbajo, said, "The fact that you are old enough to vote means you should be old enough to run."

The vice president's ruling party, the All Progressives Congress, is up for reelection in February 2019 in what is likely to be a close race, a factor not lost on pundits who suggest the administration is supporting the initiative to gain youth votes in the upcoming elections.

Cynthia Mbamalu, a cofounder of YIAGA and a member of the Not Too Young to Run strategy team, is not concerned about any underlying political calculations. "Did the lawmakers and the president think about their reelection in passing the bill? They probably did, but who wouldn't, especially when young people constitute over 50% of the voting population?" she told *Blueprint Newspaper*, a Nigerian publication.

President Muhammadu Buhari signed the bill into law in May 2018, praising the campaigners for establishing a "formidable legacy."

The constitutional amendment "has energized our youth and will further democratize the governance of our

nation," concurred Bukola Saraki, Nigeria's Senate president, speaking on behalf of his colleagues.

Since the bill became law, Mr. Itodo says more people are showing an interest in running for office.

### Global efforts launched

The global launch of the Not Too Young to Run campaign took place in Geneva, Switzerland, in November 2016, at the first UN Forum on Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law.

The Office of the UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, the UN Development Programme, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the European Youth Forum and YIAGA jointly launched the global campaign.

"Young people have every right to be active participants in civic and public life. It is time to ensure they no longer face arbitrary barriers to run for public office," said the former UN secretary-general's envoy on youth, Ahmad Alhendawi, at the launch.

High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein maintained that "younger generations are not adequately represented in formal political institutions." The IPU secretary-general, Martin Chungong, added, "If young people are not too young to get married, to serve in the military or to choose the parliamentarians who will represent them, they are not too young to run."

Young people around the world have since adopted the hashtag #NotTooYoungToRun to raise awareness of the campaign on social media. But Nigeria's constitutional amendment is the campaign's significant first success.

### An African force

The African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) also endorsed the campaign in Africa. "The ECOWAS Commission is partnering with the AU on the empowerment of the youth of the continent with a bid to release their creative energies, raise their productivity and turn a vibrant human resource into an African development force," the body stated in September

*Samson Itodo on the campaign trail: "If you're old enough to vote, you're old enough to run!"*

2017, ahead of a three-day consultative meeting on youth in Abuja.

In The Gambia, girls' and women's rights activist Isatou Bittaye leads the Not Too Young to Run campaign launched in February 2017 in that country. Ms. Bittaye also leads the Gambia's branch of the Young Leaders Program, an initiative of Women Deliver, a global advocacy group for girls' and women's rights.

The Young Leaders Program quotes Ms. Bittaye on its website: "Political parties' executive and selection committees are dominated by men. It is in there that important decisions are made and candidates are selected to contest for political office."

Ms. Bittaye and her team have held meetings in the country's five regions to mobilize young people to get involved in politics.

### Hard work begins

Passing laws that reduce age limits for those holding public office is only a first step in getting young people elected; the hard work involves (but is not limited to) developing and articulating the best policy ideas during vigorous political campaigning, networking and getting logistical and financial support.

Mr. Nwulu, who cosponsored the bill in Nigeria's parliament, told *Africa Renewal* that "the bill has been passed, it's just the beginning. It's now left for young people for whom this bill is meant to begin to take advantage of all that it offers."

It may be tempting to think that the law is the end of the journey, says President Buhari, and cautions, "It is only the beginning. There is still a lot of work ahead in ensuring that young people take full advantage of the opportunities provided."

Ms. Bittaye believes that success will depend not only on constitutional provisions but also on the active engagement of young people in politics. "There will be no progressive policies for young people without the involvement of young people. Through their involvement, young people can...lobby for parties to adopt youth policies."

Activists are optimistic about the possibility that other countries will replicate the success in Nigeria. If that happens, the youth will find more seats at the leadership table, and old politicians could find it more difficult to exploit young people for selfish ends. Time will tell. 



# Lessons from Russia

What went wrong for Africa at the World Cup?

BY DUROSIMI THOMAS

**O**n the morning of 29 June, Senegal woke up to a heart-rending headline in *Le Soleil*, one of the country's major newspapers. Two words—"La désillusion" ("The Disappointment")—summed up the paper's response to the country's poor showing against Colombia, which ended 0–1, in the crucial World Cup Group H match in the Russian city of Samara.

*Le Soleil* captured the mood of millions of not only Senegalese, but also of Africans all over the continent whose hopes that an African team would go beyond the first rounds in the 2018 World Cup were soundly dashed.

Senegal's football team, the Lions of Teranga, was Africa's last hope at the global tournament held once every four years. While the other African teams—Egypt, Morocco, Nigeria and Tunisia—were booted from the pitch early on, the Lions of Teranga seemed headed for victory after mauling Poland 2–1 and tying with Japan 2–2. But a final victory was not to be.

Mohamed Bah of Freetown, Sierra Leone, had saved up money to watch the games on a large screen in one of the makeshift viewing halls. He was crushed by Senegal's loss. "It was painful," he confessed.

## Why the dismal performance?

This year's World Cup was the first since 1982 in which an African team failed to get beyond the group stage. At the 1982 finals in Spain, Cameroon's Indomitable Lions, the continent's most competent team that year, exited without losing a match. The team drew 1–1 with eventual champion Italy and 0–0 with both Poland and Peru.

In 1982, Algeria defeated West Germany 2–1, downed Chile 3–2, but lost to Austria 2–0.

Why did the African teams perform so badly in Russia? Some pundits blame African teams for using the wrong tactics, but

the problems run deeper than the actions on the pitch.

Africa's football flaws have been visible for a long time. Most domestic leagues are not run efficiently, forcing the best players to seek greener pastures abroad. Overreliance on foreign coaches unaccustomed to the particulars of African football do not help matters.

And then there is corruption. In June this year, an investigative documentary produced by renowned Ghanaian investigative journalist Anas Aremeyaw Anas revealed how match officials and football managers in Africa demanded hefty bribes to influence a game's outcome.

Among those dragged down in the scandal was the chair of the Ghana Football Association and vice president of the Confederation of African Football, Kwesi Nyantakyi, who was seen in a hotel room taking a \$65,000 bribe from a supposed businessman seeking to sponsor the Ghanaian football league for up to \$15 million over three years.

After the exposé, Mr. Nyantakyi resigned his positions and rescinded his membership in the executive council of football's governing body, FIFA.

Many African societies still mischaracterize athletes as people unable to withstand the rigours of formal education. In many cases, those who wish to continue in sport drop out of school. Football academies have been springing up in many countries, providing opportunities for young people to acquire an education while honing their athletic skills.

Diambars in Senegal, Planet Soccer in Burkina Faso and Kadji Sports in Cameroon are some of the recently established football academies on the continent.

Some have suggested that African teams lack confidence in games against renowned football legends such as Argentina, Brazil and Germany.

Kalusha Bwalya, a former African footballer of the year who once captained the





Zambian national team, admitted in a BBC Radio interview: "We have the talent, but we have a lack of belief in ourselves."

"I watched Nigeria play very well in the second half, but I ask myself why they couldn't start the game like that in the first half," Mr. Bwalya reflected. He called on Africa's sporting federations to work with their coaches to address this problem.

Lamin Bangura, one of the most successful coaches in Guinea and a former Sierra Leone international who played two Africa Cup of Nations games, pointed to a tendency to neglect indigenous coaches. "We have to ask ourselves why African coaches are not allowed to take charge of the national teams."

In an interview with *Africa Renewal*, Mr. Bangura asked, "What is the difference between the foreign coaches of the other African teams [Egypt, Morocco and Nigeria] and the Africans who coached Senegal and Tunisia? All the teams were out in the first round."

It used to be that players weren't paid well enough to play hard. These days, most African players ply their trade in Europe and are very well paid. Senegal's team has the heaviest wallets among the African representatives at the World Cup, according to Transfermarkt, an authoritative website on football. The combined worth of Senegal's team is about \$350 million, while the combined worth of Egypt's is around \$115 million.

### Funds are key

Africa's domestic leagues, which produce the best talents for national teams, need money to survive. Preparing for the World Cup requires a budget, and for many countries, investing in sport is not as urgent a priority as addressing poverty-related problems.

Despite Africa's disappointing show in Russia, satellite and cable television companies in Africa will have raked in considerable earnings. The 2018 World Cup is expected to take in about \$6 billion in revenue for FIFA, up 25 percent from 2014. As many as 3.2 billion people watched the tournament, and broadcast revenue had been projected to rise to \$3 billion.

**Senegal Sadio Mané in action during the World Cup.**  Alamy / IPAS

Some fear that satellite and cable TV's disproportionate focus on European leagues may be doing harm to the growth of Africa's domestic leagues. And for this FIFA World Cup season, the battle was on for the eyeballs of African viewers.

### Eyes on 2022

A week before the soccer party kicked off in Russia, Kenyan telecom giant Safaricom inked a live-streaming deal with Kwesé, which is rapidly positioning itself as a pan-African market leader. This meant that fans could watch matches live on their phones.

"We want our customers to watch the biggest sports spectacle in the world on their mobile devices for the first time ever," Safaricom's acting director, Charles Kare Wan-johi, said in Nairobi.



**3.2 billion**  
people watched the  
2018 World Cup

**\$3 billion**  
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raised from broadcast

**\$350 million**  
is the worth of the  
Senegal team

Moving forward, Africa's football administrators must make amends for the disappointment in Russia. Morocco's failed bid to host the World Cup for the fifth time (losing to the joint bids of Canada, Mexico and the United States) adds salt to the wound.

On the eve of the 1970 Africa Cup of Nations, the late former FIFA president Sir Stanley Rous declared that an African team would win the World Cup before the end of the 20th century. That did not happen. Five World Cup finals into the new century, Mr. Rous's prediction still rings hollow.

But hope reigns supreme. World Cup 2022 in Qatar is next. It will be time for Africa to test its abilities. The time to begin preparations is today. 



SPECIAL FOCUS ON THE SAHEL

# Strengthening bonds in the Sahel

Confronting insecurity, joblessness, injustice and inequity could transform the region

BY ERNEST HARSCH

**P**olitical insecurity in the Sahel has its roots in poverty and climate change, declares Mahamadou Issoufou, the president of Niger.

Many agree with President Issoufou. Yet local community leaders, development experts and civil society activists claim that the region's governments and their foreign partners are not putting nearly enough money or effort into creating jobs, improving living conditions or reducing regional and social inequities—a fact that may prompt some frustrated youths to join armed movements or criminal gangs.

Even some insurgent leaders acknowledge that their recruits are motivated largely by economic needs. As the spokesperson of one faction in Mali told researchers from New York's Columbia University recently, some combatants say they are not

jihadists, not even Islamists. They are just people trying to feed their families.

The United Nations lists Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal and The Gambia as the Sahel countries. This semiarid region, sandwiched between the Sahara Desert on one side and tropical forests and savannas on the other, is regularly battered by drought and harsh weather.

## Fighting marginalization

In most countries in the Sahel, populations suffer from economic and social disparities that contribute to the people's grievances against the central authorities. For example, development in Burkina Faso's northern provinces, where insurgents are most active, lags some 50 years behind the rest of the country, says the emir of Liptako, a high-ranking Burkinabe traditional leader.

**Citizens fetching water from a community bore-hole in Chad.** UNDP / Jean D. Hakuzimana

"A population that lives in misery is weakened and succumbs easily to terrorism and extremism," he observes.

Further insights into Burkina Faso's northern region appeared in a recent report by the International Crisis Group, a Brussels-based think tank. The group noted that Burkina Faso's north has been relatively marginalized, with far fewer services, state facilities and development projects than elsewhere.

As a result, many people feel abandoned and distrust the government's security forces. That distrust is deepened by the fact that few officials come from the Peuhl or Fulani ethnic group that predominates in the north.

In 2017 the Burkinabe government announced an Emergency Programme for the Sahel, as the country's northernmost region is also called, to fight insecurity and save West Africa from the rise of terrorism. Over three years (2017-2020), the government plans to spend about \$835 million on health, education and other social services, job creation, roads and key economic sectors.

Some critics believe, however, that the programme does not devote enough to water, grazing and livestock breeding, the main occupation of most Fulani people. Also, it does not sufficiently address corruption and injustices in the public administration.

Also in 2017, the government of neighboring Mali initiated a focused development plan for that country's north. The government projects that \$3.9 billion in investments will raise the development levels of the regions of Kidal, Timbuktu and Gao to that of the rest of the country within 10 to 15 years.

But Mali remains very poor, and the government itself can commit to only 14% of the money needed. Abdoulaye Idrissa Maïga, at the time prime minister of Mali, visited Paris in October 2017 to seek more support from the developed countries' Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

Niger has similarly launched a five-year plan for its Lake Chad region. Adjoining western Chad and northern Nigeria, the lake has seen a 90% drop in its water level, devastating the local economy and providing fertile ground for Nigeria's brutal Boko Haram rebels.

Similarly, authorities in Senegal introduced accelerated development projects in its southern Casamance region as a prolonged separatist insurgency began to wind down several years ago. Those efforts have helped preserve overall peace in Casamance, although armed banditry remains a problem.

Concerned about the situation in the Sahel, UN Secretary-General António Guterres in May 2018 appointed Ibrahim Thiaw as his special envoy for the region.

### Promoting tolerance.

In announcing Mr. Thiaw's appointment, the secretary-general described the region as "one of the world's most complex areas."

Most of the Sahel's insurgent groups use the language of Islamist extremism. In every country, however, Islamic scholars and community leaders have stepped forward to dispute the insurgents' interpretations and instead promote tolerance.

In January, independent intellectuals opened a centre in Chad's capital city, N'Djamena, to counter extremist views. And the government of Niger has appointed Islamic authorities to prominent positions to help counter insurgent recruiters. In Burkina Faso, Islamic and Christian associations have joined hands to propagate interfaith messages.

However, most of the Sahel's underlying conflicts have little to do with religion as such. While some youths gravitate toward armed movements because they lack jobs or other means of making a living, others join because of various local ethnic, social and political conflicts.

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**90%**  
drop in Lake Chad's  
water level

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In Mali's north, Tuareg groups have long fought for regional autonomy. In 2012 several Islamist movements took advantage of that conflict to occupy much of the north, but they were pushed back the following year by a French-African intervention force. Today the Malian government is seeking to accommodate Tuareg concerns, while simultaneously combating Islamist insurgents.

Central Mali, meanwhile, has erupted into serious ethnic fighting, often originating in land conflicts between Fulani livestock herders and farmers of other ethnic groups. Seeking to restore peace, Fulani and Dogon youth associations came together in April to promote intercommunity dialogue.

Mauritania also suffers from the legacy of slavery, which underlies tensions between the dominant Bidan ethnic group (of Arab and Berber heritage) and the Haratine, the descendants of former slaves.

Although many Mauritanian authorities have been reluctant to acknowledge

slavery's social legacies, some are starting to take firm action by strengthening legislation and initiating judicial proceedings. Mauritanian courts have condemned many defendants to stiff prison sentences for treating Haratine as inferiors.

Gender disparities are the most apparent across all Sahelian societies. While several governments in the region have adopted laws affirming women's rights and promoting their political participation, social phenomena such as female genital mutilation and child marriage remain common, particularly in rural areas. In Burkina Faso, Mali and Senegal, a wide range of civil associations are actively seeking to mobilize communities against such practices.

Women and girls are especially vulnerable to abuses and extortions by the region's armed movements, and suffer from rapes, kidnappings and murders. Although women have a keen interest in promoting peace, they are rarely represented in peace efforts, notes Siga Fatima Jagne, the commissioner for social affairs and gender of the Economic Community of West African States.

Enhancing human rights and political engagement is vital for all citizens in the region. According to the Ibrahim Index of African Governance, which measures governance performance in African countries, five of the countries in the Sahel (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Niger and Senegal) improved their overall ranking between 2012 and 2016. Yet many problems remain, including widespread corruption, electoral irregularities, media intimidation and political violence.

Some officials claim that the so-called "war on terror" could be pursued more effectively if civil liberties were restricted. Yet human rights activists argue the opposite: that respect for human rights strengthens the bonds between governments and their citizens, and thus improves security overall.

As Boundi Ouoba, a newspaper columnist from Burkina Faso, puts it, "The problem of terrorism cannot be resolved without social justice and deep institutional reforms to eliminate all disparities and wrongs. We must attack the problem at its root."

Or, as President Issoufou maintains, "Peace cannot be won with arms alone." 

## INTERVIEW



# Turning dry Sahel into land of opportunity

— Ibrahim Thiaw, Special Adviser  
for the Sahel

Ibrahim Thiaw of Mauritania was recently appointed the UN Secretary-General's special adviser for the Sahel. A former deputy executive director for UN Environment, Mr. Thiaw is now charged with, among other responsibilities, mobilising domestic and international support for the socioeconomic development of the Sahel region, which covers 10 African countries, according to the UN. In this interview for *Africa Renewal*, Mr. Thiaw spoke with Minieille Baro of the UN Information Centre in Dakar on his vision, the need for urgency and the significant investment opportunities in the Sahel. These are excerpts.

## SPECIAL FOCUS ON THE SAHEL

### **Africa Renewal: What is the scope of your mandate as the special adviser for the Sahel?**

Mr. Thiaw: I work with all UN agencies to harmonize support for the Sahel region. The UN will have multiple roles through its various agencies, funds and programmes. One is to provide expertise, the second is to mobilize international partners and institutions, including the private sector, and help coordinate action and bring a coherent response to the multiple challenges that the Sahel is facing. The third role is to highlight the immense business potential in the Sahel and to promote sustainable development in the region.

### **Why is the UN deploying a special adviser for the Sahel?**

To coordinate the work of the UN system and to facilitate the cooperation between the different agencies working on the Sahel support plan. It is important for my office, as well as the UN Office for West Africa and all 30 agencies that operate in the Sahel, to

provide an integrated service to member states. My job also involves mobilizing international partners and other institutions, including the private sector, and then coordinating action to bring a coherent response to the multiple challenges facing the Sahel. Lastly, my office will highlight the potential in the Sahel and help promote sustainable development in the area. The Sahel is not lacking natural resources, although it may be lacking the financial means for sustainable development. We are saying, "Please, invest in the Sahel, because there are huge business opportunities in the region."

### **Almost 65% of the population in the Sahel is under 25, and there are few opportunities for young people. How will you tackle poverty and stop the youth from being attracted to groups engaged in terrorist activities?**

The Sahel population is young, which is a challenge, but it is also an opportunity. Young people are energetic, dynamic and ready to promote development.

**65%**

Of the  
population in  
the Sahel is  
under 25 years

Youth in the region are becoming more educated and can benefit from the opportunities we see around us. What governments and the international community need to do is to recognize youth as players—not as a burden. It is important to help them identify opportunities for development, including creating small and medium enterprises.

#### **What further action is required?**

A change in policies. The region has plenty of opportunities, yet lots of the people are poor. We must break that paradox by changing policies.

#### **What impact can the UN make in the Sahel, and what are the challenges?**

First, we have a mandate from the Security Council to develop a UN Integrated Strategy for the Sahel. We are now developing a concrete plan, with specific activities and actions that can be promoted not only by the UN, but by other partners, including the private sector. Most of the challenges in the Sahel can be turned into opportunities.

#### **Are there any opportunities?**

Yes. For example, the Sahel is extremely hot, and that heat can be turned into renewable energy. Also, the richest fishing ground in the world is off the coast of West Africa, which covers some Sahelian countries. Again, the geographical position of the West African coastline is an advantage. Being close to Europe, fish can be caught there today and be in European markets the next day, while still fresh. It is not by chance that you see many big fishing companies going there.

#### **What are the main challenges facing the Sahel?**

One of the biggest constraints in the region is the lack of electricity. However, with the abundant sunlight and the wind all year round, we can create renewable energy almost everywhere in the Sahel. In some cases it could be off-grid solutions, and in other cases it can be on-grid solutions, meaning that we generate energy, transfer it to the national grid and distribute it to reduce dependence on fossil fuel. Under the Paris Agreement on climate change, countries are required to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. We need to generate energy that can transform economies in the Sahel. For example, fishing products can be processed locally, creating value-added jobs for the local youth. Although pastoralism can pose a challenge due to the frequent conflicts between pastoralists and farmers in the region, at the same time, there is plenty of fresh beef, even halal, exported from the Sahel to such places as the Middle East and North Africa.

#### **Do you intend to promote environmental protection and mitigation against climate change in the Sahel?**

Although the Sahel is dry, it is also blessed with rivers and other water bodies: Gambia River, Senegal River, the Niger River, Lake Chad, and others. It also has underground water,

which is rare in other dry regions of the world. Here in our desert we have fresh water, which represents another opportunity that can be developed. Currently the water can't be harnessed for lack of energy. So, yes, the environmental issue is cross-cutting and will not be isolated. There are three factors that are cross-cutting: environmental issues (including energy), women and youth.

#### **How do you foresee change here?**

Change can happen by empowering the youth and women. In the Sahel, those under 25 years represent more than 65% of the population. Empowered women can produce enough to feed not only their families, but also the rest of the country. Any jobless youth who migrates is an economic loss to his or her society. It means they are no longer active in the home economy and, more important, economic migration puts their society at a disadvantage.

#### **How will you partner with the private sector?**

Our role is to demonstrate with actions, with concrete studies and best practices, that investing in the Sahel is good business. We will work with member states to reduce risks in the region and to make sure there is rule of law and that the right policies for investment are in place. Our role within the UN is to maintain that dialogue with member states and create the



**One of the biggest constraints in the region is the lack of electricity. However, with the abundant sunlight and the wind all year round, we can create renewable energy almost everywhere in the Sahel.**



conditions conducive for good business.

#### **How do you envisage your collaboration with governments?**

The UN has been operating in this region for many years, so we have excellent relations with governments. We have also excellent relations now with lower-level authorities like sub-national authorities and local communities. We also have a good partnership with the World Bank, the African Development Bank and many NGOs operating in the region. Our role as the UN is to provide leadership and vision and to create a platform for all actors to come together for the region's development. The support plan we have prepared is not a list of projects; it would be a mistake to think that you can transform economies through pilot projects. We are talking about scaling up initiatives and opportunities that are there already and creating the transformations needed at the national level. Development will not be achieved by foreigners but by Sahelians themselves. I have been inspired for a long time by this saying by late Burkinabe historian Joseph Ki-Zerbo: "We do not develop others, we develop ourselves."

# Confronting sexual violence in schools

Countries and activists adopt tough measures to tackle the growing crisis

BY PAVITHRA RAO

**R**achel Njeri, a student of Makerere University in Uganda, wept bitterly when recounting a sexual assault that took place in April 2018. "I tried to resist his actions but he was stronger than me. He grabbed me and threw me on the cabinet files at the corner."

Her attacker, she alleged, was a university administrator. He has since been suspended and charged with sexually harassing a student.

Ms. Njeri said she had gone to collect her transcript from the administrator's office when the man pounced on her. She managed to take a photo during the attack with her mobile phone that went viral.

In Nigeria, the Obafemi Awolowo University in June sacked a tenured professor for allegedly demanding sex from a female student, Monica Osagie, in exchange for passing marks.

Ms. Osagie released to the public a secretly recorded conversation with the professor. The audio was widely distributed on social media, grabbing the attention of international news organisations such as CNN and the BBC.

University authorities confirmed that one of the recorded voices was the professor's. He demanded sex in exchange for a passing grade, to which Ms. Osagie responded, "Prof, you know what? Let me fail it. I can't do it."

## Sexual abuse on the rise

In Africa, reports of the sexual abuse of girls by their teachers have increased with the help of social media and new recording technologies.

The World Health Organisation reported in 2014 that young women are commonly taken advantage of in school environments, while UN Women reported that up to 20% of women in Nairobi schools have been sexually harassed.

In January 2018, Uganda's president Yoweri Museveni released an investigative report on sexual violence in higher education institutions in the country. The report



stated that 40% of males and 50% of females felt sexually threatened on their campuses.

In a study published this year, *Experiences of Gender-Based Violence at a South African University: Prevalence and Effect on Rape Myth Acceptance*, researchers Gillian Finchilescu and Dugard Jackie of the University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa, found that most sexual assault cases are unreported, which hamstrung prevention efforts.

The #MeToo movement that swept from the US across the world in 2017 to raise awareness about sexual harassment and abuse has also encouraged some African women to speak out. Mona Chassero, who runs a shelter in Senegal for women rape victims, told Reuters last October that, "Women are starting to speak out, little by little, but we're only at the very beginning."

"Most girls will not report it because no one believes them," laments Ms. Njeri. But a defiant Ms. Osagie told CNN, "I am actually happy I came out.... For me, speaking up will bring more women to speak and eradicate what is happening around young women."

In April 2016, female students at South Africa's Rhodes University protested the high number of rapes on campus. To counter the common practice of victim blaming, the students published the names of 11 male students who had allegedly been involved in sexual assault but had not faced any

*School children in Cape Town, South Africa, attend a theatre show that educates them about rape.* Panos/George Philipas

investigation. University authorities denied they had shown scant attention to the issue.

On why many women do not report sexual assault cases, Ms. Osagie said they are afraid of being insulted or humiliated by others. She said that after she publicized her ordeal, "A guy came up to me at a bank and said, 'Is this not the girl who harassed a lecturer?' and called me a prostitute."

Several countries, universities and students have tried various measures to control the unwanted behavior.

Ugandan parliamentarian Anna Adeke, who represents the National Female Youth Constituency, in April this year led efforts to set up a parliamentary special committee to investigate sexual harassment in institutions of higher education in her country.

A Sexual Offences Bill was presented in the Ugandan parliament in 2016; however, cases of abuse still occur. In 2017, the proprietor of a prominent institution allegedly fathered several children with his students.

Former secretary-general of the Uganda National Teachers' Union James Tweheyo said at the time, "It is not ethical, it is not professional, it is even religiously wrong. It is wrong for somebody entrusted with the

responsibility of taking care of children to be the one to lead them into temptation."

In 2016 the Nigerian Senate enacted the Sexual Harassment in Tertiary Educational Institutions Prohibition Bill; offenders could face up to five years in prison. After the Obafemi Awolowo University story broke, the Senate passed a motion to investigate sexual violence in universities nationwide.

Benin has introduced a law that makes sexual harassment illegal in schools, offices and homes.

Civil society has not lagged behind in fighting the vice. Over the years, African citizen activists have become more vocal in campaigning against all forms of gender-based violence. Egypt's Mariam Kirollas became prominent during the Arab Spring uprising when she mobilized crowds to chant: "Harassment will not do you good; a woman's voice is not a sacrilege, it is a revolution."

### Naming and shaming

Ms. Kirollas cofounded the group Operation Anti-Sexual Harassment and Assault. Due in part to the activism of this and other groups, Egypt in 2014 passed a law that criminalizes sexual harassment. Before then, says Ms. Kirollas, sexual harassment "was often conflated with rape."

She adds, "This conceptual and lexical opaqueness of the meaning of the term reveals the multiple layers of denial that allowed a violative behaviour to be a normative one, wildly spread, particularly with the absence of a law to explicitly define it."

Egypt has witnessed a jump in reported cases of sexual assaults since the 2011 uprising that toppled Hosni Mubarak from the presidency, with large numbers of mob attacks on women during political protests.

A 2013 UN study stated that 99.3% Egyptian women had experienced sexual violence. Campaigners, such as the human rights activist and lawyer Ragia Omran, have called for the government to do more to stop the abuse.

Countries are doing the right thing by passing laws against sexual violence, but there could be an increase in reported cases if victims feel able to trust the authorities. Passing new laws is not enough, says Mary Wandia, a leading Kenyan women's rights advocate, adding that, "The police force is often uninterested in domestic violence..."

see page 34

# UN calls on countries to stand against genocide

BY SHARON BIRCH-JEFFREY

**W**ith only a few months before the 70th anniversary of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, the United Nations has renewed its appeal for the universal ratification of the Convention. This is meant to encourage states that are still not party to the convention to ratify or sign on to it before the anniversary of its adoption on December 9.

The current UN appeal is part of a yearlong campaign launched at the end of 2017 to achieve universal ratification of the convention. As of today, a total of 149 states (including one non-member observer state) have ratified or acceded to the Genocide Convention. Another 45 UN member states have yet to do so, among them 20 countries in Africa.

The convention describes genocide as a crime committed with the intent to destroy a national, ethnic, racial or religious group, in whole or in part. It does not include political groups or so-called cultural genocide.

This definition was the result of a negotiating process and reflects the compromise United Nations member states reached while drafting the convention in 1948.

Speaking at the UN headquarters in New York in June, UN Secretary-General António Guterres reminded member countries that "all atrocity crimes are preventable and can never be justified."

Responsibility to prevent and stop genocide rests with the state in which this crime is being threatened or committed, he said, adding, "At this time of extreme challenges, we must not abandon the responsibility to protect or leave it in a state of suspended animation, finely articulated in words but breached time and again in practice."

"Ratifying the Genocide Convention is a matter of moral obligation towards humanity," Adama Dieng, the UN Secretary-General's special adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, declared at the



Adama Dieng.

launch of the campaign last December. "It represents a recognition of the responsibility of states toward their populations and shows respect for those who have perished as a result of this crime."

"But genocide should not be part of our present or our future," continued Mr. Dieng. "It is not an accident, nor is it inevitable. It is our inaction, or our ineffectiveness in addressing the warning signs, that allows it to become a reality. A reality where people are dehumanized and persecuted for who they are, or who they represent. A reality of great suffering, cruelty, and of inhumane acts that have at the basis unacceptable motivations—the thirst for power or resources, distorted views of identity supremacy, extremist ideologies, selfish interests."

He added, "Remembering the victims, the tragic events of the past, and witnessing the suffering of populations around the world today should prompt us to take action."

The Convention on Genocide was among the first United Nations conventions addressing humanitarian issues and was adopted in 1948 in response to the atrocities committed during World War II.

Recognized as a serious crime under international law, genocide has resurfaced several times since the adoption of the Convention, including in Rwanda (1994), and Srebrenica, Bosnia and Herzegovina (1995). 

*A list of countries that have not signed the convention can be found at: <http://bit.ly/2LoqowJ>*

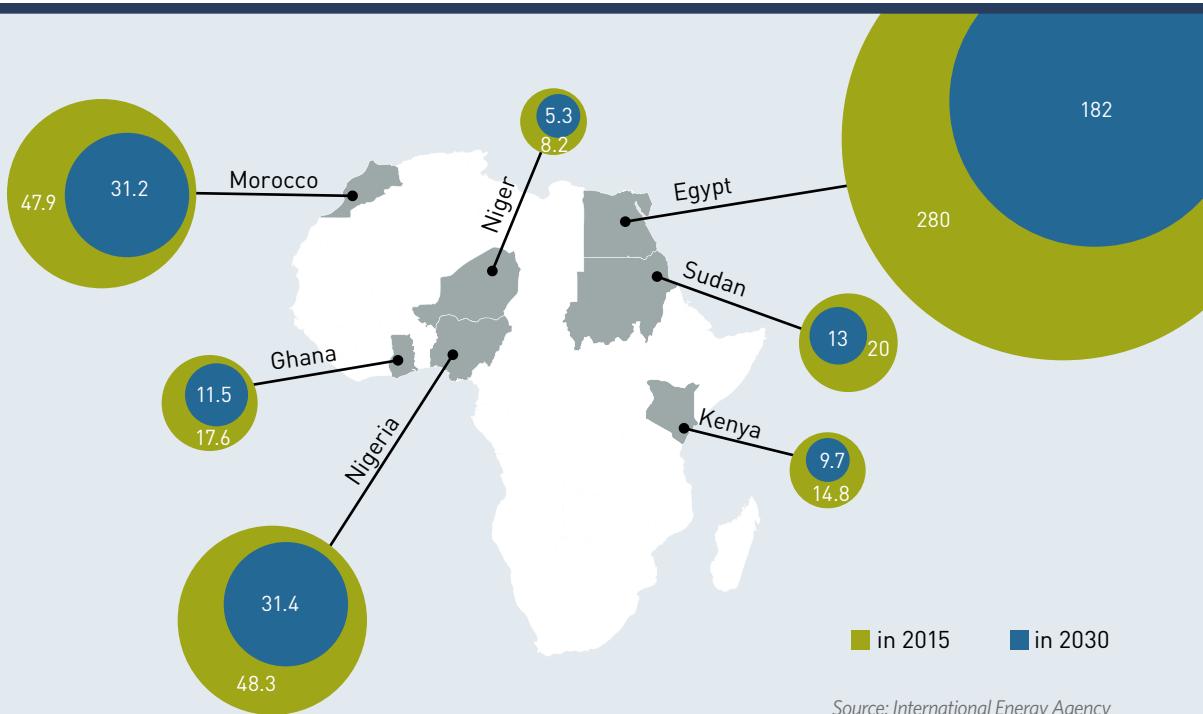
# Is Africa ready for nuclear energy?

Economic growth puts pressure on countries to go nuclear, but hurdles remain

BY LAURA GIL

## Current & expected electricity generation of African countries considering introducing nuclear energy

Unit: Terawatt hour (TWh)



Source: International Energy Agency

**Y**ears back, nuclear energy was a fancy option limited to the industrialized world. In due course, nuclear could be an energy source for much of Africa, where only South Africa currently has a nuclear power plant.

Governments across the continent are devising development policies to become middle-income countries in the medium term. Socioeconomic growth comes with a rise in energy demand—and a need for a reliable and sustainable energy supply.

For industrializing countries in need of a clean, reliable and cost-effective source of energy, nuclear is an attractive option.

“Africa is hungry for energy, and nuclear power could be part of the answer for an increasing number of countries,” says Mikhail Chudakov, deputy director general and head of the Department of Nuclear Energy at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), an international organization that promotes the peaceful use of nuclear technology.

A third of the almost 30 countries currently considering nuclear power are in Africa. Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Morocco, Niger, Nigeria and Sudan have already engaged with the IAEA to assess their readiness to embark on a nuclear programme. Algeria, Tunisia, Uganda and Zambia are also mulling the possibility of nuclear power.

“Energy is the backbone of any strong development,” says Nii Allotey, director of the Nuclear Power Institute at the Ghana Atomic Energy Commission. “And where do we get energy from? We have hydro, thermal, fossil fuels, and we have local gas—but these are dwindling. They are limited; fossil fuels could run out by 2030. And, the prices are volatile.”

For Ghana, cost-effective, reliable electricity is the entry point to higher-value-added manufacturing and export-led growth. For example, the country’s reserves of bauxite—the ore used to produce aluminum—are an important source of income, but for now it is exported raw.

“We have a smelter, but it’s not operating at full capacity because electricity is too expensive,” Mr. Allotey says. “If we had cost-effective electricity, we would not be exporting raw bauxite, but exporting smelted bauxite at a much higher price. This would be a big move for Ghana.”

### Power to the people

African governments are working to make electricity more widely accessible. Roughly 57% of the population of sub-Saharan Africa does not have access to electricity. For many, the electricity supply is characterised by frequent power outages, according to the International Energy Agency, an organisation of 30 mostly industrialised countries that have met a set of energy security criteria.

Kenya is considering nuclear to meet the demand generated by hooking up households nationwide, which is expected to contribute significantly to the 30% increase in electricity demand predicted for the country by 2030.

"For a long time in our country electrification levels were low, but the government has put in a lot of efforts towards electrifying the entire country," says Winfred Ndubai, acting director of the Kenya Nuclear Electricity Board's Technical Department. "Even those areas that were considered to be remote are now vibrant. Within a period of about 10 years we have moved from [a] 12% electrification rate to 60%."

Kenya depends mostly on non-fossil fuel for energy; about 60% of installed capacity is from hydropower and geothermal power.

### Is Africa ready for nuclear?

"Going nuclear is not something that happens from one day to the next. From the moment a country initiates a nuclear power programme until the first unit becomes operative, years could pass," says Milko Kovachev, head of the IAEA's Nuclear Infrastructure Development Section, which works with countries new to nuclear power.

"Creating the necessary nuclear infrastructure and building the first nuclear power plant will take at least 10 to 15 years."

A successful nuclear power programme requires broad political and popular support and a national commitment of at least 100 years, Mr. Kovachev added. This includes committing to the entire life cycle of a power plant, from construction through electricity generation and, finally, decommissioning.

In addition to time, there is the issue of costs. Governments and private operators need to make a considerable investment that includes projected waste management and decommissioning costs. Mr. Kovachev points out that "the government's investment to develop the necessary infrastructure is modest relative to the cost of the first nuclear power plant. But [it] is still in the order of hundreds of millions of dollars."

### Financing nuclear energy

Without proper financing, nuclear is not an option. "Most countries in Africa will find it difficult to invest this amount of money in a nuclear power project," Mr. Kovachev stresses. "But there are financing mechanisms like, for instance, from export agencies of vendor countries. Tapping into a reliable, carbon-free supply of energy when vendors are offering to fund it can make sense for several countries in Africa."

Another aspect to consider is the burden on the electrical grid system of the country.

Nuclear power plants are connected to a grid through which they deliver electricity. For a country to safely introduce nuclear energy, the IAEA recommends that its grid capacity be around ten times the capacity of its planned nuclear power plant. For example, a country should have a capacity of 10,000 megawatts already in place to generate 1,000 megawatts from nuclear power.

Few countries in Africa currently have a grid of this capacity. "In Kenya, our installed capacity is 2,400 megawatts—too small for conventional, large nuclear power plants," Ms. Ndubai says. "The grid would need to increase to accommodate a large unit, or, alternatively, other, smaller nuclear power plant options would need to be explored."

One option is to invest in small modular reactors (SMRs), which are among the most promising emerging technologies in nuclear power. SMRs produce electric power up to 300 megawatts per unit, or around half of

Another factor militating against a headlong rush into nuclear power is popular rejection of projects that are costly and hard to finance.

Also, countries are wary that in the event of a nuclear power plant accident, released radioactive materials will harm the environment and lives. Although no fatalities were recorded in the Fukushima nuclear disaster in Japan in March 2011 following the Tōhoku earthquake, the release of radioactive materials forced the evacuation of tens of thousands of residents.

### IAEA assistance

While the IAEA does not influence a country's decision about whether to add nuclear power to its energy mix, the organisation provides technical expertise and other pertinent information about safe, secure and sustainable use to countries that opt for nuclear energy.

**A successful nuclear power programme requires broad political and popular support and a national commitment of at least 100 years.**

a traditional reactor and their major components can be manufactured in a factory setting and transported to sites for ease of construction.

While SMRs are expected to begin commercial operation in Argentina, China and Russia between 2018 and 2020, African countries are still wary of such a project.

"One of the things we are very clear about in terms of introducing nuclear power is that we do not want to invest in a first-of-a-kind technology," Ms. Ndubai says. "As much as SMRs represent an opportunity for us, we would want them to be built and tested elsewhere before introducing them in our country."

Joining a regional grid is another option. "Historically, it has been possible to share a common grid between countries," Mr. Kovachev explains. "But, of course, this requires regional dialogue." One example of such a scheme is the West African Power Pool, created to integrate national power systems in the Economic Community of West African States into a unified regional electricity market.

Safety and security are key considerations in the IAEA Milestones Approach, a phased method created to assist countries that are assessing their readiness to embark on a nuclear power programme. The approach helps them consider aspects such as the legal framework, nuclear safety, security, radiation protection, environmental protection and radioactive waste management.

"Many, many people ask the question: Why nuclear?" Mr. Allotey says. "To me, it's not about nuclear being an option. It is about energy being an option. Do you, as a country, need energy? And the simple answer is yes. So if you need energy, you need to find cost-effective electricity that is clean and reliable."

"With a rapidly expanding population and plans to grow our economies, we need to work within these constraints," he adds. "We are a continent that is in dire need of energy."

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*Ms Gil is a writer and associate public information officer at the International Atomic Energy Agency.*

# Women-led tech startups on the rise in Africa

Daunting obstacles remain in the tech industry

BY FINBARR TOESLAND

**O**n the surface, sub-Saharan Africa boasts the world's highest rate of women entrepreneurs, at 27%. The *MasterCard Index of Women Entrepreneurs 2017* listed two African countries, Uganda (34.8%) and Botswana (34.6%), as having the highest percentage of women entrepreneurs globally.

But dig a little deeper and you'll find that in many countries in Africa, most female-led enterprises are small businesses with little opportunity for growth. Also, female entrepreneurs are not evenly spread across the continent. Botswana, Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, Uganda and Zambia have disproportionately high numbers.

"Most of these businesses tend to have no employees and have low growth expectations: they are, for the most part, one-woman enterprises oriented to consumers," CNN reported in 2015. In the technology industry particularly, few women attempt start-ups.

But with the right incentives, African women can unleash their potential in the continent's burgeoning tech sector, according to Eunice Baguma Ball, founder of the London-based Africa Technology Business Network (ATBN), which promotes access to resources that can create a gender-inclusive "innovation ecosystem" in Africa.

## A man's world

"African women entrepreneurs who face financing challenges when setting up their businesses need support," says Ms. Ball whose organisation supports African innovators through access to its global network of investors and tech leaders.

Globally, men account for 92% of partners in the top 100 venture capital firms, and female-founded start-ups receive only 2% of total investments by venture

capitalists. These disparities underscore the need for more women at all levels of start-ups.

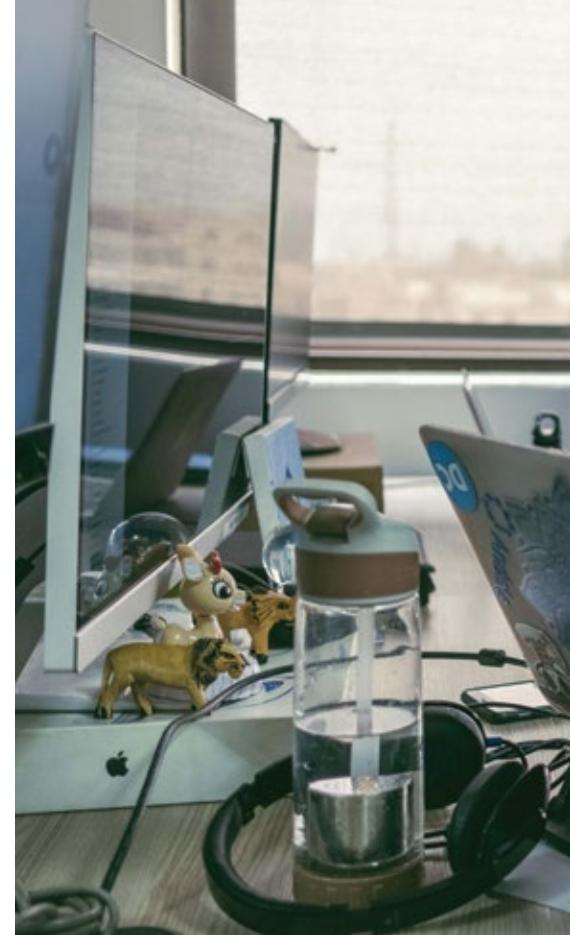
And in Africa, only 9% of start-ups have women leaders, according to a 2016 study by Venture Capital for Africa, a Netherlands-based organisation that connects start-ups to opportunities.

There is no single explanation for the limited number of women in tech start-ups, says Odunayo Eweniyi, cofounder and chief operating officer of Piggybank.ng, a Lagos-based online savings platform. One major factor, she says, is cultural.

"The premise of a start-up is to venture into something that is unsafe, risky and more difficult than usual. From a young age, culturally, women are groomed to believe that the kind of behaviour, work or endeavours that fit these descriptions are bad for them. Many times, women are not allowed to aspire 'too high.' As a result, they tend to participate in the least risky ventures."

Writing for business.com, a digital media company, Rosemary Egbo, a writer and an entrepreneur, said that financial institutions "weren't as quick to grant loans to female entrepreneurs as they were to male entrepreneurs, since men were seen as better risk takers and more likely to succeed."

But Egypt's Minister of Investment and International Cooperation Sahar Nasr describes as "misguided a perception that women are high-risk customers to lend." She recommends "affirmative action in the area of legal and regulatory framework because African tradition stands in the way of most women to own property, which limits their



**Tolu Komolafe, co-founder of the Ladies in Tech organization based in Lagos, Nigeria.**

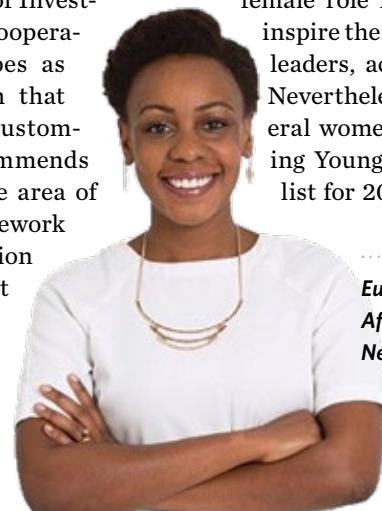
Andela / Mohini Ufeli

access to finance efforts as they don't have collateral."

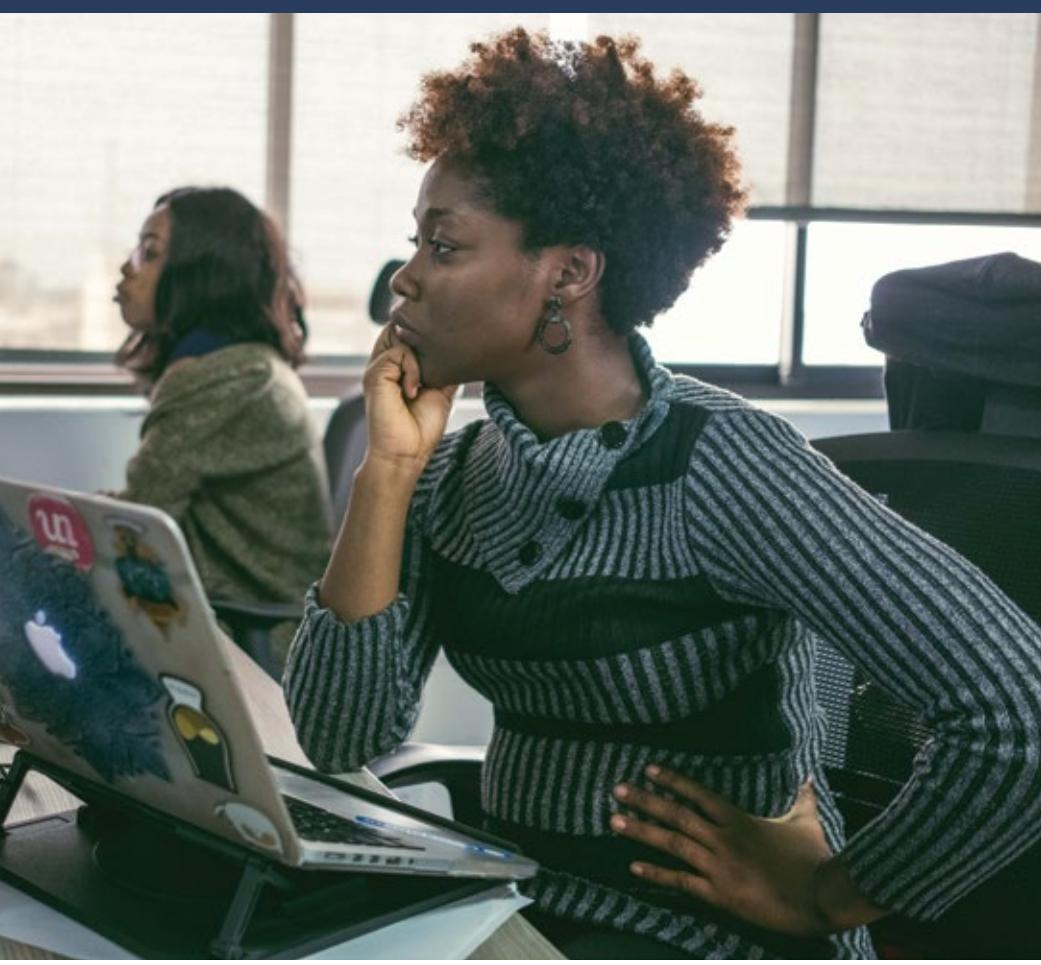
Where women are seen as child bearers and home managers, business tips do not address these unique cultural situations and are unlikely to resonate with women on the continent.

To overcome cultural barriers, African women entrepreneurs need basic knowledge about health, education, financial security and safety, Ms. Ball says.

Another key factor is that the tech industry in Africa does not provide many female role models. Role models can inspire the next generation of women leaders, according to Ms. Eweniyi. Nevertheless, Forbes includes several women in its 30 Most Promising Young Entrepreneurs in Africa list for 2018, including Nthabiseng



**Eunice Baguma-Ball, founder Africa Technology Business Network.**



Mosia of South Africa, Rahma Bajun of Tanzania and Ronke Bamisedun of Nigeria.

### **Networking is key**

"In many ways, the fact that there are so few women in leadership roles means there's far less understanding, empathy or proper behaviour exhibited towards women. If there were more women in leadership, there would be far less discrimination against them, because these women leaders would use their influence to fight against such discrimination," notes Ms. Eweniyi.

She further maintains that old boys' networks still hold a great deal of power in Africa, and recommends the creation of more female business networks in which women can share their expertise and experiences. With many business deals being negotiated informally, in male-oriented settings like bars and social clubs, business networks composed of women may help level the playing field.

"The challenge that I see is getting more female entrepreneurs to join these networks. We need to create awareness at all levels of the importance of connecting and sharing ideas and experiences with other women. These networks shouldn't

be seen only as avenues to raise funds, but also as a space to build support, business knowledge and community," maintains Ms. Omotolani.

There is a financial argument to be made for supporting women in tech start-ups, experts say. First, the spending power of women continues to increase on the continent, putting pressure on tech companies to make efforts to understand women consumers' needs and expectations. Women leaders are best positioned to introduce products that cater to female consumers' preferences.

Technology firms led by women experience a 35% higher return on investment than those led by men, according to a paper by the venture capitalist firm Illuminate Ventures. That means investors and other venture capitalists lose out by not providing financial support for women-led businesses.

"Economically empowering women leads to better outcomes for society, as women typically invest 90% of their earnings back into their families and communities, compared to 30 to 40% for men," says Ms. Ball. African women deeply understand Africa's socioeconomic challenges, she notes.

While many are working to raise awareness of the perspectives and skill sets that women entrepreneurs bring to start-ups, initiatives are being launched to bridge the gender gap.

### **Bridging the gap**

The ATBN, for example, founded the #HerFutureAfrica project to create online content, host innovation boot camps and provide mentorship—all to support women entrepreneurs in technology-related ventures.

The #HerFutureAfrica project is a response to widespread criticism that most online business tips for women entrepreneurs focus on Western audiences, disregarding the unique obstacles that African women face in business.

Ms. Ball says that support for African women in the tech industry should be tailored "to enable them to navigate some of these unique barriers so that they can successfully compete in what is still a male-dominated business." She is also donating all proceeds from her book, *Founding Women: African Women Who Are Defying the Odds to Build Successful Businesses in Tech*, to support young women entrepreneurs in Africa.

Female representation in the African tech start-up ecosystem is very important, she adds. By "start-up ecosystem" she means venture capital firms, funding organisations, mentoring networks and the start-ups themselves.

Some countries in North Africa are already developing such start-up ecosystems that support women, rivalling those in Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa. Morocco is home to dozens of ambitious female-led tech start-ups, including WaystoCap, the Casablanca-based cross-border commerce platform.

The business incubator Womenpreneur Initiative, based in Brussels, identifies female-led enterprises across the Middle East and North Africa and helps them gain the skills to scale up. Business incubators support young businesses with financing and technical services.

In sum, insists Ms. Ball, "There is a need to build a pipeline of female talent with the skills and ambition to build successful tech start-ups, and this requires changing the old mind-set that technology or big business is for men."

## One stop border post will... from page 8

pest-control requirements for exporting certain agro-based products such as tea.

Ms. Mutaviri says existing trade agreements, such as those of the South African Customs Union and the Economic Community of West African States, have not lowered trade barriers. In the absence of a trustworthy credit-rating agency and credit-insurance facilities, high credit risk across borders is a major hindrance to trade.

"Exporting from a United States dollar-based economy into markets with softer currencies has made our prices uncompetitive amidst high competition with players from the region and from outside the region," she says.

While she embraces a free trade zone, Ms. Mutaviri fears that it may subject her company to increased competition from other African economies, given that Zimbabwe's food processing sector's regional competitiveness gap is currently estimated at just 38%.

"The AfCFTA, by its size, will also attract players from outside Africa and without a single currency. Countries will not compete on equal footing," she insists.

Ms. Mutaviri notes that the industrialisation agenda being pursued by various African countries may make many governments reluctant to open their borders. She hopes that a free trade area will be implemented in a way that accommodates the different levels of industrialisation in different member states.

"The larger or stronger economies, if unchecked, will determine the way the reforms will be implemented, and lesser economies will be forced to adapt to the changes. Therefore, the AfCFTA governance structures must ensure fair representation from less developed economies," she says.

Infrastructural barriers may also pose a big challenge, she adds. According to the African Development Bank Group, Africa's infrastructure requires investments of about \$93 billion per year over the next decade. Sourcing that amount will be a huge challenge, experts say, and without a solid infrastructure base, especially adequate transportation, it will be difficult to make free trade area a reality. 

## Infrastructure key to intra-Africa... from page 9

Economic Partnership Agreements, and many other agreements and frameworks to boost a common market that we are still working to implement," he says. "And just when we thought we were making progress, we have another trade agreement [AfCFTA], which is punching all previous agreements.... At the end of the day, progress is stalled."

While the focus is on AfCFTA, critics have pointed to other serious weaknesses in the financial system, which they claim is not helping traders and cannot deliver the economic development Africa needs.

Gyekye Tanoh, of Third World Network-Africa, an Accra-based civil society organization that promotes equitable trade policies, sees a harmful trend of "speculative exploitation of differences between international and interest rates and exchange rate movements by the banks."

### Quick returns

Rather than mobilising capital for the productive sectors of the economy, banks are looking for quick returns by buying government's securities, Mr. Tanoh told *Africa Renewal* in Accra.

Ms. Lartey agrees, adding that she could not get a bank loan despite all efforts. Most banks demand collateral that business owners do not have, concurs Mr. Ukaoha, adding, "Even if you meet their demand, the interest rate is too high.... It takes extra



**Ken Ukaoha,**  
CEO of Kenaux International

hard work, resistance and determination to succeed."

The liberalization of the financial sector in West Africa is a magnet for the private sector, including foreign banks that have moved in to dominate the sector, changing the structure of domestic banking, including how banks lend to businesses, says Mr. Tanoh.

Even as short-term loans become less expensive, small businesses and cooperatives are hardly considered for loans, he adds.

But there are significant improvements in some financial transactions, making life easier for traders. Cashless payments, provided by most banks, allow a trader in Ghana to travel to Benin and pay for goods without cash. In the past, such a trader would have to carry a bag of cash, which was awkward and risky.

When AfCFTA finally comes into effect, trading among countries will rely heavily on cashless payments. The benefits will be greatest for traders who currently endure excruciating difficulty doing business across borders.

The AfCFTA aims to address the trading impediments highlighted by Mr. Ukaoha and others, particularly policy inconsistency and nontariff barriers such as bottlenecks at the land borders.

Before then, African leaders and other experts pushing for a free trade area have some work to do selling its benefits to sceptical traders. 

## Confronting sexual violence... from page 28

Unless a woman can show physical evidence of the violence she has suffered, police and law-enforcement authorities are often unwilling to believe and assist her." In other words, laws passed must be fully enforced.

Biola Akiyode, Ms. Osagie's lawyer, says that, "This victory [the professor's sacking] should encourage any university or secondary school student to speak out. What

Monica [Osagie] did was very brave, and I hope lecturers will now see that there are consequences to their actions."

The Speaker of Parliament in Uganda, Rebecca Kadaga, plans to name and shame on the floor of the Parliament any teacher indulging in sexual abuse of students.

Hopefully, citizen activism, buoyed by awareness-raising on social media will lead to the enactment of laws and rules—that authorities will enforce—against sexual abuse in institutions of higher learning on the continent. 

## APPOINTMENTS

Hanna S. Tetteh



The United Nations Secretary-General **António Guterres** has appointed **Hanna S. Tetteh** of Ghana as director-general of the United Nations Office in Nairobi (UNON). Ms. Tetteh most recently served as Ghana's minister for Foreign Affairs. She succeeds Sahle-Work Zewde of Ethiopia.

Joyce Msuya



**Joyce Msuya** of Tanzania has been appointed as Deputy Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in Nairobi, Kenya. She most recently served as Adviser to the World Bank Vice-President for East Africa and the Pacific Region. She succeeds Ibrahim Thiaw of Mauritania.

UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe



**Major General Gebre Adhana Woldezgu** of Ethiopia has been appointed as Force Commander of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA). Major-General Woldezgu recently served as Director in the Ethiopian Ministry of National Defence. He succeeds Major-General Tesfay Gidey Hailemichael of Ethiopia.

Standard Chartered



**Bola Adesola** of Nigeria has been appointed as Vice-Chair of the United Nations Global Compact. Ms. Adesola has most recently served as Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director of Standard Chartered Bank Nigeria Ltd. She succeeds outgoing United Nations Global Compact Board Vice-Chair Mark Moody-Stuart.

UN Photo/Rick Bajornas



**Ahunna Eziakonwa** of Nigeria has been appointed as Assistant Administrator, Director, United Nations Development Programme's Regional Bureau for Africa. Ms. Eziakonwa most recently served as UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative in Ethiopia. She succeeds Abdoulaye Mar Dieye of Senegal.

Robert D. Ward



**José Viegas Filho** of Brazil has been appointed as Special Representative for Guinea-Bissau and Head of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNI-OGBIS). Mr. Filho most recently served as Ambassador of Brazil to Italy. He succeeds Modibo Touré of Mali.



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The Ibrahim Leadership Fellowships offer the opportunity to work in the executive offices of either the African Development Bank (Abidjan), the UN Economic Commission for Africa (Addis Ababa) or the International Trade Centre (Geneva) with an annual stipend of \$100,000.

The Executive Management office of each organisation will host an Ibrahim Leadership Fellow for a 12-month period. The Fellowships are open to young professionals, mid-career and new executives up to the age of 40 or 45 for women with children. The Fellows will be nationals of an African country with 7-10 years of relevant work experience and a Master's Degree.

The application process opens on 13 August 2018 and closes on 15 October 2018.

For more information about the Fellowship programme, eligibility and application process please visit: [mo.ibrahim.foundation/fellowships](http://mo.ibrahim.foundation/fellowships)





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