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Special Report
A Picture-Perfect Portrait Of Africa in ABH Top 10 Finalists For 2021
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On 6 November 2021, President Paul Biya clocked 39 years as President of Cameroon. His partisans, real and imagined, the faux and the genuine went berserk in celebrations of sorts with multiple calls for him to stand as candidate of the ruling party in the 2025 elections.

Officially in his late 80’s, there was no sign of President Biya at the celebrations, not a message to his partisans, not a message to the nation. Not that he has been known over the years to join in the celebration orgy, still it was unfathomable that people will go to such ridiculous lengths in celebration of an anniversary that the main beneficiary treats with indifference bordering on disdain.

Known for very sparing participation in events, public appearances for Mr. Biya have been kept to the barest minimum and sometimes many doubt and for very good reason whether he is actually the one running the country. Plagued with a myriad of crisis, the government of President Biya has fallen short, way short of solutions. From the chaotic handling of the crisis in the English-speaking regions of the country, to the disastrous state of infrastructure, to stratospheric levels of corruption, disturbingly weak institutions, chaotic succession scenarios looming all round, it should sound insane for anyone to be urging someone who will be in his 90s in 2025 to seek re-election.

Cameroon is Cameroon President Biya has said in the past, and the country has proven to be the exception in many things. Still, a generational shift is something that is bound to occur no matter how hard partisans of Mr. Biya live in denial. Perhaps the nonchalance with which the President treats events feted with pomp by his partisans like his anniversary is a message to them to brace up for looming changes that will have to inevitably come.

While in Africa, age is associated with wisdom, trends on leadership across the continent have not shown that. It can be considered a human rights abuse on its own to saddle a man of President Biya’s age with the kind of problems that Cameroon is grappling with today. The energy levels are no longer there, the lucidity needed is missing, the urgency needed is not there and there is a real danger of people around either misrepresenting or serving their own political interests and agendas.

21st century challenges require a new kind of leadership, a new kind of vision, a new kind of African citizenship. It requires a change in the perception and functioning of leadership both from the leaders and the led. When a leader knows that his political fortunes are tied to the electorate, there is no way he is going to treat them with condescendance. Unfortunately, this has not been the case not just in Cameroon, but across several other African countries as well.

In past issues of PAV magazine, we have harped on the need for the citizenry to constantly hold the feet of leaders to the fire. The people must constantly demand, constantly ask questions, forcefully make demands, and more, for without this, you will wake up to realize that you have been saddled with inept leaderships which will continue to stall development across the continent. If this is not done, it will be father to son successions after life presidencies, and it will be others changing constitutional term limits to remain in power.

In Africa, a majority, and a very sizeable majority at that is made of young people, the future is theirs. Part of resolving the leadership woes of the continent is for them to be forceful actors in shaping the future they want. Far from allowing some cynical governments to keep pauperizing them for political domination, the African Youth must tap into their creative genius to shape a better destiny for themselves and for the continent.

It is this creative genius that we have seen in another edition of the Jack Ma Foundation African Business Heroes Prize competition which is running to an end. In its third year, the competition gives millions of dollars to the winning entrepreneurs. From over 12000 applicants, the number was filtered to the top 50, then the top 20, top 10, and finally the top three when the grande finale comes up later in the month.

These initiatives and others like those of the Elumelu Foundation, the Mandela Washington Fellowship, the JUA Fund of Industrialist Adam Molai, and others provide amazing insights into the potential of African Youth. When you leave entrepreneurial sphere and factor in the exploits in the world of academia, in the realm of sports, in the world of entertainment, and more, then there is every reason to remain hopeful for the future.

Hopeful is what we should be when we see dynamic and visionary leadership from people like NJ Ayuk and the African Energy Chamber in hosting the maiden edition of the African Energy Week in Cape Town South Africa. Driven by the humiliation and frustration of seeing the foreign dominated African Oil Week moved from South Africa to Dubai for reasons that did not bode well for many, Ayuk and his team came up with the African Energy Week. Their efforts to restore African pride and give the continent a voice in the energy sector have been amply rewarded with the huge success of the African Energy Week.

There is a reason to be hopeful when we see Simon Tietmores coming up with Simba, a money transfer card and services to ease the financial woes of African immigrants. Originally from Burkina Faso, Simon Tietmore has led a dynamic team hard at work in positioning Simba as a strong response to the multifaceted challenges facing African immigrants when it comes to financial transactions. From money transfer amongst the immigrants to remittances, and a broad range of other fresh opportunities, the services offered by Simba have the potential to be groundbreaking for the continent.

Even in the political realm, we see a group of dynamic young Cameromians under the aegis of the Coalition for Dialogue and Negotiations taking the bull by the horns and braving odds to organize a retreat for leaders from the English-speaking regions of Cameroon to brainstorm and seek a way forward in resolving simmering crisis that has wrecked untold havoc on human life and property.

Change is feasible, it is about time Africa hits the fast lane in its development journey, but for this to happen, Africans must go beyond whining about leadership and be leaders in their respective fields. It is Africans who will make the continent better for themselves, it is Africans who will make the continent get the international respect it deserves, it is Africans who will make the continent live up to its potential and become the envy of others.

In addition to stories on ABH 2021 Prize competition, Simba, and the CND retreat, this issue of PAV also takes a look at Africa’s latest military coup in Sudan, the sanction vote of South Africans against the ruling ANC, the potential of a third presidential election in three months for Malawi, warming of ties between Rwanda and Burundi and more. Happy reading!!!
Simba was founded by Simon Tiemtore, a West African immigrant from Burkina Faso. He came to the U.S. in 1998 to pursue higher education and greater opportunities for himself, his family, and his community. He experienced firsthand the many challenges immigrants face on their journey and vowed to one day find better ways of providing financial services to truly meet the needs of immigrants.

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Third Presidential Election in 3 Years a Possibility according to ex-Malawi President Mutharika

By Prince Kurupati

for just a few months however as the country’s Supreme Court later on reversed the 2019 election and called for a fresh presidential election in 2020. The court cited gross irregularities and electoral fraud as the reasons behind the reversal of the election. The 2020 presidential election produced different results as the coalition pact led by Lazarus Chakwera won the election. Fast forward a year later to 2021, Chakwera faces the same predicament as Prof Mutharika as his electoral victory is under extreme scrutiny.

The man who is putting Chakwera’s electoral victory under extreme scrutiny is his predecessor, Prof Peter Mutharika. Mutharika is buoyed in his quest to have the 2020 election reversed and fresh polls called thanks to a Supreme Court judgement which declared the appointment of four Malawi Electoral Commission commissioners invalid and unconstitutional. Recently, Mutharika sat down with Zimbabwean journalist Violet Gonda to discuss this amongst many other issues.

To start off with, Mutharika was very frank stating that it’s a huge possibility that Malawi can experience a third presidential election in three years. According to Mutharika, his party is looking to have the 2020 election nullified on the basis that it was presided over by people who were not fit to do the job. This of course necessitated by the Supreme Court decision to nullify and invalidate the appointment of four Malawi Electoral Commission commissioners.

Questioned about the involvement of his party DPP in the appointment of the commissioners as they are all from the party, and if the party may have known about going over the line when appointing the commissioners, Mutharika said at the time, everything from the party’s side was done above board. The decision to nullify the commissioners by the Supreme Court did however come as a welcome surprise to them as it gave them ammunition to seek recourse which they think they deserve.

In passing the ruling, Judge Kenyatta Nyirenda said that the nullification of the appointment of four electoral body commissioners Jean Muthanga, Linda Kunje, Steven Duwa and Arthur Nanthuru did not affect the validity of the June 2020 rerun presidential election. Mutharika and his party however say Nyirenda erred on this front as the ruling he passed a ruling which is beyond his mandate. They argue that according to the Malawian Constitution, an election which is presided over by undeserving commissioners cannot be declared legitimate and conclusive.

The same argument brought forward by Mutharika has also been brought forward by the lawyer for DPP Charles Mhango. In a statement, Mhango said that “My clients believe strongly that the elections that took place on 23rd June, electing President Chakwera, is also null and void because the principal of the law is very clear; out of nothing, come nothing.”

Based upon the provisions of the Constitution, it’s quite clear that the DPP and Mutharika have quite a
strong case before the courts. Even though this is the case, there is a high likelihood of the case to become a long and protracted legal battle which will go on and on. Mutharika is aware of this but in the interests of safeguarding and protecting the vote of the millions who cast their votes in support of the DPP, he and the party are eager to keep going until the very end.

Mutharika did quash the sentiments that his interest in the nullification of the appointment of the electoral body commissioners is just a plot by him to seek power through the back door. He said that his intentions are not at all informed or advanced by his need to cling on to power as some may speculate. Rather, the important thing at this juncture is to ensure that the party protects the voice and the votes of their supporters who came out in their numbers to support the party in the election. He said the party has a responsibility to see to it that they do things which instil confidence in their supporters and one such thing relates to protecting their votes.

Ever since the DPP expressed their interest to have the 2020 presidential re-run election reversed, some voices in the country think the reasons behind were largely necessitated by Mutharika’s keenness to cling onto power. One social commentator by the name Humphrey Mvula said that the case is a simple demonstration of the failure by political leaders to accept electoral defeat. “Our challenge as most African countries including Malawi is that we rarely accept that we have lost the elections. We always want to fight and always want the court to tell us that we have lost the elections. Even at that time, we have been able to trash the decision of the court,” Mvula said.

Still, many others believe that it will be double standards to have the victory of Prof Mutharika quashed because of irregularities and that of incumbent President Chakwera to be maintained in the face of irregularities as well albeit of a different nature.

The political situation is generating keen attention in Malawi and beyond. It will be interesting to see how another rerun plays out in case things get to that point. With Malawians able to compare a year of the change President Chakwera promised to what his predecessor and most likely challenger Prof Peter Mutharika achieved while in office, it will be an interesting contest to say the least.

Nigeria: Saving The South East

By Richard Mammah

That Nigeria is presently buffeted by several destructive insecurity storms is not in any doubt. And in all of these, one of the most troubling at the moment is that related to the South East of the country, more so when it is put within context: was this a security or political challenge from the onset? Were the right tools deployed to address it when it began? Does it look like there is sufficient understanding presently of the character of the conflict as well as the appropriate tools to deploy in quelling it? Is there a wilful and manipulated ‘fifth columnist’ involvement in the unfortunate fray that continues to ricochet?

Nowhere has it become most urgent to find answers to these questions than in the commercial hotbed of Anambra State where voters are scheduled to go to the polls on Saturday November 6 to choose a successor to outgoing Governor Willie Obiano who had been elected under the banner of the All Progressives Grand Alliance, APGA, the same party that was linked with the deceased separatist leader, Dim Chukwuemeka Ochịchwụ Ojukwu, and which has held sway in the state in the past 15 years and counting.

At the moment however, the elections are being seen as chiefly a three-horse race involving the APGA candidate and former Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria, Prof Chukwuma Soludo and his rivals from the Peoples Democratic Party, PDP and the All Progressives Congress, APC, Mr. Valentine Ozigbo and Senator Andy Uba, respectively.

But even more than the actual process of candidates and parties clamourously canvassing votes from the electorate, this is an election that is very clearly being held under tension-soaked clouds of violence with almost no single day passing now without reports of violence, destruction, maiming and deaths, some of which is clearly election-related.

At a point, so threatening were the incidents that even the Independent National Electoral Commissioner, the umpire for the polls process, was constrained to severely review whether it should yet go ahead with the conduct of the process. Not to be outdone, the Attorney General of the Federation was to also add his voice, saying that one of the cards that the Federal Government was already looking into was the option of declaring a state of emergency in the state. He was however to be shouted down by many commentators who insisted that a state of emergency declaration was not only uncalled for, it was also inconsistent with the spirit and letter of the national dynamic for even greater democratic correction and consolidation. And for added measure, they lambasted the AGF for turning the other way when even more destructive insecurity incidents were and are still being witnessed in several states of the North of the country where he and President Buhari hail from.

In the midst of the challenge however, one vote that the ordinary people of Anambra State and the South East region are already openly casting is a vote for peace.
‘We just want all of this to come and just roll over. The situation is quite terrible. Awka, the state capital is so tense. Onitsha, the commercial nerve centre is also not in its best mood. Again and again, there are distressing incidents. Many things have been disrupted. And all we just want now is for all of this to be resolved,’ a resident, Sylvia Azuka told this correspondent last week.

For the Nigerian authorities, the challenge in Anambra and indeed in about all of the South East is more criminal than political. From the expressions of President Muhammadu Buhari through those of AGF Abubakar Malami and on to Minister of Information Lai Mohammed, what is going on in the East is all brazen criminality that has to be defeated in that light.

It is in line with this perspective that the Federal Government is pursuing the trial of Independent People of Biafra leader, Mazi Nnamdi Kanu at the Court in Abuja with all gusto, with one or more government spokespersons affirming that the trial process would be the final panacea for peace to be restored in the region.

At the last hearing on October 22, it emerged that the charge sheet had been amended to reflect a revised seven count charge, with the man at the centre of the storm, Nnamdi Kanu pleading not guilty to all of them.

The case was to be subsequently adjourned to November 10.

However, no sooner had the litigants left the courtroom that the entire trial was to resume in the court of public opinion. Lawyers to Kanu in a post-hearing interview remarked that the amended charges would not do it. According to them, there was still no substance warranting a trial in the first place.

On its part, the Federal Government, through the Attorney General addressed a Press Conference where it provided even more allegedly damning public evidence of Kanu’s culpability. According to the AGF, the findings were made by a Federal Government panel that had been set up to investigate the matter. But even its explanation left many wondering why those details were not simply included in the amended charge sheets that had been tendered before the courts for statutory adjudication. Why conduct a media trial outside of the courtroom trial that the office of the AGF and the Federal Government were already supposedly prosecuting?

Even more tellingly, Nnamdi Kanu’s organisation, the formally outlawed Independent People of Biafra, which had been associated with periodic sit-at-home exercises in the region announced that it was calling yet another sit at home exercise to coincide with the interval between the Anambra polls and the adjourned date for the resumption of its detained leader’s trial and that this time this particular sit at home exercise was going to be hinged on two demands: one, the unconditional release of Kanu and two, the announcement by the federal authorities of its practical commitment to acceding to the long-running IPOB request for the conduct of a referendum on the subject of the people of the South East being formally allowed to take their exit from the Nigerian Federation.

Wading into issues related to the trial process itself, Abia Onyike of the Ala Igbo Foundation disagrees with the fundamental premise of hinging the entire trial on criminal grounds as is being prosecuted by the Federal Government of Nigeria through the Office of the Attorney General of the Federation:

‘The trial of Nnamdi Kanu is a political trial. He is not a common criminal, rather he is one of the leaders of the Igbo Self-determination struggle. The crises of federalism in Nigeria has reached a level where the only viable solution is for the Ethnic Nationalities to assert their rights to Self-determination. The Fulani oppressive Caliphate rulers in Nigeria are hell-bent on using the Nigerian state to promote Fulani hegemony over other groups in the country. This is an impossible option. The PMB fascist administration is not flexible and therefore not prepared to engage Kanu in dialogue. The Indigenous People of Biafra(IPOB) and other Self-determination organizations in Igboland are willing and prepared for dialogue and diplomacy to achieve a political solution. But given Buhari’s impunity and fascist disposition, we are of the view that a referendum should be conducted to determine the ultimate resolve for the Igbo to take their destiny in their own hands. Let the Autonomous Regions in Nigeria become Autonomous Republics within the African Union.’

Talk about clashing perspectives and visions.
Lonsa, a Mauritanian corporate holding entity, is a principal investment entity investing in the energy, industrials, logistics and property sectors in Southern Africa. Lonsa was formed in 2004 and has a track record of concluding complex corporate transactions. Lonsa’s principals have unrivalled experience and knowledge of working and delivering value in its chosen businesses gained by investing in excess of 2.5 Billion USD in the continent over the past 17 years. Lonsa operates from offices in Johannesburg, Harare, Ebene and London.

Lonsa controls the following entities:
Since the attainment of South Africa’s independence in 1994, the African National Congress (ANC) just like other revolutionary parties in the southern Africa region has enjoyed great success in electoral events. However, the recent municipal elections which were conducted on Monday 1 November 2021 demonstrated emerging vulnerabilities in the parties’ support base.

For the first time in the country’s post-colonial municipal elections, ANC failed to reach the 50% mark in terms of votes garnered. The party only managed to garner 46.04% of the vote. The result is quite damning when one considers the fact that since 1994, ANC won every vote by an absolute majority. The party’s performance in the recent elections thus paints a worrying picture going ahead and it exposes the turning of the tide as more and more people are now starting to warm up and embrace opposition parties.

To compound matters for the ANC, a huge proportion of the voting population chose not to vote. This despite the fact that election day - Monday 1 November 2021 - was declared a public holiday. The lowest voter turnout before this November 2021 election saw just 57% of the registered voters cast the votes. However, in the November 2021 municipal elections, less than half of the eligible voters bothered to vote as the voter turnout stood at 47%.

Fears of voter apathy were rife in the lead up to the municipal elections. Several surveys that were conducted in the lead up to the election by news outlets showed that the younger generation in the country associated ANC with corruption and mismanagement. Even though there are numerous opposition parties angling to wrestle power away from the ruling ANC, most of the youths were adamant that ANC’s hegemony will continue at least for the near future hence voting wouldn’t change a thing.

ANC’s poor performance in the municipal elections means that once again like in the aftermath of the 2016 election, it will have to form coalition governments in key urban centres with some opposition parties. If anything is to be learned from the past coalition governments, instability is the order of the day hence residents can expect more upheavals.

The Deputy Secretary General of the ANC Jessie Duarte said her party is not sulking at the results but is already looking ahead to rectify the situation. “I don’t think we could have done better… We believe that some of our own voters stayed away from the polls but... we are not looking at this as a great tragedy, but we will live with whatever is the outcome, that’s democracy,” she said.

To some political analysts, the performance of the ANC during the municipal elections is not overly surprising. They argue that the dissatisfaction expressed by most youths in the country in regards to the ANC leadership as well as the numerous rifts and squabbles epitomised by the Zuma incarceration is further eroding ANC’s political capital. William Gumede of the Democracy Works think tank said, “Normally after about three decades, (former revolutionary parties) lose their dominance, we are around there with the ANC.”

While the conclusions from the municipal elections certainly paint
What Next After Sudan Changes Guards At The Crossroad?

By Kester Kenn Klomegah

As reported October 25 by the reputable state media, Al Arabiya, Sudanese army and a cross-section of its population have returned, expressing dissatisfaction about the government. What is really at stake all these years is closely linked to the level of development and the living standard of the majority among the estimated 45 million population.

According to the El Sharq TV channel, two of Sudan’s three mobile operators have actually stopped providing services, so during the day people experienced communication problems. According to several media sources, Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok together with other officials have been arrested, taken to an unknown location. The leaders of many political parties called for preventing a coup in the country.

UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, the African Union and other regional and international organizations have routinely condemned the undemocratic forced change in Sudan. In a statement posted on Twitter, the Secretary-General said that “there must be full respect for the constitutional charter to protect the hard-won political transition.” “The UN will continue to stand with the people of Sudan,” Guterres assured.

Head of the UN Integrated Transition Assistance Mission Sudan (UNITAMS), also released a statement, declaring that the arrests of the Prime Minister, government officials and other politicians are “un acceptable.”

“I call on the security forces to immediately release those who have been unlawfully detained or placed under house arrest”, Volker Perthes said. “It is the responsibility of these forces to ensure the security and wellbeing of people in their custody.”

The UNITAMS chief, who acts as a Special Representative of the Secretary-General, urged everyone involved to exercise the utmost restraint. “All parties must immediately return to dialogue and engage in good faith to restore the constitutional order,” Perthes concluded.

Some unrests began sweeping the country following Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok’s meeting with head of Sudan’s Sovereign Council Abdel Fattah al-Burhan. The ministers of communication, information, finance and industries were among those in custody. Sudanese people took to the streets following calls by the main opposition movement, the Forces of Freedom and Change. The crisis between the Sudanese military and civilian forces has been going on for several weeks.

In about-turn development, Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, a general chairing the Sovereign Council of Sudan, announced in a televised address that general elections would be held in July 2023. The general declared a state of emergency in Sudan, dissolved both the country’s government and the Sovereign Council and suspended a number of articles of the Constitutional Declaration, which was signed by Sudan’s military and civilian forces in 2019 for a three-year transition period.

Besides the search for peaceful political pathways, Sudanese authorities need to address the deep-seated economic deficiencies and tackle common problems (basic infrastructure) facing people in micro levels of the society. This also relates many African countries. Sudan, located in the northeast Africa, shares borders with Egypt, Libya, Chad, Ethiopia and South Sudan. It is blessed with huge oil reserves and marine resources. The Blue and White Nile rivers meet in the capital city Khartoum to form the bid Nile, which flows northwards through Egypt to the Mediterranean Sea.

While Sudan is encircled by these seven countries mentioned above, it also has to northeast a huge sea, which could be harnessed for the further development of the economy. Revenues could be used to engage in economic diversification projects, thus creating employment for the youth. It is third-largest country in Africa, and the third-largest in the Arab world by area before the secession of South Sudan in 2011.

Over the years, damming the water resources for economy has not taken off the ground. The main
purpose of the dam will be the generation of electricity. Its dimensions make it the largest contemporary hydropower project for the region in Africa.

In terms of political developments in Sudan, Omar Hassan Ahmad al-Bashir came to power in June 1989. During several years of his administration, Sudan’s economy was largely shattered due to political tyranny, deep-seated corruption and poor policies. Al-Bashir held power for more than 30 years, refused to step down, resulting in the convergence of opposition groups to form a united coalition. The government retaliated by arresting more than 800 opposition figures and thousands of protesters, according to the Human Rights Watch.

Many people died because Al-Bashir ordered security forces to disperse the sit-in peaceful demonstrators using tear gas and live ammunition in what is known as the Khartoum massacre, resulting in Sudan’s suspension from the African Union. Eventually, Omar al-Bashir was gone. Sudan opened a new political chapter with Prime Minister, Abdalla Hamdok, a 62-year-old economist who worked previously for the UN Economic Commission for Africa.

Significantly, it is highly expected that his working experience at the UN Economic Commission for Africa must necessarily reflect on performance, and resultantly have a positive impact on the level of sustainable development that connects the daily lives of the population.

With the new administration, Sudan still faces formidable economic problems, and its growth still a little (snail step) rise from a very low level of per capita output. In practical terms, it is desperate for foreign support and one surest way was to get to a donors conference held in Berlin, Germany. The donors’ conference was to provide a lifeline to the ongoing transition, alongside Sudan’s own efforts. It is worth to say that increased international political and financial assistance remain paramount, it was a progressive step for Sudan.

The goal was to also raise enough funds to kick-start social protection programs by the World Bank and the Sudanese Government that could help Sudanese families in need. The partners supported the International Monetary Fund to open up Sudan’s road towards debt relief. Some 50 countries and international organizations pledged more than $1.8 billion, while the World Bank Group offered a grant of $400 million.

“This conference opened a new chapter in the cooperation between Sudan and the international community to rebuild the country,” German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said at that time during video conference co-organized by Germany with Sudan, the European Union and the United Nations. Berlin promised to make investments in in areas such as water, food security and education. Germany has urged the Sudanese government to invest in human rights. Germany said that it would contribute €150 million ($168 million) in aid to the sub-Saharan nation of Sudan.

Undoubtedly, Abdalla Hamdok described that conference as “unprecedented” and said it laid a “solid foundation for us moving forward” at least in the subsequent years. Sudan’s new transitional government has sought to repair the country’s international standing, but it still faces daunting economic challenges, and its growth was still a rise from a very low level of per capita output. It continues to experience troubled relationship with many of its neighbors, and especially over oil reserves with South Sudan.

Currently, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) is working hand in hand with Khartoum government to implement sound macroeconomic policies. Agricultural production remains Sudan’s most important sector, employing 80 percent of the workforce but most farms remain rain-fed and susceptible to drought. Instability, adverse weather and weak world-agricultural prices ensures that much of the population will remain at or below the poverty line for years.

Right from Sahel to the Maghreb and to northeast Africa are witnessing instability. In the Horn of Africa (Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somalia) thousands dying daily. Peter Fabricius, Research Consultant from the South Africa’s Institute for Security Studies (ISS), noted quite recently in his article headlined - African Coups Are Making A Come Back - that from 18 August 2020, four coups have occurred. Two happened in Mali (August 2020 and May 2021), one in Chad (May 2021) and one in Guinea last month.

He further pointed out “what might help prevent that would be better responses from African Union, regional bodies, and international partners to coups and other forms of unconstitutional change of government.” Perhaps the root causes of coups run too deep within a country for any external actor to influence much. But to the extent that they can, the African Union and the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) should use their power preventively, focusing more on sanctioning ‘unconstitutional preservation of power’ and other undemocratic behavior to try to pre-empt coups, suggested Fabricius.

But late October 2021 political-military and cross-section of the civilian unrest are inter-connected, both politics and economy. Sudan is rich with natural resources, as it has oil reserves. Despite that, Sudan still faced formidable economic problems. Worse is production practices including agriculture are rudimentary. There has not been efforts, at least, to modernize agriculture to the growing population.

There is still a huge increase in unemployment, and perhaps it is absolutely necessary to make attempts at minimizing social contradictions and economic disparities, unquestionably and of course, these two - politics and economy questions are inseparable. These are some of the issues the government has to address seriously, in order to maintain sustainable peace and long-term stability in Sudan and set that as an admirable example in Africa.
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17/12/2020 12:55
November 6, 2021, marked 39-years since Paul Biya became president of Cameroon. The leader of the CPDM party ascended to power on November 6, 1982, after a peaceful transition from Ahmadou Ahidjo. This was a sign of a new dawn in Cameroonians and African politics where the continent is noted for leaders clinging to power, reinventing the constitution and use of force to blatantly crackdown on protesters who demand they step down.

Across the country, supporters came out in their numbers to celebrate the day while others are already calling on President Biya to be their presidential candidate in the 2025 election. Note that President Biya still has four (4) years left in his present mandate which he won in a disputed landslide victory back in 2018.

President Biya earlier this year celebrated his 88th birthday, which made him the oldest president in Africa and the second-longest African president only behind Equatorial Guinea’s Teodoro Obiang Nguema.

The former president Ahidjo is reported to have ruled his Cameroon with so much ruthlessness, authoritativeness and intimidation as rivals were arrested, tortured and some went into exile. Many had hoped the coming of the new president will change all these things that used to happen.

Shortly after taking power, President Biya is reported to have visited the North West and South West Regions, spoke English and even called Bamenda (the capital of the North West Region) “my second home”. President Biya brought the “New Deal” and promised to eliminate corruption and he extended elementary and secondary education to rural areas. He brought back press freedom and these were all applauded.

Sadly, those aspirations were put to bed and the new president has almost gone back on all his promises and the good deeds he had started. This came after the attempted coup in 1984 and his actions and policies have been different. One of the biggest changes made was changing the country’s name from the United Republic of Cameroon to the Republic of Cameroon, a move that is presently sparking tensions in the Anglophone Regions.

President Biya is referred to as a promoter of the diverse cultural and linguistic nature of Cameroon which has a huge focus on the country’s two official languages. Sadly, that is not the case as even the Bilingualism and Multiculturalism Commission that has been created has had difficulty implementing the spoken of both English and French. Cameroon’s president rarely and if not speaks English, his address to the nation is always translated and even when he meets Commonwealth leaders (who speak English), the president is reported to speak in French.

The fight against corruption is still ongoing in the country and the country is often ranked amongst the most corrupt countries in the world. Many government Ministers are presently languishing at the Kondengui Maximum Prison in Yaounde, found guilty of embezzlement. It has even been joked in various quarters that the calibre of people who have been found guilty and are in the Kondengui present can make a country on its own.

Major successes at the International stage

If many say President Biya is failing in his domestic policies that are somewhat different in the international stage where he continues to maintain good relationships with the international leaders. The 88-year-old has a good relationship with the African Union, AU, and major powers like France, USA and China.

Cameroon and other countries including France and USA have been working in partnership to combat the Boko Haram terrorist sect. President Biya played a major role in settling the dispute over the Bakassi Peninsula with their Nigerian counterparts and the two countries have been working together in combatting Boko Haram.

“The fight against corruption is still ongoing in the country and the country is often ranked amongst the most corrupt countries in the world. Many government Ministers are presently languishing at the Kondengui Maximum Prison in Yaounde, found guilty of embezzlement. It has even been joked in various quarters that the calibre of people who have been found guilty and are in the Kondengui present can make a country on its own.”

Hosting of the TotalEnergies AFCON 2021

Cameroon will welcome sports lovers from across the African continent and the world as the country looks set to host the upcoming 33rd edition of the Africa Cup of Nations, AFCON, in January 2022. The competition was to come up in 2021 but was postponed to January 2022 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, a move that was beneficial to the country that was still carrying out works on some stadia.

The country was to host the 2019 edition of the AFCON but the rights were stripped off the country after they failed to complete works at the various stadia and due to the insecurity in the country at that time. Fast forward two years later, work is still ongoing at the Olembe Stadium (Paul Biya Stadium); a stadium to host the opening and closing games of the competition.

With barely two months to go to
the tournament, officials are in a race against time to make sure that everything is set. One certain thing is that the Olembe stadium is matchday ready after hosting competitive games. The other stadia in Limbe, Douala, Bafoussam and Garoua and not leaving out the Ahmadou Ahidjo Stadium are all ready for the competition.

Cameroon will draw experience from hosting the Africa Nations Championship, CHAN, in January 2021 and some of the stadia to be used for the AFCON were on display and used for the competition. CAF officials and even its President Dr Motsepe has been clear from the beginning that Cameroon will host the AFCON, putting to bed doubts over whether the country will be stripped again or not.

Rise of Anglophone crisis

For decades now, President Biya has had to play down the aspirations of the Anglophones who had demanded decentralization of power and for the Regions to elect those who will govern them, from their Mayors, local administrators and even the Governor, who is appointed. In 2016, these aspirations will come up again led by the teachers and lawyers and escalate to a full-blown war in 2017 that has continued since then. The separatist fighters have regrouped themselves and are calling for an independent state called “Ambazonia” with the government forces fighting hard to maintain the territorial integrity of the country. The crisis has seen thousands of people killed, others have become refugees while education has been completely affected in certain Divisions.

Both warring parties have been accused of committing atrocities and the international community continues to call on both parties to come to the dialogue table and settle their differences. President Biya in that light convened a Major National Dialogue in 2019 (many separatist leaders did not show up) and many resolutions have been put in places such as the strengthening of the Commission of Bilingualism and Multiculturalism, the conveying of a “Special Status” to the North West and South West Regions and others. President Paul Biya in 2008 amended the constitution and abolished the presidential term limit meaning he could run as many times as possible, even with ailing health. And his legacy will be tied to how best he resolves the ongoing Anglophone crisis or if the two Regions will succeed in breaking away.
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Simba, the upcoming African Fintech company has launched a new card to ease money transfer services for African immigrants in the USA. With transfer of funds free for a Simba-to-Simba card, the African Fintech has taken another giant step in its mission of providing the African immigrant communities with access to financial products and services that make it easier to save, support loved ones, and thrive.

Founded by Simon Tiemtore, a West African Immigrant from Burkina Faso, Simba is positioned to provide a strong response to the multi-faceted challenges facing African immigrants when it comes to financial transactions. From money transfer amongst the immigrants to remittances, and a broad range of other fresh opportunities, the services offered by Simba will break new grounds, says Simon Tiemtore in an interview with PAV.

**Thanks for accepting to grant this interview to talk about Simba. Could we start with why you created Simba?**

When I came to the U.S., I relied on my community to learn where to bank, how to build credit, to send money home and rent an apartment. It was a confusing and difficult process. Millions of immigrants living in the U.S. or coming to the U.S. still face the same issue. Like many of us, we are committed to give back. For me, it was easier to make banking skills to the service of immigrant communities here in the U.S. This is how Simba was ‘born’. We want to make access to banking services affordable to ALL.

**Can you make an introduction of the company and its key services and products?**

Today, Simba offers no fee mobile banking services coupled with no fee remittances in response to the needs of the African diaspora in the U.S. Simba offers the latest mobile banking services, including instant Simba-to-Simba customer transfers, contactless debit cards on the Visa network and more.

While we are ‘young’ as a company, we are planning, growing organically, introducing tailored made new products, and services in the near future. Some upcoming products include loans, rotational savings programs, wealth management and insurance over the next year. Additionally, we’re partnering with institutions in Africa to increase remittance beneficiary services, including cash pick-up, mobile top-up and bill payment, so we are a complete solution for Africans both in the U.S. and at home. Very soon, Simba will be offering intra-Africa payments services.

**Let’s talk about the Simba card that was recently launched, what is the business logic behind the card?**

We coupled our services with a debit card (both physical and virtual), so that Simba customers could not only have access to their money whenever they need it, but also use their cards for online payments. We are providing ALL banking benefits in one application or account.

**How easy is it to obtain the card and what safety guarantees are there for its efficacy?**

Simba was built with safety and security as a top priority from day one.

Simba works under a U.S. bank license, providing complete FDIC insurance up to $250,000 USD. Additionally, Simba operates on the VISA Network, so your card is accepted anywhere VISA is accepted. Signing-up for Simba takes minutes and can be done entirely from your phone.

**What does the African diaspora stand to gain from using the Simba Card and services?**

Traditional U.S. Banks do not understand the immigrant journey. Their products and services are not built around the needs of immigrants, including the challenges associated with getting a bank account without a SSN, sending money home effectively and building credit to secure loans. Simba is built around the needs of the African diaspora.

We’ve built a network of ambassadors and relationships with community organizations, so we are continually working within the community to learn how we can better support you. Our communities are part of our design process. Simba is built for us and by us.

**There are similar services out, what is it that makes Simba unique, any particular peeks that your clientele gets by using Simba services?**

We are unaware of a company today which is offering the African diaspora a complete set of products and services modeled around their needs. We are working in both the U.S. and in Africa to meet the demands of Simba clients in the U.S. and in their home countries.

**On the money transfer part, how well is that working?**

We first implemented a card-to-
A card money transfer solution built on Visa technology. This is the future—it’s instantaneous, free, and you can send large dollar amounts daily.

It’s a great first solution, but we realize not all banks in African countries accept these transfers today. While the card acceptance rates are increasing quickly, we wanted to ensure our customers have other options for sending money to their loved-ones back home, so we’ve integrated other remittance providers allowing us to do other money transfer options, including: card to bank, cash pick-up and mobile top-ups. These partners will be no fee as well and rolling out starting in late November 2021.

We did see that there were still a number of key African countries missing on the list like Nigeria, Cameroon and others, what efforts are you and your team making to make sure Simba services cover all not just parts of Africa?

We are currently covering 15 countries and adding more countries. Nigeria and Cameroun will be covered by the end of November. Our brothers and sisters from Nigeria and Cameroun and any other country not currently cover can still sign up on Simba to enjoy the no fee banking and the instant no fee local transfer in the U.S. With the Simba to Simba instantaneous and free transfer, natives of those countries can still use Simba tools to transfer funds within the communities.

From your perspective how critical is the role of the diaspora in the development of Africa?

Remittances from the U.S. back to Africa are some of the largest direct investments in Africa today and are key to development. Unfortunately, it is the most expensive. This is why we believe remittances should be effortless and free; remittances are putting food on the table, family members through college, and paying basic bills. It is about time we democratize money transfer. Simba does just that.

What are some of the challenges that you have faced getting Simba operations and services running?

While I officially began this journey three years ago, I’ve wanted to build Simba for almost two decades. Like many small companies, it hasn’t always been easy, but we’re excited to launch and begin working within the community to provide a better solution.

We’ve found many companies and investors in the U.S. that are supportive of what we’re building, but unaware of the immigrant journey and the unique daily hardships they are facing. We’re helping to bridge this gap in the market.

From early indicators, may we know how the public has so far responded to the launch of the Simba card and accompanying services?

The community is excited for Simba and has been incredibly supportive. We’re eager to keep improving our products and services and to build a better experience for everyone. Investors are also very excited about the growth prospects in payment sector in Africa, so we are seeing a lot of interest in what we are doing.

The VISTA Group that you lead has been in the news with the rapid growth of its banking portfolio across Africa, can you shed some light on this for us?

The Vista Bank Group was the first step in building my vision for a complete banking solution for Africans. Coupled with Simba, we’ll offer an end-to-end offering for Africans globally. We are currently operating in Guinea, Gambia, Sierra Leone and Burkina-Faso and soon expanding our operations in 20 countries in Africa. This will enable us to better respond to our clients intra-Africa trade needs and become a key player under the African continental free trade area. Vista will also serve as a strategic partner for Simba in providing a point of services to Simba users in Africa.

Our communities are part of our design process. Simba is built for us and by us, says Simon Tiemtore.
What is your take on the African Continental Free Trade Agreement, what opportunities do you see in it for Simba and the Vista Group?

AfCFTA aims to create a single market for goods and services in Africa. Solving cross-border payment within the continent is critical in exponentially increasing intra-Africa trade. This creates a massive opportunity for payment companies like Simba and for Vista Bank which provides the payment infrastructure to Simba. While Simba is well positioned to provide payment services, Vista Bank will provide the trade instruments to large corporates to unlock the full potential of AfCTA. Both Simba and Vista are partnering with Afreximbank and will leverage Pan-African Payment and Settlement System (PAPSS) to provide payments and trade services in the continent. So, the AfCFTA provides a unique growth opportunity for both Simba and Vista Group.

When you look at Africa what makes you hopeful and what are your fears?

Despite certain securities issues in parts of Africa, I have no fears whatsoever. We have been tested before and succeeded and will continue to thrive. To the contrary, I am super optimistic and bullish about Africa, the fastest growing region in the world. There is a reason why everyone wants to invest in Africa today.

Any last word to the large African diaspora out there on the merits of using Simba services?

Simba was built by the community for the community with the goal to empower the community financially. So, I will encourage them to sign up and take full advantage of the free banking and free transfer services that Simba offers. They worked hard to earn their money and they deserve to enjoy it fully without paying unnecessary fees for outdated services. They must be confident that Simba is here to empower them for our success is tied to their prosperity. Let’s prosper together.

Nigeria Steps Up Digital Currency Lane But There Are Concerns

By Richard Mammah

Aft er initially casting aspersions on the dizzying pace of digitalisation of currency forms in the global marketplace when it put its foot down very heavily against cryptocurrencies, Nigeria has presently eaten the humble pie and crawled into the league of markets that are intent on exploring the inevitable growth of digital based monetary and economic transaction vehicles that are being developed.

While the apex bank is still insisting that its reservations against Bitcoin and cryptocurrencies remain, it has now launched its own version of a digital money product, the e-Naira.

Packaged as a Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC), the eNaira is built on the same block chain supporting technology but unlike Bitcoins which the bank continues to hold at arm’s length, it essentially operates as a CBN-guaranteed legal tender which is issued, regulated and controlled by the apex monetary authority of Africa’s most populous nation.

Speaking at an event to flag-off its adoption in Abuja, President Muhammadu Buhari outlined that the e-Naira had the prospect of helping to increase the country’s GDP by $29 billion across the next 10 years. According to the President, the scheme had not come without a careful consideration of its pros and cons:

• In recent times, the use of physical cash in conducting business and making payments has been on the decline. This trend has been exacerbated by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the resurgence of a new digital economy.

• The absence of a swift and effective solution to these requirements, as well as fears that central banks’ actions sometimes lead to hyperinflation created the space for non-government entities to establish new forms of “private currencies” that seemed to have gained popularity and acceptance across the world, including here in Nigeria.

• Needless to add, close monitoring and close supervision will be necessary in the early stages of implementation to study the effect of eNaira on the economy as a whole.

• It is on the basis of this that the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) sought and received my approval to explore issuing Nigeria’s own Central Bank Digital Currency, named the eNaira,” the President explained.

Shedding more light on the operational details of the scheme, the governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria, CBN, Mr. Godwin Emefiele, revealed that not only were 33 banks already onboarded unto the eNaira platform, the apex bank had already minted N500 million of the eNaira, from which N200m had been released to the participating banks.

“It is a direct liability of the Bank, a legal tender and will form part of the currency-in-circulation and will be at par with the physical Naira.”

“The eNaira shall complement traditional Naira as a less costly, more efficient, generally acceptable, safe and trusted means of payment. In addition, it will improve monetary policy effectiveness, enhance government’s capacity to deploy targeted social interventions and boost remittances through formal channels,” the central bank underscored in its explanatory note.

On the plus side, while the eNaira could assist the government in sending direct payments to citizens eligible for specific welfare
programmes as well as possibly foster cross border trade should Nigeria’s neighbours warm up to it, there are however a ton of concerns that need addressing.

First is the question of how well developed the hosting facility for the project is. On this, it is to be noted that the project’s take-off had endured a month-long delay ostensibly to fine-tune the infrastructure. And then days after its formal launch, the product was to be taken down from its hosting Google Play Store to enable some more tinkering to be carried out.

Checks with bankers in the Lagos area at the close of October revealed that though they had been statutorily conscripted into the process, many still knew very little about the inner workings of the process to be able to confidently sell it to the inquiring public.

‘We really know very little about this. There should have been more robust sensitization. At the moment, we know only the few details that have been shared and frankly it is not much. So we are waiting on the CBN to give even more definite direction so that we can more confidently understand what it is all about and be able to fully respond,’ a senior banking executive confided in this reporter.

Indeed further checks reveal that while the eNaira could very well build on other recent developments in the financial serves sector such as the introduction of Automated Teller Machines, ATMs, and Point of Sale, POS machines, its mere adoption may not necessarily translate into immediate value creation for the overall economy, more so when the general growth and productivity engines continue to be bogged down by myriad inefficiencies.

On its best foot, perhaps the first direct benefit to consumers at this point of introduction would be that they would be able to carry out transactions and make payments from their e-Naira wallets without incurring some of the charges that presently come with other alternative transaction platforms. Some of the charges that may not be operational at this point could include additional VAT and Stamp Duty as well as costs like card and accounts maintenance that are presently operational in other platforms and channels. But they would have to contend with two other variables. The first is that despite the toga of the eNaira being a legal tender that should be accepted by all, the consumer would still need to find a clearly willing vendor. And second, given the continuing financial and economic challenges of the government and country, there is really no guarantee that some charges would not soon slip into the bouquet after this introductory period.

Other concerns have been raised over issues of price stability, runaway inflation, currency crises, loss of confidence in the integrity of the monetary authority, lack-lustre banking sector regulation, fears over the degrading of the value of the Naira, market manipulation, the risk of frauds and illicit value creation, and indeed the overall novelty of the entire exercise.

The economic issues commentator, Dr. Boniface Chizea remarks:

‘My take is that we have taken this step essentially to be seen to be compliant. If we recall four months before the decision was taken to launch the digital currency, it is on record that the Central Bank instructed Deposit Money banks not to have anything to do with cryptocurrencies. But when sound bites from high quarters informed that it is better to position the financial system not to be found wanting as certainly digital currency will be the future medium of exchange, the CBN geared up for the country to also launch it’s own version of digital currency even if it is correct to observe that the CBN we were informed had under studied digital currency for the past four years.

‘From where I stand the entire innovation must be seen as work-in-progress for our Central Bank as it must be the case with Central Banks in other jurisdictions. Not too long ago for example, China that had championed digital currency and has been on it for many years turned tails to suddenly raise some doubts about its viability.

So its early to talk about the benefits of digital currency as we can only logically do so after its working is fully understood. It is fair to observe that the CBN during the launch identified improved financial inclusion, enhancement of the effectiveness of monetary policy, improved speed of and costless transactions as some of the many benefits of eNaira.

There is also this talk that digital currency will aid financial inclusion but I am at a loss how those who have not embraced conventional banking would suddenly find the capacity to use the digital version! It runs contrary to what one would logically expect. We were also told before that massive illegal funds entered our economy through the digital currency ecosystem. But now suddenly we are informed that it will now make money laundering more difficult to perpetrate as the trail of transactions could be easily tracked. One aspect that has been highlighted as an advantage is the fact that digital currency don’t need costly infrastructure such as branch network to operate.

So, again no doubt it will all hang out in the light of experience. Even now some concerns are envisaged. To what extent will the use of wallets drain deposit money banks of liquidity? How will digital currency facilitate international person to person transactions without third party involvement? How is the Central Bank going to balance its role as a regulator with that of an operator in the context of eNaira?

All said, congratulations are in order that Nigeria can now be counted amongst the countries that have officially launched their own version of digital currency ready to reap it’s full benefits as they manifest. Infact the point has been emphasized that Nigeria is the first country in Africa to do so.’

Indeed, so many questions, and so few definitive answers. And so we wait.

But if this is going to be of any comfort, feelers are that Nigeria’s neighbour, Ghana, which already has a mobile money product, momo, may also be among several other nations in the continent and beyond that are contemplating signing on to the digital currency pathway with a proposed launch of the e-cedi. But again as with the Nigerian experience, the devil would of course remain as they say in the details.
Billions at Play
The Future of African Energy and Doing Deals
by NJ AYUK

“Billions tells us the answer lies in the abundant, accessible and affordable natural gas reserves that dot the continent.”
JOÃO MARQUES
Energy analyst and Editor

“Ayuk sees opportunity all around him, and he realizes that appropriate development will solve many of the continent’s challenges, including power generation.”
ANN NORMAN
General Manager for Sub-Saharan Africa, Pioneer Energy

“‘There is no stone left unturned in Mr. Ayuk’s analysis of Africa and OPEC.’”
MOHAMMAD SANUSI BARKINDO
Secretary General, OPEC.
Africa and Europe have been close allies for centuries, which crossed turbulent times including colonization era which still haunt Africa until today. New partners have emerged but as said, ‘you can’t make old friends’.

From 25 to 26 October 2021, the Second African Union-European Union ministerial meeting, took place in Kigali, Rwanda where different topics of common interests were discussed including the response to recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, building resilience, investing in the digital and green transitions, peace, security and global governance among others.

Meeting came global multilateralism is at crossroads, economic wars among big economies are evident. It is time for both sides, AU and EU to accept their past and redefine a shared future which is beneficial to the people.

However, that is not an easy task as described by Grace Naledi Mandisa Pandor, South African Minister for Foreign Affairs who sat in a brief interview with Pan African Visions’ Maniraguha Ferdinand, at the sidelines of AU-EU ministerial meeting in Kigali.

She talked about the future of her dissatisfaction about the current AU-EU partnership, Presence of Rwanda troops in Mozambique as well as uneasy relations between her country and Rwanda.

Below are excerpts:

How important do you think it is for Africa and Europe to meet and discuss on different issues of common interests?

We’ve established a joint technical task team between Rwanda and South Africa so that we understand the concerns of both parties. It is an immigration matter, not a foreign affairs matter. So colleagues in that field are working together, and we’ve given them a time frame in which they should report to myself and Minister [Vincent] Biruta.

Are you hopeful that all the concerns will be addressed?

I hope we will arrive at a point where both countries feel that we are working very well together. We work very well together at the political level; we work very well together in multilateral bodies such as the UN and within the context of the African Union.

So I hope even bilaterally, that the good friendship between President Kagame and President Ramaphosa, It will lead to even greater collaboration between our two countries.

What is your comment about Rwandan soldiers currently deployed in Mozambique, a SADC member?

Well, Mozambique has an absolute right to have bilateral support as they have with Rwanda. We thought it’s very important. Mozambique did inform SADC about this, and we agreed that, to have bilateral support in this big combat against insurgents, it would be important that they’re able to do so because it’s their sovereign right.

But I’m pleased as well that we’ve now shown that different regions on the continent can work closely together because you now have one Rwandese and SADC.
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Gas-To-Power – An Opportunity that Africa Can't Toss Away after COP26

By NJ Ayuk*

A
fter three days in Glasgow for COP26, you can’t help but ask yourself where do we go from here as an African energy sector. I maintain my disappointment with the global elites for failing to invite the oil and gas industry. Oh well, they invited me.

With dire warnings about the impending dangers of climate change clouding the headlines on a daily basis, energy transition from fossil fuels to renewables is a hot topic. Talk of banning fossil fuels altogether floats among the more liberal circles in the United States and Europe as companies scramble to crank out acres of solar cells and plant forests of windmills. In May, the International Energy Agency (IEA) proposed banning any new investment in fossil fuels after 2021, and we’re already seeing significant divestment in oil and gas projects around the globe. I responded to their publicity stunt and I still stand by my response.

As I said at that time “we live in reality. And today, in real-world Africa, this goal is not feasible. Nor is it advisable”

The threat of climate change is real, and the goal of lessening it is noble, but what is often forgotten in these discussions are the repercussions of a rapid shift from fossil fuels, particularly in developing nations like those in Africa. Countries that have enjoyed over a century of energy development and near-universal electrification did so first by exploiting their own natural resources to the fullest extent possible — a right not everyone has been able to exercise equally. While the developed world can afford to take risks and think about sloughing off old industries, large parts of Africa are still struggling to provide their people with reliable electricity. As a result, industrialization and economic stability have remained out of reach for large swaths of the continent. Education, already a challenge in impoverished communities, is even harder. So is the provision of health care.

These are some of the reasons the African Energy Chamber has become an outspoken advocate for continued natural gas production: Gas-to-power initiatives — the development and expansion of gas-powered electricity plants — are not new to Africa, but they are building momentum. They are a practical way to address energy poverty and they make sense for Africa. This is not the time to pressure African countries to abandon them.

Living in the Dark

It is not an exaggeration to say energy poverty is one of our continent’s most pressing problems: Only 56% of Africa’s population has access to electricity today, and in many places that power is still inadequate and unreliable at best. We address this topic in our recently released report, The State of African Energy 2022.

“Comprehensive energy access across the continent remains a central target, with some 600 million people without access to electricity today," says the report. "Moreover, households themselves, facing low and inadequate supply of electricity, often rely on highly polluting traditional energy sources such as hard biomass, which constitutes 45% of total primary energy demand in Africa.”

The Downside of Wind and Solar

Many existing power grids in Africa remain underdeveloped, such that an intermittent supply of energy can threaten the stability of an entire grid. Such is the case in Kenya, which is widely considered to be at the forefront of Africa’s energy transition, building momentum in the renewable sector with the 310 MW Lake Turkana wind farm and 50 MW Garissa solar PV station. Some 15% of Kenya’s installed capacity comes from solar and wind, but as our 2022 Outlook reports, they have experienced severe voltage instability. Better system management, upgraded infrastructure, and long-term power
storage technology are needed to solve these problems, but implementing these things on a nationwide or continent-wide scale won’t happen overnight.

Another problem plaguing renewables development is near-complete reliance on overseas manufacturing and expertise. The majority of solar cells and windmills are made in China, like so much else, with most of the rest made in Europe and the USA. Those same countries also provide the primary supply of knowledge, training, and technology for installing, maintaining, and repairing renewable facilities. Economically, this means fewer home-grown jobs for Africans in this sector until such capacity can be developed. It also ensures security of supply in case war or politics cripples the ability to import key materials and workers.

Energy demand across Africa is expected to triple within the next 20 years—faster than anywhere else in the world — as a result of population growth, rising incomes, and rapid urbanization. To meet such rapidly accelerating demand, Africa needs the ability to make use of its existing natural resources and human capital, and to employ tried-and-true solutions that will reliably keep the lights on when the wind won’t blow and the sun won’t shine. Mitigating climate change must remain part of the equation, but the perfect cannot be allowed to be the enemy of the good when so many people are still starting from zero.

**Why Gas-to-Power Makes Sense in Africa**

When it comes to reliability, fossil fuels remain the standard by which all other energy sources are judged, and natural gas is the cleanest among them by far. All of sub-Saharan Africa could triple its electricity use overnight using only natural gas and still account for only a 1% increase in global emissions, so low is its starting point.

Gas power also pairs better with wind and solar than other clean power sources. Unlike coal, hydro, nuclear, or geothermal generators, gas turbines can power up and down quickly, making them ideal as backup for wind and solar when the weather isn’t cooperating and increasing the reliability of the power supply.

Gas turbines require less up-front capital investment than most other generating equipment, and they have the advantage of being modular as well for quicker deployment. Until wind and solar become more reliable, gas has the potential to keep coal out of the fuel supply and displace older, dirtier equipment running on diesel or fuel oil, while ensuring that a growing society’s basic needs are met. Africa already is seeing the benefits of its growing liquefied natural gas (LNG) sector. As the 2022 Outlook reports, LNG-to-power has the potential to help build a resilient, low-emission power infrastructure across the continent.

The report cites promising developments in Ghana:

Ghana is set to commission the first sub-Saharan Africa’s LNG-to-power project at Tema LNG Terminal. A floating regasification unit arrived from China in January 2021 and it will be able to deliver 1.7 million tons of natural gas per year for power generation. Ghana’s electricity consumption remains lower than the average over the sub-Saharan region and far below that of developed countries. Bridge Power project in Tema will have the capacity to produce 400MW of electricity from liquefied natural gas. This is equivalent to the power consumption of 1.6 million average Ghanaian homes.

And this is only one example: From new gas-to-power projects in Tanzania to the construction of gas pipelines in Nigeria, African countries are poised to produce, transport, and harness natural gas to boost their power capacities.

And why shouldn’t they? A total of 25 countries on the continent have proven natural gas reserves, 11 of which are currently generating power from their own domestic production in sub-Saharan Africa. Oil and gas are the largest sources of income for many of these countries and have been for decades, giving Africa a substantial well of experience and expertise among its own population to build on. Ceasing oil and gas development in these markets would be devastating both economically and politically, potentially even leading to government collapse and drastically increased poverty. Allowing Africans to build on what they already have increases social stability and the capacity to further develop technological capability.

Ultimately, Africans deserve the same level of energy access and security that the rest of the world takes for granted. The number of people left behind is simply too large to allow foreign agendas to take viable options off the table. If Africans are to do their part in solving the world’s biggest problems such as climate change, they have to be enabled to control their own destinies and participate on their own terms. Gas-to-power is a means to that end, and a brighter future for Africa could mean a brighter future for us all.

*NJ Ayuk is Chairman of the African Energy Chamber*
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The report is the result of strong regional and international cooperation between the African Energy Chamber, governments, and other major public and private sector stakeholders across Africa. It gathers the latest available data on Africa’s energy sector, and benefits from the insights of key local, regional, and international companies and experts, making it the most comprehensive resource to date on the future of African energy markets.

According to the Chambers outlook in 2022, Over 580 million (almost 46%) of the continent’s population lack access to electricity. To “make energy poverty history by 2030”, Africa’s electricity generation capacity needs to expand rapidly by over 6% a year to support strong economic growth, foster industrialisation, and safeguard livelihoods. Despite Africa’s expected growth in renewable power generation by close to 14.5% in 2022, it is not enough to stem the overall decline of 2.5% in generation brought about by the pandemic. Conventional fuels such as coal, oil, and natural gas collectively accounted for three-quarters (75%) of Africa’s power generation. The report therefore concludes that rapid moves to attain net-zero at all costs will severely negatively impact Africa and hence highly unrecommendable.

The oil and gas sector is expected to see an increase sanctioning and investment activities in 2022 as a result of improved cashflows from oil and gas companies, especially in the latter part of 2021 following demand and supply recovery from the low levels in 2020. Africa’s oil and gas industry will continue its increased exposure to gas projects, as demand for gas increases and gas establishes itself a key force in the drive to decarbonise, whilst at the same time meeting the continent’s energy needs.

From its inception in 2019, the AEC’s yearly outlook report has sought to provide key stakeholders and the general public with reliable and actionable information on Africa’s energy sector, guiding key players on investments for the year to come. It explores the forces shaping the continent’s energy sector and provides key insights and trends that the industry and key stakeholders should pay attention to for the near future.

The State of African Energy 2022 report outlines the expected state of the Oil, Gas and Power industry in 2022, with a key emphasis on the effects of energy transition on the Oil & Gas and Power sectors. It’s without a doubt that energy poverty needs to be eradicated. This flagship energy outlook is the Chamber’s guide to investors and major players within the energy sector, that provides a comprehensive approach to battling energy poverty – one that includes gas-to-power initiatives – and we’re seeing movement in that direction. More than a dozen African countries are already using natural gas they produce themselves or import from other countries to generate electricity. And new projects are on the way.

“The African Energy Chamber is committed to helping Africa’s energy sector stakeholders navigate a complex and ever-changing global energy landscape. Through the State of African Energy 2022 energy outlook, the Chamber continues on its mission to support the dynamic private sector and unlock the continent’s remarkable energy potential.” says NJ Ayuk, Executive Chairman of the African Energy Chamber.

The Chamber’s energy outlook, The State of African Energy 2022, will launch via a webinar launch taking place on 25 October 2022 15:00 to 16:15 (SAST, during which industry experts will join the executive chairman of the African Energy Chamber NJ Ayuk, to share their view on the outlook for 2022 and what that means for the future of Africa’s energy. The State of African Energy 2022 outlook will be available for download after lunch on the African Energy Chamber website.


disappointed many in the quest to correct past wrongs

by prince kurupati

Expectations are very high for President Hichilema to deliver for Zambians.

Hakainde Hichilema swept to a crushing victory when he defeated incumbent Edgar Lungu in Zambia’s recent election. In his election campaign, Hichilema decried the rot that had engulfed the nation from the political, economic to the social realm. He promised that once in power, he would correct all the past wrongs in the process setting the country on a path to success. Just a few months into his presidency, the man is living up to his word. The new Zambian leader is making some sweeping reforms which are transforming Zambia for the better.

Bally, as Hichilema is affectionately known in Zambia, has already put up a team of advisers whose main mission is to review Zambia’s tax regime. A new Cabinet has been chosen to oversee the development of the nation while security sector reforms which were enacted in Hichilema’s first few days in office have already proved Hichilema’s determination to uproot the old and instil the new.

Hichilema is aware of the fact that the task of uprooting the old however will not be as easy and smooth as most people probably believe. Speaking on the issue of economic turnaround and job creation, Hichilema recently stated that some tough but much-needed austerity measures need to be implemented. These measures will affect mostly the youths – the highest age group in the country – but patience will need to be practised as the country undergoes a tough but significant economic transformation.

The first task that faces the Hichilema administration is to address and tackle the debt challenge. The new Zambian President inherited an unsustainable national debt which keeps ballooning owing to default on repayments. The debt saw the country’s growth contract by 4.9% in 2020. Though the outlook is scary, Hichilema says he is optimistic about resolving it and clearing the debt.

Since his ascension to power, he has managed to engage the international financial institutions Zambia owes and the first talks have been positive. Decisions were made and the ball is now in Zambia’s court to implement all the decisions agreed upon.

Looking forward to the future of Zambia, Nicole Beardsworth who is a politics lecturer at the University of Witwatersrand in South Africa said the first steps being taken by the Hichilema administration are commendable. However, just as Hichilema warned, the austerity measures to be implemented will make life hard for the already struggling Zambian population. The extra hardship however is just a storm before the calm as it will pave way for an economic turnaround.

“The key challenge that they will face is that the restructuring required by the IMF will likely be unpopular, including rolling back subsidies in electricity, petrol prices, and reconfiguring the civil service wage bill... The administration will need to find a way to ring fence social spending, which declined year-on-year under the previous administration, and mitigate the negative consequences for the country’s poorest,” Nicole Beardsworth said.

The mining sector has long been the backbone of Zambia’s economy. In recent years, owing to the dwindling demand in copper which is Zambia’s main export and some everchanging mining laws, Zambia has not been benefiting as much as it would like from its most prized treasure. However, the shift to electric cars on the globe may just be the catalyst that Zambia needs when it comes to increasing its copper exports. In comparison to fuel consuming cars, electric cars do use much more copper hence this can help increase demand for the metal. This compounded by Hichilema’s likely policy stability on the mining sector will help improve copper exports.

Grieve Chelwa who is a Zambian economist with the New School of New York said, “Hichilema’s likely to offer more policy stability because he comes from a background of fiscal discipline, but the people have been saying we need to tax the mines more so Hichilema’s likely to do that because he has to put Zambia’s interests first. However, he’ll do it with much more stability and consistency than what we’ve seen in his predecessor.”

The reforms that Hichilema plans to implement in the mining sector are not going to be all rosy for the ordinary folk though. For long, some Zambian mines have been left in the hands of artisanal miners popularly known as ‘jerabos’. These jerabos doubled up as a strong political support base of the previous Lungu administration. Owing to this, they were left to do as they please in the mines and often, they would invade some private mines and lay claim on them. President Hichilema has promised to do away with the jerabos as he is determined to facilitate “local ownership” of mines.

There are many things that have to be done by the jerabos in order to formalise operations and failure to satisfy these may put them at a disadvantage. A possibility of...
Burundi-Rwanda: Towards Restoration Of Diplomatic Relations

By Egide Lucky

Handover of suspect rebels on both sides, meetings among governors on borders are telling signs that Burundi and Rwanda are on the right way to turn the page over diplomatic unrest that had prevailed between the two countries since 2015. Relations between the two neighboring countries deteriorated after the failed coup in Burundi in 2015. On one hand, the government of Burundi led by late Pierre Nkurunziza accused Rwanda of providing refuge to the coup plotters. On the other hand, Rwanda accused Burundi of providing shelter to the Interahamwe, people who conducted the 1994 genocide against Tutsi in Rwanda and other enemies. Both sides have always dismissed the accusations. Diplomatic relations had broken off between the two countries until 2020 when Evariste Ndayishimiye stepped in as president of Burundi after Nkurunziza passed away. Evariste Ndayishimiye showed up with strong endeavors to bury the hatchet between Burundi and Rwanda and repair their relations, but under a condition that Rwanda might handover to Burundi the coup plotters.

In a press release on 19th August 2021, the Burundian Prime Minister Alain Guillaume Bunyoni insisted that relations between the two countries will be re-established if Rwanda transfers the 2015 coup plotters.

Frosty relations emerging between the government and the jerabos is therefore highly likely as according to Grieve Chelwa. “These are people who feel they have indigenous rights to the land and these are people who’ve found a source of livelihood at a time when there’s huge youth unemployment in the country. Formalising them is a challenge because they must mine according to regulations and not occupy,” Chelwa said.

Whilst the austerity measures will certainly hit hard on the already struggling Zambian population, Grieve Chelwa said citizens need to put their trust in Hichilema as he has displayed great flexibility over the years moving from a strong capitalist stance to a people-driven stance. This in essence means the president will take measures to cushion the public from much suffering. “HH Hakainde Hichilema) has been criticised in the past for having a free market approach that favours private business and capitalist needs over public interest, but over the years there’s been a big change in HH. His campaign was focused on putting Zambians first so we can expect to see more of that in his presidency,” Chelwa said.
However, Rwanda has so far refused to favorably respond to the Burundi demand arguing that the “putschists” are protected by the international refugees’ rights. “Rwanda is not going to handover people who are under a UN protection. We cannot deliver people who have sought asylum with us,” said Paul Kagame, President of Rwanda.

This year, on July 1st as Burundi celebrated 59th anniversary of its independence, the Rwandan prime minister Edouard Ngirente was an important guest. Many believed his presence was a tangible sign that the two countries were thoroughly resuming their relations. This was confirmed by president Ndayishimiye who argued that “Burundi and Rwanda are going to write a new chapter”.

**Promising signs**

On October 25th, governors of the eastern and southern provinces of Rwanda met with Burundian governors of Kirundo and Muyinga provinces at the Gasenyi-Nemba border post in Kirundo, north of Burundi. Delegations included administrators of different districts, army and police representatives from both sides.

“The purpose of the meeting was to jointly assess border security (maritime and land) and establish contact between district and municipal administrators. It was also set up to discuss border fraud and how to strengthen communication between us,” said Albert Hatungimana, governor of Kirundo province. He added that they agreed to regularly hold meetings every three months.

The meeting took 5 hours. Both sides convened on enhancing communication, sensitizing population on border and migration regulations. They agreed on a joint fight against transborder fraud, theft and criminality.

Earlier, on October 15th, at the Ruhwa border post in the north-west of Burundi, the Burundian governor of Cibitoke Carème Bizoza met with his counterpart governor of the western province of Rwanda François Habitegeko. They discussed security situation at the common border.

At the end of the meeting, the two governors expressed their will to reopen the border and restore free movement of people and goods between Rwanda and Burundi.

“We are all convinced that it’s high time free movement on our borders resumed,” said François Habitegeko, governor of the Rwandan western province. They also accepted to meet regularly after three months.

A similar meeting was also held between the governor of Kayanza Rémy Cishahayo and his counterpart from Rwandan southern province Alice Kayitesi at the Kabarore-Nshili border post on August 6th. “We have agreed to exchange cross-border criminals, so those who commit crimes in Burundi do not retreat in Rwanda and vice versa,” said Rémy Cishahayo after the meeting.

Handover of “rebels”, but…

Exchange of “rebels” has happened twice between Burundi and Rwanda.

The recent event occurred at the Gasenyi-Nemba border on October 19th. 11 suspect combatants of the National Liberation Front (FLN), a Rwandan rebel group, were handed over to Rwanda by Burundian authorities.

Vincent Nyakarundi, Rwandan Chief of Military Intelligence commended steps that both countries have taken to re-establish relations: “This is not only a gesture to improve relations between our two countries, but a significant contribution to peace and security in the region.”

However, he warned about the presence of more rebels in the Kibira forest in Burundi: “As we receive these 11 combatants, it should be noted that hundreds of others remain in the Kibira Forest from where they continue their attempts to cross the border in order to kill innocent civilians.”

He insisted that both countries should work hard together to ensure that the common threat to the two sister countries is completely defeated. “Our people need the return of activities, businesses and cross-border exchanges,” he concluded.

On July 30th, Rwanda also handed over to Burundi 19 suspect rebels believed to be combatants of Red Tabara, a rebel group that has spearheaded different attacks in Burundi.
Aviance welcomes United Airlines to Accra

Akwaaba

#StrongerTogether
Until my death” I will continue in politics.

These are the exact words uttered by former Ivory Coast president Laurent Gbagbo as he launched his new political party in the capital, Abidjan. Gbagbo launched his new party just a few weeks after returning back home following his acquittal by the International Criminal Court. He had been arrested for his role in a civil war sparked by his refusal to relinquish power following an election defeat.

Launching his new party, the African People’s Party – Cote d’Ivoire (PPA-CI), Gbagbo refused to give a definitive answer as to whether he will contest in the upcoming 2025 presidential election. Speculation however is rife that Gbagbo only formed the party because he wants to get another shot at the presidency something which had become almost impossible in his former party the Ivorian Popular Front where he couldn’t contest for the presidency post any more. The major stumbling block for Gbagbo if he is looking to contest one more time for the presidency post is a bill designed to limit the age of presidential candidates to 75. By the time the 2025 presidential election is conducted, Gbagbo will have turned 80.

Though boldly stating that “I am going to practise politics until my death,” the 76-year old Gbagbo also suggested that it was time for “the elders” to retire from active politics. Some have used the suggestion to infer that Gbagbo just wants to lay the path for the younger generation to come forward and possibly take the reigns come the 2025 presidential election. For over three decades now, Ivorian national politics has been dominated by three men – Gbagbo who is 76, incumbent Alassane Ouattara who is 79 and former president Henri Konan who is 87.

If the argument that Gbagbo is looking to pave way for the young generation to take power through forming a new party is true, then the move can be likened to the one taken by Ouattara last year. Ouattara in the build up to the last presidential campaign for long periods had chosen to step aside from contesting. He chose a younger candidate to run but unfortunately, the candidate died before the election and he had to return and contest for a third term which he subsequently won.

Regardless of the real intentions behind Gbagbo’s decision to form a new party, one thing is certain. This is, Gbagbo’s declaration that he intends to remain in politics till death more so, his desire to remain in close proximity to supreme power rather than at the lower levels of power structures is a great example of Africa’s age-long problem, that is, the propensity by African leaders to cling on to power at all costs till death. Many African leaders past and present have demonstrated a great addiction to power with several of them only relinquishing power at death.

The propensity to cling on to power as demonstrated by Gbagbo raises once again the question of leadership in Africa – what is it that draws African leaders to cling on to power and what feeds their addiction. There are many theories that have been forwarded to try and explain why this is the case. One such theory is of negative and positive liberties as forwarded by Steven Friedman in his book Democracy, Citizenship and Social Justice. In the book, Friedman posits that power addiction “is a symptom, not a cause.” He states that the problem of power addiction is a symptom of the collective (common people)’s inability to take control of their own destiny rather choosing to outsource their core mandate of being masters of their own destiny.

Because people aren’t able or aren’t willing to take control and become masters of their own destiny, they outsource this power to perceived demigods. These demigods in turn end up consolidating absolute power, something which eventually sees them reign supreme and subjugate the very same people who entrusted them with the authority to lead them. Putting into practise the issue of Gbagbo and his decision to form a new party and remain in politics (power) till death, it can be argued that he realised how he is perceived as a liberator by the collective group and thus he is executing his liberator duties albeit without factoring in the time he has exercised this role and the need to open up the avenues for more perceived demigods/liberators with new and fresh ideas to emerge.

Another theory that has been forwarded to try and explain African leaders’ propensity to cling on to power is the (desperate) need to protect their legacies. History is very kind to some leaders while its very harsh to some. A common argument is that before one departs the big stage, its important that s/he leaves the stage at the right time with his/her legacy intact. Sometimes
however, some untimely situations may pop up and in so doing, act as catalysts for quick an ungracious exit from the stage. Juxtaposition this with the situation in Ivory Coast in 2010 to 2011, it can be argued that the civil war is the catalyst which paved the way for the quick and ungracious exit from the stage for Gbagbo. As such, having now been given the time to get on the stage once more, he is determined to correct some things he deemed were wronged against him thus, protect his legacy.

**Time for the UK and Africa To Rethink Business Ties-**

Edgar Chibaka Chairman of the UK Malawi Business Group

*By Ajong Mbapndah L*

The UK must stop thinking that they are Africa’s saviour and African countries must stop lifting their begging bowl to the UK, says Edgar Chibaka, Chairman of the UK Malawi Business Group. Despite the wealth inequality between the UK and African countries, trade must be done on a partnership of equals approach to create a win-win situation, says Chibaka who recently scooped the top prize at this year’s Black British Business Awards alongside his partner Jamal Tahlil.

While Chibaka sees in the award a recognition of the hard work he and his partner have put in under challenging circumstances to make it in the corporate world, he believes that there is still much the African diaspora can do to participate in the development of their continent. Instead of limiting themselves to remittances, Chibaka tasks the diaspora to consider investment in property and agribusiness.

You and your partner Jamal Tahlil recently scooped the top prize at this year’s Black British Business Awards, how did you receive the news and what did the award mean to you?

We were very excited and received the award with a lot of humility reflecting on the journey we have travelled to get this level.

The award is a reflection that when one has a vision or dream are prepared to pay a price for it through a mixture of hard work and strategy nothing is impossible. This is what we have demonstrated over the fourteen years of building the First Response Group and other companies we also own like Robinsons MEA Ltd which is a mechanical and electrical contractor business with £4 million annual turnover; Apardion Limited focused on facilities management solutions based in Scotland; Robinsons Living Ltd that focuses on property maintenance and refurbishment; RoCool HVAC Ltd focused on design, installation and maintenance of air conditioning equipment; Gemini Rail Ltd which is a critical staff provider to the rail industry but also undertake small works packages.

May we have insights into your company First Response Group, the services that it offers and how it went from scratch to employing over 500 workers today?

First Response Group is a security, risk, and facilities management company. It is a multi-service business working across all sectors of the economy providing manned and electronic security like Access Control, Detection and Surveillance systems, cleaning, landscape, pest control and facilities management.

Foremost, we set the vision and core values of what our business was to be like. We defined the organisation culture upfront and all what we did revolved around authentic family, respect and love which was translated in the way we marketed the business promising that our personnel deployed to their locations would be happy and loved.

You are from Malawi, and your partner Tahlil is from Somalia, can you tell us a little more about your meeting and forging the business relations and bonds that led resulted in your successful corporate adventure?

Jamal and I met at work. We were working for different companies but within the same business park. Our offices were opposite. Then, we got talking about the way how our companies treated their staff. There was no difference in the general practices in that nobody cared, one was just number and mattered less. So, we shared a common dissatisfaction and frustration hence we sought to do it ourselves. The vision was then born “to creating a company whose staff were loved, valued and happy to work for.” Today, we look around our offices and on our customer locations, we see staff who are over twelve years in the business, they have not moved and do not even contemplate changing jobs.

Jamal and I are brothers, family, and friends. There is great respect between us which create a conducive environment for a great partnership. We value each other’s talents and skills which are unique.

What are some of the challenges that you faced in growing the Group to the prominence that it occupies today?

There have been many challenges from prejudice, discrimination, and...
racism. There have times when our business was denied opportunities because of our race. But when you have faith, hope and determination, all wrapped up in a great vision, nothing of this sought can deny one’s destiny. They can only delay it. We kept going knowing that better things lay ahead of us.

We had to overcome doubt that as black people could deliver a quality service. So, we made sure that we were authentic and credible in communications with potential customers. We clarified our messaging several times to overcome the roadblock of doubt.

**How has COVID 19 impact business for you in the last two years?**

The major impact has been a slowdown on our growth plans. Certain contracts we had won got delayed and with lockdowns, we saw some staffing numbers on customer locations reduce. However, we pivoted the business by strategically positioning to be a helper in Covid 19 management especially in the retail sector. We had an aggressive push on innovative security technologies replacing manned security.

In the end we experienced a 50 percent growth in annual sales.

You are originally from Malawi; may we know the ties that you maintain with your home country and continent?

I still have family there, my mother, brothers, and sisters. I am growing coffee and macadamia nuts in Malawi. I have investments in media, transportation, and site facilities management and logistics services businesses in Malawi. I hope in the next couple of years to expand the services business to Zambia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, and Tanzania.

First Response Group in partnership with a United Kingdom registered charity sponsors a school children’s feeding program in Kenya, Somalia, and Malawi as a way of giving back to the continent.

**What is your assessment of business ties between the UK and Africa and is there any room for improvement?**

The UK has strong ties with Africa from colonial days. I think the ties could have been better to help Africa develop faster especially by implementing trade for aid. The UK now with Brexit should be inviting Africans to trade more in their commodities as it is only through trade that lives are uplifted. UK companies must partner with their African counterparts for trade and investments. The African continent is not short of good skills and talents.

There is plenty of room but starts with a change in attitude on both sides. The UK must stop thinking that they are Africa’s saviour and African countries must stop lifting their begging bowl to the UK. Despite, the wealth inequality between the UK and African countries, trade must be done on a partnership of equals approach to create a win-win situation. This is some of the work I am championing in my role as Chairman of the UK Malawi Business Group which is in the final stages of becoming a Chamber of Commerce.

**Broadly speaking, what role do you see the African diaspora in the UK playing in the development process in Africa?**

The African diaspora possess a great deal of skills and knowledge across many sectors. Most African countries have closed doors to their diaspora by restricting access to opportunities like jobs and dual citizenships.

African diaspora of course must continue with remittances but should consider some investments in properties and agribusiness.

African diaspora must be interested in developing their continent if they don’t no one will. It is not the responsibility of the Chinese, Indians, American, Europeans and British but for Africans.

**Based on your experiences, what is it the government in Malawi and others in Africa could do to facilitate the participation of its diaspora in the development of the continent?**

I have been having some serious thought about parliamentary representation. The diaspora is a constituency for Malawi and most African countries. There is need for proper reforms that the diaspora is represented in parliament, let them bring another perspective of what good looks like. Consideration of having a junior minister within the Foreign Affairs Ministry would be good so that the diaspora affairs are heard. At the moment there is a lot of frustration among the Malawi diaspora as it has been touch and go with nothing to show.

**For other young immigrants who see in you a role model and will love to emulate your kind of success, what are some success tips you can share with them?**

There is no short cut to success. If the young immigrants and young people in general would like to produce sustainable success, they have work hard in their talents. Must align themselves with the right people who can provide mentorship and coaching. Have faith in who you are. I always say, “God did not create a failure neither did he create a mistake.” So must have a vision of their success. Never stop dreaming because if they don’t have a dream, they will never have a dream come true.
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PRESS
PROF. VICTOR MBARIKA
PRÉSIDENT OF ICT UNIVERSITY WITH PM DION NGUETE
F
d five years down the line since
the Anglophone Crisis erupted
in Cameroon and morphed into
a full-blown war of independence, the
drive has witnessed several cracks due
to mistrust, greed, fear, suspicions
and sometimes betrayal in the circle
of leaders due to their unwillingness
to concert and harmonise their
collective objectives.

The jinx has however been broken by
the recent Toronto Retreat organised
by the Coalition for Dialogue and
Negotiations, CDN bringing together
various stakeholders and holders
of various shades of opinion in the
ongoing crisis and war in Anglophone
Cameroon. The retreat brought
together leaders of armed groups,
advocacy groups, church leaders,
domestic groups and those affected by
the crisis.

For five years now since the
Anglophone crisis started, the main
problem of observers has been the
lack of collaboration between the
various stakeholders. At some point
in this period, bitterness engulfed
many groups, with the leaders,
mostly in the diaspora giving orders
to armed groups loyal to them to
rather focus on attacking rival armed
groups. The bitterness spilt blood
in communities creating animosity.

Though the leaders often claimed
that the enemy has been the government
of Cameroon and its troops, the quest
for power and fame along the line
showed the ugly part of the groups,
who oftentimes preached the same
thing, but due to lack of concertation
with each other, began looking at
each other as the enemy.

Even the government of Cameroon
that has been accused by many of only
preferring the war option to dialogue,
has often given the excuse that it
does not know who to dialogue with,
because of the multitude of groups
with allegiance to different leaders
who all accuse each other of being a
stumbling block.

The just ended Toronto Retreat
which was the brainchild of the CDN
gave a sigh of relief and hope to
many, especially as the retreat was
predicated on building trust among
leaders, finding a common ground
and to another extend, harmonising
views regarding the aspirations of the
majority of Southern Cameroonians
who are today the Minority English
speakers in today’s Cameroon.

The main takeaway of the Toronto
retreat is the agreement by various
stakeholders to endorse and pursue
the furtherance of the Swiss-led
dialogue initiative with Cameroon.

At the end of a pioneer retreat that
brought together key stakeholders
involved in the quest for the
autonomy of Anglophone regions in
Cameroon, the participants, made up
of leaders of armed groups fighting
for independence, religious leaders,
CSOs, advocates for a federation,
moderates and others agreed to
support the Swiss-led initiative, while
urging the incorporation of other like-
minded stakeholders to facilitate the
talks and negotiations.

The leaders’ retreat ended with a
release of the “Toronto Statement”,
which highlighted the key agreements
reached by the leaders. The organisers
of the retreat, The Coalition for
Dialogue and Negotiations, CDN say
after this pioneer retreat the various
leaders expressed satisfaction and
pressed for the need for such
retreats to continue ironing out and
harmonising their various with a
greater vision of achieving more
concerning unity and pressing for
their collective interests.

The Toronto Statement in its
opening line says the agreements
were reached after the various parties
reiterated “their firm determination
to ensure that the aspirations of the
people of the Southern Cameroonians
are realised, through dialogue and
internationally mediated negotiations
that address the root causes” of the
Anglophone Crisis.

On International Mediation,
the CDN release said the leaders
and stakeholders recognising the
strength in diversity and collective
engagement, oneness”. On this, they
agreed to “work together to build trust,
respect, tolerance, and courtesy as
we work towards consensus, commit
to a memorandum of understanding
(MoU) on Communications etiquette
and the use of social media that would
be elaborated.”

Another common ground reached
at the Toronto retreat was the need
to promote education and access
to humanitarian aid. On this, the
leaders agreed to, “Promote the right
of children to education, including
through community schools,
encourage parents to consider
safety and security conditions in
making educational choices for
school children, support provision of
access for humanitarian workers and
assistance to all victims of the armed
conflict and call on aid workers to
abide by international humanitarian
law, especially in armed conflicts.”

Principles for Negotiation
On guiding principles for
negotiation, Southern Cameroon’s
stakeholders said they recognise the
importance of collective engagement
in matters of negotiations founded
on trust, and as such, “accept to
explore and enhance avenues to
build a team for internal and external
negotiations. Create space to build
from their different strategies to
engage in external negotiations as
one entity, representing the people
of the Southern Cameroonians and their
ultimate interest.”

On International Mediation,
the CDN release said the leaders
and stakeholders discussed the
ongoing Switzerland-led facilitation
process and the lack of progress and
commitment from the Government
of Cameroon. In this regard, they
agreed to work together to ensure
that international mediations are
credible and to “engage in an effort to
improve the internationally mediated process facilitated by the Government of Switzerland, including adding like-minded partners. Reconvene to reassess progress in alignment with the collective aspiration of the people of the Southern Cameroons."

At the end of the retreat, the leaders applauded the Coalition for Dialogue and Negotiations, CDN for providing the space for frank discussions. They pledged to work with the CDN to build synergy. The Toronto retreat spanned from October 29- to November 1.

The retreat is a pioneering initiative for Anglophone leaders from Cameroon and the diaspora to sit together to assess the conflict and attempt to build a consensus on how to engage all Southern Cameroonians towards a common pathway to achieve the collective interest of Southern Cameroonians.

The Ambazonian Coalition Team, ACT earlier involved in the Swiss mediation process was noticeably absent from the talks. But the Swiss Government and officials of the Swiss mediation process attended. At the end of the retreat, other actors including those who earlier opposed the Swiss-led mediation agreed to back it, while urging that it be multilateral.

CDN stakeholders, however, promised to ensure an inclusive Southern Cameroonian side for negotiations. As such, the CDN promised to pursue conversations with the ACT team post-retreat to get them to work together with the other NSAGs.

The main participants at the Toronto Retreat included GLOBAL TAKUMBENG SCAWOL, SCEW, SNWOT, THE CONSORTIUM, SCNC, AGOV/ADF, IG-CARE, AMF, 7 KATA, PSALMS 91, THE TERMINATORS OF AMBAZONIA, SCCOP, AIPC, IPOA, AYC, SCYC, SCAAF, WCA, DAC, CHRDA, CHRI, AYAH FOUNDATION, REACH OUT, PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE, REFUGEES, IDPS, BU, BCA, INTER-Religious Forum and Traditional Authorities.

Women Pledge To Support Dialogue, Negotiation Endeavours Towards Lasting Solution

In a press release, women who participated in the Toronto retreat also came up with their separate statement endorsing the outcome and pledging to support and facilitate internal and external dialogue to bring a lasting solution to the crisis. The women stated that they have committed to, “Work together despite our diversity as women to be able to support and facilitate internal and external dialogue among parties in conflict to move towards a peaceful resolution of the ongoing conflict; “Align with the Toronto 2021 outcomes as women, offer our services and expertise to assist and contribute within any peace initiative and engagement that puts humanity first to ensure the wellbeing of our people;“Amplify the voices of stakeholders who engage in meaningful dialogue intentionally and purposefully among themselves in order to speed up the process of peace negotiations; “Call on all goodwill people and institutions to support women through capacity strengthening and financing for effective and efficient monitoring and supporting of all peace initiatives as we move towards a peaceful negotiation.

“We the women in all our diversity uphold to continue working with the Coalition for Dialogue and Negotiations and other goodwill stakeholders to bring an end to the suffering and pain of our people.”

Responding to negative criticisms by those who refused to be part of the leaders’ retreat, one of the activists and leader, Mark Bareta chastised them, urging that all should shun the attitude of always trying to find fault in initiatives that are meant for all’s collective good. “It seems some people are afraid for the war to end and most of them reside in the diaspora. I think all genuine Ambazonians want to see this armed conflict end. I want an end to the war. An end that meets the aspirations of our people. An end that satisfies thousands murdered,” he said.

He furthered that “we must not be afraid to fix our own house, we must not be afraid to look others in the eyes and say look, we can’t go back, not be afraid to make the ground fertile for any surprises even as we fund our self-defence heroes to fight.”

Participants at the high level retreat believe that the presence and participation of other leading actors on the Swiss initiative could yield better results.
Special Report: A Picture-Perfect Portrait Of Africa in ABH Top 10 Finalists For 2021

By Ajong Mbapndah L

The 2021 edition of the Africa’s Business Heroes (ABH) prize, a flagship philanthropic program established by the Jack Ma Foundation moved closer to the finishing act with the recent announcement of this year’s top 10 finalists. Expected to take the stage at the grand finale in November for their final pitch to win a share of a US$1.5 million prize pool, the ten finalists paint a picture-perfect portrait of the continent.

In a continent increasingly waking up to the need and modern-day realities of shirking off stereotypical gender roles, the super rigorous selection process resulted in an even split of the top ten finalists: five men and five women.

The ten entrepreneurs were selected from over 12,000 applications across all 54 African nations and passed multiple stages of judging and evaluation. With an average age of 32 years, the top ten represent businesses primarily operating in 7 African countries: Botswana, Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, and Uganda. Their businesses span key industries such as agriculture, beauty, education, energy, food & beverage, logistics, manufacturing, media & entertainment, and retail. 80% of the finalists operate their businesses in rural areas. Through their ventures, these outstanding entrepreneurs are generating positive impact and creating opportunities for their communities.

Francophone Africa and the Central African sub region is missing from the top ten selection which may not come as a surprise to many who follow development trends across the continent.

“It’s African time! We have been continuously impressed with all of our 2021 Top 10 finalists, especially their diversity and strength of their businesses. The Top 10 are truly inspiring and are a testament to the talent, resilience, innovation, and passion of African entrepreneurs. In the midst of unprecedented challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, we remain steadfast in our efforts to identify, support and shine a spotlight on African entrepreneurs that are driving positive growth for their communities,” said Jason Pau, Executive Director of International, Jack Ma Foundation.

“It was an absolute pleasure to judge the ABH semi-finals again this year. The quality of the semi-finalists continues to be high. It was extremely difficult to shortlist the final 10 because each entrepreneur was so inspiring. They demonstrated the resilience, passion, imagination and traction that we need in our entrepreneurs here in Africa. I can’t wait to follow their success!” added Fred Swaniker, Founder of ALU and a semi-final judge of ABH.

The Ten Finalists are Ghirmay Abraham, Founder, Aptech Africa, (Uganda),
-Navalayo Osembo-Ombati, Co-Founder and CEO, Enda Athletic, (Kenya),
-Oghenetega Iortim, Founder, Grid, (Nigeria),
-Yvette Ishimwe, Founder and CEO, IRIBA Water Group, (Rwanda),
-Charlot Magayi, Founder and CEO, Mukuru Clean Stoves, (Kenya),
-Khadija Mohamed Elbedweihy, Founder, PraxiLabs (Egypt),
-Chidi Nwaogu, Co-founder and CEO, Publiseer (Nigeria),
-Ikenna Nzewi, Co-founder and CEO, Releaf Marketplace Nigeria (Nigeria),
-Violet Amaoabeng, Founder and CEO, Skin Gourmet (Ghana), and
-Ketsheaphone Jacob, Founder and CEO, The Bulb World (Botswana)

PAV shares interviews with some of the finalists in this special report.
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Chidi Nwaogu is a tech entrepreneur and software developer. He is the CEO of Publiseer, a digital content distribution company that helps independent and underserved African creatives earn a living. He is the winner of the 2020 Migration Entrepreneurship Prize from the Swiss Government, and is also an Acumen Fellow, Alibaba eFounders Fellow, Westerwelle Fellow, and French-African Young Leader.

“One important thing I learned from the ABH program is that to build a successful business, one shouldn’t focus on breadth, but on depth. Focusing on the number of customers one can acquire is nothing if the quality of the services that you offer to them is less than exceptional,” says Chidi Nwaogu in an interview with PAV.

May we know a little more about Publiseer, how did its creation come about, and prior to your participation in this year’s ABH competition how was it doing?

Publiseer is a digital platform that helps independent African writers, musicians, filmmakers, and video game developers, focus on the creating process, while we handle the tedious but important business of transforming their creativity into wealth for them. Our mission as a business is to help these creatives earn above the minimum wage and live above the poverty line from the sales of their creative works. We achieve this by helping them distribute, protect, promote, and monetize their creative works worldwide at no charge to them, but for a share in the revenue we generate for them. First, we fine-tune their creative works to industry-standard, so that they stand a chance to compete on a global scale in a very competitive market. Then, we protect their work from intellectual property theft and illegal distribution, so that they truly own their works. Finally, we distribute their works to our over 400 well-established local and international partner stores, so that they easily get discovered. Our creatives can monitor their sales performance across our partner stores using our centralized dashboard and receive their royalties via African-tailored payment methods, such as into their local bank account or through their mobile money wallet.

Five years ago, my twin brother and co-founder recorded a studio album. He heard of a music aggregator based in the US and distributed his album with them and had huge sales after engaging in some social media campaigns. Unfortunately, the aggregator and other existing aggregators primary pay royalties via PayPal, and in many African countries, including Ghana and Nigeria where we come from, we can’t receive money this way, so he went for the alternative payment method, which is cheque payment. Two months down the line, the cheque never arrived, so he reached out to them to know why. It was then they discovered someone in Oslo, Norway, intercepted the cheque via mail fraud, and used a fake ID to take the money, and my twin was devastated. A year later, he said to me, “I’m not the only African creative that have gone through this kind of challenge trying to monetize my content independently. Let’s create a platform that solves this problem for African creatives”, and Publiseer was born.

So far, we have worked with over 12,000 creative works, including eBooks, audiobooks, short films, feature movies, digital music, music videos, and video games. These works have received over 56 million downloads and streams; helping to generate over $280,000 in revenue for our creatives.

One important thing I learned from the ABH program is that to build a successful business, one shouldn’t focus on breadth, but on depth. Focusing on the number of customers one can acquire is nothing if the quality of the services that you offer to them is less than exceptional. One should be focused on the quality of their value proposition and how scalable it can be. Rather than thinking about the number of users or customers one has, one should be focused on the number of satisfied customers instead. This is because the number of satisfied customers will determine if the business grows.

May we know a little more about Publiseer, how did its creation come about, and prior to your participation in this year’s ABH competition how was it doing?

Any advice to many in Nigeria who may now look up to you as a role model, what are some of the tips or things to have in mind for them to emulate your success?

Do not dwell on your successes. I achieve something great; I celebrate it, but I move on to the next goal. I’m always constantly asking myself, “What’s next?” Yes, I did great, but that was yesterday. What can I do great today?” I don’t dwell on past glory. I move on.

Also, never say “I tried”. Keep trying until you get it done and you get it done right. I fail more times than I succeed. You just don’t see my failures. I fail, I learn from it, and I try again, this time more intelligently and more informed. I never say, “I tried.” I try over and over again until I get it right. Even if it takes a thousand times to get it done, I will do it. I never say, “I can’t” because failure is success when you learn from it. The only time you fail is the moment you quit.

What role do you see entrepreneurship playing in shaping a better future for Nigeria and Africa?

From March 2020, in the midst of the COVID-19 lockdown, many lost their jobs and moved from being gainfully employed professionals.
to being unready job seekers living with uncertainty. According to the UN’s International Labour Organization, 225 million jobs were lost worldwide in 2020 alone, thanks to the COVID-19 pandemic. I believe that entrepreneurship is the only way to reduce this global unemployment. So, I see entrepreneurship playing a leading role in shaping a better future, not just for Nigeria and Africa, but for the entire world. Through entrepreneurship, people will create sustainable and profitable businesses that will employ others, create wealth for themselves and their nations, and improve the overall economy of the world.

As the 2021 ABH prize competition winds down, any last word to your fellow contestants, mentors, sponsors, and management of the competition?

I want to say a big thank you to my mentors for shaping me for success. I want to thank the ABH management team for putting such an amazing program together for African entrepreneurs. And I want to thank my fellow contestants for solving some of Africa’s most pressing problems through innovation. Everyone has been remarkable before, during, and of course, after the competition is over.

ABH Continues To Develop Us For Greatness-Violet Amoabeng, Founder and CEO, Skin Gourmet

Violet attained both Bachelor’s and Master’s Degree in Business Administration – specializing in marketing, supply chain management and accounting. In 2014, Violet created Skin Gourmet with GHS 145 (US $ 45.00). Skin Gourmet is now distributed in over 17 different countries and Violet has been featured in Glitz and EMY Magazine as an emerging industry leader.

“ABH continues to develop us for greatness. This is the best platform for recognition because we are working for it. So, people know we are a legitimate brand because we are backed by ABH,” says Violet Amoabeng.

From some 12000 applicants at the beginning to the top 50, top 20 and to 10 finalist, what kind of challenges did you face along the way and how did you overcome them?

Challenges during my Africa’s Business Heroes (ABH) journey included managing my time effectively and ensuring I prioritize the competition and not miss any learning opportunities offered throughout the entire competition.

I’ve overcome these by adapting. I must focus on what is important and reinvent myself based on all the new knowledge I acquire and make changes.

What are some of the big lessons that you have learned in the ABH 2021 journey?

Wow! Not sure where to start BUT let me share some as they’re many:

The Art of Pitching and understanding who my investor is.

I learnt more about my business and forged a direction that is flexible and sustainable.

Learned new ways to grow my business with minimal capital investment.

Strategic Partnerships are a great source of opportunity if we go in with a win win mentality.

Investing in others is how we invest in ourselves and ensure we are a business that is sustainable.

Finally, a positive outlook- always look for the opportunity in the problem.

“To do hard things “Ze Fred Swaniker

Any perceptible impact that you have noticed on the fortunes of Skin Gourmet, is there more recognition, more customers, or better sales already as a result of your ABH fame?

Oh yes! Brand awareness! The competition is boosting our visibility worldwide. The best part? ABH continues to develop us for greatness. This is the best platform for recognition because we are working for it. So, people know we are a legitimate brand because we are backed by ABH! It’s amazing!

For future contestants of the ABH and other young entrepreneurs in Ghana who may want to emulate your success what words of advice do you have for them?

“Do the hard things “Ze Fred Swaniker

That’s where the best things are. So don’t give up - be grateful for the opportunity to learn. Be thankful when it’s hard because it is an opportunity to meet your potential and grow it. The greatest things come out of need and difficulty. So, if it’s hard- say thank you and overcome.

DO NOT GIVE UP.

As the ABH 2021 moves towards the end, any special message to fellow contestants, mentors, ABH Management, and others who have been part of the adventure with you?

A BIG THANK YOU to the entire ABH team, to my fellow contestants, and to everyone that has been a part of my ABH Journey! You will never know how you are changing my life. I’m grateful, and I promise to pay it forward.
INFINITY Health Care Services (IHCS) is a home healthcare and staffing agency that is founded by nurses. It is licensed, bonded and insured in the State of Maryland. IHCS accepts clients of most ages. We provide skilled nursing and healthcare services to those with physical or developmental disabilities in the comfort of their homes, in hospitals, assisted-living facilities or nursing homes. We understand that you want to remain in your familiar environment. At IHCS, we make it our priority to help you remain where you are happiest and comfortable.

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Ghirmay was born in Eritrea and studied mechanical engineering at the University of Asmara before starting work in the renewable energy sector. He started Aptech Africa with only a $20,000 investment. Working to bring electricity and water to people across Africa, Aptech has grown to be a multinational business operating in seven African countries.

“The ABH prize competition is very important in that it’s showcasing entrepreneurs across the continent that might otherwise not gain such positive exposure. We need to inspire Africa’s youth to believe in and work for their future. This is an awesome platform that let us do just that,” says Ghirmay Zeray Abraham.

**What does your selection to the Top 10 mean for you personally and for your company Aptech?**

It has been such an honor to be selected among the 2021 top 10 Africa’s Business Heroes. My whole team has worked so hard to build up our business and gain a positive reputation within the solar energy and water pumping industry, so it’s an incredible feeling to be recognized for our work.

**May we know some of the vital lessons that you have learned during your journey in the 2021 ABH Prize competition?**

It has been amazing to see all the incredible entrepreneurs out there across Africa. I’ve learned that Africa is full of innovative bright minds coming up with amazing business solutions to Africa’s challenges. I’ve learned that we really need to showcase the work we are doing in order for others to know about the positive things that are happening in Africa.

**You have been in the news and people now know more about Aptech, are there any business projects or new horizons opening up from the exposure you have received from the ABH competition?**

Not yet, but we are eager to take advantage should any opportunity present itself. We are hoping that through the networking we’ve been able to do, and the exposure we’ve gotten we will be able to connect with like-minded people and companies interested in working towards a shared mission of increasing clean electricity and water access across Africa.

**Any advice to budding entrepreneurs who may now see you as a role model?**

Never give up. Believe in your dream. When things don’t go your way, try to pivot and see how you can address your challenges. Resiliency leads to success.

**How important do you think initiatives like the ABH prize competition can be in changing the fortunes of Africa?**

The ABH prize competition is very important in that it’s showcasing entrepreneurs across the continent that might otherwise not gain such positive exposure. We need to inspire Africa’s youth to believe in and work for their future. This is an awesome platform that let us do just that.
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NOBEL Women’s Breakfast
International Affairs Luncheon
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A Renewed Sense Of Passion And Commitment To The Vision Of Mukuru Clean Stoves- Charlot Magayi - Founder and CEO of Mukuru Clean Stoves

When Charlot’s two-year-old daughter suffered a severe burn caused by a traditional stove, Charlot was moved to provide safer cooking technologies. She founded Mukuru to help keep children safe, as well as reduce fuel consumption and household air pollution. Charlot is an Echoing Green Fellow and has been recognized by Global Citizen, World Bank and AWIEF.

“There’s a renewed sense of passion and commitment to the vision of Mukuru Clean Stoves – from the management team to the artisans, field officers, and sales agents,” says Charlot Magayi on the early benefits of her ABH 2021 exploits.

Last year’s ABH winner was a lady from Kenya, this year, there are two Kenyans in the top ten, what is your country doing right to bring out the creative genius making people like you to excel?

I believe the startup ecosystem in Kenya is quite accommodating for female entrepreneurs right now, and with investors, both in the continent and internationally interested in gender lens investing, the playing field is beginning to feel a little bit more levelled for us.

What has changed for you and PraxiLabs with your participation in the 2021 ABH competition?

Since we started to rank up in the Africa’s Business Heroes (ABH) competition, our exposure has massively increased because the competition gave us a great reach through local, regional, and even some global media coverage. We also learned a lot from the sessions/mentors and have adapted a lot of it in our day-to-day operations.

What other defining lessons have you learned in the 2021 ABH journey?

Clean Stoves as a result of your experiences and exposure from the ABH competition?

Yes please. There’s a renewed sense of passion and commitment to the vision of Mukuru Clean Stoves – from the management team to the artisans, field officers, and sales agents.

Where do you see Mukuru in the medium and long term?

Medium term, distributing 500,000 cookstoves, impacting 2.5 million lives, creating 300 jobs, and saving families over $50 million in fuel consumption costs.

Long term, manufacturing ethanol stoves, producing ethanol locally and distributing both products in Africa and Asia.

Any message to the sponsors and management of the ABH prize competition and others out there who have the potential to help young Africans live their dreams?

My immense gratitude for investing in the future of Africa.

Persistence Is Very Important In Entrepreneurship -Khadija Mohamed Elbedweihy, Founder, PraxiLabs , Egypt

Khadija received her PhD from the University of Sheffield studying human-computer interaction and user experience. With her belief in adopting technology for improving education and enabling equal opportunities, Khadija founded and is currently managing PraxiLabs, which makes virtual science labs accessible for educational institutions and schools.

“We applied last year and were not even selected, but we didn’t give up and tried again and this year we are amongst the top 10. Persistence is very important in entrepreneurship,” says Khadija Mohamed Elbedweihy.

What has changed for you and PraxiLabs with your participation in the 2021 ABH competition?

Since we started to rank up in the Africa’s Business Heroes (ABH) competition, our exposure has massively increased because the competition gave us a great reach through local, regional, and even some global media coverage. We also learned a lot from the sessions/mentors and have adapted a lot of it in our day-to-day operations.

What other defining lessons have you learned in the 2021 ABH journey?
Mostly that you should never give up, we applied last year and were not even selected, but we didn’t give up and tried again and this year we are amongst the top 10. Persistence is very important in entrepreneurship, and we have also learnt to continuously work on enhancing what we offer.

Is there any impact that you see your success having on young entrepreneurs in Egypt? What are some of the success tips you can share with them?

I’ve been blessed with tons of positive feedback from both people I know and people I never met, but a common theme was that they got inspired and encouraged to pursue their dreams as well. It is amazing to see how others perceive one’s success and their encouragement and support means the world to us. Knowing that this has also inspired others to do the same is very humbling and a great honor.

On success tips as mentioned above, young entrepreneurs in Egypt should not give up on pursuing their dreams. No matter how many times you fall, get up and carry on. Success requires a lot of persistence and hard work. Our persistence got us into the ABH Top 10 this year. That’s a big lesson to learn from.

With the success, the fame, the mentorship, and other dividends that the ABH has brought for you, what projections can you make for the middle and long term for PraxiLabs?

I believe with the immense support we got from ABH and from the impact its reach has given us, we will be able to increase our future projections and speed up our growth plans to move ahead faster and stronger.

Any message you want to send as a last word to your fellow contestants, ABH management, mentors and others as the competition enters its final stages?

To my fellow contestants I want to say congratulations to all of us, we all are already winners and it’s been a real pleasure to have been part of this amazing selection of inspiring startups, giving me hope for a brighter future for Africa and the world. And I believe that “Thank You” is not enough to measure up to what the amazing ABH team deserves, but I do truly and sincerely thank you all for everything you have done and are still doing for us. You are on a great mission, and it’s been an honor to be part of it.

Plans for Further Expansion in Africa On Course thanks To ABH -Navalayo Osembo-Ombati, Co-Founder and CEO, Enda Athletic

Navalayo is from a town in Kenya that has produced generations of the world’s greatest distance runners. To maximize social impact in Kenya through sports, Navalayo founded Enda Athletic, a made-in-Kenya running shoe brand that creates jobs, invests in local communities, and spurs economic development through exports. She is a graduate of the London School of Economics.

“We have started with shoe designs that tell the Kenyan story but hope to expand to tell other African stories. A big step towards that is getting more people in Africa to know that we exist. ABH has really helped us move in that direction,” says Navalayo Osembo-Ombati.

What are some core lessons that you have learned in your ABH prize competition journey this year?

I’ve learned the importance of failing and trying again. This is our second time applying to ABH and I am glad that we tried again and succeeded this time around. I have also learned that we should put more effort in finding out what’s happening in other places on the continent rather than being content with limited knowledge of only our surroundings. The quality of businesses and entrepreneurs I have met from the Top 50 finalists to the Top 20 Finalists and now the Top 10 is excellent. I was surprised that I hadn’t heard of some of them before this ABH journey and neither had some of them heard about Enda. There’s a lot of room for improvement in that regard.

May we know the impact that the ABH exposure has had on the fortunes of Enda?

We have received great publicity, and with that, public support from all over Africa. That has been the most amazing experience because one of our long-term goals is to be known globally as Africa’s cultural shoe brand. We have started with shoe designs that tell the Kenyan story but hope to expand to tell other African stories. A big step towards that is getting more people in Africa to know that we exist. ABH has really helped us move in that direction.

We’ve also had people reaching out for investment, job opportunities and connections to potential suppliers in Africa. All these are resources that are useful both now and in future. We are creating a database so that we retain the information and reduce the cost of seeking these resources in future.

Plans for further expansion in Africa On Course thanks to ABH competition, says Navalayo Osembo-Ombati.
To young Kenyans and Africans out there who now see in you a role model, what advise do you have for them?

You only have one life, and your existence is not an accident. View life from a perspective of adventure and discovery. Whether or not you choose entrepreneurship, this perspective allows you to be curious, to seek knowledge, to understand the meaning of things, and to ask questions. Questions are the foundation of where your life will go so always keep asking. When you do this, you are likely to get on a journey of discovery at a personal, professional or entrepreneurship level. Don’t get stuck in fear. It will always be there as there are many voices that will make you doubt. Learn, however, to be comfortable with being afraid but continuing with the journey.

Based on the rich experience you have had with the ABH journey, where do you see Enda in the medium and long term?

In the medium term, I see us continuing our phenomenal three-digit percentage growth in revenue. We are also investing in research and development of tools with strong partnerships with the private sector,” Hon. Raila Odinga, the AU Higher Representative on Infrastructure Development in Africa, said during the opening session. Ibrahim Mayaki, Chief Executive Officer of the AUDA-NEPAD CEO, noted “Infrastructure is not about economic transformation alone, but the transformation of people’s livelihoods.” This was in agreement with Atef Marzouk, Acting Director of Infrastructure and Energy at the AUC, who also emphasized that infrastructure development is not an end in itself, but a means to an end.

The conference highlighted, among others, the recently adopted Second Phase of the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA-PAP2). “Before the onset of PIDA, regional infrastructure projects were not prioritized. When we moved from PIDA Priority Action Plan 1 to PIDA Priority Action Plan 2, we took on a corridor approach, in order for us to think beyond country boundaries. The corridor approach is the main change in paradigm in our continent’s infrastructure development. Africa is therefore ready for investment – it has gone through a process of consultation, prioritization and development of tools with strong facility, encouraging strategic consultation, prioritization and development of tools with strong supply chain.”

**Spotlight on Infrastructure Development in Africa at Expo 2020**

By Kester Kenn Klomegah

During the two-day high-level conference held within EXPO-2020 in Dubai, the African Union Commission (AUC) and the African Union Development Agency-NEPAD (AUC-NEPAD) presented a number of strategic continental infrastructure and energy projects for potential foreign investors, the aggregate cost undisclosed.

The exhibition, originally scheduled for last year was postponed due to Covid-19 pandemic. The Expo 2020 was officially opened on 30 September 2021 and operates until March 2022.

The conference on Infrastructure Development in Africa featured high-level personalities and thought leaders from the continent, articulating the African vision for transformational infrastructure, while engaging stakeholders on the effective delivery of infrastructure and energy in Africa.

“We believe that Africa’s better days lie ahead of us. Appropriate infrastructure is a prerequisite for implementing the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). However, the lack of well-prepared and bankable infrastructure projects has been a major constraint. This is why we are working with AUDA-NEPAD, AfDB and other partners in the NEPAD Project Preparation Facility, encouraging strategic partnerships with the private sector,” Hon. Raila Odinga, the AU High Rep for Infrastructure Development in Africa, said during the start of our dreams and ambitions. We also plan on sponsoring African athletes from different countries and increasing the number of people who benefit from us directly, e.g., through employment, or indirectly, e.g., through an expanded continental supply chain.

Any word to the ABH Sponsors and management as we wrap this interview up?

Definitely! My team and I are very grateful for the new opportunities and networks that have come with being an ABH finalist. We also have big expansion plans from the funding that we will get. ABH has been a wonderful experience and it is no doubt because of the investment and work put in by its sponsors and management. There would be no ABH without them – so we really are thankful to each one of them.
The second PIDA Priority Action Plan, known as PIDA-PAP 2 (2021-2030) has adopted the Integrated Corridor Approach, a multi-infrastructure corridor approach to infrastructure development that works toward a more prosperous Africa by emphasizing projects that maximize job creation and climate friendliness.

The approach also contributes to continental integration by prioritizing projects that improve connectivity between urban and rural areas and link different infrastructure sectors.

Symerre Grey-Johnson, AUDA-NEPAD’s Director of Technical Cooperation and Programme Funding, pointed out that projects in PIDA-PAP 2 were curated this way to also guarantee a people-driven Africa as they strengthen the role of women through gender-sensitive infrastructure development.

Amine Adoum, AUDA-NEPAD’s Director of Programme Delivery and Coordination Directorate, explained: “The objective of regional integration is to facilitate movement of people, goods and services, a bottleneck in the realization of Agenda 2063. Hence the corridor development is an integral part for regional integration and realizing of the AfCFTA goals together with PIDA-PAP 2.”

Adoum also expounded on the importance of other infrastructure sectors and the tools that have been developed to accelerate the implementation of continental and regional projects.

“Energy corridors are also important hence we are working towards implementing the Continental Power System Master Plan. Three tools that have been developed to accelerate infrastructure projects rollout are: the Service Delivery Mechanism, the Continental Business Network (validated by the African Union), and the publishing of de-risking infrastructure projects in Africa reports,” Adoum declared.

Participants at the event also learnt that financial viability was taken into consideration for all PIDA-PAP 2 projects, with new partners sought. Robert Lisinge Chief, Operational Quality Section at United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, clustered the partnerships for Africa’s infrastructure development into the following:

• Green Funds - PIDA projects are eligible for financing through green funds, including road, water and energy projects.
• Impact Investors - Impact investors are important as inclusiveness is a major component of PIDA-PAP 2 projects, aimed at improving the wellbeing and livelihoods of African citizens.
• Public-Private Partnerships
• Strategic Partnerships

The importance of financing for infrastructure was also brought to the fore, in a session led by Towela Nyirenda-Jere, the Head of Economic Integration at AUDA-NEPAD. She informed the conference participants that African Heads of State approved 69 PIDA-PAP 2 projects. “Therefore, more investments are needed for infrastructure with the opportunities that the AfCFTA (brings),” Towela said.

The PIDA PAP II consist of 28 transport projects, 18 energy projects, 12 water projects, and 11 Information Communication Technology projects. PIDA-PAP 2, as the second PIDA priority action plan will run for the period 2021 to 2030. This portfolio is based on an inventory of projects proposed by Regional Economic Communities and African Union Member States as one of the key deliverables in Africa’s Agenda 2063 towards the continent’s development.

Cameroonian Entrepreneur &Community Leader, Njukang Asong
Appointed Board Member Of First-Ever African Diaspora Advisory Board In Maryland’s PG County

Cameroonian-born entrepreneur and community leader Njukang Asong who recently got appointed board member of the African Diaspora Advisory Board in Prince George’s County, Maryland – USA, opens up to Pan African Visions about the Board’s mission and relationship with County Executive, Angela Alsobrooks.

Speaking to our reporter, Amos Fofung, at Spectrum Lounge, a business he co-owns, Asong who is a former student of the prestigious St. Joseph’s College, Sasse – Cameroon and an alumnus of the International Relations Institute of Cameroon walks us behind the significance of the recently proclaimed African Heritage month in the county.

The community leader who regularly gives back by donating to the underprivilege in his native country opens up about the secret to his successful business and reveals that plans are afoot to establish a second brand of one of his most successful ventures, Spectrum Lounge, an Afro-centric entertainment spot.

You are a member of African Diaspora Advisory board in PG country, what does the advisory do?

The African Diaspora Advisory Board has been in existence for over three years now. It was a promise made and a promise kept by the County Executive, Angela Alsobrooks when she wanted to expand her base, and she understood the importance of the African community within Prince George’s County which I should say, owns 40% of small and medium size businesses. She recognized the data and contribution of Africans within the county and thought it wise to have representation within that community.

So, one of the things she wanted to do was listen to us and to create a platform through which we could channel communication. So, the
board is that medium where we are able to channel our concerns to the County Executive and her Office, and at the same time, she is able to direct solutions to us.

How strong is the African diaspora presence and what contributions are they making to the growth of the county?

That is a tough question and that is a reason why the Board is in existence because we have been operating in a very clandestine fashion. As you know there is strength in numbers but that has not been the case. If you look at other communities like the Latino, Jewish and Italian…they are extremely powerful and because they come together as one, they are able to portray their individual efforts collectively and that has a bigger influence in the community. That is what the Board seeks to achieve.

September is the African Heritage month in PG county, how did this come about?

When the County Executive came into office, she promised to create a board for African immigrants, a platform where we could have a conversation in a formal setting and she selected Mr. Vincent Iweanoge, one of the most prominent Africans in the county to chair the board and tasked him to find like-minded people to form a board. To make it functional, she created an office of liaison within the African community...so now we have a paid county staff official whose job is technically an African liaison to the county and that post is held by Dr Dasi Sylvia who happens to come from Cameroon. In as much as Dr Dasi Sylvia is a part of the board, she is a county employee with her sole job been to keep that connectivity between the board and the county.

May we know the reaction of Africans in the county to this proclamation and what kind of activities will be carried out in celebration of the Heritage month?

Remember, this is the first time we are launching this and unfortunately, we were limited due to Covid constrains. The initial planning was gigantic, we meant to bring Heads of States, Ambassadors, sponsors from different backgrounds, we intended to invite even the Governor of Maryland for the launching but for Covid 19. So, this tells you how excellent the County Executive is, because despite the constraints and issues with the pandemic, she didn’t want to cancel it, but rather downsized it. She said, we may not get the celebration that we need but we are going to have this month proclaimed now in a very small, opened setting and then we plan on a big celebration next year.

This year was just the proclamation, next year we are planning for something grandiose which will not only be celebrating the African Heritage month, but also to showcase Africa. I am talking about real African “juju” dance groups, cuisine, dressing, music and so much more. It doesn’t end there; a major highlight of this month is to give Africans access to real people of power to push our agenda and projects ahead.

What credit does the County Executive Angela Aslobrooks deserve for this major development?

We have to be thankful to the County Executive for she is a revolutionist in the way she reasons and interacts
with the various communities that make up Prince George’s County. The first thing she did was make a promise to listen to Africans and doing this does not mean inviting them to town halls, she came to us. She has been to Spectrum, Swahili Village, and even Pastor Kobe’s church in Lanham. She is coming to us and listening to us – that is the first thing and the second is creating the African Diaspora Advisory Board, the third is creating the liaison office and hiring Africans to work for Africans and that is important because the liaison understands our struggles and can identify herself with us, the fourth is creating a multicultural center for Africans and the fifth is dedicating September as African Heritage month. And this singular act will stay even way after her reign. This is true leadership.

Taking of business, you are the Chief Operating Officer and Managing Partner at Spectrum Lounge, can you introduce that for those who do not know?

Spectrum is an entertainment spot for Africans and every lover of African music and food. We are a lounge, and we operate as a bar, restaurant and full-blown night life. We have created a business which speaks specifically to a need in the community. You know, you should be comfortable in your community and be able to eat your own food, listen to your own music and dine with your own fellows. Spectrum is something for us and people can appreciate what we have, and at the same time it is a business that does not take our people for granted. We try to provide top notch service that is offered anywhere else in the country. The question we ask is; why do we travel to Vegas? We go there for the ambiance, the life...and that is exactly what we try to recreate here at Spectrum.

What motivated you and your partner or team to settle on this line of business?

Because it has money (laughs). Life takes you to different angels and the real question is not what you do but how you used your skillset. I grew up in a home where my dad was a teacher and my mom an Agric Officer and skilled businesswoman...and she help shaped the entrepreneurial side of me. I choose night life because in business you must find a problem to solve, so, when I looked around and I said Well, withing the limited scoop of my resources, which problem can I solve.

At that time the only option available to us was Kitchen Near you (a bar and restaurant) and that was not the kind of service I needed, so instead of always complaining I decided to partner with Valery Holmes who is like a brother to me and on August 4, 2018 we opened Spectrum Lounge and God has blessed us since then because the community realized it was a need in the community.

Six months later we had to come up stairs because of increased demands; fast forward a year later covid hit and we had to create an outdoor space and now we have three sections and also plan on opening another branch in Upper Marlboro.

They are probably other businesses in the county that offer the same services, what makes Spectrum Lounge standout?

True they are several other lounges, but we look at the quality, service, and professionalism. They are young professionals like you Mr. Journalist who want to feel respected and enjoy some quality moment in a serene environment. A place where you can bring your Caucasian, Asian, Latino, Caribbean friends and so on, and have fun without compromising, that is what Spectrum is here for. To give you that home-away from home feeling with a blend of extraordinary customer service similar to those offered at top bars and lounges across America.

What are some of the challenges you and your team faced in putting together and running a thriving business?

The main challenge as with every business is access to capital. Money was tight and we had to stretch, borrow as much as we can and dip into credit cards and so on. Access to capital is one thing, followed by access to information and what is the areas which the African diaspora board will be able to support young African in. you should be able to walk into the office and say I want to open a gas station and be handed a checklist to guide you. Perhaps our most daunting challenge was being able to prove our business concept works. We were data driven and decided to not go the regular route taken by restaurants. Instead of selling a hundred things on our menu, we started our business and said No, McDonald sells just one thing and that is their burger and fries.
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Promise Made, Promise Kept: African Energy Week Exceeds Expectations In Maiden Edition

By Prince Kurupati

Yes, Africa can!! NJ Ayuk and the African Energy Chamber defy odds to host a highly successful African Energy Week-AEW in Cape Town South Africa. The African Energy Week 2021 happens to be the only Pan African Energy that took place in the continent. AEW 2021 united African energy stakeholders with investors and international partners to drive growth and development and promote Africa as a destination for energy investments. In the face of what was perceived as undignified treatment when key players dumped Africa to seek fortune elsewhere, NJ Ayuk and his team made the decision and promise to restore the dignity of the continent. In AEW 2021, that promise was kept. PAV shares images of the event that is poised to become a staple on the African Energy Scene.
O n 17 October, 2021, Alena Douhan who is the U.N. special rapporteur on human rights arrived in Zimbabwe. She came on a 10-day trip fact finding mission about the impact of sanctions on the country. Her arrival as well as her subsequent findings report after meeting with various entities in the country divided opinion amongst the country’s populace.

At the turn of the millennium, Zimbabwe decided to embark on a fast track land reform. The fast track land reform was done in a haphazard way something which resulted in loss of life, loss of property and damage to both people and property on a wide scale. At the same time, ZANU (PF) the ruling party which had been in power since the country’s attainment of independence saw the birth of its most powerful opposition party, the Movement for Democratic Party.

The first thing that was done by this powerful opposition was to inflict a huge (and embarrassing) defeat to the ruling party on a national referendum to have the country’s Constitution changed – something which immediately prompted ZANU (PF) to enter defence-attack mode against the opposition. The move resulted in widespread state-led violence which was condemned by most countries across the globe. Some countries which include the US, the UK, Australia and the greater European Union went further to impose targeted travel and financial sanctions on Robert Mugabe, then country president together with his close allies.

Over the years, the European Union and the US have revised the sanctions removing some individuals and corporations whom they regarded as transformed while placing new individuals and corporations they regarded as deserving for their complicit in human rights abuses in the country. Though all the sanctions are targeted sanctions applied on certain individuals and corporations only, there have been arguments in government and civil society sectors that instead of affecting individuals on the sanctions list, the sanctions actually affect the ordinary men, women and children on the streets. As such, they are concerted efforts by the government and civil society to have the sanctions lifted. Another school of thought largely consisting of government critics and the opposition however argue that sanctions aren’t the problem facing the country, rather, the major cancer in the country is gross mismanagement of the economy and sanctions. To them, the removal of sanctions is a secondary issue, the pertinent issue is corruption.

With the country highly polarised between those who view sanctions as the cancer impoverishing then nation and those convinced that corruption is the bigger cancer, the government of Zimbabwe invited the U.N. special rapporteur on human rights to come to the country and assess the impact of sanctions on the country and ordinary citizens first hand. However, the invitation drew ire of the opposition who said that the rapporteur was invited to do the bidding on behalf of the government.

To compound matters, the revelations that the special rapporteur is not an official employee of the United Nations and that she is not paid a salary by the United Nations made government critics and the opposition to conclude that the rapporteur is just a tortoise put on a lamppost by a bigger and more powerful individual – in this case, the Zimbabwean president and his administration. Government critics are convinced that the rapporteur receives ‘compensation’ from the inviting government and because of that, their work will largely side with the payer. After all, its common knowledge that who pays the piper calls the tune.

Moreover, the special rapporteur on human rights has in the past visited countries more or less in similar situations to Zimbabwe such as Syria and Venezuela. In her reports, the rapporteur agreed to a larger extent with the views and opinions of the government and government supporters something which made the opposition and government critics in Zimbabwe to conclude that she always sides with the government in all her work. Her coming to Zimbabwe to assess the impact of sanctions was thus a foregone conclusion.

Alena Douhan’s findings report on her stay in Zimbabwe and the impact of sanctions in the country together with the manner with which the report was ‘leaked’ does rubberstamp some of the concerns expressed by government critics and the opposition. On her last day before releasing her official report, Alena Douhan was scheduled to meet with the country’s main opposition party, MDC Alliance. The meeting did go according to schedule but a problem arose when her report was leaked before the commencement of the meeting. This in essence meant that she had already compiled her report based upon her interactions with the government and state-friendly organisations. This to some extent confirmed the concerns by government critics that her visit was meant to sanitise the government of the day rather than doing a thorough, independent and commendable job.

The leaking of the U.N. special rapporteur’s report before her meeting with the country’s main opposition party made many people to disregard reading it completely. The few who did read it however weren’t impressed. One such person is an opposition activist Pride Mkono who said, “There isn’t much which makes sense in her findings which we can talk about, it was all nonsense... I am happy however to know that she encouraged dialogue between the Zanu (PF) government and important stakeholders such as the opposition, churches and civic society so that they discuss issues of electoral and political reforms, as well as corruption.”

The MDC Alliance in a statement said that their meeting with the special rapporteur was not progressive as she refused to discuss real contentious issues such as the legitimacy issue and political reforms citing that the issues were outside her mandate. The party said it has lodged a complaint with the United Nations.
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Mozambique: "We Are Dying Prematurely From Air Pollution By Vale"

By Jorge Joaquim

In 2007 the Mozambican government signed a concession contract with the Brazilian company Vale for coal mining in Moatize, Tete province, in an area of approximately 23,780 hectares, where more than 1360 families lived and worked at the time.

The communities directly affected by the mega-project had to be resettled. The turmoil and displeasure on the part of the population has been reported several times by the media and Civil Society organizations during the last few years.

As a way to show the real suffering of the resettled communities, Pan African Visions went to visit the sites and found several problems. Noise and environmental pollution and cracks caused in the houses following the earth tremors due to the explosives used by the mining company Vale, are some of the complaints of the population.

Alberto Roga lives in the Nhatchere neighborhood, on the outskirts of the city of Moatize. Incidentally, one of the residential areas closest to the mining operations of Vale Mozambique and tells the drama of living near a mine.

«My house is next door to the Vale mine. When they detonate the rocks, all that dust gets into our flour. Once I asked my wife to take the flour to serve as curry and they were completely dirty with coal dust. We washed it off and ate it, even though we know it’s harmful to our health,» Roga said.

«We are suffering. When you extend white flour, you will eat charcoal. They have come several times to register us, saying we have to leave here, but nothing is happening. All the houses here have cracks, but they say «we are not suffering, there are neither cracks nor dust. You are fine». But we are not fine here,» reported one woman.

«When they do explosions, they create cracks in the walls of the houses and some of them have already collapsed. We feel that it is difficult to live in this community,» said another resident.

Other issues that plague residents in these areas are the occupation of agricultural land and the pollution of rivers where fishing was practiced as a means of livelihood.

«We can say that there is practically that motto that says that «the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer. Because Vale has power and we have no power,» stated one resident.

«We are suffering from the dust that comes out of the company» and from the pollution of the Chirodzi River, complained Manuel Pateguana, leader of the village of Chirodzi.

«We breathe the smell of coal all the time,» added Pateguana, who said he has sent several e-mails to the relevant authorities reporting the communities» problems, but to date has had no response.

The executive director of the Association of Support and Legal Assistance to Communities (AAJJC), Rui de Vasconcelos Caetano, says that the people who live around the mine have also suffered the impacts of coal mining. Besides air pollution, he points out that the river that used to supply the families was contaminated by the mining company.

«Vale is aware of this, so much so that it supplies these communities, through cistern trucks», he added.

For the AAJJC executive director, the responsibility for the environmental and social damage attributed to Vale contrasts with the expectations generated by the company itself. «When there was the first contact with the population, the discourse was of development, of lots of jobs. So, this created expectation, and this expectation made the communities, without thinking, accept all those kinds of conditions. Today, we are kind of frustrated with the presence of this mega project, because it only brings us suffering.»

Respiratory Illnesses

Lurdes Alberto, also a resident in Bairro Nhatchere, says that «where we live, there are breathing problems, conjunctivitis and tuberculosis.»

«We have a rural hospital in Moatize and the health
technicians can’t explain to us the origins of the diseases. And we try to make a demonstration because of this problem and they only prescribe us what they understand and we remain sick,» denounces the resident.

«We are dying prematurely from air pollution by Vale»

Until they are resettled, the residents of Nhantchere want the mine to remain paralyzed. One of the residents demands: «While Vale is thinking about resettling people, the machine can’t work because we are dying».

The population also shows great concern about the dust raised by the transportation of coal in open wagons. The trains pass very close to the dwellings, and the residents fear for their health.

«Coal is being transported in the open. I am of the opinion that coal should be transported with tarpaulin covers, so that it can give more safety to the people who are along the corridor. The train also passes through the village. We also feel it,» said a Moatize resident.

Coal trains in open wagons pass near Isidro Ismael’s house in Moatize. Ismael is apprehensive about the long-term effects of the passage of these trains.

«I am one of the victims. I’m just a few meters away from the railway line. It’s a very serious concern. Now, it may not even seem like a matter of great concern, but over time there will be many negative health effects for those who live along this corridor. The way the coal is transported is really very dangerous,» he told Pan African Visions.

Another resident who also fears the effects of coal dust, Joaquim Patrício, said in an interview with Pan African Vision that this is «a stone in the shoe, an extremely big concern.» He believes that in three to five years the population will face public health situations because of the way coal is transported.

Workers left with occupational diseases

The mining company Vale Mozambique is accused of abandoning employees who have fallen ill because of exposure to coal dust extracted in the Moatize district of Tete province.

Rui Mário Matongue, 28, operated the mining company’s machinery for five years and says he contracted a lung disease due to passive consumption of coal dust during his activity. Now he can’t work, he has no salary and no money to pay for his health expenses.

A father of two children, Matongue says that he receives no medical assistance, despite the fact that every month his health insurance benefit has been deducted from his salary.

«I am slowly dying and I don’t know what my fate will be without receiving a salary. We are being made slaves. We work to benefit certain people and the salary that is good, we don’t have. It may not be a big deal, but the problem is the lack of consideration,» the young man exclaims.

Some cases similar to Matongue’s have been taken to the Center for Arbitration, Conciliation and Mediation (CACM) - an entity that does not have a coercive role, but a persuasive one for the prevention and resolution of commercial and labor disputes.

In addition, Vale is accused of carrying out mass layoffs, without notice or just cause. «I was fired unfairly, without any compensation. There they work as if they weren’t in Mozambique, it’s as if they were in another country, because there people don’t have a voice», says Jacinto Adriano, a former employee of the mining company.

Another former Vale employee, Jorge Luis, points out that this issue is not a recent one at the company. For Luis, the company has been unfair to its workers and many of these cases don’t come to light because people stay silent: «They trample a lot on their own workers, you don’t have a voice. They say that life comes first, but that’s not what happens. When you have health problems, they don’t want to hear that you have health problems,» he denounces.

The employees accuse the company of giving privilege to foreign workers. «There is a lot of difference at the level of treatment between nationals and foreigners. In terms of health treatment, with the same pay scale, a Mozambican doesn’t have the right to air tickets when, for example, he needs to be treated in Maputo or in another province. The health insurance is very restricted, you are not entitled to almost anything,» criticized Luis.
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Kenya is dealing with Gender-Based Violence amid an economic depression caused by the Covid-19 outbreak. The Ministry of Public Service, Gender, Senior Citizens Affairs & Special Programmes Ministry of Public Service, Gender, Senior Citizens Affairs & Special Programmes in April noted that the country recorded 5009 GBV cases in 2020, up from 1411 instances in 2019. Prof. Margaret Kobia, Cabinet Secretary, ascribed the increase to Covid-19 lockdowns, which kept families confined to their homes for longer than intended.

GBV is explained by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) as harmful acts directed at a person based on their gender. It is founded on gender inequity, power abuse, and damaging norms. Sexual, physical, emotional, and economic injury, threats of violence, coercion, and manipulation are all examples of the act. Child marriage and female genital mutilation are two other kinds.

The threat is a global issue that affects both male and female genders; nevertheless, women and girls are more vulnerable than their male counterparts. According to World Health Organization reports, around one-third (30%) of women worldwide have experienced physical and/or sexual intimate relationship abuse or non-partner sexual violence in their lives.

GBV is perpetrated by current or past intimate partners, according to a WHO study, and such occurrences are prevalent in poor and middle-income nations or areas. To demonstrate how terrible the problem is, a report produced by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women indicated that 137 women are slain by a member of their family every day. In addition, millions of women and girls worldwide have been victims of sexual assault, sexual harassment, forced marriages, forced sex, human trafficking, and female genital mutilation (FGM).

GBV is exacerbated by the following factors, according to the WHO: community norms that privilege or ascribe higher status to men and lower status to women, discriminatory laws against women and girls, harmful masculine behaviours, such as having multiple partners or attitudes that condone violence, and a history of child maltreatment.

Other risks include harmful alcohol use, marital instability and discontent, lax legal punishments for sexual assault, communication issues between partners, and family honour and sexual purity beliefs.

Study findings

Murders involving partners or lovers made headlines in the East African country in early 2020, causing public outrage. For example, a pastor in Mombasa was said to have stabbed his wife to death before committing suicide on the pulpit of one of the region's churches. According to the police report, the man in the cloth accused his wife of cheating.

In response, President Uhuru Kenyatta intervened in July 2020 to put a stop to the scourge. He instructed the country's National Crime Research Centre to move quickly and investigate escalating occurrences of gender-based violence.

"If the family is weak, the country is weak. Therefore, to fortify our protection of the family as the foundation of the state, I direct and order that the National Crime Research Centre probe the escalating cases of gender-based violence, the worrying trend of cases where the girl child has been disempowered and the violation of children's rights," he said.

The findings, which were announced in April of this year, were alarming. According to CS Kobia, 877 incidences of gender-based violence were reported between January and March 2021. The counties of Nairobi, Kakamega, Kisumu, Nakuru, and Kiambu were reported to have many cases.

The most common forms of Gender-Based Violence identified were physical assault, rape and attempted rape, murder, defilement, grievous harm, child neglect and psychological torture.

Several factors were identified as contributing factors in the study, including alcohol, drug, and substance abuse; poverty; family/domestic disputes; retrogressive cultural beliefs and practices; poor parenting/upbringing and moral decadence; identity crisis among the young population, and insufficient support system.

Intervention measures

To de-escalate the cases, the Ministry of Gender established a national GBV helpline 1195, as well as a national police helpline and a child helpline, to enable anonymous reporting, aid to survivors, and referrals to medical and legal services for GBV victims.

36 GBV shelters maintained by Civil Society Organizations have been created in 13 counties of Nairobi, Kisumu, Mombasa, Kwale, Samburu, Kajiado, Murang’a, Laikipia, Kiambu, Nyeri, Meru, Machakos, and Makueni
through National Government Affirmative Action.

There is also ongoing sensitization and awareness of GBV cases through national and regional media and within the formed National Government Administration Officers (NGAO) in collaboration with other stakeholders.

“To this end, prioritized programs targeting men and boys as allies, advocates, role models and change agents, championing advocacy efforts against all forms of GBV to mobilize collective action in the communities,” noted Kobia.

President Kenyatta stated during a panel discussion at the opening session of the Generation Equality Forum (GEF) in Paris, France, in June 2021 that the country will continue to tighten its anti-GBV policies by adopting relevant international treaties such as the ILO Convention 190.

“Kenya has made significant progress in addressing Gender Based Violence. I have made a personal commitment to end Female Genital Mutilation during my tenure and to end all forms of Gender Based Violence by 2030 as envisioned in the Sustainable Development Goals,” he said.

He stated that Kenya will invest over 23 million USD in GBV prevention programmes by 2022 and increase budgetary allocation to 50 million USD by 2026.

He further announced Kenya’s elaborate plans to introduce data supported policies in its anti-GBV efforts, including a specific module in next year’s annual demographic health survey, roll out of an electronic information management system, and integration of GBV in the country’s ambitious universal health coverage program.

On enforcement of GBV laws and policies, President Kenyatta said Kenya will implement an integrated national police service response mechanism dubbed ‘policare’ and establish GBV recovery centres in all of its 47 counties.

In collaboration with local communities, county governments, religious centres, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the Kenyan government is working relentlessly to reduce the plague to avert life losses, physical and mental injuries, and a general economic disaster.
Africa Vaccine Manufacturing Initiative (AVMI) primarily aims at promoting the establishment of sustainable human vaccine manufacturing capacity in Africa. Since its establishment, AVMI together with multiple and different partners, have been advocating for the establishment of vaccine development and manufacturing in Africa.

With the outbreak of coronavirus, AVMI has embarked on public education on the risk of the pandemic and further been persuading African leaders about the need to serious prioritize manufacturing of vaccines instead of depending on external supply.

In this snapshot interview, Patrick Tippoo, Executive Director at the Africa Vaccine Manufacturing Initiative, explains that vaccine manufacturing is a complex, time-consuming exercise requiring considerable commitment, and financial as well as technical resources. He further underscores the fact that the capital investment required is considerable and equally essential is a long-term future view for the health system and population in Africa.

Here are the interview excerpts:

What are your views about the global politics surrounding the coronavirus vaccines? Where does Africa stand in this case?

It's unfortunate that Covid-19 vaccines have become politicized leading to a situation where some regions and countries are lagging so far behind others with respect to vaccination coverage. As we've seen Africa in particular has been affected very negatively in this regard.

In your view, should vaccines and related coronavirus medicines be politicized, in the first place, in this era of global pandemic?

In pandemic situations like we are experiencing now it is regrettable that vaccines have become so politicized. Ideally one would expect that every effort would be made to ensure that vaccines are made available equitably to ensure that there is no delay in getting the pandemic under control across the globe.

Within the context of current trade wars, for example between United States and China, and/or between China and India, what do you think be done to remove distribution barriers for vaccines in regions such as Africa?

Understandably, I don’t think that trade wars between certain countries are a major reason for Africa not having accessed vaccines in proportion to other geographies. As I understand, the reason why Africa does not have access to the volume of vaccines is primarily due to the fact that African countries could not purchase vaccines in advance and are dependent on facilities like COVAX. COVAX in turn has had challenges in securing enough vaccines for distribution into countries which signed up.

It implies that Africa will have difficulty in accessing the coronavirus vaccines? What do you suggest African leaders critically look redirecting funds to their health systems and health research (R&D)?

African leaders need to rally together to ensure that no effort is spared in facilitating and supporting the building of large scale vaccine manufacturing capacity on the continent. The recent African Vaccine Manufacturing Summit in April is an encouraging start. Focus needs to be on developing real vaccine R&D capacity which leads to products. This requires substantial investment and a long-term commitment.

Furthermore, governments need to commit to buy locally made vaccines and work individually and collectively in creating guaranteed access to African vaccine markets. What makes this 10 times more difficult is that around 40 of the 54 African countries receive the vaccines from UNICEF financed by GAVI.

Business is business and making profit is the basis for business. Do pharmaceutical firms have to be profit-oriented in the global health crisis?

A balance should be struck. Making a profit is vitally important for business sustainability. However, in a global health crisis such as Covid-19 companies should not be exploiting the situation to generate maximum profits. Indeed, some companies producing Covid-19 vaccines have demonstrated that this is possible, charging a few dollars per vaccine dose.

What could be the possible roles of African Union (AU) and other sub-regional organizations?

• Demand certainty and access to markets are vital. African governments, sub-regional organizations and the AU should work together to create regional or pooled markets and guarantee purchase of locally produced vaccines. This is possibly the most important enabler of building and sustaining local vaccine manufacturing capacity.

• Accelerate efforts to create streamlined regulatory processes for speedier accreditation of vaccine manufacturing facilities and licensing product to ensure that vaccines can be available in the fastest time possible. Delays in getting market authorization for product by National Regulatory Authorities have a direct negative impact on cash flows and creates real barriers to building sustainable capacities.

• Another essential contribution would be the mobilization resources and/or creation of enabling environments for resources to be unlocked and discharged as vaccine production is capital intensive and requires access to innovative funding streams over 10-20 years.

• Incentivization of technology transfer partnerships to achieve capacity building in the fastest possible time.

• Invest in skills development programs specifically geared to creating a workforce skilled in vaccine development and manufacturing know-how.

• In summary, no effort should be spared in working to ensure that in a pandemic situation vaccines there is no delay in getting vaccines to where they are most needed in the fastest possible time.
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Africa's Booming Sports Industry

By James Woods*

Over the years, the sports and entertainment industry in Africa has experienced a dynamic revolution. In its earliest form, entertainment comprised of traditional dances, which were shown freely at the time. Sports were still a popular activity, but there was no actual value attached to it. However, the discovery of the lucrative industry joins other emerging areas that artists, sportspeople, and businesspeople can invest in.

As many economies across the African continent continue to grow, the sports and entertainment industry is growing, too. Many entrepreneurs have taken advantage and channelled their resources into it; credit to the unreserved potential that exists in the business side of the sports and entertainment sector due to its unexploited talent and market. At present, Africa presents an unchallenged area of exploitation due to its immense culture that attracts many international filmmakers. The creative industry has experienced its breakthrough, producing movies, music, and fashion incorporated in global streaming channels. Global companies such as Netflix and Universal Music Group have turned to Africa searching for talent and are eager to exploit the many opportunities available. Despite this success in the entertainment sector, one significant opportunity that has been overlooked is the growth of sports across the continent.

In the last few years, the unexploited potential of Africa's sports industry has been best captured by the success of the Basketball Africa League (BAL), which was founded in 2019. Since 2003, the National Basketball Association (NBA) has increased its presence across Africa. The success of African stars in the United States’ premier men's basketball league, such as Manute Bol, Dikembe Mutombo, and Hakeem Olajuwon has fueled the interest. In establishing its primary development and community outreach program, Basketball Without Borders, the NBA has continued to expand its reach to fulfil its commercial interest.

As the first professional league owned and operated outside the United States by the NBA, the BAL, which completed its first regular season in 2021, is a testament to the growing sports market in Africa and an appreciation of the wealth of talent that the continent possesses. During the launch of the BAL, NBA commissioner Adam Silver noted the NBA’s commitment to using basketball as an economic engine to create opportunities in different sectors across Africa.

Estimations have shown that the middle class in the continent is expected to reach 1.1 billion and 690 million smartphones user in Sub-Saharan Africa by 2050. This means that many people will watch games online and fill up the currently underused stadiums. As basketball attempts to establish its roots and built a local fanbase, football remains the most popular sport in Africa. Currently, every country in the continent has a national league, with league champions getting the opportunity to compete for continental awards such as the Confederation of African Football (CAF) cup.

In addition to an established national league, the majority of the young generation supports European leagues. Premier League teams such as Manchester United, Liverpool, Chelsea, and Arsenal are widely supported, and media houses continue to invest heavily to sell the product in the continent. In 2018, Rwandan President Kagame announced that they had reached an agreement with Arsenal Football Club in a deal estimated a £30 million to boost local tourism and strengthen the global brand of Rwanda.

The influence of Africa in European and American sports markets will continue to rise, and the markets will continue to sell their product to growing Africa’s middle class. As the sports market continues to grow across the continent, leisure activities have grown as well. Sports leisure activities like cycling, biking, marathon running, and motorcycling have culminated into competitions, and countries like Kenya have established national championships for these activities. According to reports by Statista, a German company specialising in market and consumer data, South Africa’s e-commerce sports and outdoor segment is projected to reach revenue of $549 million in 2021 and $781 million by 2025.

While Kenyans and Ethiopians have excelled and dominated in long-distance running, especially in global marathons, local marathons have begun taking shape, and their popularity is skyrocketing. In the inaugural Lagos City marathon, over 20,000 athletes competed, which increased to 100,000 competitors in the 2019 edition. Outside athletics, the Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI) announced that Rwanda will host the 2025 Road World Championships, an event that attracts 5,000 cyclists and 20,000 delegates from all over the world. Rwanda will be the first African country to host such an event. The growing sports ecosystem in Africa provides viable investment opportunities to spur economic growth.

In 2010, South Africa hosted the coveted FIFA World Cup and used the world's largest sports event to shape
Inside Africa

The rise of the sports industry in Africa is an avenue to develop better relations with the people and establish the continent as a global hub for sporting events. The cultural experience and interpersonal connections cannot be underestimated in their role to attract investment to the continent. Ultimately, the sports industry in Africa is among the growing industries that governments can support in growing its economy. Not only will the industry contribute its fair share of revenue, but it will also foster job creation. As the NBA pioneers the new path to establish Africa as a sporting hub, we can expect more governmental and non-governmental entities to follow.

* James Woods, a Director at Pan-African sporting entity, Rainbow Sports Global. He also specialises in strategic communications, reputation and crisis management. James previously worked in diplomacy and currently advises governments and business leaders across the globe helping them achieve long-term economic and political goals.
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