



Call for features from this photo

HISTORY in Focus: This undated photo evokes an Africa of experimentation, resistance, adaptation, and survival. From left are then presidents; Omar Bongo (Gabon), Muammar Gaddafi (Libya), Marien Ngouabi (Republic of Congo -Brazzaville), Mobutu Sese Seko (Zaire - now Democratic Republic of Congo), and Siad Barre (Somalia). Submit analytical features on one president's notable contributions; policy, impact, and balanced critique. Send full piece to editor@theafrifiles.com. Open submission rolling.

The AfriFiles

Volume III - February, 2026

We Know Africa



we are not poor,
we are only
under-capitalised."

Dr. Akinwumi Adesina

Africa's investment reckoning

■ **MOTSEPE'S QUIET TRAMP TO SOUTH AFRICA'S PRESIDENCY**



■ **NOW IS THE TIME FOR AFRICA INVENT OWN RISE**

■ **PRESIDENT ADMITS FAILURE OF HEALTH PROGRAM**





Africa's investment reckoning

Cover Story:

The AfriFiles features **Akinwumi Adesina** on its cover for redefining Africa's investment narrative -championing African-led capital mobilisation, asset sovereignty, and ambition at scale. His push for Global Africa Investment Summit (GAIS) reflects a bold belief that Africa can finance, own, and drive its own development future without being independent from "uncles."

Listen to an audio analysis- Page 6

The AfriFile Profile

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60,000

Number of African Savannah elephants estimated to live in Tanzania as of the most recent surveys and compilations - around 2024–2025.

200

Approximately number of African Savannah elephants in Rwanda – according to recent aerial census. This reflects steady growth due to conservation and anti-poaching efforts.

Gates defends Epstein meeting

BILL Gates has acknowledged that he met Jeffrey Epstein, while firmly rejecting claims that the encounters involved women, impropriety, or personal gain.

Gates has said the meetings were brief and focused narrowly on philanthropy, specifically, exploring whether Epstein could help connect ultra-wealthy individuals to large-scale global health and development causes.

He emphasized that his intent was to unlock funding for urgent needs such as disease prevention, education, and poverty reduction, not socializing or endorsement. He has described the decision to engage as a misjudgment, acknowledging that Epstein ultimately proved an unsuitable conduit for charitable work.

Gates maintains that no donations materialized from those discussions and reiterates his commitment to transparency and to the mission of mobilizing resources to serve the world’s most vulnerable communities.

Global Beats

Trump presidency incorporated

The The New York Times editorial board has argued that the financial benefits flowing to Donald Trump during and immediately after his presidency, were not marginal but vast—exceeding \$1 billion by some cumulative estimates.

The editorials draw on the paper’s investigations showing how Trump kept ownership of his businesses, allowing government spending, foreign patronage, licensing deals, and post-presidency windfalls to accrue to his family empire.

When revenues, asset appreciation, brand amplification, and indirect benefits are combined, the board says the gains plausibly cross the billion-dollar mark.

Crucially, it allegedly that the exact total remains unknowable, because Trump declined full divestment and transparency, highlighting ethical loopholes that enabled unprecedented personal enrichment from public office.



Robotic wombs now reality

CHINA has pioneered a groundbreaking pregnancy robot, designed to carry and deliver a baby. This revolutionary technology could transform reproductive health, offering new solutions for infertility and challenging traditional concepts of motherhood.

The prototype features an artificial womb in the humanoid’s abdomen, connected to a nutrient-delivery system. A lifelike interface allows interaction with the pregnant robot, bridging the gap between technology and human experience.

The project, states that artificial womb technology has reached maturity. The next step is integrating this technology into the robot’s abdomen, enabling a symbiotic relationship between human and machine to achieve pregnancy.

Expected this year, the prototype is projected to cost around 100,000 Yuan (\$14,000). This development could make artificial gestation more accessible, potentially reshaping family planning and reproductive options for many.



Banker buys killing tools

THE National Criminal Investigation Service (Sernic) of Mozambique has issued a provisional verdict of suicide in the death of Pedro Ferraz Reis, chief financial officer and board member of Portuguese-owned Banco Comercial e de Investimentos (BCI).

He was found dead at the Polana Hotel on Monday evening – January 16. In a briefing, Sernic said investigators pieced together a timeline showing Reis left his workplace earlier that day, purchased two knives and a container of rat poison.

Reis then drive to the Polana Hotel, where he wounded himself and ingested the poison. Forensic tests reportedly detected traces of the pesticide in his body.

Officials described the conclusion as provisional and said the inquiry remains open while forensic and criminal investigations continue.

Cartoon by Gado



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Peace does not mean just to stop wars, but also to stop oppression and injustice -

**Tawakkol Karman,
Yemen Nobel (2011).**



Letters to the Editor

Africans must emulate Che Guevara

Hello Editor,

I am writing to invite Africans to thoughtfully commemorate Che Guevara as one of the enduring pillars of liberation struggles across the Global South.

Beyond the iconography, Guevara's commitment to anti-imperialism, social justice and armed resistance against oppression inspired movements in Africa, Latin America and beyond.

His involvement and solidarity with liberation causes, particularly in Congo and Southern Africa, reflected a belief that freedom was indivisible and global.

Remembering Che is not about romanticising violence, but about honouring a generation that dared to confront domination head-on. Africa's liberation history is incomplete without acknowledging those who stood with it in its darkest hours.

**Michael Holnes,
Salt Lake City, USA
Via email**

Never again bloodshed in Tanzania

Hello Editor,

AFTER reading powerful stories in The AfriFiles which carried a clear and painful message: "Never Again," I join that call in urging both the Government of Tanzania and its people to ensure that election violence never appears again.

The events of October 29 deeply stained the image of a beautiful, peaceful and widely respected nation.

Tanzania's legacy has always been unity and stability, not fear and bloodshed. Democracy must never be defended with bullets.

I appeal for honest reflection, accountability and reforms so that future elections restore trust, dignity and national pride, for the sake of our country and generations to come.

**Serious reader,
Ottawa, Canada
Via WhatsApp**

Kudos Traore for the bold leadership

Hello Editor,

PRESIDENT Ibrahim Traoré has demonstrated rare courage and tireless commitment to the development of Burkina Faso, placing the welfare of citizens above comfort and external approval.

I am writing to praise the people of Burkina Faso for their strong readership and support of a leadership that prioritises sovereignty, self-reliance and national dignity.

Through bold decisions and a clear focus on domestic production, security and social justice, the country is charting a new path of people-centred progress.

Such unity between leadership and citizens is inspiring and offers a powerful lesson to Africa; true development begins with courage, discipline and collective resolve.

**Omondi Kasule,
Nairobi, Kenya,
Via Email**



Dr. Akinwumi Adesina (centre) with presidents; Luiz Lula da Silva; Brazil (left), and Emmanuel Macron – France, during the 2022 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP27) in Sharm, El Sheikh, Egypt. Photo: Courtesy – The Guardian.

Africa's investment reckoning

By Special CORRESPONDENT



ONE of Africa's most eminent economists, Dr. Akinwumi Adesina has long framed the continent's financial challenge in stark but strategic terms; "we are not poor, we are only under-capitalised." That distinction is more than rhetorical.



It underpins the logic of the Global Africa Investment Summit (GAIS), an initiative designed to reset how Africa mobilises and structures capital for its own development. The brains behind the initiative are Dr. Adesina – former head of Africa Development Bank and Margery Kraus, who is a renowned economist.

For decades, African economies have operated within a financing architecture shaped by aid inflows, concessional lending, commodity exports and periodic surges of foreign direct investment.

This model has delivered infrastructure and stabilised fiscal accounts, however, it has also entrenched structural vulnerability.

When global crises erupt, whether financial shocks, pandemics or geopolitical conflicts, African economies often experience capital flight, currency pressure and tightened credit

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conditions. Borrowing costs rise just as public spending needs increase.

GAIS comes up, not as a symbolic gathering of leaders, but as a structural response to that cycle of dependency. It seeks to reposition Africa from a reactive borrower to a proactive originator of investable assets.

Reframing the narrative

The initiative rests on a powerful reframing; Africa possesses abundant sovereign assets that remain under-leveraged in global capital markets.

These include energy potential, particularly in renewables, mineral reserves critical to the global energy transition, transport corridors linked to the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), agricultural value chains, expanding urban infrastructure and a rapidly digitising services economy.

Yet many of these assets are either poorly structured, insufficiently prepared for investment, or presented without the governance frameworks that global institutional investors require.

The result is a persistent risk premium attached to African projects, inflating the cost of capital and limiting scale of growth.

GAIS wants to change that dynamic by prioritising preparation over presentation. Instead of convening leaders to make pledges, it focuses on building pipelines of bankable projects backed by transparent valuation, regulatory coordination and credible risk mitigation.

The objective is to attract in long-term capital, sovereign wealth funds and infrastructure investors, that seek stable, predictable returns over decades.

The narrative shifts from aid dependency to asset monetisation, from financing gaps to structured opportunity.

The timing advantage

The global economic environment reinforces the initiative's strategic timing. Advanced economies face slower growth trajectories, while institutional investors manage trillions of dollars in search of long-term yield.

Infrastructure and renewable energy projects in emerging markets offer attractive diversification potential - provided governance risks are manageable.

At the same time, Africa's demographic trajectory intensifies urgency. The continent's working-age population is expanding faster than any other region.

Without significant investment in energy, transport, manufacturing and digital infrastructure, that demographic growth risks overwhelming labour markets and social systems. With investment, however, it could fuel industrialisation and domestic consumption at scale.

GAIS positions itself at this intersection of global capital seeking yield and African economies seeking productive transformation.

By aligning investment pipelines with continental frameworks such as AfCFTA and national development strategies, it aims to reduce fragmentation and create scale across borders.

Sovereignty through structure

Economic sovereignty in the 21st century is less about isolation and more about leverage. Africa cannot detach itself from global capital markets; nor should it seek to. What it can do is improve the terms of engagement.

By reducing opacity, harmonising regulatory standards and strengthening governance frameworks, GAIS seeks to lower the perceived risk of African investments.

Lower risk translates into lower borrowing costs and broader investor participation. Over time, diversified capital inflows can reduce overreliance on short-term debt and emergency financing arrangements.

This approach aligns with a broader continental conversation about debt sustainability. Several African economies have faced debt distress in recent years, underscoring the limits of heavy reliance on sovereign borrowing.

GAIS implicitly advances a capital structure that blends equity investment, domestic institutional funds and international co-investors — sharing risk rather than concentrating it on public balance sheets.

Equity financing aligns investors with productivity outcomes rather than repayment schedules. It creates incentives for long-term operational performance rather than short-term fiscal manoeuvring.

Credibility and institutional backbone

Initiatives of this scale depend on credibility. Adesina's



Dr. Akinwumi
Adesina

leadership at the African Development Bank demonstrated an ability to mobilise capital increases, scale infrastructure financing and advance climate finance instruments. Institutional reputation functions as currency in global markets.

Investors assess governance standards, track records and policy continuity before committing long-term capital. GAIS benefits from institutional scaffolding designed to signal seriousness, not spectacle. Its emphasis on due diligence, transparent valuation and structured pipelines suggests an understanding of what global capital requires.

Furthermore, political backing further strengthens its profile and when multiple African governments align behind a shared investment platform, it reduces the perception of fragmentation.

Collective signalling enhances investor confidence, particularly when supported by consistent policy frameworks.

The mechanics of success

There are several structural factors supporting GAIS's prospects.

First, global institutional capital is searching for long-duration assets with stable returns. Infrastructure, renewable energy and logistics corridors in emerging markets align with that demand.

Second, African domestic capital pools, including pension funds and sovereign wealth funds, are expanding. GAIS offers a bridge between domestic savings and international co-investors, deepening local participation and reducing dependency on external lenders.

Third, technology ecosystems across African cities have demonstrated entrepreneurial momentum. Digital payments, fintech platforms and agritech innovations signal productivity potential that complements traditional infrastructure investment.

Fourth, the global energy transition elevates Africa's strategic importance. Critical minerals and renewable energy potential position the continent at the centre of future supply chains.

Structured responsibly, these assets can attract sustainable capital aligned with environmental standards.

These factors create convergence; Africa's structural needs align with global investment appetite.

Guardrails and governance

Ambition without accountability risks repeating extractive patterns of the past. For GAIS to achieve durable success, governance must remain central.



Tanzania's President Samia Suluhu Hassan (left) with Dr Akinwumi Adesina and Mohammed Dewji, Tanzania's billionaire entrepreneur and philanthropist. Photo: @moodeewji



US President Donald Trump and Dr. Adesina in Sicilian Town of Taormina, Italy, May 27, 2017. Photo: Andrew Medichini / AP

Transparent asset valuation processes, equitable revenue-sharing agreements and adherence to environmental and social safeguards are essential.

Citizens must see tangible benefits; jobs, infrastructure, industrial growth, rather than opaque transactions. Political legitimacy strengthens investor confidence; both depend on transparency.

The initiative's credibility will hinge mostly on execution ensuring that projects move from pipeline to performance, returns must materialise while governance must withstand scrutiny.

If these guardrails hold, GAIS could recalibrate Africa's financial architecture.

Psychological reset

Beyond capital mobilisation, GAIS represents a psychological shift. For decades, Africa's economic narrative has centred on deficits - infrastructure gaps, financing shortfalls, development aid needs.

Reframing the continent through its assets alters global perception and domestic confidence.

Furthermore, GAIS is determined to push for markets respond to narrative coherence, serious investors are influenced not only by data, but by signals of coordination and strategic direction.

GAIS also want African leaders to present structured opportunities rather than reactive borrowing requests, this will change the tone of engagement.

It needs confidence compounds, lower capital costs which enables further investment, strengthens growth, and reinforces confidence.

This virtuous cycle contrasts with the boom-and-bust patterns tied to commodity cycles and external shocks.

Toward financial independence

Financial independence does not imply detachment from international markets, it means building resilience within them.

By diversifying capital sources, strengthening domestic participation and prioritising equity over excessive sovereign debt, African economies can expand fiscal space and policy autonomy.

Over time, a shift in capital structure could reduce exposure

to volatile short-term financing and external conditionalities.

Infrastructure financed through blended models, domestic funds, sovereign partnerships and climate-linked instruments, strengthens long-term stability.

If GAIS succeeds in institutionalising such frameworks, it could gradually transform how Africa finances its development.

A Continental inflection point

Africa stands at a decisive juncture as its demographic expansion offers immense productive potential, yet without sufficient capital formation, that potential risks underemployment and social strain.

Global investors, meanwhile, seek growth and diversification in an era of subdued returns elsewhere. GAIS attempts to align these trajectories.

Its success is not predetermined. It will depend on political unity, disciplined preparation and sustained transparency.

But its strategic logic is clear; Africa must transition from episodic financing to structured capital mobilisation.

If fully implemented and supported as a genuinely African entity, GAIS could evolve beyond a summit into a permanent investment platform — one that strengthens economic agency and recalibrates the continent's relationship with global capital.

In doing so, it would not merely attract investment, it would reshape the terms on which that investment arrives, anchoring Africa's development in design rather than dependency.

That is the get-up-and-go, and in a shifting global economy, ambition that matches with structure may prove pivotal. ■

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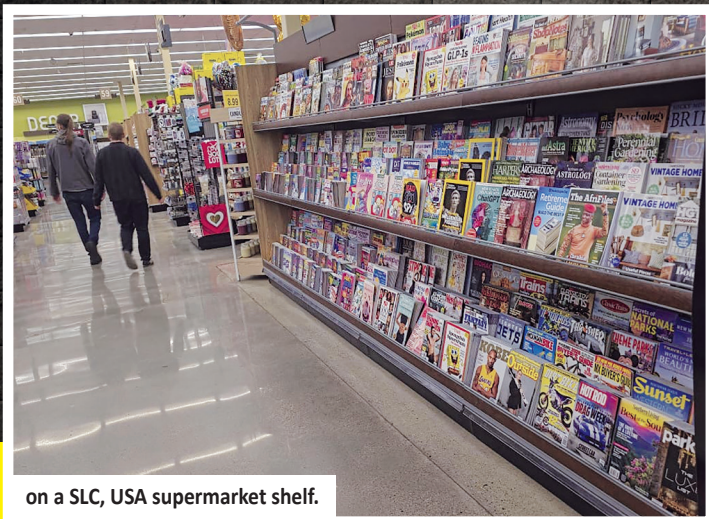
at Cultural Heritage in Arusha



The AfriFiles in Dodoma, Tanzania



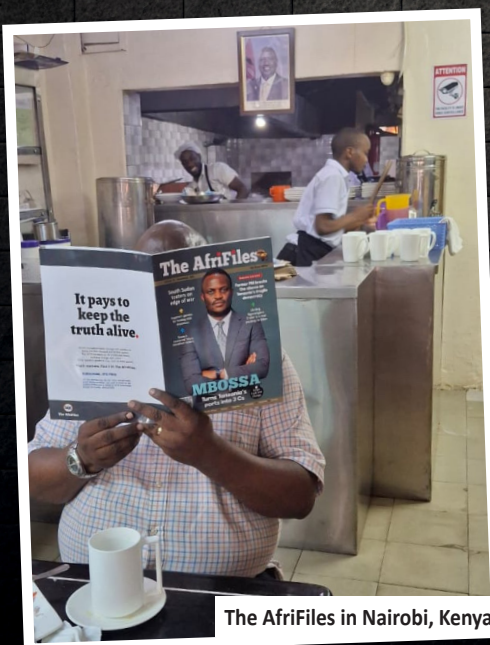
in Salt Lake City, USA



on a SLC, USA supermarket shelf.



at Smith's Market Place, SLC, USA



The AfriFiles in Nairobi, Kenya



On Tanzania's SGR train



in a tourist hotel, Arusha

Now is the time for Africa invent own rise

By Simon Mkina, in Malaysia

AFRICA's development debate has spent more than fifty years orbiting one persistent comparison. From policy briefs and donor roundtables to boardrooms, the same question keeps resurfacing; should the continent follow the Asian path to prosperity?

The extraordinary rise of South Korea, China, Vietnam, Malaysia, Singapore and Taiwan has become shorthand for what "successful development" is supposed to look like; factories humming, exports surging, incomes rising, poverty retreating. Yet Africa today is not Asia in the 1960s or 1980s.

The global economy has shifted, technology has rewritten the rules of production, and Africa's demographic and resource profile is fundamentally different.

The real issue, then, is not whether Africa should imitate Asia, but whether it can afford to pursue a model designed for another era.

The evidence increasingly points to a different conclusion; Africa's route to wealth will not be a replica of Asia's experience, but a reinvention shaped by African realities.

What Asia actually got right

Asia's transformation was never the product of laissez-faire economics. It was built through deliberate, state-led strategy.

Governments identified priority sectors, channelled capital toward them, protected infant industries, and then exposed them to fierce competition once they matured. Firms survived not because they were politically connected, but because they could export.

Manufacturing became the backbone of this approach because it tackled two structural problems at once. It absorbed large numbers of underemployed rural workers while tying economies to expanding global markets.

Timing was decisive. Asia industrialised when Western demand was rising, production was labour-intensive, and automation had not yet hollowed out factory floors.

Sequencing mattered just as much. Education preceded mass consumption. Many Asian states invested heavily in skills, especially technical and engineering capacity, before living standards surged.

Furthermore, infrastructure followed production needs rather than prestige ambitions. Ports, power stations, industrial zones and transport corridors were built to cut costs and raise competitiveness, not simply to signal modernity.

The deeper lesson, often overlooked, is not that factories automatically generate wealth. It is that development requires coordination; between state and market, between education and industry, between domestic capability and global demand.





IShowSpeed meets fans at Independence Square in Accra, Ghana. Photo: Tsraha Yaw/ AP

‘Speed,’ spectacle and the cost of visibility

By Amne KUZILWA

DARREN “IShowSpeed” Watkins Jr.’s 28-day sprint across twenty African capitals unfolded like a carefully staged opera of modern publicity; floodlit stadiums, military salutes in reception halls, corporate tents festooned with logos, and an endless loop of livestreams drawing millions of viewers.

IShowSpeed is a 20-21-year-old American YouTuber and one of the world’s top streamers with 50 million viewers to date.

During his Africa’s visit, the visuals were irresistible. Leaders craving instant relevance posted smiling photos; marketing teams captured reach that no paid campaign could have bought overnight.

Yet for all the glitter, the ledger behind the tour remains stubbornly blank. Contracts have not been published. Ministries have offered no itemised accounts. Speed’s own camp has released no consolidated statement of fees.

The absence of paperwork does not erase economic reality; money changed hands, value was created for a select few, and deliberate choices were made about what public attention - and potentially public money, should be buying.

The tour’s geography made its ambition clear. From North Africa through West and East to the South, the itinerary

stitched together marquee stops in countries whose leaders prize global optics as much as domestic policy.

In several instances, a single visit was framed as evidence of diplomatic sophistication; stadium appearances were touted as proof of mass popular appeal.

Local media dutifully recorded the scenes: governors and presidents exchanging handshakes with a youth celebrity whose influence lives in short-form, high-energy bursts. What the coverage did not reliably document was the price tag attached to those moments.

Appearance fees, if paid in cash, were likely shielded within tourism budgets, corporate marketing lines, or provided in kind — private jets, security details, production crews and event infrastructure.

Absent confirmed invoices, any reconstruction of what Speed might have “pocketed” must rely on industry analogues and the economics of celebrity appearances.

At the lower end, such tours can be structured around logistics agreements, where travel, accommodation and production are the sponsors’ primary contribution and direct cash payments remain modest.

In a midrange scenario, bundled activations — sponsored livestreams, exclusive events, content rights sales — can push totals into seven-figure territory for an itinerary of this scale.

At the high end, headline appearances backed by major states or multinational sponsors, combined with platform monetisation and merchandise, could plausibly generate multi-million-dollar returns.

The point is not to assign a specific dollar figure, but to underline the plausibility of significant sums circulating without meaningful public scrutiny.

The political arithmetic that makes such arrangements attractive is straightforward. For ministers and marketing directors, an influencer’s visit offers a tidy metric of modernity; trending hashtags, glossy photographs, and youth engagement distilled into easy captions for social media and state television.

Elections and shareholder reports reward visibility; the slow, difficult work of building clinics, training teachers or funding research rarely does.

The result is short-termism dressed up as cultural diplomacy. Corporations gain instantaneous content and reputational optics; states purchase narratives of relevance.

Citizens enjoy a few viral nights, and may later confront the familiar reality of underfunded public services when budget pressures resurface.

Translated into public goods, the opportunity cost is stark. Funds sufficient to underwrite a single headline appearance in several countries could, in many contexts, establish community health clinics, finance multi-year scholarships for medical and engineering students, or equip research laboratories tackling endemic challenges.

Investment in human capital and infrastructure compounds over time; spectacle depreciates as quickly as the news cycle that produced it.

This is not to belittle culture or deny the soft power value of visibility. African creators deserve global platforms, and the continent benefits when its narratives enter mainstream attention.

The problem arises when visibility is purchased without mechanisms to ensure value accrues beyond the images.

Ethically, the practice sits on thin ice when public resources are involved. Transparency and accountability should be non-negotiable. Contracts ought to be published. In-kind valuations should be declared. Parliamentary scrutiny should be invited.

Sponsors should clarify whether payments are purely commercial or whether they include co-investment obligations for local development.

Where celebrity platforms are leveraged, there should also be a meaningful handoff to local creative economies; training for production crews, revenue shares for local artists, and guaranteed investment in community projects.

Without such conditions, global personalities risk performing atop communities that receive little lasting benefit.

There is, however, a more pragmatic path. Influence need not be the enemy of investment if engagements are structured to deliver measurable outcomes. Match-funding arrangements can convert marketing spend into clinics or scholarships.

Livestream campaigns can raise funds for public health drives, while content rights and sponsorship agreements underwrite local media training.

Most critically, transparency must be non-negotiable. The public has a right to know what its agencies spend on spectacle — and what those sums might otherwise have achieved.



The Speed tour serves as a diagnostic moment for the continent's governance of soft power. It demonstrates that a single week-long celebrity visit can generate more headlines than years of policy work.

But headlines are not a substitute for capacity. Doctors, engineers and researchers build resilience; influencers amplify messages.

If African states and corporate partners continue to court global creators - and there are legitimate reasons to do so, they must insist that such deals produce more than a photo opportunity. Visibility should be the lever that unlocks investment, not the mirror that distracts from it.

Until contracting practices evolve, spectacle will remain an alluring diversion from the harder, slower business of nation-building. ■

The writer is an economist based in Kampala, Uganda.



USA visa bonds barrier for African travellers



President Donald Trump on Feb. 6, 2026. Photo: Leah Millis/Reuters

By The AfriFiles REPORTER

THE introduction of new U.S. visa rules requiring travellers from 24 African nations to post hefty deposits ranging from \$5,000 to \$15,000 marks a significant shift in the landscape of international travel.

This new policy by President Donald Trump administration, which stems from a broader anti-immigration stance, is set to have profound implications for Africa's connectivity with the United States, further complicating an already challenging visa acquisition process.

Initially proposed during the administration and narrowly targeting Malawi and Zambia, the policy has unexpectedly expanded its reach to include countries like Angola, Nigeria, Tanzania and Senegal.

It became into effect this month – since January 2026, it reflects a growing trend of declining visa approvals for African travellers.

With visa policies increasingly being influenced by concerns over overstays, this new requirement could create friction in U.S.-Africa relations, amplifying barriers that many aspiring travellers face.

At the core of the policy is the administration's justification of high overstay rates among visa holders from certain African countries.

While the U.S. challenges the influx of immigrants overstaying their visas, critics argue that such measures disproportionately affect law-abiding citizens who wish to travel to the U.S. for tourism, education, or business.

The requirement to post substantial bonds not only creates a financial burden but also raises questions about the U.S. commitment to fostering international relationships.

The manner in which these bond amounts are determined adds another layer of complexity. Bonds will be assessed during the visa interview, with no guarantee that a visa will be issued, leaving hopeful travellers in an uncertain and precarious situation.

Stakeholders note that this could deter many from applying in the first place, fearing that they may be subjected to exorbitant fees without assurance of being granted a visa.

Such unpredictability may disproportionately discourage those from lower economic backgrounds, further widening the gap in access to international travel.

This initiative is reflective of a broader anti-immigration sentiment that has been gaining traction in recent years, particularly in the U.S.

The perception that immigrants contribute to societal problems has led to an environment where laws and regulations become increasingly stringent.

For travellers in Africa, these policy changes can compound existing issues of limited mobility, as many countries on the continent already face strict or complicated visa processes when hoping to visit the U.S. or other developed nations.

The impact of these new regulations extends beyond individual travellers. The repercussions could affect the broader economic landscapes of African nations.

A reduction in travel to the U.S. can impasse opportunities for trade, tourism, and academic exchanges. For many African businesses seeking partnership or investment from U.S. firms, a decline in traveller volumes could hinder potential collaborative ventures.

Furthermore, academic institutions looking to attract students from Africa may find it increasingly difficult to lure top talent with such entry barriers.

In addition, diaspora communities in the U.S. that often act as cultural and economic bridges to their home countries may feel the pressure of this policy.

Many African nationals send remittances back home, vital for their families and communities. A decrease in visits could impede these relationships, ultimately affecting the economic dynamics within these countries.

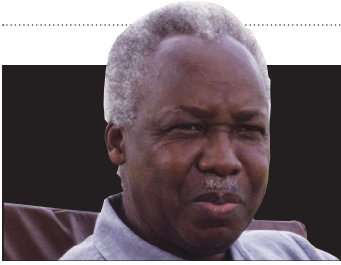
Opponents of the policy argue for a more nuanced understanding of immigration and travel. Instead of tightening rules based on the actions of a few, they suggest revisiting the evaluation systems in place to better differentiate between individuals.

The U.S. has a rich history of benefiting from cultural diversity and innovation fuelled by immigrants, and restricting the flow of travellers from Africa undermines these ideals.

As the new visa policy looms, it becomes evident that the consequences of such decisions extend far beyond individual travellers.

This sharp shift highlights the need for thoughtful approaches to immigration and travel policies that balance security concerns with the economic and cultural value brought by international connections.

The hope remains that dialogues surrounding immigration can evolve, promoting inclusivity rather than exclusion, ultimately enriching both nations and embracing their shared aspirations for a prosperous future. ■



IN Tanzania, it was more than one hundred tribal units which lost their freedom; it was one nation that regained - "
Julius Nyerere, Toronto, Canada, 2 October 1969.

Five assets Africa can turn into better jobs at scale

By Prof. Pierre NGUIMKEU

AFRICA's jobs challenge is not simply unemployment; it is a question of scale, productivity, and the speed of structural transformation.

Over the coming decades, the continent will experience the fastest labour force expansion in the world; The World Bank projects a net increase of roughly 740 million working-age people by 2050, with about 12 million young Africans entering the workforce each year, against only 3 million new formal wage jobs.

Yet these same numbers also represent a unique, momentous advantage. No other region will add as much talent, entrepreneurial energy, and consumer demand in such a short period.

This demographic surge can become a workforce dividend if Africa implements the necessary policies to convert its assets into opportunities for large-scale job creation.

The real shift needed, however, is to move beyond a narrow focus on job quantity. Africa needs more jobs, but also better jobs—work that is productive, stable, safe, remunerative, and

dignified. Structural transformation becomes self-reinforcing only when workers invest in skills and firms invest in people.

Africa needs more jobs, but also better jobs—work that is productive, stable, safe, remunerative, and dignified.

In this analysis, I explore how five of Africa's current assets - a young workforce, a continental market of unprecedented scale, the entrepreneurial dynamism of millions of small firms, expanding digital connectivity that can boost productivity, and vast agricultural potential capable of anchoring agroindustry—can be activated to provide a path to large-scale, high-quality job creation.

Transforming demographic growth

Africa's most powerful asset is its young people. Young Africans are entrepreneurial, mobile, and increasingly connected. What remains missing is alignment between training, employers, and real market demand. Three priorities can help close this gap.

Create skill to career learning compacts focused on competency rather than access alone. These should strengthen foundational literacy and numeracy, build digital fluency, and deliver job relevant technical skills while aligning curricula, training providers, employers, and governments around measurable standards, apprenticeships, and verified placement outcomes.

Expand work-based skilling, including apprenticeships and modular micro credentials that reward demonstrated mastery rather than time spent in classrooms.

Treat inclusion as a productivity strategy by expanding access to child care, safe transport, and social protection that enable all workers, especially women, to participate fully and advance.



Since 2008, the share of manufacturing in GDP across Africa has stagnated at around 10%, calling into question if African economies have undergone structural transformation vital to sustained economic growth.
 Photo: Curt Carnemark / World Bank



Working smarter on renewable energy.
Photo: Online

A practical design shift is to move beyond isolated industrial parks toward corridor-based “good jobs zones,” integrated clusters that combine infrastructure, training pipelines, supplier development, and enforceable labour and safety standards.

Together, these priorities will match Africa’s rising talent with its youth employment ambitions while sharpening the focus on what truly matters: security, decency, productivity, retention, earnings growth, and dignity in work.

Using the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and economic corridors to create markets for job-creating firms

No economy industrializes behind a fragmented market. This is why the AfCFTA is one of Africa’s most powerful latent job assets. Its scale is unprecedented; 55 member states, a market of more than 1.3 billion people, including a rapidly growing middle class, and a combined GDP exceeding \$3.4 trillion.

This continentwide market is not only a trade story; it is fundamentally a jobs story. Larger and more predictable markets allow firms to scale, scaling enables specialization and productivity gains, and productivity makes better wages and more stable employment economically viable.

The opportunity is immense, but implementation is the hinge. Despite ratification, fewer than half of member states were actively trading under the AfCFTA framework as of September 2025.

This implementation gap constrains job creation, yet a corridor-led industrialization strategy can help close it by concentrating public action where it compounds most powerfully.

This strategy should include the following:

Trade logistics and border reforms that cut time to market. In labour-absorbing sectors such as agro-processing, light manufacturing, and tradable services, time and reliability are often more binding constraints than wages.

Mutual recognition of skills and professional mobility. A truly continental labour market requires transferable certifications and easier movement for technicians, truckers, nurses, coders, and artisans, especially along high potential corridors.

Reliable power and digital connectivity. These systems boost firm productivity, expand market access, and lower transaction costs while enabling new digital sectors that generate employment.

When paired with transport infrastructure, they further amplify job creation and attract higher levels of foreign direct investment.⁷

A practical design shift is to move beyond isolated industrial parks toward corridor-based “good jobs zones,” integrated clusters that combine infrastructure, training pipelines, supplier development, and enforceable labour and safety standards.

Converting Africa’s entrepreneurial density into job multipliers

Africa’s labour market is already dynamic, with the private sector serving as the continent’s primary employer. Private firms generate roughly 90% of all jobs, even though many remain small because of financial constraints, weak infrastructure, and fragmented markets that limit their ability to grow.



Molatelolo Boloka works on a pipe installation project in Ga-Kibi, South Africa, that enabled residents to have access to water.

Photo: Nocwaka Sinxadi / FHI 360

A quality-jobs strategy must therefore be two-track: helping a subset of firms scale into job multipliers while improving the quality of self-employment for the majority.

In practice, this means creating pathways from survival businesses to growth businesses and from precarious work to dignified work.

The scalable lever is effective upgrading or formalization, which means bundling services and incentives that expand market access, reduce risk, and raise productivity, rather than formal registration for its own sake.

This includes; Digital rails (identification, e-payments, e-invoicing) which enable firms to build transaction histories and mobile data that strengthen creditworthiness and expand access to finance.

Procurement ladders which allow credible firms to graduate from micro-contracts to larger opportunities based on performance and standards.

Lightweight business services which comprise basic accounting, marketing, inventory tools, and quality standards which lower operating costs and can be delivered through platforms and associations, with sector-specific modules for traders, agro-processors, logistics providers, and artisans.

This agenda is essential in a region where informal employment accounts for roughly 85% of the labor force.

A jobs strategy that ignores informality cannot reach scale, and one that focuses only on formalization without raising productivity will fail. The goal is to breed more productive firms, regardless of initial formality status.

A jobs strategy that ignores informality cannot reach scale, and one that focuses only on formalization without raising productivity will fail.

Building a digital jobs engine while closing the usage gap

Digital connectivity is now a core jobs lever in Africa, not a luxury. By the end of 2023, nearly 44% of people in sub-Saharan Africa (about 527 million people) subscribed to a mobile service.

Yet more than 900 million people remain offline, and 76% face a usage gap; living within network coverage but lacking the means or skills to use digital services. Closing this gap is a labour market strategy with the potential to unlock millions of livelihoods across three channels:

Platform-enabled self-employment and microenterprise upgrading. Digital commerce can create new “iWorkers” and expand markets for small firms. Up to 80 million young people could benefit from digital commerce by 2030, earning income through gig work or platform-based services.

Remote work, business process outsourcing (BPO), and tradable digital services. Online gig work is expanding rapidly and already accounts for up to 12% of the labour market in emerging economies.

Sub Saharan Africa has seen the fastest growth in online job postings, more than doubling between 2016 and 2020 (130%).

This momentum can translate into real jobs in BPO, cybersecurity, data analysis, software development, and freelance professional services, connecting African talent to both local and global markets.

Productivity gains in offline sectors. Digital tools raise productivity in agriculture, logistics, and retail by improving payment systems, information flows, and coordination across value chains.

These investments can create stable wage jobs in agro-processing and logistics across rural and secondary cities, while raising farm incomes, boosting productivity, and enhancing the dignity of self-employment in allied sectors. Stronger local opportunities can also ease high-pressure migration into already congested urban labour markets.

But digital job creation must be matched with a quality framework. A decent digital work package should include mass digital literacy and job specific skills; transparent rules for pay, ratings, and grievance mechanisms on platforms; and transferable, contributory social protection that follows workers across gigs and jobs.

Using agro-industry to absorb labour in rural and secondary cities

Agro-industry is Africa's most scalable employment frontier because it links land, labour, domestic demand, and regional markets on a continent that holds 60% of the world's uncultivated arable land.

The binding constraint is productivity, especially in inputs, logistics, and processing. Africa applies only 22 kilograms of fertilizer per hectare on average, while the global average is seven times higher at 146 kilograms.

Though many countries use fertilizer far above the rate needed for high productivity agriculture, Africa's low usage impedes crop growth on the continent.

Yet the continent also holds a latent input advantage: Morocco alone has more than 50 billion metric tons of phosphate rock, representing roughly 70% of the world's known reserves of this essential, non-substitutable ingredient for modern fertilizers.

Africa can generate large-scale employment by transforming agriculture into a food systems industry. Priorities may include:

Strengthening soil health and input systems with smarter fertilizer blends and distribution, which can quickly raise yields and incomes and unlock major productivity gains for millions of smallholder farmers.

Expanding irrigation and water control, which reduces climate risk, stabilizes production, and enables multiple cropping seasons that dramatically increase labour demand.

Building cold chains and storage, which reduce post-harvest losses, preserve value, extend market reach, and create new jobs in logistics, maintenance, and temperature-controlled transport.

Developing processing clusters linked to economic corridors and AfCFTA-enabled regional markets to capture more value locally, support rural industrialization, and connect farmers to larger, more predictable regional demand.

These investments can create stable wage jobs in agro-processing and logistics across rural and secondary cities, while raising farm incomes, boosting productivity, and enhancing the dignity of self-employment in allied sectors. Stronger local opportunities can also ease high-pressure migration into already congested urban labour markets.

Conclusion

Africa's five assets—its young workforce, continental market, dynamic firms, expanding digital opportunities, and vast agricultural base—can become a powerful engine for job creation when they are activated together, rather than treated in isolation.

The shift required is to move from fragmented projects to coherent, corridor-led, market-shaping strategies that help firms scale, help workers advance, and turn informality into productivity.

By aligning skills with employer demand, connecting firms to finance and markets, expanding digital inclusion, and transforming agriculture into a food systems industry, Africa can convert demographic pressure into a workforce dividend.

The ingredients are already in place; the task now is to connect them into a transformation engine capable of generating millions of productive, dignified jobs. ■

The writer is the Director at Africa Growth Initiative, and Senior Fellow - Global Economy and Development.



Immunization
in Botswana.
Photo: Unicef



President admits failure of health program

By Duma Gideon BOKO

SHORTAGES of medicine in Botswana forced me to declare a public health emergency last year.

Patients went without treatment – not because health workers failed them, but because the system did. For a nation committed to universal healthcare, free at the point of use, it was a moment of hard truth.

Even outwardly strong public health systems can be fragile. As donor assistance bites across the continent, governments cannot afford to delay building resilience.

As a stable, middle-income country, Botswana was only ever a peripheral recipient of aid. Yet when diamond revenues – the country's primary export – fell amid a market downturn, the fiscal shock was no different in effect.

For many, the conclusion was simple: less revenue leads to worse health outcomes.

The reality is more nuanced. Diamond revenues enabled Botswana to build a universal public health system. Even in one of the world's most sparsely populated countries, most people in Botswana are rarely more than five kilometres away from a clinic.

Yet the same diamond revenues that built our system also masked its weaknesses. Problems were paid away rather than fixed. Drug prices were inflated many times over.

Supply chains were inefficient. Public capacity was hollowed out through outsourcing. These failures did not suddenly appear but accumulated over the years.

When shortages hit, it is the government that people turn to. Democratic responsibility cannot be subcontracted

Falling revenues simply made them impossible to ignore. When healthcare systems face a moment of reckoning, the same prescription is reliably offered; inject more "private-sector rigour" into inefficient public health delivery.

But greater reliance on private provision fragments care, raises costs and diverts scarce health budgets into profit margins.

Private providers have an important role to play. Still, where care can be delivered at cost within a strong public system, it is simply more affordable – and more sustainable – than outsourcing it.

Moreover, when healthcare is outsourced, accountability becomes blurred. But when shortages hit, it is the government

that people turn to. Democratic responsibility cannot be subcontracted.

Botswana is expanding public capacity. We are bringing our largest private hospital into public ownership to relieve pressure on overstretched facilities.

We are restructuring the national medicines procurement body, making it autonomous to cut bureaucratic delays.

A national health intelligence centre will soon be operational, using real-time data to forecast medicine demand and prevent shortages. And once the health insurance bill passes parliament, health funding will be ringfenced – ending our exposure to swings in commodity markets.

Together, these reforms will determine whether a mother can find antibiotics for her child, or whether a patient needing dialysis must travel huge distances for care.

But no country of two-and-a-half million people can fully secure its medicine supply alone. Africa must ultimately produce more of the treatments its people rely on.

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), which brings 55 countries into a single market, offers a chance to do what Europe and Asia did decades ago; build regional pharmaceutical industries designed to serve public health first.

Pharmaceutical manufacturing needs scale and predictable demand. AfCFTA provides both, turning fragmented national markets into a regional economy large enough to draw investment.

It also creates the conditions for governments to use African suppliers in public procurement, turning health budgets into a driver of industrial development.

AfCFTA has been largely ratified, yet implementation remains uneven. Now governments must give it force through their laws, their institutions and their choices.

Ambition for the continent only works when governments take responsibility at home.

Resilience is not created by spending alone; it is built through public capacity, which only governments can sustain. Botswana has learned this through crisis.

Diamond revenues built our healthcare system; dependence on them weakened it. Shock exposed the cracks.

Now reform must rebuild it. ■

Duma Boko is the President of Botswana. This extract is from his televised address.

Marry or die: Africa's print press needs tech to survive



migrated online.

Broadaudience print titles that relied on mass circulation quickly lost scale.

Second, production costs and distribution logistics; paper, ink, fuel for delivery, and vendor networks, disproportionately hit large, geographically dispersed titles.

Third, younger readers are mobilefirst and prefer realtime, multimedia content. Titles that failed to build credible digital platforms found themselves invisible to the next generation of consumers.

Survival without technology is therefore limited, in today's world, technology is not only about publishing websites; it unlocks new revenue streams; digital subscriptions, newsletters, events, targeted native advertisements, provides audience analytics, lowers distribution costs like social platforms, mobile apps, email, and enables product diversification; audio, video, data journalism at the same time.

South African examples show this; outlets that invested in digital products, paywalls or targeted community offerings have been better

able to offset print declines than those that remained print-centric.

Yet the path to digital is uneven as transition demands capital, technical skills and organizational change - resources many legacy newsrooms lack.

Even when digital strategies exist, regulatory and market factors matter; South Africa's relatively high internet penetration and developed advertisement market offer more opportunity for digital transition than many other African countries.

Conversely, in nations with low connectivity, print still carries greater value as a primary information channel, giving publishers a window to adopt hybrid strategies rather than face immediate extinction.

For print outlets that cannot fully transform, realistic survival tactics include hyperlocal or niche specialisation, premium limitedrun print products, membership models tied to trust and investigative depth, and commercial partnerships; diaspora distribution, bundled local advertising.

Afrikaansmarket dailies demonstrate the strength of targeting; tightly defined language and cultural alignment can command loyalty and local advertisements spend in ways broad generalist titles cannot.

But these strategies typically sustain smaller, stable operations rather than restoring massmarket dominance.

In short, print media in Africa is not uniformly dying, but its traditional massmarket model is under severe threat.

South Africa's recent closures, alongside the persistence of communityanchored Afrikaans papers, illustrate that survival hinges on adaptation; integrating technology, sharpening audience focus and diversifying revenue.

Without such change, print will endure in narrowed, niche roles - trusted and influential in pockets, but increasingly marginal in national information ecosystems. ■

By **Mathahe HOLILALE**

HERE is the crucial question - is print media in Africa dying?

The quick answer might be this; not entirely - but without embracing technology its prospects are bleak.

Across the continent, traditional newspapers are squeezed by falling advertising revenues, rising production and distribution costs, and shifting audience habits.

South Africa provides a stark microcosm; oncedominant titles have folded even as others, particularly those rooted in specific language communities — continue to perform relatively well.

Recent closures underline that vulnerability of the like of national Sunday titles such as City Press have folded, and mass-market tabloids like Sunday Sun have been shut down, eliminating major outlets that once commanded wide urban readerships and advertiser attention.

These losses are not just about brands disappearing; they remove platforms for investigative reporting and opinion pluralism, and they shed jobs for journalists — creating gaps in the public sphere that digital entrants do not always fill.

At the same time, some Afrikaanslanguage and communityanchored newspapers have remained resilient. Papers like Die Beeld, alongside other Afrikaans dailies and weeklies, sustain readership and advertising within clearly defined niche markets.

Their survival highlights two dynamics; language and identity can create loyal, monetizable audiences; and focused editorial models, with strong ties to particular communities, businesses and cultural institutions, can weather market turbulence better than generalist national papers.

Why the divergence? First, advertising has become more measurable and targeted. National brands shifted budgets to digital channels where performance can be tracked; classifieds

Prawns overfishing, pollution bite hard

By The AfriFiles REPORTER

MOZAMBIQUE, once known for its thriving prawn export industry, has witnessed a significant decline in this vital sector over the past few decades.

At its peak, prawn fishing generated over \$100 million annually, making it a cornerstone of the nation's economic revenue.

However, factors such as overfishing, environmental degradation, and ineffective government regulations have severely impacted the industry, raising concerns among stakeholders about the future of Mozambique's marine resources.

Prawn fishing, referred to as shrimp in the United States, has traditionally been a vital source of income for Mozambican fishermen and small-scale enterprises along the coastline.

The coastal waters, especially in regions like Nampula and Zambézia, were once teeming with various species of prawns, attracting both local and international buyers.

However, today's stark reality tells a different story, as prawn stocks have markedly decreased, leading to plummeting revenues and livelihoods threatened.

One of the primary culprits behind this decline is overfishing. While prawn fishing is an age-old practice in Mozambique, the lack of effective management and regulatory frameworks has allowed unsustainable fishing practices to flourish.

Unregulated fishing, competition from industrial fleets, and a growing domestic demand have all put immense pressure on prawn populations.

Research indicates that many fish stocks in Mozambique are now below sustainable levels, with the prawn species particularly affected.

This has made it increasingly difficult for local fishermen to rely on prawn fishing as a source of income, leading to economic instability for many communities.

Additionally, the environmental impacts of heavy mineral sands mining in Nampula and Zambézia have further exacerbated the situation.

The release of sediments and pollutants into the coastal waters has negatively affected prawn breeding grounds, rendering them less hospitable for young prawns to grow and thrive.

Mangrove forests—essential ecosystems that nurture juvenile prawns and other marine species—have suffered tremendous loss due to deforestation for agriculture, urban expansion, and mining activities.

The destruction of these habitats has disrupted the delicate marine ecosystem, pushing prawn populations further into decline.

The Mozambican government has been criticized for its slow and ineffective response to these pressing issues.

Despite acknowledging the problems with-

in the prawn industry, regulatory measures to combat overfishing and environmental degradation remain limited.

The failure to implement strict fishing quotas, enhance monitoring systems, and enforce existing regulations has left local fishermen vulnerable and under-equipped to navigate the challenges they face.

Moreover, insufficient investment in sustainable fishing practices and aquaculture development has curtailed efforts to replenish dwindling stocks.

International pressure also plays a significant role in addressing the crisis. Organizations and consumers are increasingly demanding sustainably sourced seafood products, pushing countries like Mozambique to adopt better practices.

Failure to align with global sustainability trends could jeopardize Mozambique's access to international markets, further harming the country's chances for economic recovery within the prawn sector.

Efforts to revitalize Mozambique's prawn industry could begin with the implementation of stricter regulations on fishing practices and the establishment of marine protected areas to safeguard vital breeding grounds.

Encouraging community involvement in fishing management would foster a sense of ownership and responsibility among local fishermen, enhancing their commitment to sustainability.

Public awareness campaigns can also educate communities about the importance of mangrove forests and responsible fishing practices, ultimately benefiting both the environment and the economy.

Mozambique's prawn industry faces significant challenges due to overfishing, environmental degradation, and ineffective government response.

The path forward requires substantial commitment from the government, local communities, and international partners to implement sustainable practices and restore the once-thriving prawn population.

With effective management and conservation efforts, there is hope for rejuvenating this vital industry, thus safeguarding the livelihoods of countless Mozambicans while ensuring the long-term health of marine ecosystems.

The time for action is now, as the future of Mozambique's prawn industry hangs in the balance. ■





South Africa, Iran naval drills gamble



Cyril Ramaphosa

By The AfriFiles REPORTER

THE unfolding dispute over Pretoria’s security relationship with Tehran, highlighted by South Africa’s participation in Iranian-hosted naval exercises, is symptomatic of two converging strains in South African governance.

A perceived erosion of civilian control over the military and a diminishing executive authority under President Cyril Ramaphosa.

At its most basic level, the controversy raises questions about who in South Africa decides over defence diplomacy and how foreign engagements align with the country’s stated foreign-policy values.

South Africa’s involvement in naval drills with Iran therefore has outsized symbolic and practical implications.

Naval exercises are more than training, they signal strategic alignment, interoperability, and political acceptance.

When a democratic state participates in such activities with a regime accused of mass human-rights abuses, it invites domestic political blowback and international reputational risk.

The criticism aimed at Pretoria has “ballooned” precisely because the optics clash with the post-apartheid state’s self-image as an advocate for human rights and multilateral norms.

Domestically, the controversy feeds narratives about weak-

ening presidential control. South Africa’s constitution places the armed forces under civilian oversight, but credible allegations that military or security apparatus elements are acting with autonomy — particularly in foreign engagements — erode that principle.

If senior defence officials or elements within the security services took unilateral steps to engage Iran, it would represent a governance failure with constitutional and political consequences.

Even absent explicit unilateral action, the perception that Ramaphosa lacks the clout to enforce coherent policy contributes to political instability, internal party factionalism, and broader public distrust.

Politically, the episode weakens Ramaphosa on multiple fronts. First, it exposes tensions within the African National Congress (ANC) between factions with divergent foreign-policy priorities — some inclined toward non-alignment and South-South solidarity, others toward closer ties with Western partners.

Second, it hands opposition parties and civil-society groups a tangible grievance to mobilize public sentiment against the president’s stewardship.

Third, it complicates Ramaphosa’s international diplomacy; allies and multilateral partners may question his ability to deliver on pledges, while critics may leverage the incident to isolate South Africa on rights-related issues.

Internationally, the Pretoria–Tehran controversy could recalibrate relationships. Western governments and human-rights organizations have intensified scrutiny of Iran; South Africa’s engagements risk diplomatic friction with those actors.

Conversely, Iran may view South African participation as a political win, using it to deflect criticism and portray international legitimacy.

The naval exercises themselves could spur debates within regional security frameworks — about naval presence, maritime security cooperation, and the message such exercises send in contested geopolitical waters.

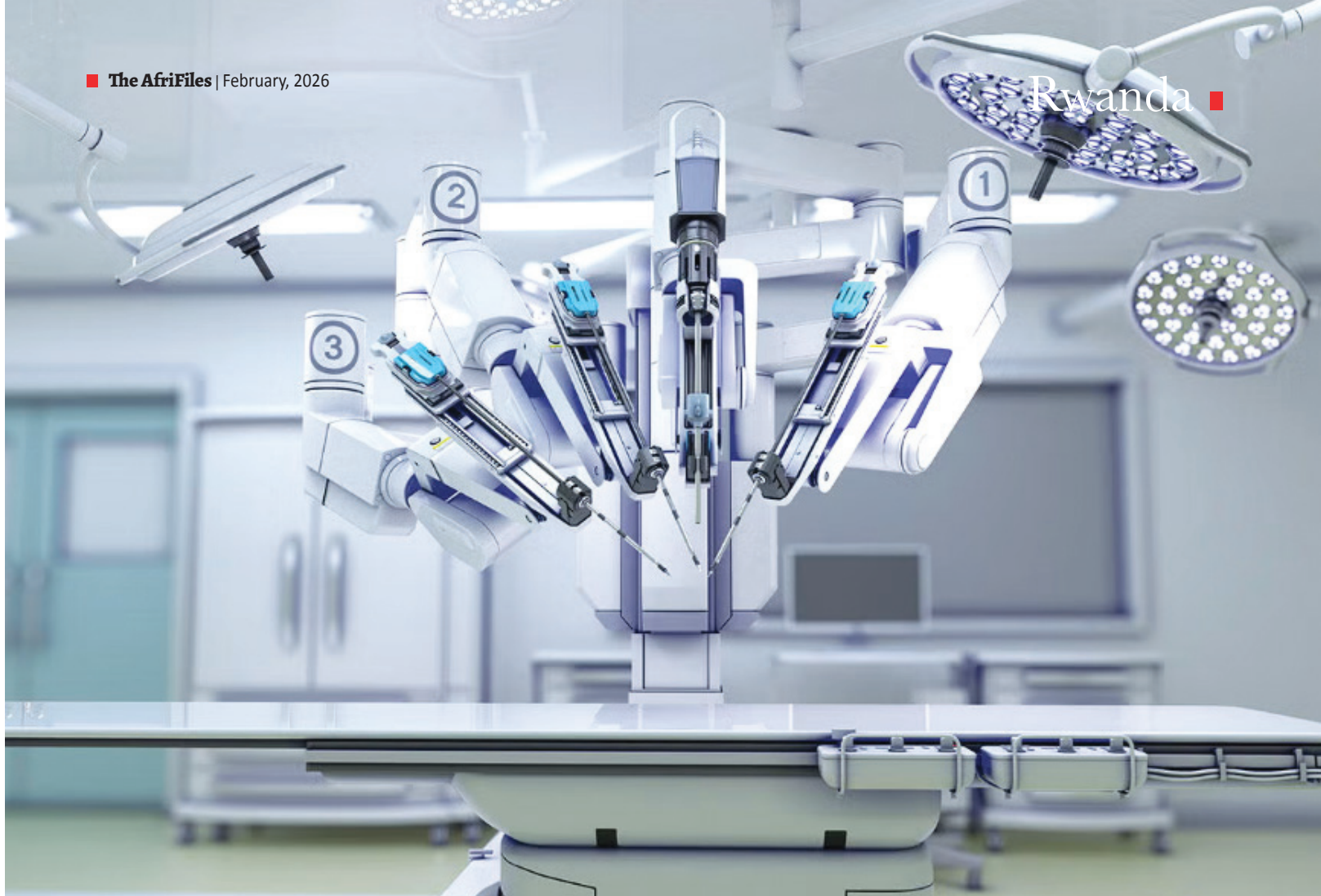
Policy options for Pretoria are limited but consequential. Reinforcing clear chains of civilian oversight over defence diplomacy would be the immediate legal and governance remedy.

Transparent public explanations of the objectives, scope, and authorisation for any past or planned military engagements with Iran would also help restore public trust. Finally, South Africa could choose to recalibrate engagement — for example, limiting military-to-military contacts while preserving diplomatic channels — to balance strategic autonomy with normative commitments to human rights.

In sum, the dispute over naval exercises with Iran is more than a bilateral quarrel: it is a litmus test of South Africa’s governance coherence and international standing.

With Iran accused of thousands of deaths in recent repression, Khamenei’s “several thousand” and regional counts up to 5,000, including around 500 security personnel — the stakes are high.

How Pretoria responds will shape domestic political dynamics, civil-military relations, and South Africa’s broader diplomatic posture for years to come. ■



Gates, OpenAI \$50M for African clinics

By The AfriFiles REPORTER

THE Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and OpenAI have launched a \$50 million partnership to introduce artificial intelligence tools into public health systems in several African countries, starting with a pilot in Rwanda.

The initiative, named Horizon1000, aims to reach 1,000 primary health clinics and their surrounding communities by 2028, supplying funding, technology and implementation support as governments integrate AI into frontline care.

The project arrives amid a retrenchment of traditional donor funding, recent cuts by the U.S. and other Western governments have reduced aid flows by billions of dollars, prompting large philanthropic actors to experiment with higher-leverage interventions.

Gates framed the collaboration as addressing “generational challenges” through systems that accelerate solutions previously out of reach. For philanthropies seeking greater efficiency, AI offers the promise of multiplying scarce human resources and streamlining services, but whether generative tools can offset reductions in conventional aid remains unproven.

Horizon1000’s stated purpose is to augment, not replace, existing health workers. Sub-Saharan Africa faces an estimated shortfall of nearly six million health care professionals; in Rwanda, for example, there is roughly one health worker per 1,000 people, well below the World Health Organization’s recommended four per 1,000.

The AI tools being deployed are tailored to reduce administrative burdens, automated transcription, streamlined paperwork, clinical decision support and triage assistance, freeing

clinicians to spend more time on patient care.

That approach targets a clear bottleneck; time-consuming non-clinical tasks that can siphon capacity from direct services.

Yet, several practical and ethical questions will determine whether Horizon1000 achieves its goal.

First, infrastructure constraints remain acute. Reliable electricity, broadband connectivity, secure cloud services and local data centers are uneven across rural clinics.

AI systems trained or hosted remotely will require consistent bandwidth and latency performance; intermittent connectivity risks degrading service quality or creating dependence on foreign-hosted platforms.

Second, clinical safety and efficacy must be rigorously validated in real-world settings. Many generative and decision-support systems perform well in controlled tests but degrade when exposed to the local disease mix, language variants, and care protocols of diverse African contexts.

Robust clinical trials, post-deployment monitoring and local clinician oversight will be necessary to detect errors and avoid harms from misdiagnosis or inappropriate recommendations. Third, data governance and patient privacy are central. Sensitive health data used to train or operate AI requires clear consent models, secure storage, and strong legal frameworks to prevent misuse.

Questions about data ownership, cross-border transfer, and secondary commercial use will influence public trust. Successful deployments will need transparent agreements with ministries of health, explicit commitments on data residency, and measures to ensure community-level control over personal health information.



Bill Gates



Bill Gates with Paul Kagame, Rwanda President.
Photo: www.mikemilken.com

Fourth, workforce and capacity-building must be integral, not incidental. Technologies that reduce administrative load but are implemented without training risk creating parallel systems that only tech-literate staff can use.

Horizon1000's stated emphasis on supporting health workers implies investments in digital literacy, local technical support, and career pathways that recognize new roles — such as AI system supervisors or data stewards — within health systems.

Finally, sustainability and equity matter. A \$50 million philanthropic push can catalyze pilots, but long-term scale depends on governments allocating budgets for maintenance, upgrades and staffing.

There is also a risk of creating two-tiered systems in which better-resourced clinics receive AI enhancements while more remote sites are left behind.

Equitable rollout will require coordination with national health strategies and engagement with community stakeholders to ensure benefits reach marginalized populations.

Horizon1000 offers a consequential test case: can targeted AI interventions amplify limited human resources and deliver measurable improvements in access, quality and efficiency in low-resource settings?

The stakes extend beyond Rwanda. If the initiative demonstrates clinical safety, cost-effectiveness and genuine capacity-building, it could influence how major donors and governments view technology as a complement to — not a substitute for — sustained investments in health personnel and infrastructure.

If not, it risks demonstrating the limits of technological fixes when underlying systemic shortfalls in workforce, financing and governance remain unresolved.

As Horizon1000 moves from announcement to implementation, clear evaluation metrics, transparent data policies, and sustained local partnerships will determine whether this marriage of philanthropy and AI translates into durable gains for primary care across Africa. ■

Motsepe's quiet tramp to South Africa's presidency

By The AfriFiles REPORTER

BURGEONING campaign signs suggest Patrice Motsepe is quietly positioning himself for the African National Congress (ANC) leadership — and ultimately South Africa's presidency — in 2027.

For months the billionaire businessman and Confederation of African Football (CAF) president has insisted he is “not available” for party leadership, adhering to the ANC's long-standing convention against overt campaigning for top posts.

Yet the visible organization and branding — although still at lower lever, now circulating around “PM27 Savumelana” indicates a more coordinated backing that could transform Motsepe from an aspirant to a front-runner by the time the ANC holds its elective conference in December 2027. Savumelana is a Zulu word meaning; “Lets agree.”

Here are significant signs of Motsepe quite campaign for presidency.

First, the emergence of an organized campaign identity is telling. Political movements rarely gain traction without a unifying brand; the “PM27 Savumelana” slogan — leveraging Motsepe's initials and an evocative local South African phrase implying unity, signals that supporters have moved beyond informal conversation to deliberate messaging.

It is being said that branded T-shirts already in production are a practical manifestation of this shift.

Merchandise has historically been a low-cost, high-visibility tool for testing and amplifying support across constituencies, and the decision to manufacture and distribute apparel indicates confidence in the campaign's staying power and organizational reach.

Second, the campaign's early mobilization infrastructure points to significant resource backing.

Motsepe is one of South Africa's wealthiest individuals, and the logistical coordination required to design, produce, and plan distribution of branded materials implies access to financial and managerial networks capable of national outreach.

Beyond money, the campaign's operational footprint suggests the presence of organizers experienced in political mobilization — people who know how to navigate ANC structures, galvanize branch-level activity, and coordinate messaging while respecting the party's norms on public campaigning.

Third, the move has attracted both public and private endorsements that could be decisive.

While formal endorsements within the ANC will be contested, informal signals from key party figures, civic leaders, business elites, and provincial influencers create momentum that can translate into delegates' support.

Motsepe's existing profile, combining business acumen, philanthropic visibility, and continental sports leadership, makes him an attractive compromise candidate to factions seeking stability, economic credibility, and international stature.

Early back-channel conversations reportedly underway reflect a coalition-building phase that often precedes formal candidacy in ANC politics.



Fourth, Motsepe's own rhetoric and behaviours are calibrated to preserve plausible deniability while allowing supporters space to organize.

By publicly asserting he is “not available,” Motsepe aligns with ANC convention and diffuses accusations of rule-breaking.

At the same time, the absence of a categorical rejection of leadership responsibilities leaves room for delegates and party structures to invite him to stand, a typical pathway by which “reluctant” candidates have entered ANC contests historically.

This dual posture can be politically advantageous; it keeps open the possibility of leadership while minimizing intra-party backlash from rivals who weaponize accusations of undemocratic campaigning.

Fifth, the campaign is tapping into a larger desire within segments of the ANC and the electorate for renewal and competency.

After years of internal divisions and governance criticisms, a figure perceived as technocratic, financially literate, and capable of attracting investment could appeal to delegates concerned with electoral competitiveness and economic recovery.

Motsepe's record in business, philanthropy, and sports administration offers a narrative of managerial competence that contrasts with factionalized party politics.

If framed effectively, that narrative can convert institutional dissatisfaction into delegate votes.

Finally, timing is significant. The 2027 elective conference provides a concrete deadline that intensifies early organizing.

By planting the PM27 brand well ahead of the conference, supporters can shape delegate conversations, test messaging, and pre-empt rival coalitions.

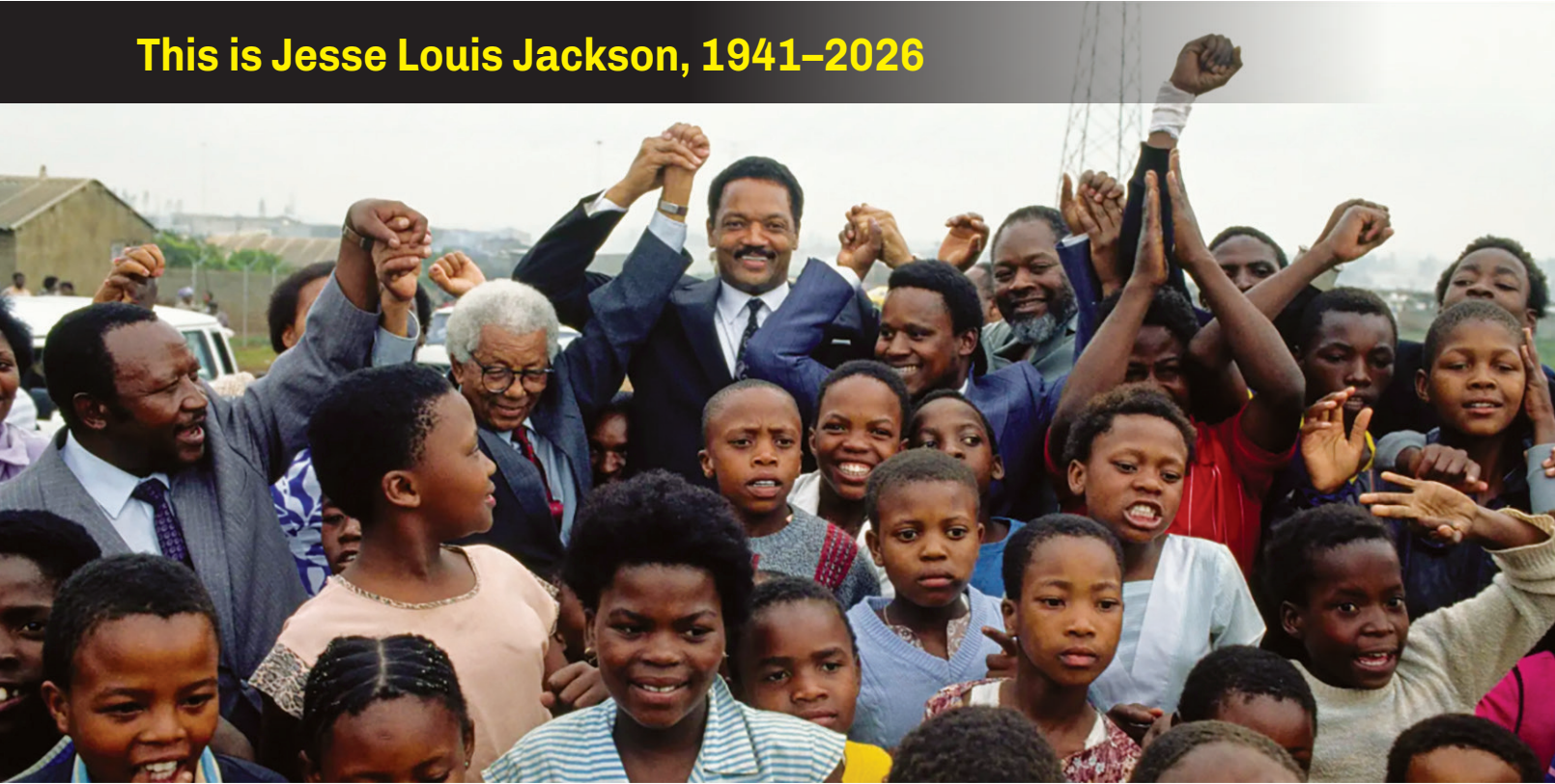
Early momentum can be decisive in the ANC's complex delegate-driven contests, where perceptions of inevitability often snowball into real delegate shifts.

In sum, while Motsepe publicly maintains distance from an outright run, the operationalization of the “PM27 Savumelana” campaign, branded materials, resource-backed organization, strategic endorsements, calibrated messaging, and a compelling narrative of renewal — collectively constitute strong indicators that he may be vying for ANC leadership and the presidency in 2027.

Whether this quietly building movement can overcome entrenched factionalism and translate into delegate support will determine if Motsepe's cautious emergence becomes an unstoppable political force. ■

Reverend who made Africa

This is Jesse Louis Jackson, 1941–2026



A crowd of children gathers around Reverend Jesse Jackson (center) with SA Liberation Hero Walter Sisulu (centre-left with white hair) and other dignitaries in Soweto, Johannesburg, South Africa - February 8, 1990. Photo: Peter Turnley/ Getty Images.

By The Editorial TEAM

HE arrived in African capitals not as a tourist, but as a negotiator, witness, and amplifier; a pastor whose pulpit carried moral authority into diplomatic chambers, whose voice translated protest into policy, and whose presence at peace tables conferred international legitimacy when it mattered most.

Over four decades, Reverend Jesse Louis Jackson moved fluidly between pulpits and presidencies, between protest lines in Chicago and crisis rooms in Freetown, Sierra Leone and Johannesburg, South Africa.

He was part evangelist, part power broker, and wholly committed to ensuring that Africa's struggles were seen - and acted upon - in Washington, on Wall Street, and on the evening news.

The central claim is straightforward: Jackson's interventions produced measurable benefits for African peoples and movements.

From accelerating international pressure on apartheid South Africa to helping negotiate ceasefires and secure prisoner releases, his influence was tangible, even when outcomes were imperfect. This is how Africa benefited from Jesse Jackson, in practical and documented ways.

From the outset of his international engagement, Jackson framed Africa as a moral issue for Americans.

In the early and mid-1980s, when many U.S. policymakers favored a policy of "constructive engagement" with Pretoria, Jackson placed apartheid at the center of American civic consciousness.

His 17-day tour of southern Africa in 1986, visiting Nigeria, Angola, Botswana, Mozambique, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, was not ceremonial diplomacy but a deliberate effort to amplify African

voices within the American conscience.

By publicly denouncing the apartheid regime, convening mass rallies, and mobilizing African American constituencies, Jackson helped shift U.S. public opinion.

That shift proved consequential. When Congress overrode President Ronald Reagan's veto to pass the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986, the broader divestment and sanctions movement—bolstered by Jackson's visibility and organizing—had altered the political calculus. Economic and diplomatic costs imposed on Pretoria intensified. For millions of Africans, the result was a faster trajectory toward the international isolation of an oppressive regime and a political environment more conducive to liberation movements and, ultimately, democratic transition.

Yet Jackson's engagement with Africa extended beyond protest politics. He brought a negotiator's discipline to conflict zones.

His work often resembled quiet witness more than headline diplomacy: observing negotiations, advocating humanitarian access, and using his global stature to open doors for other mediators.

The most frequently cited example is Sierra Leone's Lomé peace process. On May 18, 1999, Jackson served as a named witness to the Lomé Agreement—a ceasefire and power-sharing accord between President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah and Revolutionary United Front leader Foday Sankoh.

Although the agreement later faced serious challenges, Jackson's presence helped galvanize international attention, legitimize the negotiation track, and support the deployment of peace monitors and expanded humanitarian corridors during a devastating civil war. In conflicts where visibility can mean survival, such witness carried weight.

a unignorable

A similar pattern unfolded in South Africa. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, Jackson made repeated visits, meeting leaders of the African National Congress (ANC), addressing mass rallies, and humanizing the anti-apartheid struggle for American audiences.

His public alliance with Nelson Mandela - visible in joint appearances and shared platforms - generated powerful imagery. These moments were not merely symbolic; they translated into media coverage, advocacy networks, and political pressure in the United States. African movements gained resources and attention they could deploy strategically.

Beyond mass mobilization and diplomatic witness, some of Jackson's most concrete contributions came through casework.

Over decades, he intervened in detention and hostage situations, negotiating the release or safer transfer of detainees, including U.S. citizens and, in certain cases, Africans caught in political crackdowns.

Sometimes this meant face-to-face meetings with heads of state; at other times, urgent calls that resulted in paroles, transfers, or international monitoring.

For affected families, these were not symbolic victories. They were reunions, lives preserved, and crises defused.

This human-scale impact remains one of the most durable measures of his legacy; people freed, families restored, tensions eased at fragile moments.

Jackson also sought to convert moral solidarity into institutional relationships. Through initiatives such as the Wall Street Project, he convened business, religious, and civic delegations to Africa, advocating greater minority participation in global markets.

While Africa's macroeconomic transformation required structural reforms and multilateral investment beyond any single individual's reach, Jackson's efforts nudged African and African American institutions toward partnership.

Tangible outcomes included memoranda of understanding forged during business delegations, development initiatives unlocked through his convening power, and heightened awareness among African American corporations and philanthropic organizations of opportunities on the continent.

These efforts, modest in scale but meaningful in influence, broadened the constituency viewing Africa not solely as a site of crisis but as a partner in growth.

His moral authority often translated into policy outcomes. By making African causes legible to U.S. voters, Jackson reshaped domestic political incentives.

When constituents demanded divestment, sanctions, or humanitarian intervention, lawmakers responded. The 1986 anti-apartheid sanctions law stands as the clearest example of how civic mobilization and visible leadership generated concrete legislative change with lasting consequences for Africa's political trajectory.

Jackson's record was not without limits or controversy. Celebrity diplomacy has inherent constraints; agreements he witnessed sometimes faltered, and durable institution-building cannot be substituted by high-profile engagement.

Personal controversies and uneven presidential campaigns at home - in the U.S, complicated his authority. Yet history often crystallizes around moments of urgency.

Across Africa, many recall instances when he pierced diplomatic isolation, drew cameras and monitors to neglected crises, or simply occupied a seat at the table and refused to let abuses pass unnoticed.

The geography of his influence traces a map of late twentieth-century African crises and transitions. His repeated visits to South Africa strengthened international solidarity against apartheid.

His 1986 southern Africa tour took him through frontline states



Director of Economic Diplomacy at Tanzania's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador John Ulanga with Reverend Jackson in undated picture.



Former South African President Nelson Mandela, left, walks with the Rev. Jesse Jackson after their meeting in Johannesburg, South Africa, Oct. 26, 2005. Photo: AP/Themba Hadebe

hosting exiles, liberation movements, and humanitarian emergencies. His role in Sierra Leone's Lomé negotiations placed him in both Freetown and Lomé at a pivotal juncture in the country's search for peace.

Across West and Southern Africa, he used the platform of American civil society to elevate African priorities onto the global stage.

Jackson's African legacy is thus hybrid: moral witness, crisis responder, and bridge builder. Activists remember rallies where he framed African liberation as an American responsibility.

Families remember negotiations where his intervention meant freedom. Business leaders recall early efforts to connect diasporic capital with African opportunity. Historians will continue to debate the boundaries of celebrity diplomacy.

But for many ordinary Africans, the ledger is concrete: pressure that hastened apartheid's demise; witness that legitimized peace efforts and expanded humanitarian access; interventions that reunited loved ones.

As Africa's political and media archives of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries are revisited, Jesse Jackson will appear both in headlines and in footnotes—a bridge, imperfect but serviceable, that carried attention, resources, and urgency across continents.

He did not single-handedly build Africa's institutions, but he persistently opened doors, redirected American focus, and, at decisive moments, converted awareness into action.

For that, many across the continent will remember him as an ally who refused to let their causes fade into distance—or their lives into invisibility. ■

Rest well Reverend Jesse Louis Jackson.

Can the EAC survive its fiscal meltdown?

By The AfriFiles REPORTER

THE Chairman of the East African Community (EAC), President William Ruto of Kenya has convened a meeting with heads of member countries.

The core agenda of the meeting – which is scheduled in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania next month; March, is to discuss how to rescue the entity from an acute funding shortfall. President Ruto confronts a problem that is more structural than temporary.

The EAC Secretariat is reported to be effectively insolvent, with members collectively indebted by roughly US\$89.3 million.

This is not merely an accounting headache; it threatens delivery of customs, trade facilitation, infrastructure planning and the very credibility of a bloc that promised deeper regional integration.

Founded to accelerate economic and political integration across eight member states – Somalia being a new member, the EAC depends heavily on assessed annual contributions from its partners.

Unlike a sovereign treasury, the secretariat lacks independent, predictable revenue streams; when capitals delay or default, programming grinds to a halt.

Over the past decade the union's ambitions, from a common market to major regional infrastructure projects, expanded faster than funding mechanisms. Layer on macro shocks (pandemic fallout, commodity volatility), and the result is a liquidity crisis that now demands high-level political answers.

Who owes what — and who has paid?

Publicly available, authoritative confirmation of current arrears requires the EAC's most recent audited financial statements or an official communique from the Summit or Council of Ministers.

Payment patterns have historically been uneven; larger economies such as Kenya have tended to be relatively more consistent contributors, while other members at times accumulate arrears.

Tanzania's position has fluctuated across administrations, sometimes clearing dues and at other times falling behind.

Absent the Secretariat's latest disclosures, any definitive ledger would be speculative. The meeting President Ruto calls should produce - and publish - an explicit schedule of outstanding obligations to restore transparency.

Why members fall short

The reasons are more political and fiscal. Domestic priorities; social spending, debt service, crowd out supranational transfers, especially after shocks like Covid-19.

Perceptions of weak financial controls and politicized procurement at the Secretariat undermine trust, making capitals less willing to pay without assurances of value-for-money.

Donor aid is often project-tied and cannot replace reliable, recurrent income. The result; a classic collective-action failure where short-term national interests override long-term regional gains.

Rescue options on the table

The meeting of members session must move beyond finger-pointing to practical rescue measures; a summit-endorsed arrears-clearance timetable with binding commitments from each capital and a short-term bridging loan from multilateral partners conditioned on reforms.

Also, immediate public audit of Secretariat finances and program priorities; and medium-term revenue diversification - modest levies on regional transactions, service fees, or dedicated regional taxes, to reduce dependence on member transfers.

Will the EAC survive the next ten years?

Survival is plausible but not guaranteed. If leaders convert rhetoric into a credible rescue - clear arrears, institutional reform, diversified revenues and strict transparency - the union can stabilize and continue incremental integration.

Without those reforms, the EAC risks a slow erosion of functions, stalled flagship projects and a shift toward ad-hoc, bilateral arrangements among willing states.

Political commitment will be the decisive variable; institutions can be rebuilt, but only if member states treat the union as a strategic public good rather than an optional add-on.

Closing perspective

The EAC's fiscal crisis is a stress test for African regionalism. It exposes the tension between ambitious supranational goals and the fragile fiscal realities of member states.

President Ruto's convening of leaders is a necessary first step, what matters next is whether the meeting produces a transparent, enforceable roadmap that turns arrears into reform.

The EAC will not die from a one-time cash crunch; it will falter if member capitals fail again and again to make the political and fiscal choices integration requires. ■



IMF embrace signals turning point

By Braise OUGEDLE

BURKINA Faso government recent high-level engagement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), has proved that the country is progressing well.

Marked by President Captain Ibrahim Traoré's meeting early this month with IMF Deputy Managing Director Kenji Okamura, spotted a pivotal juncture in the landlocked West African nation's economic trajectory.

The encounter, focused on fiscal stabilization, reform momentum, and prospects for expanded cooperation, sheds light on both the progress already achieved and the hard policy work that still lies ahead.

Official statements from the IMF highlighted a notable shift; public finances are stabilizing, key reforms are under way, and the macroeconomic framework is strengthening.

That the IMF publicly lauded Burkina Faso's progress is significant. For a country grappling with security shocks, displacement crises, and constrained fiscal space, external validation from a major multilateral lender serves as a confidence signal to other creditors, investors, and development partners.

It can lower borrowing costs, unlock concessional finance, and catalyze technical assistance that the country badly needs to translate macro gains into inclusive growth.

But the praise must be read in context. Stabilization after a period of fiscal strain often reflects a combination of expenditure restraint, temporary revenue measures, and external support.

The durability of improvement depends on a government's capacity to deepen revenue mobilization, protect priority social and security spending, and sustain reforms that raise productivity.

The IMF's emphasis on administration and structural reforms, areas where capacity gaps and implementation bottlenecks are common, underlines the institution's view that short-term stabilization must be reinforced by medium-term structural change.

Two practical implications flow from the meeting. First, the prospect of broader cooperation with the IMF suggests upcoming technical programs aimed at public financial management, tax administration, and monetary policy framework enhancement.

These interventions can tighten budget credibility, reduce leakages, and enhance transparency—critical for governance and for public trust in a fragile political context.

Second, an enhanced IMF partnership often conditions further support from other multilaterals and bilateral donors; a credible program can unlock donor coordination and investment flows essential for reconstruction, security, and social services.

Yet risks remain. Burkina Faso's security landscape continues to exact a heavy toll on the economy; agricultural production disruptions, internal displacement, and diversion of public resources toward urgent defense and humanitarian needs.

Such dynamics can erode reform gains and complicate fiscal consolidation. Moreover, a narrow reform focus that neglects social protection risks stoking public discontent if austerity is perceived as unevenly distributed.

Balancing fiscal prudence with social resilience will be critical to maintain political legitimacy and avoid backsliding.



President Traore

The IMF's public commendation, and its pledge to deepen cooperation, also carry political signals. For a leadership that assumed power amid instability, forging stronger ties with the IMF can bolster international standing and provide a pathway to stabilize external financing.

It sends a message that the government is committed to policy discipline and reform, an important reassurance to regional partners and markets.

However, this alignment raises expectations. Burkinabè authorities will need to demonstrate measurable outcomes, improved revenue ratios, better debt management, and tangible progress in governance reforms - to sustain momentum and secure expanded support.

Looking ahead, the effectiveness of the trajectory spelled out by both sides will hinge on sequencing and implementation.

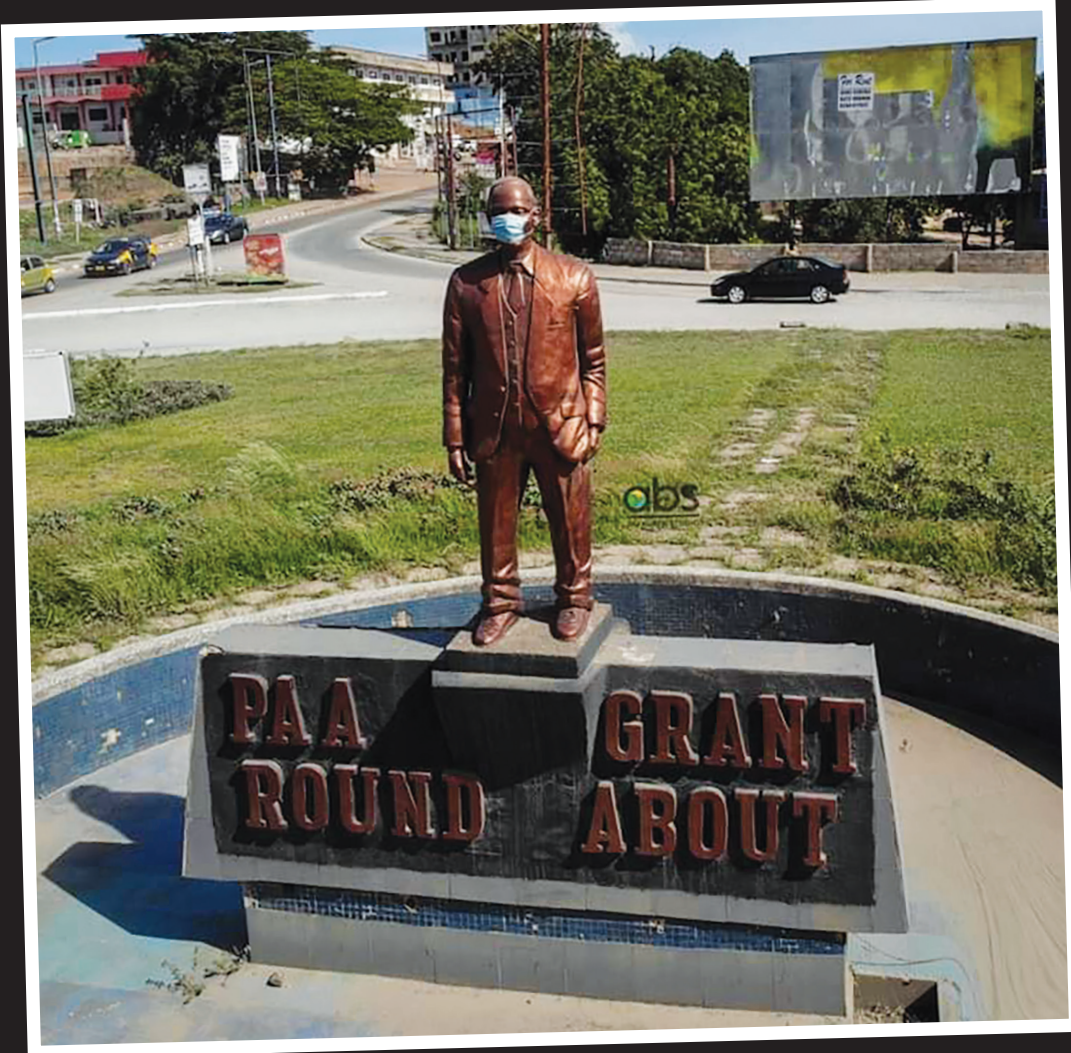
Priorities should include broadening the tax base through formalization measures, enhancing public expenditure reviews to shield indispensable social and security spending, and deploying IMF technical assistance to modernize public financial management systems.

Simultaneously, coordinated donor support should focus on poverty alleviation and resilience-building to ensure stabilization benefits reach vulnerable populations.

The meeting between Captain Ibrahim Traoré and Deputy Managing Director Kenji Okamura is more than diplomatic courtesy; it is a practical opening for intensified policy engagement.

The IMF's endorsement provides a window of opportunity for Burkina Faso to lock in fiscal gains and pursue deeper reforms.

Whether that window leads to sustained stability and inclusive growth will depend on disciplined implementation, political will, and the ability to manage security-related shocks while protecting the social foundations of the economy. ■



A roundabout with Paa Grant statue in Sekondi-Takoradi

The quiet kingmaker of Ghana

By Special CORRESPONDENT

GEORGE Alfred “Paa” Grant is a figure whose name rarely commands the center of Ghana’s founding story, yet his fingerprints are all over the machinery that transformed anti-colonial sentiment into organized nationalist politics.

A successful merchant from the central, Grant was more than a financier who quietly underwrote others’ ambitions; he was an engaged political actor whose networks, strategy, and willingness to challenge colonial economic and administrative practices helped create the conditions for mass mobilization.

Recovering his fuller role complicates the single-leader narrative of Ghana’s independence and insists that we recognize the varied forms of political work, material, institutional, and organizational - that make liberation possible.

From commerce to politics

Born into a prominent coastal family, Grant built his reputation in trade, credit, and local patronage rather than the colonial professional classes that later dominated public office.

That mercantile background mattered; it gave him resources, a broad social reach, and a practical understanding of how colonial economic policies affected everyday livelihoods.

He moved through a web of merchants, chiefs, and civic leaders whose influence extended beyond the Central Region and into the ports and markets on which the Gold Coast de-

pendent.

Grant’s conversion of private wealth into public purpose was not simply philanthropy; it was a political calculation rooted in the conviction that economic independence and political self-rule were linked.

Founding the UGCC

In 1947 Grant joined with lawyers, chiefs, and professionals to found the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC), the first broadly based nationalist organization to demand self-government.

The UGCC’s membership reflected a cross-section of elite opinion; it housed traditional authorities uneasy with colonial encroachment, educated professionals who drafted arguments for constitutional change, and businessmen who wanted an end to economic arrangements that privileged colonial companies.

Grant’s role in the UGCC was multifaceted. He underwrote meetings, funded the production of pamphlets and bulletins, and helped pay for travel and stipends.

His wealth allowed delegates and organizers to move the organization beyond Saltpond and Accra to regional towns and market centers. In short, he helped turn a loose conversation among elites into a functioning political body.

Grant was not content to remain a backroom patron. He used his social capital to recruit supporters, coordinate meetings, and build coalitions across the country.

His network among chiefs helped secure the endorsement and participation of traditional authorities, lending the UGCC legitimacy in communities where colonial rule had complicated customary governance.

He pressed for an organized, legally grounded campaign for self-government, one that combined petitions, deputations, and constitutional demands rather than spontaneous uprisings.

That strategic posture reflected both principle and prudence; Grant and his collaborators believed that carefully prepared legal and political pressure could delegitimize colonial administration without unravelling existing social structures.

Confronting colonial rule

Grant's opposition to colonial rule was as much about economic justice as about political autonomy.

He publicly criticized British economic policies that disadvantaged indigenous traders, from discriminatory licensing practices to monopolistic contract arrangements that favored metropolitan firms.

Using his voice and influence, he lobbied colonial administrators, engaged metropolitan contacts, and placed pressure on local chiefs to coalesce around reformist agendas.

The UGCC's tactics under his influence included petitions to Governor's councils, formal deputations to colonial officials, and public resolutions that articulated a clear demand for self-government.

These were not gestures of mere symbolism; they were sustained assaults on the legitimacy of colonial governance and an assertion that the Gold Coast's future should be determined by its own people.

Bringing Kwame Nkrumah

One of Grant's most consequential acts was supporting the search for a full-time organizer for the UGCC. That effort brought Kwame Nkrumah to the Gold Coast as the organization's paid secretary.

The recruitment was pragmatic; the UGCC needed someone who could mobilize beyond elite circles and turn constitutional argument into popular pressure.

Grant's financial backing made that possible. The relationship between the UGCC and Nkrumah was complicated and ultimately fractious; ideological and tactical disagreements erupted into a split that propelled Nkrumah to found the Convention People's Party (CPP) and to pursue a more radical, mass-oriented path.

Nevertheless, the initial decision to bring in a dynamic organizer was a crucial step in the evolution from elite agitation to popular movement, and Grant's role in enabling that transition underlines his importance not merely as a funder but as an architect of political strategy.

Eclipsed by spectacle

Despite these substantive contributions, Grant's place in public memory has been muted. The post-independence narrative favored charismatic, mass-based leaders whose biographies and speeches fit easily into national myth-making.

Nkrumah's dramatic rise, rhetorical brilliance, and ultimate sway over the independence story created a natural focal point; histories that privilege individual authorship and spectacle tend to compress complex coalitions into simplified lineages that eclipse enablers like Grant.

Moreover, Grant's own temperament and class position complicated his appeal in the emerging political culture.

He preferred constitutional pressure and negotiation to street-level confrontation, and his status as a merchant placed him at a remove from the populist imagery later celebrated by



state ceremonies and school curricula.

Political memory, which often rewards theatricality, has little patience for the infrastructural labor of financing, convening, and institution-building.

Paa Grant died in 1956, less than a year before the Gold Coast became Ghana. His death fell at a historical hinge, as the movement he had helped organize reached its decisive phase.

Rather than a state funeral that would have cemented his role in national remembrance, Grant's passing was observed in a modest, family-centered manner.

He was buried in his hometown in the Central Region in accordance with local customs, surrounded by the communities and traditions that had shaped his life.

That quiet close reflects the paradox of his legacy: essential to the architecture of independence, commemorated in ways that remained intimate and local rather than national and monumental.

Rethinking remembrance

Recovering Paa Grant's fuller role is not merely an act of historical restitution. It is a corrective to how nations tell their founding stories.

Independence movements are ensembles that require financiers and convenors as much as orators and ideologues.

Re-centering figures like Grant forces people to recognize the material foundations of political change, the money, networks, and disciplined organizing that allow mass mobilization to take hold.

It also poses a civic question about what kinds of leadership a nation chooses to honor; the visible, theatrical leader or the less glamorous but indispensable architects of institutions.

Increasingly, local efforts to preserve Grant's Salt-pond residence and to document his role in the UGCC are beginning to expand the archive of memory, inviting younger generations to see nation-building as a collective undertaking.

Why Grant matters now

Paa Grant matters because he widens our definition of leadership. His life shows that political transformation depends on networks as much as on oratory, on financing as much as on manifestos, and on convening as much as on commanding.

Remembering him enriches the story of Ghana's founding by showing how elites and grassroots actors, legal strategists and merchants, chiefs and organizers converged to dismantle colonial rule.

Grant did not seek the limelight; he often worked through channels that resist photographic commemoration.

Yet without his money, his networks, and his insistence on disciplined political pressure, the architecture of organized nationalism in the Gold Coast would have looked very different. Restoring his place in the national narrative does not diminish better-known figures; it enlarges the public understanding of how a nation was made. ■

Slim mandate, NPP gambles on comeback

By Julius MANASE

A decisive moment for a major West African party has added clarity to its path forward; the New Patriotic Party's (NPP) presidential primary delivered a 56% endorsement for continuity, crystallizing both the party's internal cohesion and the scale of the challenge ahead.

The result confers a mandate but also exposes a political organization still grappling with the fallout from its worst national defeat in 2024.

That endorsement gives the ticket to Mahamudu Bawumia, whose re-election as the NPP's 2028 presidential candidate is at once predictable and consequential.

His standing within party structures is evident, yet the margin is not so vast as to erase dissent. A persistent minority, delegates and grassroots activists who preferred alternatives—points to unresolved questions about ideology, strategy and leadership style.

For a party intent on reversing a catastrophic national loss, internal reconciliation must be immediate and sincere; former rivals need visible roles, critiques should be answered with policy revisions rather than platitudes, and the apparatus of campaign organization must be reshaped to avoid repeating past mistakes.

Beyond intra-party dynamics lies the harder task of reframing public perception. Bawumia was a central actor in the administration voters rejected, and that association will be a focal point for opponents and skeptical electorates alike.

To neutralize this linkage without erasing experience, the campaign must craft a narrative of accountable stewardship, one that acknowledges shortcomings, accepts responsibility where due, and outlines clear reforms.

This is a test of political craftsmanship; humility must be balanced with competence, and symbolic gestures must be matched by substantive policy shifts.

Policy recalibration will be the crucible of credibility. Electorates punish parties when everyday realities—jobs,

food costs, healthcare access, and public services, deteriorate.

If the NPP is to regain trust, its platform must move beyond slogans toward measurable commitments; concrete timelines for job creation, targeted measures to reduce cost-of-living pressures, stronger anti-corruption mechanisms with independent oversight, and service-delivery benchmarks tied to transparent funding.

Voters respond to tangible promises backed by plausible financing and implementation plans; rhetoric alone will not suffice.

Equally important is a reimagined approach to coalition-building. The electoral map that emerged in 2024 likely altered alliances and voter loyalties.

Reclaiming lost ground demands energetic outreach to disaffected urban youth, informal-sector workers, and swing constituencies that may have felt ignored. That means localized listening campaigns, community-driven policy pilots, and partnerships with civil society organizations that can vouch for the party's renewed commitment to inclusion.

Reconciling with regional and traditional leaders whose support waned will also be essential to rebuild ground-level mobilization.

Organizational renewal must underpin all of this. The recent defeat exposed operational weaknesses -from candidate selection and field coordination to digital engagement and voter-data analytics.

A forensic audit of the 2024 campaign, followed by targeted investments in professional campaign staff, modern data systems, and grassroots training, will be necessary to modernize the party's machinery.

Strengthening provincial branches and creating accountable performance metrics for constituency teams can prevent past lapses from recurring.

Momentum will hinge on timing and optics. Early unity gestures, joint appearances with former contenders, a transparent transition to a general-election campaign team, and the swift release of a credible policy platform, can reshape narratives and reassure wavering supporters.

Conversely, prolonged infighting or a delayed policy response will feed a storyline of stagnation and entitlement.

More broadly, the NPP's predicament is emblematic of a wider democratic dynamic; parties that occupy government for extended periods must periodically reinvent themselves to remain electorally viable.

Success will depend less on nostalgia for past accomplishments and more on the capacity to demonstrate learning, deliverable change, and empathetic leadership.

Bawumia's primary victory gives the NPP a clear ticket to 2028, but it is only the opening chapter.

Converting intra-party endorsement into national redemption will require candid self-assessment, bold policy shifts grounded in evidence, inclusive outreach, and a disciplined, modern campaign machine.

If the party can marshal those elements, it may transform a bruised legacy into a comeback; if it fails, the 2024 verdict risks becoming a defining trajectory rather than a temporary setback. ■



Mahamudu Bawumia



Russia is accused of exploiting African recruits as frontline fighters in Ukraine, with claims they are being sent to dangerous missions with minimal support while Russian troops remain in safer positions. Photo: Filippo Montorfote / AFP

Mercy for Russia–Ukraine war victims

By The AfriFiles REPORTER

REPORTS that young Gambian men have died fighting in Ukraine for Russian forces have rippled far beyond West Africa, exposing a transnational marketplace where promise, profit and peril collide.

Fragmentary casualty counts and opaque recruitment channels make exact tallies elusive, but patterns emerging from investigations into African recruitment for Russian proxies, notably private military companies (PMCs) like Wagner, illuminate how these men were drawn into a distant war and who, if anyone, might answer for their deaths.

The recruitment playbook combines digital bait with on-the-ground brokerage. Social-media ads and WhatsApp outreach promise quick money, vocational training and even residency; recruiters present roles as security, construction or logistics work rather than frontline combat.

Local intermediaries, former soldiers, small-time travel agents, diaspora contacts - legitimize offers, arranging flights and paperwork that mask the ultimate destination.

Investigations across Africa show that many recruits are unemployed youth or ex-security personnel attracted by signing bonuses and wages that dwarf local opportunities.

Deception is routine; recruits in other countries have reported being told they would do non-combat work, only to find themselves in active operations alongside Russian units.

Beyond these networks sit layers of accountability that blur with plausible deniability.

PMCs have been central to recruitment strategies, often operating through subcontractors and regional hubs. While Wagner-style groups are notoriously opaque, reporting has linked them to organized campaigns in several African states, using recruitment agents who receive commissions for each recruit.

The Russian state's involvement, direct or indirect, further complicates responsibility; where control or direction by state organs can be shown, international legal responsibility becomes a possibility, though enforcement is politically fraught.

So who bears the moral and legal burden for the Gambian casualties? First, the recruiters themselves, the local brokers who lured young men with false promises - carry clear culpability.

Gambian domestic law could theoretically criminalize fraudulent recruitment and trafficking; prosecuting such figures is a realistic avenue for accountability if Banjul commits

resources to investigation.

Second, the PMCs or entities that deployed the recruits would be the primary civil defendants in any transnational litigation. Yet suing opaque entities across borders is costly and slow, and judgments may be difficult to enforce.

Third, the Russian state may bear responsibility under international law where state organs directed or substantially controlled the forces involved, a route that faces immense diplomatic obstacles given geopolitics and sanctions.

Practical remedies are therefore likely to be pragmatic rather than purely legal. The Gambian government has an immediate duty of care; repatriate remains, provide consular assistance, and offer emergency financial relief to bereaved families.

Many countries confronted with similar crises have set up ex gratia death benefits or temporary pensions; such measures are politically feasible and immediately impactful.

Beyond emergency aid, Banjul could launch criminal probes targeting recruitment rings, freeze assets of identified brokers, and pursue civil claims domestically against intermediaries.

International and civil-society actors also have roles. Human-rights organizations can document cases, creating dossiers that pressure recruiters, PMCs and enabling states through public exposure and sanctions advocacy.

Regional bodies like ECOWAS and international partners can demand transparency and assistance, conditioning cooperation on accountability measures.

Diaspora groups and NGOs can provide legal aid, fund immediate support for families, and keep media attention focused — a crucial lever when state action stalls.

Longer-term prevention requires systemic changes; stronger laws criminalizing deceptive recruitment for foreign conflicts, public-awareness campaigns that warn young people about recruitment tactics, and economic strategies to reduce vulnerability to predatory recruiters.

Training and reintegration programs for returning fighters, and monitoring of travel flows and recruitment intermediaries, would close gaps exploited by brokers.

The death of Gambian youths in a distant war is not merely a bilateral tragedy; it is a symptom of a globalized recruitment economy that preys on inequality.

Meaningful compensation and accountability will demand a mix of swift domestic action, targeted legal efforts, and international pressure - coupled with policy reforms that deny recruiters the raw material of desperation. ■

Fixing Africa's road to UK, US veg markets

By The AfriFiles REPORTER

THE United Kingdom and the United States rank among the world's largest and most consistent consumers of fresh leafy greens and salad vegetables, driven by high percapita consumption, dense supermarket networks, and robust foodservice sectors that demand yearround, highquality supply.

That intense, reliable demand explains why buyers in London and New York set exacting standards, and why African producers face a steep climb to become preferred suppliers.

Perishability is the unforgiving first act. Leafy greens and tender herbs live on a clock: they need rapid cooling, careful handling and fast freight.

In much of subSaharan Africa, rural roads slow trucks, cold stores are few, and refrigerated trucking and bonded packhouses are patchy at best.

A harvest that loses its cold chain becomes a liability; buyers in the UK and US would rather pay a premium to proven corridors from Spain, Morocco or Mexico than gamble on an unproven alternative.

Then there's the regulatory theatre. Highvalue markets demand sanitary checks, traceability, accredited lab tests and certifications such as GlobalGAP or HACCP.

When inspection capacity is inconsistent and traceability relies on paper trails or informal assurances, importers face the risk of costly rejections - financially and reputationally. In such a climate, a single detention can close doors to big buyers for months.

Scale and cost economics finish the scene. Very perishable goods often travel by air, and air freight is expensive. African producers are frequently smallholderbased and fragmented, which elevates perunit costs and confounds quality uniformity.

European growers benefit from seamless logistics and integrated packhouses; growers in Africa are competing with systems that have spent decades optimizing every link from seed to shelf.

But this is not a story of inevitability. The interventions that would shift the calculus are straightforward and concrete,

if politically and financially demanding.

First, build coldchain corridors and export hubs. Think refrigerated consolidation centres at production clusters with packhouses, quick testing labs and bonded facilities.

These hubs aggregate volume, professionalize handling and offer a visible qualitycontrol point for buyers. Publicprivate partnerships can make the upfront investment viable.

Second, professionalize aggregation through contract farming and outgrower models. When farmers are organized into cooperatives or linked to anchor buyers, inputs and post-harvest protocols are standardized.

Aggregators can manage certification, coordinate harvest windows, and present buyers with guaranteed, uniform loads, transforming risk profiles overnight.

Third, scale testing and certification. Regional accredited labs and subsidized certification programs reduce one of the biggest nontariff barriers. Donor finance and impact investors can underwrite initial costs while governments fasttrack recognition of standards.

Diplomacy matters too. Bilateral phytosanitary agreements and preclearance systems, modelled on successful US-Mexico schemes, can shorten inspection chains and reassure importers. Trade ministries need to sit at the same table as agriculture and transport agencies to negotiate predictable entry conditions.

Logistics finance and freight innovation will lower costs. Pooled airfreight contracts, cargo consolidation across commodities and export credit guarantees derisk shipments.

Longterm buyer commitments, seasonal contracts with minimum volumes, can anchor freight deals and justify capital expenditure on cold storage.

Market differentiation is another smart route. African exporters don't need to mimic Spain. They can dominate niches; organic salad mixes, specialty herbs for diaspora markets, heirloom and ethnic greens that meet the culinary needs of global cities. Valueaddition, like blanching and IQF freezing, turns perishability into tradeable inventory for the US market.

Finally, strengthen institutional pipelines. Digital traceability, mobile extension services, streamlined customs and reliable port operations reduce friction across the value chain.

Governments that simplify paperwork and guarantee transparent rules suddenly make investment attractive.

The prize is worth it; jobs across rural economies, greater value retention on the continent, and more resilient global supply chains.

Africa's limited role in vegetable exports to the UK and US is not a natural fact but the result of missing infrastructure, weak institutions and misaligned incentives. Fix those, and the continent can move from risky experiment to trusted supplier, reshaping markets and livelihoods in one sweep. ■





Pedal power: Malawi's 'rickshaw' bush ambulances cycle the sick to Trinity Hospital in Nsanje District, Malawi. Photo: courtesy - Mail & Guardian

How bribes became Malawi's hospital currency

By PIJ Investigative TEAM

ON paper, Malawi's public hospitals promise free care for all, a compact between state and citizen meant to shield the vulnerable from the ruinous cost of illness.

In law and policy, the covenant is unequivocal; public facilities should deliver care without fee. In practice, however, that pledge has been hollowed out.

Across the country, from the sprawling wards of Queen Elizabeth Central Hospital (QECH) to the remote shores of Likoma Island, access to lifesaving treatment is increasingly governed by an invisible tariff; a shadow economy that rewards those who can pay and abandons those who cannot.

Over several months, a consortium of investigative jour-

nalists from Malawi's leading media outlets went undercover in seven public facilities, including QECH, Kamuzu Central Hospital (KCH), Mzuzu Central Hospital, and district hospitals in Mulanje, Thyolo, and Chiradzulu.

What they uncovered was not a string of isolated lapses but a coordinated ecosystem of corruption. Security guards, clerks, cleaners, and clinicians have monetised suffering, turning waiting rooms and corridors into marketplaces where the price of survival ranges from K4,000 to K260,000. This is the story of how corruption became the ultimate gatekeeper.

The Gatekeepers at QECH

QECH in Blantyre is the country's largest referral hospital, a sprawling, busy complex where exhaustion hangs as heavily as the antiseptic smell.

For those who arrive from distant districts, it represents a last chance. People travel for hours, sometimes days, clutching referral letters and hope. Inside the hospital, they confront more than medical complexity; they confront a system that quietly stratifies care by cash.

On December 16, 2025, farmer Kumbukani Stafford of Phalombe arrived with his niece, who had been living with a painful swelling since a 2017 operation.

After fruitless visits to local hospitals and private clinics, the referral to QECH represented a final hope. They arrived at 8:00 a.m. and were still sitting on the same hard chairs 24 hours later.

"We were bounced like a ball," Stafford says. "Room One, then the burns department, then back to reception. They told us our name was 'not in the system.' But we were standing right there."

Undercover reporters walking the same corridors watched the mechanism in action. The queue is not merely a function of clinical triage; it is enforced by human intermediaries who quietly demand payment.

Security guards - men whose uniforms should fend off intruders, have become brokers of life and death. One guard, speaking to an undercover journalist posing as a desperate relative, explained the unwritten rule; money must be shared across departments.

“Don’t come here like a child,” he warned. “Every department the patient passes through must get a share. Once you pay, they tell each other an ‘urgent’ patient has arrived. The clerks, the nurses, the doctor, they all need to eat.”

When Stafford finally surrendered K15,000, money meant for food and the bus fare home, the missing name suddenly materialised. A health worker, pocketing a portion of the fee, offered a thin, knowing smile.

“They have entered the room now,” he said. Behind the scenes, the reporter watched portions of the bribe being split; K5,000 to scanning staff, K1,500 to a security guard near the entrance. Medical triage had been turned transactional.

In Room One, a place intended to stabilise patients, another facet of the corruption became visible. A woman from Lunzu arrived for a routine dental extraction but was referred to Room One because her blood pressure was dangerously high.

She reported at 8:00 a.m. on Tuesday, 16 December and watched all day as other patients handed K10,000 notes discreetly to officials and were promptly ushered inside.

She had nothing but her hospital card and mounting pain. By the end of the first day there was no assessment, no medication, no blood pressure management.

The following morning, she remained on the same chair, unassessed and untreated; by midafternoon she was curled, whimpering in visible agony. She later asked a reporter to lend her K10,000 to be “called.”



Every department the patient passes through must get a share. Once you pay, they tell each other an ‘urgent’ patient has arrived. The clerks, the nurses, the doctor, they all need to eat.”

The high stakes auction at Kamuzu Central

At KCH in Lilongwe, the corruption is less about small tips and more about highstakes extortion calibrated to families’ desperation. Here, the sums are larger and the consequences even more damning.

In July 2025, a family from Kasungu arrived carrying a 27-year-old man with a shattered leg. He was the family’s primary breadwinner.

The demand was blunt, K200,000 for an Xray and “facilitation” of surgery. The uncle, a retired civil servant surviving on a meagre pension, scraped together his savings and paid. Payment, however, is no guarantee.

Despite handing over cash, the patient lay in the ward for days as his leg swelled and discoloured. Only when the uncle refused to be silent, demanding receipts that did not exist and publicly denouncing the delay - did staff act and move the patient to surgery.

At the Lilongwe Institute of Orthopaedics and Neurosurgery (LION) the auction reaches its zenith. A radiologist told Deborah, 22, that the medicine required for a neuroscan was out of stock unless they could find K260,000.

A nurse attends to a patient at Trinity Hospital in Nsanje District, Malawi.
Photo: Amos Gumulira





A health worker dries decontaminated nasal prongs and oxygen face masks at Queen Elizabeth Central Hospital in Blantyre, Malawi on Saturday, Jan. 30, 2021. Photo: Thoko Chikondi / AP.

Deborah begged relatives, failed to raise the sum, and watched her mother's condition deteriorate until she became paralysed. Others who paid immediately had scans and results within hours.

These stories reveal a cruel calculus; when clinical need collides with informal payment systems, outcomes depend on capacity to pay and propensity to resist. The result is a two-tiered public system - officially free, practically payable.

The Fall of Chiradzulu

The rot extends beyond the big cities. In Chiradzulu District Hospital, the withdrawal of international oversight has left a vacuum. Médecins Sans Frontières once provided not only care, but a layer of accountability. Since its departure, local networks have filled the gap.

The investigation documented networks of "agents," often lowlevel staff or former employees, who prowl hospital corridors like vultures, identifying the most desperate and offering to "connect" them to clinical officers for fees.

An underage pregnant girl in distress was intercepted and directed to a clinical officer whose identity was shielded; her family paid K38,000 via mobile money for a procedure carried out in a government theatre with government supplies and nurses. What looked like a private arrangement was in fact a public resource diverted for personal gain.

Even death has been monetised. The hospital mortuary, once a place of solemn respect, is now a revenue stream. Families are routinely charged between K20,000 and K50,000 for embalming and bathing deceased relatives, often without receipts or any form of transparency. For many poor families, the dignity of burial has become another commodity.

Perhaps the most corrosive allegation concerns hiring. Under the decentralized system, the investigation found, some job placements reportedly require fees of up to K500,000.

Qualified, poor candidates are excluded while less quali-

fied but cashrich applicants secure positions. "We are not just stealing money; we are stealing the quality of our future doctors," one anonymous health worker said.

The longterm cost is not just financial theft but institutional decline, a health service staffed by those who could pay rather than those who are best qualified.

The Weapon of neglect in Thyolo

In Thyolo District Hospital the invisible tariff sometimes operates through omission rather than explicit demand. Here, the weaponisation of neglect is a tactic; patients who cannot pay, or lack powerful advocates, are subjected to deliberate indifference designed to make them leave or, eventually, to pay.

A young man identified in the investigation as Chotsadzwa has been admitted for three weeks with a broken leg after a fall from a tree. Initial treatment was provided, but once staff assessed that no extra funds would arrive, the care effectively stopped.

"Doctors just pass by without checking on me. It's like I am invisible," he says. When he cries out, he is met with mockery; at times clinicians dismiss his pain with a phrase that dismisses his suffering. "If I am not sick, why am I here?" he asks, tears in his eyes. "I cannot eat because of the pain. Is that not sickness?"

Nearby, Wawa Phiri, a rural father, spent K30,000 on transport to reach Thyolo for his child's injury. Upon arrival he was barely examined; a staff member declared the child "healed" and handed him eight Panadol tablets.

"I wasted my food, my time, and the money I borrowed for this journey," Phiri says. "If you have money, you are a patient. If you don't, you are a nuisance."

An elderly ward patient, a victim of a violent assault, was told his leg might need amputation. After initial care, he entered a cycle of postponements, "come tomorrow" - that stretched into weeks.



They told us the ambulance had no fuel,” says Mike Kulumbo, Laston’s father. “They looked at my son bleeding and asked for K75,000.”

“The poor are being pruned away like dead leaves,” he whispered. The cumulative effect of such conduct is not only immediate harm to patients but a deep erosion of trust in public institutions.

The crocodile and the ambulance

In remote districts the predation intensifies where options are few. Geography creates monopolies of care that unscrupulous staff and intermediaries exploit with impunity.

On March 3, 2025, 18-year-old Laston from Likoma Island was attacked by a crocodile. He was mangled and his life hung by minutes.

Likoma District Hospital recognised the need for an urgent referral to Mzuzu Central Hospital—requiring an ambulance boat to the mainland followed by a land ambulance. The state should have borne that responsibility.

“They told us the ambulance had no fuel,” says Mike Kulumbo, Laston’s father. “They looked at my son bleeding and asked for K75,000.”

Kulumbo scraped together the money as his son bled. When they reached Nkhata Bay, the driver refused to move until he was handed another K55,000.

Later Kulumbo discovered the ambulance’s tank was full—there had been no fuel shortage. He paid because his son’s life was at stake; yet the system robbed him in the moment of greatest vulnerability.

Forced payments, and the silence

Health rights advocates insist these practices are neither exaggerated nor novel; they are widespread, deeply entrenched and intentionally concealed.

George Jobe, Executive Director of the Malawi Health Equity Network (MHEN), says bribery and forced payments have become defining features of the public health system even as patients are technically entitled to free care.

“There is massive corruption in public health facilities,” Jobe said. MHEN’s investigations differentiate voluntary gifts from coerced payments extracted from patients under duress.

The organisation has documented cases where patients are encouraged, or instructed, to place cash in their health passports, a practice now widely understood across communities as the unofficial price of attention.

“Some people do not give money willingly,” Jobe explains. “Someone is unwell and wants treatment. They feel they have no choice.”

Fear, power imbalances and mistrust in reporting mechanisms keep victims silent. Many incidents never move beyond rumours and whispered accounts.

To counter this, MHEN launched a project to document “forced payments,” empowering communities to report abuses anonymously and offering a structured method to capture the scale and pattern of extortion.

Hospital ombudsmen are recruited and deployed by the Ministry of Health and often hold junior grades, creating structural obstacles to investigating senior officials. “It becomes very difficult for them to report to their seniors,” Jobe notes.

Oversight, accountability and reform

Those tasked with oversight acknowledge the scale of the problem, but point to resource constraints and procedural limits. Ombudsman Grace Malera confirmed that hospital ombudsmen are recruited and deployed by the Ministry of Health due to financial constraints.

She nonetheless defended the mechanism’s integrity, saying the ombudsmen operate with functional autonomy and are trained to investigate complaints impartially.

Malera disclosed that in 2025 more than 16,000 complaints were registered through the hospital ombudsman mechanism, with 238 relating to informal or irregular payments.

She said such complaints were handled as facility-level matters and noted that allegations of bribery and extortion primarily fall under the Anti-Corruption Bureau’s mandate.

Malera conceded that any practice conditioning access to public healthcare on unofficial payments constitutes maladministration and abuse of power and that, subject to resources, her office is considering a systemic investigation into public health service delivery.

The Ministry of Health accepts malpractice occurs but often frames the issue as one of professional ethics rather than systemic criminality. Principal Secretary Bestone Chisamire acknowledges that extortion and informal payments have come to the ministry’s attention and that disciplinary action has been taken in some instances.

He declined to provide numbers, citing the complexity of the national health system. “This is about mindset change,” Chisamire said.

“Health workers must understand they are employed to serve the public, not to generate personal income.” He promised steps to address malpractice but offered few specifics on enforcement or timelines.

What must change

The evidence compiled by this investigation paints a picture of a public health system in which official promises and lived realities diverge dramatically. Where law guarantees free care, practice has erected toll booths.

This is not merely theft; it is a structural capture of a public good—a siphoning of state capacity into private pockets that undermines health outcomes, worsens inequality and corrodes public trust.

Addressing the crisis will require multiple, sustained actions, genuine independence and resourcing for oversight institutions, transparent, enforceable disciplinary procedures, protection for whistleblowers and victims seeking redress.

Moreover, measures to remove cash from points of contact (digital transaction systems, clear accountability for supply chains), strengthened staff remuneration and working conditions to reduce incentives for illicit income, and community-led reporting mechanisms that make it safer and easier to document and pursue abuse.

For patients navigating Malawi’s public hospitals today, the consequences of institutional failure are immediate and brutal; care delayed, dignity stripped away, and survival reduced to a whispered negotiation.

Until independent oversight is resourced, protections are enforced, sanctions are real and alternatives exist for those who cannot pay, Malawi’s most vulnerable will continue to pay the price for a promise they were once told was free.

Reporting by: Maureen Kawerama, Noel Mkwaila, Nicholas Mbonela, Thomas Kachere, Bobby Kabango, Chikondi Mphande, and Julius Mbewe, Mercy Matonga, Rebecca Chimjeka, and Jack McBrams. This investigative was first published by Platform for Investigative Journalism (PIJ), and edited by The AfriFiles to meet its standards and space. ■



Volcanoes Rwanda's most coveted escape



By Sam NDEYENSILE

LUXURY travel has entered a quieter, more selective age. The new global elite no longer chase landmarks or volume; they seek access to what is rare, protected, and meaningful.

In northern Rwanda, beyond the reach of mass tourism and noise, Volcanoes National Park has emerged as one of the world's most discreetly powerful destinations.

Wrapped in mist and silence, the park offers something increasingly scarce; controlled access to a living wonder. Numbers are limited, movement is measured, and the experience is designed around restraint rather than excess. Here, luxury is not announced — it is felt, in privacy, precision, and purpose.

At dawn, volcanoes rise gently from ancient forest, their

slopes layered with bamboo and cloud. There are no convoys, no spectacle, no rush. What exists instead is intention. Volcanoes National Park does not entertain the world; it admits it.

For many global travellers, the decision to visit Rwanda is driven by a single, compelling promise; an encounter with mountain gorillas in their natural habitat.

Yet what unfolds here is not merely wildlife viewing. It is an experience carefully shaped by conservation, national strategy, and an understanding that rarity, when protected, holds immense value.

Entering Volcanoes National Park is an exercise in restraint. Visitor numbers are tightly controlled, groups are small, and movement through the forest is deliberate and respectful.

There are no rushing crowds or engines idling nearby. The journey is made on foot, guided by trackers who read the forest with practiced ease.

Then the moment arrives.

A gorilla family emerges from the foliage, close enough to hear their breathing, close enough to feel the weight of their presence. A massive silverback watches calmly, a reminder of strength without aggression.

Youngsters tumble and play, entirely unconcerned by the visitors who have travelled thousands of kilometers for this hour.

This intimacy is what sets the experience apart. Unlike traditional safaris defined by distance and observation from vehicles, gorilla trekking places humans and wildlife on the same ground. The effect is profound. Visitors often leave the forest quieter than they entered, changed in subtle but lasting ways.

The mountains shape story

Volcanoes National Park sits within a dramatic landscape of extinct and dormant volcanoes whose fertile soils support dense bamboo and montane forest.

These mountains define the park's atmosphere, misty, cool, and richly textured, and give it a sense of permanence that transcends human timescales.

But the park is not only a natural monument. It is also a historical one. Its global profile owes much to decades of scientific research and advocacy that transformed public understanding of gorillas from fearsome beasts to complex, social beings closely related to humans.

That legacy continues today through ongoing research and monitoring, ensuring that tourism is guided by science rather than spectacle. Visitors encounter not just animals, but a living conservation story still being written.

Rwanda's strategic tourism choice

What truly distinguishes Volcanoes National Park from other iconic wildlife destinations is how Rwanda has chosen to manage it.

Rather than maximizing visitor numbers, the country has pursued a high-value, low-volume tourism model. Gorilla permits are deliberately expensive, making the experience premium by design.

This strategy serves several purposes. It limits environmental pressure on a fragile ecosystem. It attracts travellers willing to invest in meaningful experiences. And it generates significant revenue that feeds directly back into conservation and community development.

In a region where wildlife protection often struggles to compete with economic necessity, Volcanoes National Park demonstrates that conservation can be both ethical and profitable when backed by political will and long-term planning.

Communities at the edge

The success of the park is inseparable from the people who live around it. Revenue-sharing programs ensure that tourism income supports schools, health centers, infrastructure, and local enterprises.

It came to be known that some of the former poachers have become guides and trackers, turning knowledge of the forest into livelihoods.

This relationship is critical. By linking community well-being to conservation outcomes, Rwanda has reduced conflict between people and wildlife and strengthened local stewardship of the park.



Visitors sense this stability in the professionalism of guides and the pride with which communities speak of the gorillas.

The forest is no longer seen as a barrier to development, but as its foundation.

More than a single experience

While gorilla trekking remains the park's defining attraction, Volcanoes National Park offers a broader range of experiences that encourage longer stays and deeper engagement. Golden monkey tracking introduces visitors to another rare and charismatic primate.

Volcano hikes lead to crater lakes and panoramic views that stretch across borders. Cultural encounters provide insight into traditions shaped by generations of coexistence with the forest.

Together, these experiences position the park not as a one-day excursion, but as a layered destination capable of sustaining interest beyond a single headline activity.

Accessibility without sacrifice

Another advantage lies in geography. The park is located just a few hours' drive from Rwanda's capital, making it one of Africa's most accessible high-end wildlife destinations. For international travellers with limited time, this proximity is a decisive factor.



A pair of golden monkeys share an intimate moment. Photo: Sam Wallace

Accommodation options around the park range from luxury eco-lodges to community-based guesthouses, all operating within strict environmental guidelines.

Roads are reliable, logistics efficient, and security strong. The result is a rare balance: genuine wilderness supported by modern infrastructure.

A Symbol of national identity

Volcanoes National Park has become more than a tourism product. It is a symbol of Rwanda's broader transformation and ambition. In international forums, marketing campaigns, and diplomatic visits, the image of the gorilla has emerged as a quiet emblem of national renewal.

The park communicates a message to the world: that Rwanda values protection over exploitation, quality over quantity, and long-term gains over short-term returns. In doing so, it has positioned itself as a serious player in global conservation and premium tourism.

Standing a competitive world

Rwanda offers diverse attractions, from rainforests and savannahs to lakeside retreats. Yet Volcanoes National Park consistently outperforms them in visibility, demand, and revenue generation.

The reason lies in rarity. Very few places on Earth offer the chance to encounter mountain gorillas in the wild, and fewer still manage that encounter with such discipline and care.

In a global tourism market crowded with similar experiences, distinctiveness is everything. Volcanoes National Park does not compete on scale, but on significance.

The road ahead

The future of the park will depend on maintaining this delicate balance. Climate change, regional pressures, and rising global demand pose ongoing challenges. But Rwanda's track record suggests restraint will continue to guide decision-making.

Rather than expanding access, the focus is likely to remain on refining the experience, strengthening science, and deepening community integration. In doing so, Volcanoes National Park can remain both exclusive and inclusive — exclusive in access, inclusive in benefit.

Where memory lingers

Long after travellers leave Rwanda, it is often the forested slopes of Volcanoes National Park that stay with them. Not just the sight of gorillas moving through the mist, but the understanding that survival, when carefully protected, can still be witnessed up close.

In a world where wildness is increasingly distant, Volcanoes National Park offers something rare and resonant; a reminder that conservation, when treated as a national priority, can succeed, and inspire.

Here, among mountains that breathe and forests that endure, giants still walk. And the world continues to follow. ■



The anthill on the crash site is 100 metres from the wreckage

Revisiting crash site of Hammarskjöld's plane

THEN a sleepy town, Ndola, in Zambia's Copperbelt, was yanked to global prominence overnight in September 1961, when the *Albertina*, crashed there with 16 passengers perishing. Cyrille Adoala blamed moneyed powers. Our contributor, Shoks Mnisi Mzolo took a trip to the crash site to go through the encrypted page on Cold War.

The truth is so precious and fragile. So, some people would cover it in layers of lies for its protection, once quipped a middle-aged political animal, now a Cabinet Minister in East Africa.

My mind drifts to that aphorism when I meet Jacob Phiri, a conservation assistant at Zambia's Heritage Commission and curator at the Dag Hammarskjöld Memorial National Museum in Ndola.

Notwithstanding its tiny size, the museum's aircraft-shaped library, made of masonry indigenous to this region, also chronicles Congo's decolonisation.

Hanging on its walls are photographs of United Nations Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld, revolutionaries and statesmen; from Kwame Nkrumah to Patrice Lumumba.

Sitting in the disfigured copper-rich region, Ndola was yanked to global prominence overnight after September 17th 1961, in the wake of the crash of the DC6-B, the *Albertina*,

with 16 passengers on board perishing in turn.

Congo's then Prime Minister, Cyrille Adoala, blamed "moneyed powers." Reasons given for the fatal crash included foul play and pilot error.

Twenty-five years later, pilot error was again given as an excuse in the crash that claimed 25 people, including Samora Machel, then-president of Mozambique. This year marks the 40th anniversary of that crash and the 65th of the *Albertina*'s.

Amid zigzags, the quest to rescue the truth in the case of the *Albertina* has seen the setting up of the Hammarskjöld Inquiry Trust a whole 50 years after the fact, with Lord David Lea as the chair, and Chief Emeka Anyaoku, Susan Williams and other prominent figures named as trustees.

Journey to Ndola

Ndola sits some 320km from Lusaka. My bus crawls for eight hours on its way there. Cars hurtle down the T2/T3 highway. Trucks slog. Some are heading to the Democratic Republic of Congo, from as far as the region's bustling Durban port, or Walvis Bay, Namibia. Trucks routinely take weeks to traverse Southern Africa due to stifling bureaucracy.

Still, it's about time the DRC optimized its access to the Atlantic as a trade route within Africa and beyond. Though 70%

of the country's more than 100 million population languishes in poverty, the land is endowed with minerals – from diamond to gold and, for mobile phone users, cobalt and lithium – but the mining industry here is gripped by exploitation.

Views of long white charcoal-laden sacks spool past along the T2/T3 highway. Such sights are familiar in Zambia. Savannah and a sprinkle of hills define the landscape.

It's too bland, but the people are warm, as I've repeatedly found out. For me and a few other passengers, the trip ends when the bus hits the drizzling Ndola after 22h30. Passengers' luggage includes bags, suitcases, bales of clothes, and wooden chairs.

The drizzle does nothing to dampen my Friday mood. I discovered later that dance floors in this tiny city answer to Afrobeats, Amapiano and R&B. The Zambian leg of my heritage sites tour, via Botswana and Zimbabwe, weaves Lusaka and the Albertina crash site – on Unesco's tentative list for over 25 years.

Home to almost 500,000 people, Zambia's third largest after Lusaka and Kitwe, Ndola is the copper-mining city of low-rise buildings. The nearest DRC border is just 20km to the north. Some 200km, as the crow flies is north-westerly Lubumbashi – once the bastion of Belgian colonial settlers.

I head to the site on Saturday after a morning stroll in the scorching Ndola, and a quick stop at the bustling Chifubu market. Near the expansive location – home to the museum – are a police station, a school both named after the UN chief, and a new airport named after Zambia's liberation struggle hero Simon Mwansa Kapwepwe.

The mood is poignant at the museum, officially opened by Zambia's founding father Kenneth Kaunda in 1981.

The site and its story are as good as an encrypted page on Cold War. The mirage on the road from Ndola is a tragic metaphor of how the path to the truth has unfolded (or not unfolded). It's been plain illusive. "We are still digging, sifting through evidence," says the museum's well-versed Jacob Phiri, taking visitors through the on-off-on search for facts.

Hammarskjöld had travelled to Ndola to meet exiled rebel Moïse Tshombe, Belgium's puppet. Some sources say the former's crime was his stance on decolonization, angering the West. That is not to affirm the UN's decision to bring fighters to Congo.

The world organization, now 80 (and still featuring an exclusive five-some club of the Security Council's Permanent Members), hasn't been impartial. Look at what's happening now and what happened then.

Separately, Congo is a victim of its riches, with foreign invaders accused of stoking chaos to enable looting. From his Lubumbashi base, Tshombe seceded Katanga province into a short-lived republic at the behest of Brussels.



The anthill, where Hammarskjöld's body was found, on the crash site is 100 metres from the wreckage.

Eyewitness accounts

The crew, soldiers and UN staffers were aboard the plane, including Alice La Lande, William Ranallo and Heinrich Wischhoff. The victims' remains were found on Monday afternoon - 18 September. So was an injured Harold Julien, who died in hospital ten days later.

While on his deathbed, he recalled that Hammarskjöld had moments before the crash shouted to the pilot; "Turn back". Alas! Explosions followed.

Locals from Ndola's Twapia put the subsequent bang on Sunday midnight. Edvard Persson's body (with mysterious bullet wounds) was recovered on Tuesday. The political climate hit new lows when Katanga broke away from the newly independent Congo. A messy near future lay ahead.

The first year of the DRC's freedom was tragic; the central government had fallen, the country balkanized, millions displaced, and atrocities synonymous with Belgium's bloody years returned. Soldiers ran the show. Congo was on its third Prime Minister before its first anniversary as an independent state.

Lumumba had been ousted, jailed, and assassinated "by a firing squad under the command of a Belgian officer" in January 1961 outside Lubumbashi, observed Martin Meredith in *The State of Africa*.

Some among the droves who cheated death and fled their mineral-rich homeland, like Laurent Kabila, joined forces with Victor Dreke-led Cuban guerrillas, including Che Guevara (codenamed Tatu because he was third in command).

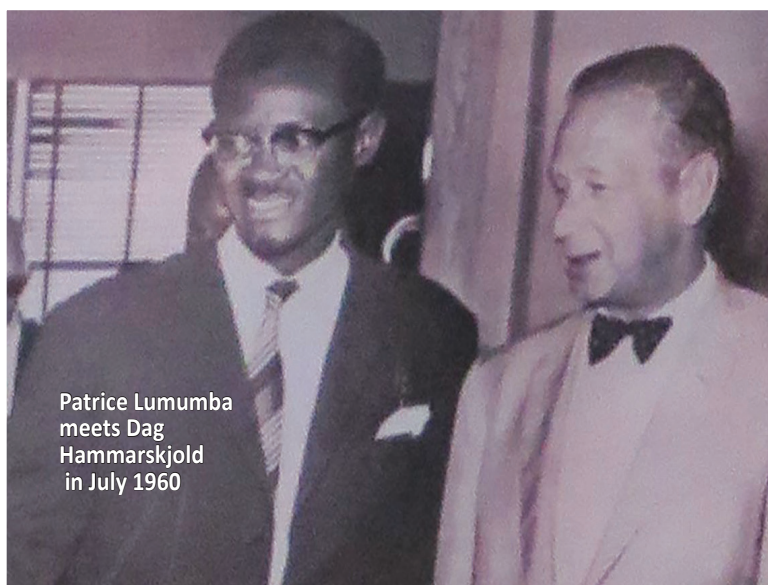
Now for a step back. The nation attained its independence in June 1960 under the baton of Lumumba.

The liberation project soon foundered thanks to Belgium, which, after an eight-decade rule of mutilations, displacements, and killings, had left its cash cow, Congo, grudgingly. Photographer Chris Tsui Hesse – armed with faith and a camera – was there to film the genesis of the crisis.

While Belgium propped Katanga's rebels and apartheid-era South Africa supplied mercenaries, fighters from Harold Macmillan's Britain and the John F. Kennedy-led United States of America – countries, like South Africa, accused of foul play – were officially absent. ■

To be continued in the next issue.

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Patrice Lumumba meets Dag Hammarskjöld in July 1960



Gen Z of Kenya protesting on the street. Photo: Courtesy

2027: Youth takeover, patronage endures



By Ivan MAYABI

LONG dismissed as apathetic, Kenya's youth forced a rupture in 2024. As the 2027 election approaches, their challenge is to turn digital rebellion and street protest into durable political power.

The conventional wisdom about Kenya's young people before mid-2024 was simple; they didn't care.

That verdict missed the point, as their apparent apathy was not laziness but a reasoned withdrawal - a generation convinced that the ballot box repeatedly failed to produce meaningful change.

Successive elites had promised prosperity through education and hard work, yet structural economic constraints - chronic unemployment, stagnant wages, and entrenched patronage - turned aspiration into disillusionment.

For many Gen Z and millennial Kenyans, the old formula felt like a bait-and-switch. The result was not indifference but strategic skepticism.

That skepticism was visible in the 2022 general election. Young people dominate Kenya's demographics: under-35s make up roughly 75 percent of the population, and 18-34s represent about 28 percent of eligible voters.

Yet registration data showed only 2.3 million citizens aged 18-24 had registered by May 2022, and youth participation in the eventual vote was disproportionately low — likely under 10 percent of total ballots cast.

This was not mere sloth; it was a political choice: a withdrawal of legitimacy from a system governed by dynasties and ethnic brokers.

William Ruto's 2022 campaign exposed how that withdrawal could be weaponized. His "Hustler Nation" rhetoric and bottom-up economic promise recognized and routed youth anger into electoral support.

Policies such as the Hustler Fund offered microloans and a narrative of economic inclusion that resonated with informal workers and the unemployed. For a moment, Gen Z's skepticism found an institutional outlet: not apathy, but selective engagement with an antiestablishment pitch.

The honeymoon was short. Barely a year into his term, the administration pursued austerity and revenue measures through successive Finance Bills in 2023 and 2024.

Tax increases hit essentials - bread, sanitary products, digital services - goods and services central to low-income households. For many young Kenyans, this was ideological betrayal; the state was taxing the very "hustlers" it had promised to uplift.

That contradiction lit the fuse for the June 2024 uprising. What began as fiscal protest quickly became a broader revolt against perceived betrayal, state violence, and systemic impunity.

The movement that emerged had clear systemic demands: justice, accountability, better governance, and meaningful relief from



Activist Bonifasi Mwangi

the cost-of-living crisis.

Shared economic pain, repeated state repression, and brutal policing created a “peer bond” that turned scattered grievances into collective identity.

Arrests, enforced disappearances, and lethal force against protesters hardened priorities and politicized a generation accustomed to digital dissent and street mobilization.

Yet the movement confronts a brutal democratic dilemma. Kenya’s political architecture still privileges costly, regionally based party machines rooted in ethnic mobilization.

Digital rebellion is cheap, decentralized, and fast; electoral politics is expensive, bureaucratic, and slow. Polling in May 2025 captured this disjuncture; roughly half of Kenyans expressed no confidence in the integrity of the 2027 elections.

That skepticism makes the crucial task of building a national, nonethnic political vehicle all the more difficult.

The stakes are existential for the uprising. If Gen Z cannot create durable structures and must instead join existing vehicles, its energy risks being absorbed into traditional patronage.

The test is whether the movement can field national candidates who transcend ethnic calculus — the ultimate litmus for whether the 2024 rupture becomes structural reform or yet another cycle of co-option.

Complicating the landscape is the opposition’s institutional unravelling and the end of the Odinga era. Raila Odinga’s political manoeuvring, bargaining into government and securing formal posts under a “broad-based” arrangement, reshaped mainstream politics and fractured opposition credibility.

His subsequent death removed both a perennial challenger and the most organized infrastructure for mass opposition.

Odinga’s passing deepened fragmentation, potentially advantaging an incumbent who now faces multiple, divided challengers rather than a single united front.

The result is a volatile middle ground as veteran politicians remain powerful but are increasingly detached from the moral authority of the protests.

For Gen Z, the old guard’s compromises confirm the cynicism that drove the streets to boil in 2024; elite infighting is seen as competition for spoils rather than a contest of ideas or policy.

William Ruto’s credibility has been the central casualty. His flagship BETA (Bottom-Up Economic Transformation Agenda) and programs like the Hustler Fund (microloans) and the 2025 Nyota grants (up to Kenya Shilling 50,000) are read by many as transactional attempts to break solidarity rather than systemic fixes.

Microcredit and grants can relieve individual hardship, but they do not dismantle the structural inequalities that spawned the revolt.

More damaging was state violence and impunity; the crackdown on protests, allegations of abductions and fatalities, and the failure to deliver promised accountability have cemented a narrative of betrayal.

Into this breach step a class of disruptors who might translate moral momentum into ballots.

The most prominent include Senator Okiya Omtatah, human-rights activist, Boniface Mwangi, and former Chief Justice David Maraga, along with left coalitions backing candidates like Sungu Oyoo. Each offers distinct pathways for Gen Z.

Omtatah brings legalism and institutional critique. A seasoned public-interest litigator, he positions accountability and judicial remedies at the center of reform.

His approach draws on parliamentary tools and courtroom battles to chip away at impunity. But legalism is slow; for a generation demanding rapid change and impatient with bureaucratic tempo, the trade-off is stark: sustained credibility versus immediate impact.

Boniface Mwangi is the embodiment of the protest era’s moral urgency. A photojournalist turned activist, Mwangi channels the movement’s anger into anti-corruption and human-rights platforms.

He commands visceral loyalty and grassroots energy but faces the practical obstacles of financing, party building, and navigating



Former President of the Supreme Court of Kenya, David Maraga

an institutional terrain primed to crush outsider bids.

David Maraga, by contrast, offers institutional credibility. His tenure as chief justice, defined by the dramatic 2017 election nullification, establishes him as a defender of constitutionalism and the rule of law.

His public defense of digital rights after the 2024 crackdown aligns with Gen Z’s fears of surveillance and censorship. Maraga’s value proposition is stability and enforceable reform; he promises to translate protest demands into binding institutional change.

The question is whether the youth will embrace a former establishment figure as the vehicle for their revolution.

On the left, organized efforts like the Left Alliance and Sungu Oyoo aim to convert protest into party politics. Their economic platform — anti-austerity, structural redistribution, and “liberated territories” — supplies ideological clarity.

Yet operational gaps remain: meeting IECB nomination thresholds, raising vast campaign funds, and building regional voter networks are daunting tasks for movements accustomed to decentralized mobilization.

The path to 2027 thus divides into two futures. One is the movement’s absorption; Gen Z energy diluted into ethnic machines or transactional clientelism.

The other is a reconfiguration of Kenyan politics, where digital networks, protest legitimacy, and focused institutional strategies produce a new civic-political architecture.

That would require blending rapid digital mobilization with the slower work of institution building: recruitment, fundraising, regional coalitions, and credible candidate training.

If the youth choose abstention, the paradox is grim: boycotts would likely lower turnout thresholds, making it easier for incumbents to retain power through traditional ethnic math.

The movement’s best hope is pragmatic: to insist on electoral integrity while simultaneously building the organizational capacity necessary to win.

That means translating digital followings into party structures, protest legitimacy into credible platforms, and viral outrage into disciplined, well-funded campaigns.

Kenya’s 2027 election will therefore be a test of generational transition. The country’s future depends not only on who wins the presidency, but on whether a new social contract can be forged — one that restores trust between state and citizen.

And replaces patronage with accountability, and converts the moral energy of the streets into democratic institutions that endure.

The onus is on a generation that has already shown it can rupture the old order; now it must show it can rebuild something better.

This analysis was first published by The Elephant. It has been edited by our editorial team to fit The AfriFiles space, and policy. ■

Journalism under fire - crushed, silenced, detained



Angela Quintal, Africa coordinator for CPJ.
Photo: Rogan Ward

By **Eliseme MALESY**

WHEN four journalists were detained in Yaoundé on February 17 and held for five hours while police seized their cameras, phones and laptop, the incident read like a cautionary tale about journalism under siege.

Routine harassment turned potentially far darker by the specter of secret deportations and the threat to anonymous sources.

The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) has urged Cameroonian authorities to drop a criminal trespass inquiry into the case and immediately return the confiscated gear.

For press-freedom advocates, the episode is symptomatic of a broader pattern: intimidation that chills reporting and corrodes public access to information.

The detained team included three reporters working for the Associated Press — correspondent Nalova Akua, photographer Angel Ngwe and videographer Arnold Ndal — and freelance reporter Randy Joe Sa'ah, who accompanied Joseph Awah Fru, a lawyer representing several recently deported migrants.

The journalists were on assignment to document a sensitive development; the clandestine deportation of African migrants from the United States, a story with international resonance and local repercussions.

According to Fru, the presence of unknown people photographing the reception center alarmed its director, who scrutinized the footage, interrogated the journalists and phoned the judicial police.

About a dozen officers arrived, confiscated equipment and escorted the journalists to the judicial police headquarters. All five were questioned individually.

Ngwe and Ndal were placed with other male detainees in a communal cell; Akua and Sa'ah remained in interrogation rooms.

None were charged during their detention, but their devices remain in police custody. Fru and rights groups warn that the police frequently rummage through confiscated devices, a practice that can expose confidential sources and subject journalists to fabricated charges.

The threats reportedly made during questioning underline the stakes. Sa'ah says he and Ngwe were told they would be “crushed,” while Ngwe was allegedly warned she could “disappear without a trace.”

Such language is chilling in a country repeatedly singled out for hostile treatment of the press. Cameroon's record on press

freedom is poor; journalists are regularly intimidated, arrested or assaulted, and reporting on politically sensitive topics - national security, migration, corruption, is especially perilous.

CPJ Africa Director Angela Quintal framed the incident in stark terms; authorities must stop harassing journalists and respect the public's right to be informed.

Her office warned of the obvious next steps the police might take if they remain in possession of the journalists' devices - accessing private material, identifying and retaliating against anonymous sources, or manufacturing evidence to sustain criminal prosecutions.

For reporters working on migration and other contentious beats, the protection of sources is not a technicality; it is the difference between being able to tell difficult stories and being silenced by fear.

The Cameroonian government has been reticent. René Emmanuel Sadi, minister of communication and government spokesman, declined to comment, saying he did not yet have details.

CPJ's requests for comment from the police and the AP went unanswered. The silence — official and otherwise — compounds the uncertainty surrounding the incident and fuels concerns of impunity.

This case exposes a fault line between the formal obligations of state actors to protect civil liberties and an informal security culture that frequently treats reporters as suspects rather than civic actors.

When journalists are investigating matters with cross-border implications, such as deportation operations, the potential diplomatic and political embarrassment for authorities may increase the incentive to intimidate.

Yet the longer-term cost of such tactics is clear: a civic sphere deprived of independent reporting, where abuses can persist unreported and public trust erodes.

International organizations and media houses can apply pressure, but the decisive variable remains domestic political will.

Restoring confidence requires more than returning seized equipment and dropping charges; it demands accountability for threats, transparent procedures for handling press complaints, and genuine protections for confidential sources.

Without that, the detention in Yaoundé will be remembered not as an isolated incident but as another illustration of how fragile journalism has become in Cameroon — and how high the price is for telling uncomfortable truths. ■

Mantuli Resort fences off Ngezi Forest

By The AfriFiles REPORTER

THE construction of the perimeter wall around the proposed Mantuli Luxury Eco Resort within Ngezi Forest Reserve in Pemba is now well underway.

The Zanzibar Investment Promotion Authority (ZIPA) says the project has paperwork in place, but the Department of Forestry's representative had no proper mandate to approve selling off large parts of this biodiversity jewel.

The investor is ostensibly not even following own planning map and building the wall in a different location.

As a result, access to the forest is effectively blocked; only narrow, informal footpaths remain for community members and forestry staff to reach the forest and beach landings. Pemba's treasured forest and tourist asset is being cut off by this development.

Two recent meetings attended by ZIPA outlined the Department of Forestry's proposal to upgrade the Nature Forest Reserve into a National Park to boost tourism on Pemba, and suggested zoning the area into tourism and conservation sections.

Yet, ZIPA has taken no action to halt the ongoing construction, even temporarily. Over the last three weeks, Department of Forestry officers on Pemba have told WIPI Group staff that their activities are causing major inconvenience and blocking access to a tourism promotion centre.

Construction of the perimeter fence, which cuts through parts of Ngezi-Vumawimbi forest reserve and the Makangale rubber farm, is already disrupting officials and Konde residents.

Local people are speaking out in public; they do not want the wall, they do not want the hotel, and they say they have not been given clear information about what is happening in their village.

Residents who depend on beach landings for fishing and on guiding tourists through the forest report their livelihoods are being undermined.

Attempts to discuss the matter and reach a fair solution are failing because ZIPA and the investor are not cooperating or answering queries. ZIPA sends representatives to meetings and offer promises, but policies remain unchanged.

In the past, Saleh Saad Mohammed, ZIPA Executive Director, and Konde representative, Zawadi Amour Nassor defended the project as part of the government's push to improve Pemba's infrastructure and expand tourism.

"We must work hand in hand with the private sector to ensure construction of world-class hotels, restaurants and shops continues faster, especially for Pemba," Mohammed said at an investment conference.

Tourism is important, but it must be planned with clear involvement of local communities and forestry stakeholders, otherwise it will fail.

Although, Nassor said consultations were held through public rallies earlier this year to explain the project's benefits, some local people, in meetings and surveys, say they were largely unaware of the project now blocking their access and impacting their businesses.

They fear that after the initial construction jobs end, hotels will be staffed by outsiders and local benefits will vanish.

Local residents are supported by environmental activists, scientists and some foreign embassies who warn the development will consume over 20 percent of the forest reserve.

A group of 14 international researchers urged authorities to move the Mantuli project to a different site that would not damage fragile ecosystems. In an open letter published in science, they warned the U\$8 million hotel will harm both nature and local



Construction of the hotel going on. Photo: Our Photographer

lives.

The planned resort is promoted as an eco-resort, yet it threatens ecosystems and unique species. The complex would remove roughly 23% of tall, mature closed-canopy trees in Ngezi-Vumawimbi and destroy a stand of *Intsia bijuga*, a species once thought extinct on Pemba.

Endemic orchids and at least three *Sansevieria* species would be lost, and vulnerable animals such as Pemba flying foxes, Pemba scops owls and Pemba pigeons would be at risk.

Pemba's source of pride is being altered by investors operating behind ZIPA, who rarely answer questions or involve local communities.

Ngezi, a flagship natural area, must be preserved. WIPI construction should stop immediately to allow meaningful talks and find a path that benefits all Pembroans. ■



East Africa turns up the heat



Raila Odinga Stadium -Kenya

By The AfriFiles REPORTER

EAST Africa laces up for a shot at hosting the African Cup of Nations, with Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania promising electric atmospheres and passionate crowds.

But they face a sprint against the clock to tighten upgrades, sharpen logistics and meet CAF's technical standards if they want to deliver a world-class tournament.

All three countries possess national stadiums with renovation potential. Kenya's Moi International Sports Centre (Kasarani) and Nyayo Stadium have hosted major fixtures but need upgrades to seating, VIP areas, player facilities and broadcast infrastructure (cameral positions, commentary boxes).

Uganda's Mandela National Stadium (Namboole) is the obvious flagship but requires improvements in turf quality, flood-lighting, and media facilities.

Tanzania's Benjamin Mkapa National Stadium and the new National Stadiums in Dar es Salaam, Zanzibar and Arusha, are comparatively modern, though maintenance, pitch standards and VAR-ready technical rooms must be ensured.

CAF's checklist extends beyond capacity; pitch quality, drainage, lighting lux levels, spectator segregation, accessible seating, broadcast and VAR facilities, doping and medical rooms.

On these technical items, progress is uneven — Tanzania currently scores higher on modern stadium fabric, Kenya has strong renovation plans but slower delivery, and Uganda needs concentrated upgrades to meet international broadcast and VAR standards.

Transport and connectivity

Air access is acceptable regionally; international airports in Nairobi, Entebbe and Dar es Salaam provide direct flights across Africa and to some global hubs. However, internal transport links to stadiums and team bases present some challenges.

Nairobi and Dar es Salaam face urban congestion that could impede matchday flows unless traffic management and dedicated lanes are implemented.

Uganda benefits from relatively short distances between Entebbe and Kampala but road quality to provincial venues can be weak.

Rail and coach capacity upgrades, reliable shuttle services, and clear logistics plans will be essential.



Namboole Stadium -Uganda

Lodging, training facilities

Major cities in all three countries offer international hotels and sufficient room inventories for group-stage needs, but peak demand during Afcon will strain mid-tier and budget options.

Investment in training complexes and UEFA/CAF-standard practice pitches is uneven; Tanzania and Kenya have private sports academies and hotel-based facilities, Uganda has fewer ready-made high-standard camps.

Ensuring secure, FIFA/CAF-approved training venues near team hotels is a deliverable that organizers can accomplish with modest lead time if procurement is efficient.

Security and medical facilities

Security planning is strong on paper, with experience from regional tournaments and high-profile events.

Challenges are coordination across agencies, crowd control training, emergency medical response and trauma care near venues.

Strengthening rapid-response ambulance coverage, on-site emergency rooms, and accredited anti-doping and medical teams must be prioritized.

Telecoms and fan experience

High-definition broadcasting, reliable power, robust fibre and 4G/5G coverage are non-negotiable.

Urban centres already have decent telecom infrastructure, but stadiums must have redundant power supplies and dedicated broadcast connectivity.

Fan zones, signage, ticketing systems and accessible facilities must be planned to international expectations to prevent negative narratives.

Governance and funding

The critical variable is governance; clear procurement, transparent contracting, realistic timelines and contingency funds.

Delays in stadium rehabilitation often stem from bureaucratic bottlenecks and funding gaps.

Public-private partnerships and CAF/FIFA facility grants can close financing gaps, but only with strong project management and independent oversight.

Risk assessment, mitigation

Key risks include budget overruns, project delays, match-day transport congestion, and inconsistent pitch quality.

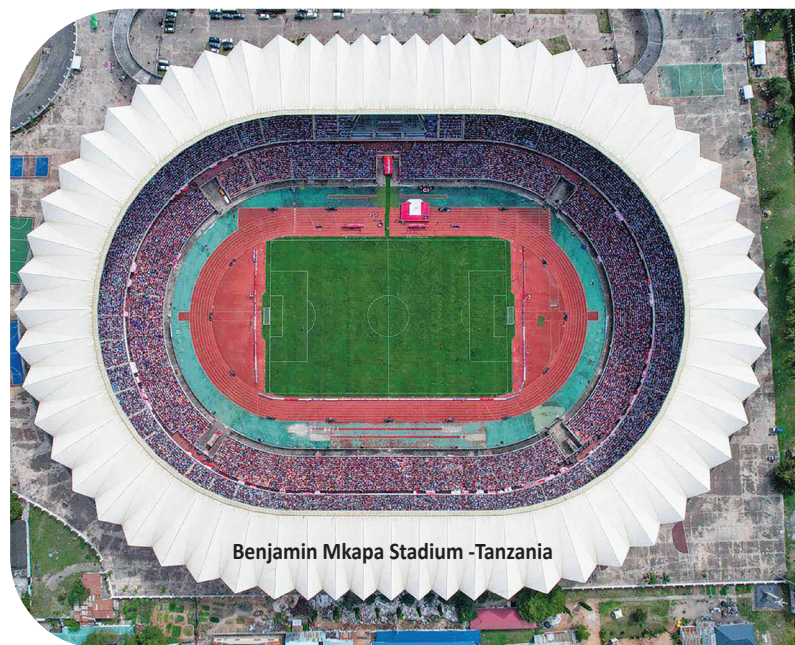
Mitigation; stage-wise delivery with independent technical audits, trial events to stress-test operations, phased upgrades prioritizing CAF requirements, and coordinated stakeholder command centers during the tournament.

Realistic optimism

Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania are not starting from zero; they have stadiums, airports, hotels and event-hosting experience.

However, skeptics are justified in flagging gaps. Success depends on disciplined project timelines, focused upgrades on CAF's technical list; pitch, lighting, VAR and broadcast, robust transport and security planning, and transparent governance.

With concentrated political will, targeted investment and rigorous operational testing, East Africa can host Afcon to international standards — but there is little room for complacency. ■



Benjamin Mkapa Stadium -Tanzania

Dorothy: Her voice, our resistance



By The AfriFiles REPORTER

DOROTHY Masuka was more than a voice; she was a generational beacon whose music carried the truth of southern Africa's joys, sorrows and political urgencies. She died on February, 2019.

Born in Bulawayo on September 3, 1935, then Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), and raised in Johannesburg, Masuka rose from the vibrant streets and 'shebeens' where jazz and township rhythms converged to become one of the central figures of southern African popular music.

Her art fused the cosmopolitan pulse of jazz with the indigenous rhythm of Marabi and Kwela, producing a sound at once intimate and monumental—rhythmic, lyrical and resolute.

Masuka's career began in the 1950s, a golden yet fraught era for South African culture. As apartheid tightened its grip, her songs provided both solace and dissent.

Early recordings showcased a supple, warm contralto that could cradle a love ballad and then harden into a pointed political commentary.

She composed and popularized songs that became anthems across townships and beyond, crafting narratives that were as much social reportage as they were art.

Her earliest hits captured everyday life; later works articulated the rising impatience and resistance among black South Africans.

She wrote with a storyteller's eye, attentive to detail, to humor, to pathos, and with a songwriter's conviction that melody could carry message.

Masuka's friendship and collaborations with other greats; most notably Miriam Makeba and Hugh Masekela, positioned her at the heart of a cultural movement that transcended national borders.

Yet, Masuka also stood apart for the fearless content of some of her songs. During a period when the South African state monitored and censored creative expression, a number of her politically charged pieces drew official ire.

One composition celebrating the Congolese independence leader Patrice Lumumba led to a public controversy that contributed to her effective exile in the 1960s.

She spent years abroad, living and performing in countries across the continent and beyond, including Zambia and Zambia's cultural circles, where her music continued to resonate and evolve.

Exile sharpened her perspective; distance deepened her commitment.

Throughout more than six decades of artistic activity, Masuka demonstrated remarkable adaptability. She moved between languages, singing in Zulu, Xhosa, Ndebele, Shona, Kiswahili and English—reaching listeners from disparate communities while refusing to dilute her message.

Her repertoire ranged from lilting love songs and nostalgic laments to trenchant social critiques; always, the line between artistry and activism was porous.

In later years, Masuka's songs were reclaimed by new generations of artists and reissued for audiences worldwide, who discovered in her voice a history both musical and moral.

Recognition came, though often belatedly. She received honors that acknowledged not just longevity but the cultural and political weight of her work, and she remained a mentor and an emblem for younger musicians.

Audiences remembering her live performances recall a performer who could disarm with a smile and then, without theatricality, deliver a phrase that lodged in the memory, a testament to the power of disciplined phrasing and heartfelt intent.

Dorothy Masuka's legacy is manifold. She helped expand the possibilities of southern African popular music, demonstrating that the jazz idiom could be used to reflect local experiences and political realities.

She helped internationalize South African culture, showing global audiences the depth and sophistication of its musical traditions.

And she stood, in life and in song, for a persistent belief that artists have a duty to speak to their times.

When she passed in Johannesburg in 2019, tributes poured in from across the continent and around the world.

Musicians, scholars and ordinary listeners invoked not only the records and performances but the larger moral architecture of her career; courage, creativity and compassion.

To hear Dorothy Masuka today is to hear history without nostalgia, a living archive of resistance and tenderness.

Her songs continue to be played, sampled, taught and sung, ensuring that her voice still walks with those who seek beauty and justice in equal measure. ■



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