

African journalism. May 30 2020

ISSUE
NO. 7

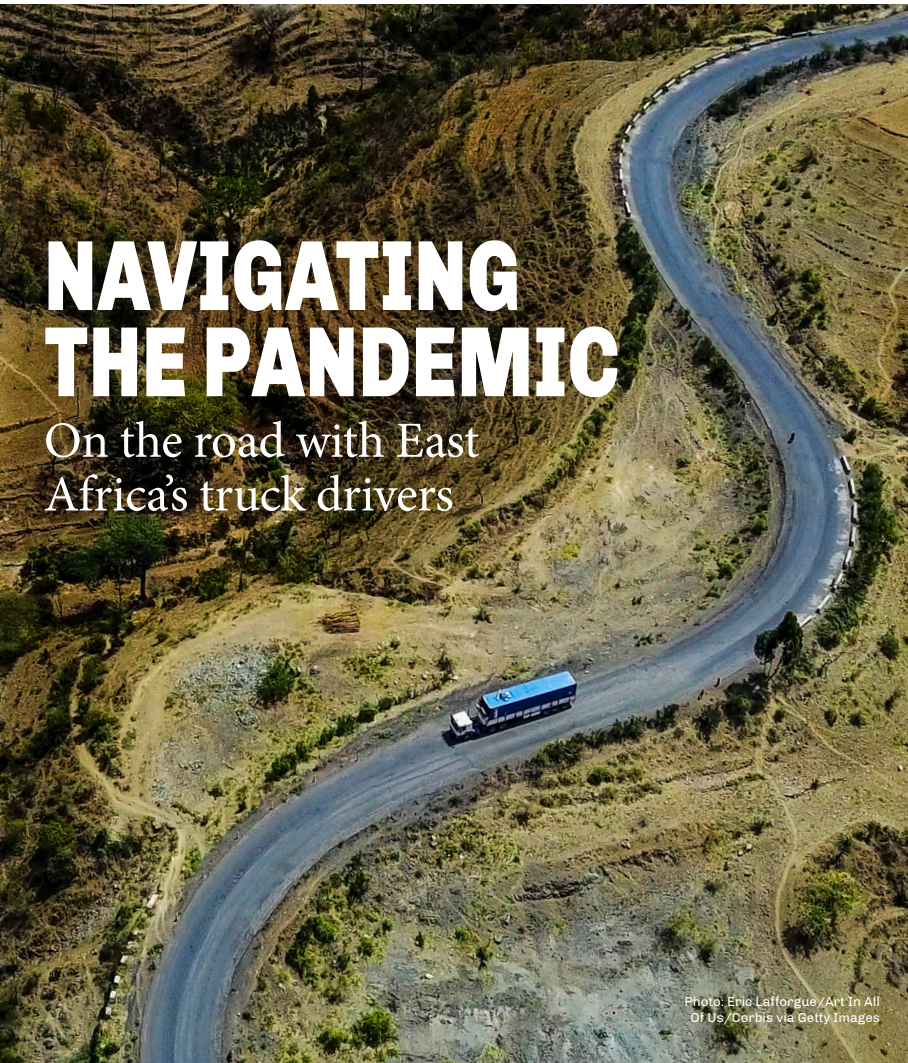
The Continent

with Mail & Guardian

NAVIGATING THE PANDEMIC

On the road with East
Africa's truck drivers

Photo: Epic Lafforgue/Art In All
Of Us/Corbis via Getty Images



Highway heroes

Truck-driving can be a lonely, dangerous profession. Drivers must navigate long hours and bad roads; spending weeks and sometimes months away from their families. And they must stay vigilant at all times, safeguarding their precious cargo from thieves and overzealous customs agents.

Without truck drivers, our lives would look very different. Most countries in Africa rely on trucks to bring in and distribute essential supplies: everything from food and medicine to petrol and sometimes even water comes in via road. And if we want to sell anything, to each other or to the outside world, that too must at some point be transported in the back of a truck.

Major roads are sometimes called arteries, and the metaphor is apt: highways and the tens of thousands of trucks that ply them are the lifeblood of our economies.

But as countries close their borders

due to the coronavirus pandemic, work has become even more difficult for truck drivers (see our cover story on page 13). Not only are they subject to lengthy, confusing delays, but they are on the receiving end of insults and hostility from people who believe that they are spreading the virus.

Without truck drivers, our lives would look very different

There's an inherent risk, of course: when people move, so does the virus. But if we want to keep our markets supplied and our petrol stations open, then it is a risk we have no choice but to take.

Instead of blaming truck drivers, we should be celebrating them. They are performing an essential service, and they are taking immense personal risks to keep our supply chains intact. ■

Share real news

The Continent is free to read, and free to share. We have no delivery trucks or roadside newspaper traders: we rely on you, our readers, to disseminate our newspaper. If you like our journalism, please share it with your friends and family - not indiscriminately, but with people and networks who you think might value the work that we do.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40
41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50

The 100 most trusted brands in Africa:

This week, Brand Africa released its annual survey of the most trusted brands on the continent, based on surveys of consumers in 27 countries. Together, these countries represent about 80% of Africa's population and GDP. How many African brands can you spot? Not enough, that's for sure. MTN emerged as the most trusted African brand, with The Dangote Group not far behind.

"African brands have an important role in helping to build the image, competitiveness and transforming the continent's promise into a real change. It's concerning that in the 10 years since the triumphant FIFA World Cup in South Africa which globally highlighted the promise and capability of Africa, and despite the vibrant entrepreneurial environment, Africa is not creating more competitive brands to meet the needs of its growing consumer market," said Thebe Ikalafeng, Brand Africa's chairman.

51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60
61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70
71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80
81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90
91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100

Inside:

- **COVER:** Despite everything, drivers keep on trucking
- **Missing in action:** Where is South Africa's deputy president? (p9)
- **Movie review:** The Zimbabwean rom-com taking Netflix by storm (p11)
- **The big pan-African quiz:** how well do you know your continent? (p17)
- **Miriam Makeba** on hosting Stevie Wonder, and an unexploded hand grenade (p18)
- **Investigation:** Solving the mystery of the missing \$640,000 (p24)

In the headlines this week

Samira Sawlani

Burundi

Ruling party candidate General Evariste Ndayishimiye has been named winner of Burundi's general elections, surprising precisely no one.

Citing irregularities, opposition candidates are mounting a court challenge to overturn the results, but it's unlikely anyone is holding their breath on that.

Hopefully not incumbent President Pierre Nkurunziza's wife, Denise, anyway. After the government declared Burundians were beloved of God and need not fear the coronavirus, she had to be evacuated to Nairobi, reportedly for Covid-19 treatment. Awkward. Still, we wish the first lady and all Covid-19 patients a speedy recovery.

DR Congo

One minute the Democratic Republic of Congo's national assembly was debating the removal of the First Vice-President Jean Marc Kabund, the next punches were being thrown by men in suits. This fight was *not* socially distanced.

Here's a thought: how about redirecting political predilections for pugilism into a defence of the people? This week at least 40 people were killed in Ituri Province after an attack by a rebel group. According to Unicef, rebel

attacks earlier in May led to more than 200,000 people being displaced, 150 schools damaged and 22 health centres destroyed.

Malawi and Zimbabwe

Down south things are going even further south, it seems. Malawi has reported that more than 400 people recently repatriated from South Africa and elsewhere have "escaped" quarantine in Blantyre. And in Zimbabwe police say they are "hunting down" 100 people who have left isolation facilities.

Perhaps the people they seek might have returned if they were "patients" being "traced" instead of "escapees" being "hunted". Little wonder they're "on the run".

Tanzania

President John Magufuli has announced the reopening of universities and the market for tourism, alongside a resumption of sporting events. One of the only things he isn't opening is a window into the country's Covid-19 reality: the government hasn't released any figures for over a month.

Also open is comedian Idris Sultan's jail cell door, now that he has been released on bail after being charged with failing to register a sim card previously



Face swap: Comedian Idris Sultan (left) controversially photo-shopped President Magufuli's face onto his own body (right). (Photo: supplied)

used by someone else.

Sultan was initially arrested on charges of cyberbullying, of all things, after sharing a video of himself laughing at an old photo of the president. In October last year he faced cybercrime and impersonation charges after posting a “face swap” with Magufuli on social media.

The president has now endorsed the wearing of face masks, which may prove useful to both him and Sultan in future: for Magufuli, they make face swaps irrelevant; for the comedian, they make it hard for anyone to prove you were laughing at them.

Ethiopia

Reconciled with neighbours: Tick. Mediated in a conflict: Tick. Won a Nobel Prize: Tick. Investigated allegations of abuse by state security? Hmm.

A new Amnesty International report says that in 2019, security forces detained thousands of people, destroyed

homes and in some cases visited violence and death upon minority groups in Amhara and Oromia. We shall have to see whether Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed responds to calls for justice with a tick – or an attack.

Guinea

The world had the opportunity to see some of the continent's greatest musical talents in a virtual concert held to mark Africa Day on May 25 and raise awareness about Covid-19.

Angelique Kidjo, Wizkid, Fally Ipupa, Salif Keita, and Yossou N'dour were among the stars who lit up our screens and reminded the world of the wealth of our talent.

For all this wealth, we are poorer for the loss of Mory Kanté, the Guinean singer and songwriter behind hits like *Yé ké yé ké* and *Tama*. The esteemed musician sadly passed away this week as a result of chronic health issues, but his legacy and his music live on. ■

THIS IS AN EXPERIMENT.

The Continent is a new way of delivering news. It is the first-ever weekly newspaper designed to be read and shared on WhatsApp. The newspaper showcases the best journalism from all around Africa. But for this experiment to succeed, we need your help.



STEP 1: SUBSCRIBE

Sign up on email or WhatsApp and we will deliver your free copy every Saturday. Send an email to TheContinent@mg.co.za with 'SUBSCRIBE' in the subject box or WhatsApp +27 73 805 6068 saying 'NEWS'.



STEP 2: SHARE

Send *The Continent* to your friends, family and colleagues. Not indiscriminately, but only with people who you think will appreciate our journalism.



Share real news.

The Continent
with Mail & Guardian

The Week in Numbers

\$597.7-billion

The total value of Africa's top 250 companies, according to *African Business Magazine's* annual survey. That's down from \$748.20-billion last year. The magazine attributes the decline to the economic impact of the pandemic. There are 100 South African companies in the top 250.



(Photo: Kevin Lamarque for Reuters)

700

The estimated number of generals in South Sudan. "Nationally, that's about three times as many generals as physicians," claimed The Sentry, a research and advocacy group, in a report released this week.

1 000

The number of ventilators that US President Donald Trump claimed to have sent to Nigeria last week. Nigeria's information minister Lai Mohamed said that no ventilators have arrived.

10

The number of elephants that have been shot in the past month by wildlife authorities in Namibia. The cull was ordered after the animals moved into farming areas, destroying crops during harvest season.

26 000

The number of international peacekeepers in Darfur. The United Nations and the African Union are considering withdrawing the entire peacekeeping mission this year, with support from Sudan's government, but activists warn that their absence could lead to renewed conflict.

0.1%

The percentage of Africa's population that has been tested for Covid-19, according to the Africa Centres for Disease Control. This compares unfavourably with higher-income countries in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, where the percentage is 2.3%.

Cameroon

Masking Cameroon's political problems

Amindeh Blaise Atabong

Last Saturday, three volunteers began to distribute free face masks and hand sanitisers to people in Sangmélima, a small town in southern Cameroon.

Shortly afterwards, they were arrested.

The volunteers belong to the Survie-Cameroon-Survival Initiative, a fundraising group established to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. It has so far raised at least three-quarters of a million euro.

But the initiative has been outlawed by President Paul Biya's government, which has accused it of fundraising illegally. All of its accounts have been frozen. At least six other volunteers have also been arrested. A donation of 16,000 masks and 950 test kits that had been organised by the initiative was rejected by the government.

Two senior officials connected

with the initiative are currently being investigated by judicial officers for financial crimes. The government has accused the initiative of fundraising illegally.

But analysts suspect that the government may have another reason for shutting the group down. It was founded by Maurice Kamto, the main opposition leader and a vocal critic of President Paul Biya.

Atia Tilarious Azohnwi, a Cameroonian political analyst at the University of Istanbul, said that both the government and the opposition are politicising the virus. "After Covid-19 is contained, the political class will have many other ways to prove themselves and to score political points," he said.

As of 29 May, Cameroon had confirmed 5,436 cases of Covid-19, including 175 deaths.

Christian Penda Ekoka, a close Kamto ally and the coordinator of the initiative – and one of the officials under investigation for financial crimes – told the *Mail & Guardian*: "Our compatriots are facing difficulties amid the coronavirus. We are not going to abandon them. We are going on with the distributing of the materials and are planning to go up north." ■

South Africa



Has anyone seen the deputy president recently?

Paddy Harper, Athandiwe Saba and Sabelo Skiti

South Africa's President Cyril Ramaphosa has been the very visible face of the country's response to the coronavirus pandemic. But his deputy has barely been seen in public for the last three months, and South Africans are wondering: Where, exactly, is Deputy President David Mabuza?

When asked for the deputy president's schedule for the past three months,

spokesperson Matshepo Seedat said that Mabuza has attended every meeting of the National Coronavirus Command Council and every cabinet meeting. His social media accounts have also been active.

But his lack of public-facing engagements has led some within the party to question his leadership – and potentially his position. Insiders at different levels of the African National Congress told the *Mail & Guardian* that the deputy president is likely to face a strong challenge for the number two spot at the next ruling party elective conference in 2022.

Two of the main contenders for Mabuza's position are the health minister, Zweli Mkhize, and the minister for cooperative governance, Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, both of whom have been at the forefront of the Covid-19 response.

"This pandemic was an opportunity for [Mabuza] to remake himself as someone who can lead the country. Instead, he has opened the gates for Zweli and Nkosazana and they are doing very well," said one high-level source.

Although the pandemic has spelled trouble for Mabuza, it appears to have had the opposite impact on his boss. Ramaphosa's position looks more secure than ever, with the party eager to ensure continuity in the face of the crisis. ■

South Sudan

Most of the cabinet has Covid-19. How did that happen?

David Mono Danga

South Sudan's information minister, Michael Makuei, contracted Covid-19 while he was on the country's high-level task force to combat the virus. He was not the only one.

Almost the entire task force became infected, including 10 cabinet ministers and Vice-President Riek Machar.

"I contracted the virus in the course of my duty. We contracted it as members of the high-level task committee, that's why all the members are positive," Makuei told *The Continent*.

Another member of the task force, Dr Richard Lako – director of policy planning, budget and research in the health ministry – said that the source of infection may have been a single funeral attended by several committee members.

"They could also get it from their own homes, all of them of course

have been intermingling with so many people. Some of them attended the funeral of other people like the Abyei major who passed away. Some of them attended that funeral," said Lako.

The major in question died of Covid-19, but this diagnosis was only confirmed after the funeral in Juba.

The task force was dissolved after the spate of infections. Shortly after it was reconstituted, with different personnel, its new chair – Fifth Vice President Hussein Abdelbagi – announced that he too was infected.

Information minister Makuei is taking all precautions to ensure that he does not infect his family, friends or loved ones. "I am completely isolated from them. I have an isolated sitting room which I have turned into my quarantine. They serve me only when one person is assigned to me, who comes in with gloves in hand and a mask," he said.

South Sudan has so far confirmed 994 cases of Covid-19, with 10 deaths and six recoveries.

President Salva Kiir warned in a speech on Monday that the pandemic would overwhelm South Sudan's precarious health system if the situation gets any worse, and used the infections of the vice-president and ministers on the task force to underscore just how serious a threat it posed. ■

Cook Off: A recipe for success

Despite having global appeal, *Cook Off* is undeniably African — without the stereotypes.

Samira Sawlani

On June 1, the romantic comedy *Cook Off* is set to premiere on Netflix, the first film from Zimbabwe to achieve this feat.

The film was first shown at the Rotterdam International Film Festival in 2018, and has received much critical acclaim. Watch it once, and you'll understand why.

Set in Budiriro, Harare, *Cook Off* tells the story of Anesu, a single mother and a talented cook who is entered into a cooking competition by her grandmother and son, Tapiwa. Shy and lacking confidence in her skills, our leading lady steps up to the plate (no pun intended) and takes up the opportunity to change her life.

Although there are many laugh-out-loud moments and heart-stealing scenes between her and fellow contestant Prince, one of the most powerful aspects of *Cook Off* is how women are so central to the story: Anesu's grandmother's faith in her granddaughter, her strained relationship with her mother, the ride-or-die that is her best friend Charmaine, and her unrelenting boss.

Cook Off does not feature tiresome "African stereotypes" and it is clear that



although this is a film made for a global audience, it is very much a Zimbabwean creation.

The film captures minor details of everyday life which many people all over the world will be able to identify with: the slightly gossipy women discussing neighbourhood affairs; the young men who eat at roadside restaurants and pay "compliments" to women and the



Ready, steady, cook:
Cook Off was filmed in late 2017, in the last days of Robert Mugabe's rule in Zimbabwe (Photos: Anel Wessels)

hard-to-please judges on cooking reality shows.

The fully Zimbabwean soundtrack is a treat. Ryan Koriya, who composed the score, deserves awards for it, Sebastian Lallemand's cinematography is mesmerising, as is Tomas Brickhill's screenplay.

Above all, what really stands out about the film is the wealth of talent in the cast.

Tendaishe Chitima plays the role of Anesu to perfection, you can't help but be drawn into every emotion portrayed and the chemistry between Chitima and Tehn Diamond, who plays potential beau Prince, is like alchemy, just the glances between them (and his dimples)

will have the most hopeless of romantics sighing in admiration.

Playing the role of Anesu's son Tapiwa, Eugene Zimbudzi is an absolute scene-stealer — if you only need one reason to watch this film, then he is it, followed closely by legendary actress Jesese Mungoshi who plays Gogo.

Fungayi Majaya excels as our villain, and Charmaine Mujeri, who plays the role of Charmaine, is not only a delight to watch, but will have you wishing you had your very own Charmaine.

When it comes to creating a hit, all those involved in the making of *Cook Off* have certainly got the recipe right. ■

Cook Off will be available to stream on Netflix on June 1.

Navigating the pandemic

In East Africa, truck drivers are being attacked, robbed and used as diplomatic footballs. But without them our markets would be empty.

Simon Mkina in Dar es Salaam, Godfrey Kimono in Kampala and David Mono Danga in Juba



Hard borders: Trucks entering Uganda from Kenya at the Malaba border post can wait for days while drivers are tested for Covid-19
(Photo: Brian Ongoro for AFP)

Khamis Makaranga did not intend to cause a diplomatic incident. He just wanted to deliver the tomatoes in the back of his truck.

Makaranga plies the highway between Dar es Salaam and Nairobi. Those tomatoes, from Tanzania's central Iringa region, were destined for a market in Kenya's capital city. They never arrived.

When he got to the Namanga border post, Makaranga saw hundreds of trucks waiting to cross into Kenya. Thanks to new Covid-19 restrictions, the backlog was even bigger than usual. Every truck driver entering the country is being tested by Kenyan authorities, adding days to their journeys.

Makaranga was tested for the coronavirus with a cotton swab pushed to the back of his throat. Last week, his result came back: he was positive. “I didn’t agree with the medical result from the Kenyans,” he tells the *Mail & Guardian*, as he didn’t show any symptoms. In total, 19 Tanzanian truck drivers tested positive, and Kenya would not allow them in.

Makaranga and other drivers complained to the Arusha regional commissioner, Mrisho Gambo, who gave an explosive press conference on May 20. Gambo said a Tanzanian laboratory had tested the drivers, and all came back negative. He accused Kenya of deliberately falsifying the results in order to sabotage Tanzania’s tourism industry.

Within hours, a furious Kenya had shut its land border, with Tanzania threatening to follow suit. It took personal interventions from President Uhuru Kenyatta and President John Magufuli to defuse the tensions — but not before Makaranga’s tomatoes had turned rotten in the back of his truck.

The road is long and full of terrors

Most countries have shut down their borders in an attempt to contain the spread of the coronavirus. But trucks and truck drivers are a special case: they need to move between countries to deliver essential goods like food, petrol and cleaning products. Without them, supermarket shelves would be empty and market stalls would have little to sell.

This is especially true for landlocked countries in East Africa. Goods arrive at the ports of Dar es Salaam and Mombasa, and from there an army of trucks moves them along more than 5,000km of sprawling highways. These roads connect Tanzania and Kenya with Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Rwanda, South Sudan, Sudan, Uganda and Zambia.

Even in more normal times, truck drivers do not have it easy. The hours are long and the challenges many, Anthony Wasilwa tells the *M&G* from a truck compound in Kampala. As a truck driver from Kenya, he spends most of the month away from his wife and five children.

His usual route takes him from Mombasa to Kampala, passing through Nairobi, Nakuru, Eldoret, Busitema, Musowa, Bugiri Iganga, Jinja and Mukono along the way. Traffic jams are a constant headache, as are the thieves who steal cargo or fuel if he does not pay attention.

Whenever possible, he parks his truck in government-run parking yards overnight instead of roadside truck stops, where prostitution and drug use is rife. “A lot of the old-time drivers, even some of the new guys, are a little disgusting and the truck stops can smell like urine and drugs.”



**Mobile home:
The cab of
Anthony
Wasilwa's truck,
a Beiben NG80,
doubles as his
bedroom and
his kitchen
when he's on
the road (Photo:
Godfrey Kimono)**

Covid-19 has made things much harder. It now takes three to four days to cross into Uganda at the Malaba border post instead of three to four hours, thanks to screening measures. The journey from Mombasa to Kampala now takes 12 days instead of seven.

Wasilwa worries that, as truck drivers wait, they may spread the disease into the community — and to other truckers. So he has taken his own protective measures. He installed a 5kg gas cylinder and a hot plate in the cab of his truck, so he can cook all his own food, and he has a supply of groceries with him. There is a jerrycan of sanitiser by his side, and he wears gloves and a face mask when interacting with others.

“I am a sole bread earner for the family, so I have to avoid interacting with my fellow truckers,” Wasilwa says. This makes his journey lonely and boring – when it isn’t dangerous. “You cannot stop anywhere,” he says. “People point fingers and threaten to stone your truck for fear of spreading Covid-19 to them.”

‘Stopping cargo is suicidal’

There is no doubt the virus can travel along the same transnational networks used to distribute goods. It’s happened before: trucking corridors have long been identified as a major vector for HIV/Aids.

Last month, Uganda said up to half of new Covid-19 cases in the country came from infected truck drivers. But in a public address, President Yoweri Museveni stressed that these same drivers were vital to the country’s economy, and should not be harassed.

“I appeal to Ugandans to swallow your anger and employ amagezi [wisdom],” he said. “Stopping cargo is ... suicidal because if we stop cargo, how will our coffee and cotton, tea, milk, cement from the factories, and



On the frontline: The delivery of goods across East Africa is dependent on the movement of trucks like these, pictured in a compound in Juba, South Sudan (Photo: David Mono Danga)

food move?”

Nonetheless, truckers have reported a sharp rise in tensions in the towns they pass through. Many, like Wasilwa, refuse to leave their cabs.

“We can’t socialise or interact with members of the local communities because people fear us,” says Isaac Lumago, a driver on the Mombasa-Juba route. “It makes us fear for our lives, too.”

Lumago and other drivers interviewed by the *M&G* in Juba in South Sudan are scared of contracting the virus — and if they were to contract it, they are not sure they would receive proper medical attention. South Sudan does not provide support to drivers who test positive and need to self-isolate.

Driving itself has become more dangerous. “Turn-boys” — backup drivers who travel along on long trips — are being denied entry at South Sudan’s border with Uganda. With just a single exhausted driver at the wheel, the risk of accidents soars.

There are other dangers on the road. From the Ugandan border to Juba, a distance of just 200km, at least 10 illegal checkpoints have been set up. These are usually manned by soldiers — or thieves in soldiers’ uniforms — who demand hefty bribes.

“They will either beat you or take all the money your boss gave you for the whole trip ... you can lose your job, too, if your bosses think you stole the money,” says Simon Jamus.

Jamus and his fellow drivers don’t see things improving any time soon. “It should not be truck drivers who are blamed for carrying the disease,” said Amule Mustafa, another Juba-based driver. “Even us, we contract the virus by mistake like anyone. And we are afraid.” ■

Additional reporting and editing by Simon Allison.

SO, YOU THINK YOU'RE A REAL PAN-AFRICAN?

Take this quiz to find out
how well you really know
our continent

Photo: Kelly Sikkema/Unsplash

- 1.** The Basilica of Our Lady of Peace, in Yamoussoukro Diocese, is the largest church in the world, according to the Guinness Book of Records. What country is it in?
- 2.** What is Nigeria's national men's soccer team known as?
- 3.** Which country is known as the Mountain Kingdom?
- 4.** The Zambezi River flows into which ocean?
- 5.** What was the African Union known as before 2002?
- 6.** What is the capital of Burkina Faso?
- 7.** Which country hosts French,

American and Chinese military bases?

- 8.** What is Somalia's currency?
- 9.** 'Lord of All the Beasts of the Earth and Fishes of the Seas and Conqueror of the British Empire in Africa in General and Uganda in Particular' formed part of the official title of which president?
- 10.** The governor of Kisumu, in Kenya, is the father of which Hollywood actress?
- 11.** How many official languages are recognised in South Africa?
- 12.** Who was the first president of independent Ghana?

How did I do?

WhatsApp 'ANSWERS' to +27 73 805 6068 and we will send you the answers immediately.

0-4

"I think I need to start reading more newspapers."

5-8

"I can't wait to explore more of this continent."

9-12

"Pan-African is my official language."

“Miriam, age ain’t nothin’ but a number”

Miriam Makeba on hosting Stevie Wonder and an unexploded hand grenade

It’s 1977, and I’m in Nigeria for Festac, a festival of arts for black people from all over the world. Since I am African, they ask me to be a hostess. Stevie Wonder arrives, and I am asked to take care of him. Stevie remembers me from the Copacabana show of his when I gave him an African statue because I admired him. I admire him still, and he is quite a success. Stevie is looking like an African now, his hair all braided with beads. For the month, I am his guide. I will see that he has all he needs during his stay.

“Miriam,” he says, “I love you.”

“What? Stevie, I am old enough to be your mother.”

“Miriam, age ain’t nothin’ but a number.”

We all laugh and I go home thinking, “Age ain’t nothin’ but a number.” But age is other things, too. It is wisdom, if one has lived one’s life properly. It is experience and knowledge. And it is getting to know all the ways the world



Peerless: The late Miriam Makeba during a performance in Zurich in 1969 (Photo: Pfändler/RDB/ullstein bild via Getty Images)

turns, so that if you cannot turn the world the way you want, you can at least get out the way.

But what have I to tell Stevie about the ways of the world? He is on top of it. His album, *Songs in the Key of Life*, has been nominated for seven Grammy awards. But he doesn’t want to leave Festac to attend the Grammys in Los Angeles.



Second home: The legendary American singer-songwriter Stevie Wonder, pictured here at the 1977 Billboard Awards, loved Lagos so much he did not want to leave (Photo: Chris Walter for WireImage)

I am in my hotel room when we come up with an idea. Suppose I find a way to get a TV hookup here in Nigeria so he can give his acceptance speech in Africa and be seen in America live?

I go to the nation's ministry of information, and ask to arrange a satellite connection. "Festac is a festival of all black people around the world," I tell the officials. "But it's ignored by the world press. To get them to take

notice, we need a personality like Stevie Wonder, who is loved everywhere."

When the president enters the theatre, an assassin throws two hand grenades

It is agreed, and a link-up is made at the National Theatre. Other artists are performing right up to the time of the awards show, which we watch on monitors. Stevie wins his Grammys, and the people in the United States are impressed to see him saying his thank yous from the other side of the world. The setup is considered very innovative and daring. Stevie thanks me. I was glad to help, because he is one artist who gives of himself: not only for black causes, but causes for all people.

Festac is a lot of work, and I am tired when I return to Guinea. There is a ballet performance at the People's Palace, but I do not attend because I am sick. It is one time that I am thankful to be ill. When the president enters the theatre, an assassin throws two hand grenades at him. One goes off to the right and explodes, killing a man and wounding a woman. The second lands at the president's feet, but it does not explode. Several people are injured in the ensuing panic. But [President] Sékou Touré is all right. His luck is amazing. ■

This is an extract from Makeba: My Story, co-written with James Hall.



What it means to be kitoed in Nigeria

Homophobia in the digital space has violent real-world consequences for Nigeria's queer community

Vincent Desmond

Kevin, a 26-year-old lawyer in Abuja, describes himself as a late bloomer. “It took me a long time to come out to myself, then my friends. And even longer to have friends in the community. So that is probably why this happened to me.”

Last year, Kevin signed up to Grindr, the dating app. He started talking to someone on the app; after a few weeks, they made plans to meet up. Kevin's date invited him to a friend's house.

“I drove to his and met his friend –

who he told me was gay as well and so I felt comfortable with him. The friend took me inside and next thing I knew, my supposed date and another guy came out and started pushing me around calling me a lot of names. They had sticks but they didn't use it on me, thankfully. Just threats and kicks.”

Kevin's attackers forced him to transfer ₦80,000 (US\$205) to their account. He was relieved it was not worse.

Kevin had just been kitoed. “I'm

willing to bet anything that I'm not the first person they have done this to," he said. "They must have derived some pleasure in beating my gay ass but it was the money they were after. And they'll do it again to me and other queer men. It's a hustle. It's like fraud but directed at people in the LGBTQ+ community."

A kito is a person who pretends they are queer on dating apps. This is a ruse to extort or physically harm their date

No one is entirely sure where "kito" comes from, but the word has become entrenched in Nigerian internet slang: A kito is a person who pretends they are queer on social media and dating apps. After building an online rapport with someone, they make plans to hook up or go on a date. But this is just a ruse to extort or physically harm their date.

While this happens to all genders, it is gay and bisexual queer men who are targeted most frequently – sometimes with fatal consequences.

On March 10, a video started circulating online. It featured a man in south-eastern Nigeria who claimed to have kitoed and then killed a gay man. The killer defended his actions to the crowd, repeatedly pointing out that his victim was a homosexual – as if that justified the murder.

The crowd left the killer untouched.

This is in stark contrast to other videos

circulating online that show angry mobs beating queer Nigerians to within an inch of their life.

Online homophobia

Nigerian laws criminalise many aspects of queer life. This forced Nigeria's queer community to go online. Social media and the internet became places where queer people could connect with other queer people in relative safety. But as the LGBTQ+ community went digital, so too did the homophobes.

But the community is fighting back. Digital wars require digital weapons. When they can, queer Nigerians are posting photographs of kito attackers, as well as the locations of these attacks. This helps others to know when to steer clear. Kito Diaries is an online platform collates images, locations and stories from as many sources as possible, creating an online database of alleged Kito attackers.

Kito Diaries has saved many queer Nigerians from being kitoed. But it doesn't always work.

Kevin, the Abuja lawyer, said there were no pictures of his attacker on the site. He is nervous of connecting with anyone in the queer community – either online or in the real world.

"After my experience, I have no desire to get back out there in real life or via any of the apps." Kevin said. "I want to. I want to make more queer friends and go for hookups and find love and all that stuff at least. But I can't lie, being in that situation again is way too scary...I don't want to be killed." ■

A victory in any language

Daniel Ekonde

The Abakwa Boys, from Cameroon's English-speaking Northwest region, came close to winning a major trophy in 1979.

The team's official name, PWD Bamenda, is in itself an artefact that still thrives today. When English-speaking Cameroonians voted to join La Republic du Cameroun to form a two-state Federal Republic of Cameroon, the Public Works Department had been fostering development in then Southern Cameroon. It also ran football clubs known as PWDs, hence the club name.

Having beaten heavyweights Canon Yaoundé and Tonnerre Yaoundé to reach the final of the Cup of Cameroon, the final against Dynamo Douala was supposed to be a cakewalk. PWD Bamenda lost 3-1 – a bitter pill to swallow for many Anglophone Cameroonians.

“It was a very tragic moment in the life of PWD Bamenda,” veteran sports journalist Njomo Kevin said, recalling that investigations took place after it was reported that the players' food was tampered with.

Forty-one years later, against the backdrop of a grumbling separatist war — one that led to the kidnapping of their former coach last year — PWD Bamenda



Soccer-speak: PWD Bamenda was founded in 1962 (Photo: supplied)

has become only the second team from Cameroon's Anglophone regions to win a league title.

In a highly contested match to move to the top of the league, PWD beat Union of Douala 2-1, finishing with 47 points.

PWD were still at the top of the league when football activities in the country were suspended in March. The cancellation of the league in April meant that the Abakwa Boys won their first major national trophy in their 58-year history.

“We are beginning to think that football might be part of the solution to what we have been witnessing [the Anglophone Crisis] for the past four years,” club president Abunde Pascal said. The team will participate, for the first time, in the CAF Champions League next season. ■

Fake news in Nigeria: 'It's as if people need to deny reality'

Idayat Hassan

Along with the spread of Covid-19 in Africa, there has been a deluge of fake news. This has raised real fears that misinformation will prevent people from taking necessary health precautions.

Nowhere is this problem more pressing than Nigeria, where 122-million people are now online. The Centre for Democracy and Development has constantly reviewed the country's information ecosystem since January 2020, when news of Covid-19 first circulated, finding that the nature of fake news is constantly changing – often with troubling consequences.

When coronavirus first captured media headlines, narratives claiming that Africans somehow had immunity dominated the fake news landscape. But this has changed on an almost weekly basis, as if there is a need to deny the grim reality and blame something, or someone, for the pandemic. From initially denying that the virus was a problem, fake news stories are now more likely to try and incite panic by spreading alarmist messages – pretending to be from doctors and nurses – that allege that the true extent of Covid-19 is being hidden.

Misinformation has also increasingly

focused on false cures or prevention mechanisms. The screenshot of a fake CNN newscaster with the headline “constant sex kills Covid-19” has been shared widely. Similarly, herb sellers in Kaduna State hiked their prices by sharing an online letter from China that alleges a mixture of ginger, garlic and herbs cures the coronavirus if taken with tea.

Sadly, the politicisation of the Covid-19 response by Nigerian officials has facilitated the proliferation of fake news. Historic distrust in government and poor communication – including some officials claiming that they have no cases in their states – is being exploited by purveyors of fake news to misinform Nigerians. Unfortunately, trusted sources such as religious leaders have also contributed to this problem by peddling fake cures – leading to a worrying and dangerous situation in which the public doesn't know who to trust about the origins of the virus or how to stay safe. ■

Idayat Hassan is the director of the Abuja-based Centre for Democracy and Development-West Africa. This column is produced in partnership with Democracy in Africa



The mystery of the missing \$640 000

After a spate of suicides, Ethiopians in Lebanon raised money to support their community. Then it disappeared.

Zecharias Zelalem

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, morgues in Beirut began to fill up with the bodies of dead Ethiopian women. They had come to Lebanon as domestic workers, but were routinely underpaid and exploited. Rather than suffer further abuse, some decided to end it by jumping off their employers' balconies.

The small Ethiopian community in Lebanon was rocked by these deaths. So they did something about it. Community leaders established a fund to support domestic workers, and over the course of a decade managed to raise a considerable sum: \$640 000. The money was supposed to be used to repatriate the bodies of the deceased, and to pay the medical bills of women left injured after surviving attempts to end their own lives.

The money was lodged with the Ethiopian consulate in Beirut for safekeeping. In 2006, the \$640 000 disappeared. No one had any idea what

had happened to the money. Until now.

Regional tensions

For Lebanon, 2006 was a turbulent year. Heightened tensions in the Middle East led to an Israeli bombing campaign targeting much of the country. There was an exodus of Ethiopians from Beirut and other towns across the country. To be safe, the Ethiopian consulate in Beirut transferred the funds into the safekeeping of the Ethiopian consulate in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

That, at least, was the understanding of community leaders at the time. But the consulate in Jeddah never returned the



Paper trail: Leaked documents shed light on missing funds (Photo: Addis Standard)



Clearing house: The Ethiopian consulate in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

(Photo: *Addis Standard*)

money, nor has it publicly acknowledged that it was ever received.

After tensions simmered down, Ethiopians began returning to Lebanon. But abuses and exploitation continued. In 2007-2008 alone, the Ethiopian consul-general in Lebanon said that his office was dealing with 148 suspected suicides.

For Ethiopians in Lebanon, the disappearance of the money was a source of frustration that would boil over at every meeting between the community and their consulate. For years, the Ethiopian community in Lebanon pressured their government to address the issue. One woman even went to the foreign ministry headquarters in Addis Ababa, where she was brushed off by officials. Eventually, she stopped asking.

On the money trail

In late 2019, a whistleblower leaked some documents to *Addis Standard*. They appear to show, for the first time, exactly what had happened to the missing \$640 000.

The documents came from an audit carried out of the Ethiopian consulate in Jeddah in 2015, and their authenticity was confirmed after months of investigation by *Addis Standard*. They included receipts

and letters that show that the money stayed in the consulate's account until 2009, when the bulk of it was transferred to a bank account in America.

This bank account belonged to DLA Piper, an American lobbying firm. They had been contracted to defeat a motion in the US Congress which would have called for the United States to condemn human rights violations in Ethiopia. The motion was duly defeated.

A letter signed by Nega Tsegaye, a career diplomat who was in the Ethiopian foreign ministry's finance department at the time, requested that \$600 000 "from the emergency funds transferred from Beirut" be sent to DLA Piper's account.

When contacted by *Addis Standard*, Nega Tsegaye refused to comment. "You're talking about a matter from over a decade ago. It isn't fit to be discussing such matters over the phone."

Another diplomat alleged to have been involved – Tekleab Kebede Aregawi, the Ethiopian ambassador to Saudi Arabia at the time of the alleged crime – strongly denied that any money had been transferred to America.

The whistleblower, who had only brief access to the Jeddah consulate's files, asked not to be named. He said the public deserves to know what happened to the money. ■

This is an edited version of an investigation first published by the Addis Standard. The full investigation is available here: <https://bit.ly/AddisStandard>

AfDB boss faces US wrath

Aanu Adeoye

This has been a difficult year for Akinwumi Adesina, the president of the African Development Bank (AfDB). His troubles began in January when concerned staff members at Africa's biggest lender leaked an 11-page complaint to the media, accusing him of favouritism, nepotism and abuse of power.

An internal bank investigation cleared him of wrongdoing, but now he faces a fresh probe following pressure from the United States.

US Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin, in a letter dated May 22 and first reported by Bloomberg, said the Treasury disagreed with the findings of the internal investigation. The US is the second-largest shareholder in the AfDB, behind Nigeria. Mnuchin's call for an external examination into the allegations is reportedly supported by other countries including Denmark, Sweden, Norway and Finland.

Adesina, a former Nigerian agriculture minister, is running unopposed for re-election in August. The 60-year-old, who has consistently denied all allegations, has been at the helm of the bank since 2015. In a statement circulated on Wednesday, he called the allegations "trumped up" and "unprecedented attempts to tarnish my reputation and

the bank's governing structures."

"I am confident that fair, transparent and just processes that respect the rules, procedures and governance systems of the bank, and the rule of law, will ultimately prove that I have not violated the code of ethics of this extraordinary institution," he said.

It is unclear how the new headaches will affect Adesina's standing within the organisation. It is understood that he will continue to lead the bank during any probe.

Adesina enjoys widespread support from African governments, and was recently praised by Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari, who commended him for "making his motherland" proud after the initial investigation was concluded.

South Africa's Cyril Ramaphosa also expressed appreciation for Adesina's stewardship earlier this month after the Bank launched a \$3-billion social bond for African countries to deal with the Covid-19 crises.

The AfDB is Africa's most important multilateral lender with a capital base of \$208-billion. It provides credit to African nations and companies. ■

Aanu Adeoye is a media fellow with Germany's Konrad Adenauer Stiftung.

Analysis

How to count the costs of Covid-19

We need to differentiate between the costs of lockdown, and the costs of the pandemic itself.

Nechama Brodie

South Africa's economic woes have worsened during the country's hard lockdown period – but blaming the lockdown alone for the change misses a crucial distinction.

There is a difference between the economic costs of lockdown, and the costs of living through a pandemic. Telling one from the other is not complicated (although there is some overlap): once we remove or change the lockdown variable, the economic consequences that remain can largely be attributed to the pandemic.

In other words: the pandemic itself has and will continue to induce widespread behavioural and economic changes.

If we treat every economic cost as the sole fault of lockdown (and, by implication, of an over-authoritarian government), then we will have missed the opportunity to correctly identify the myriad problems and burdens still waiting for us as these restrictions are eased.

Some stories, for example, blamed lockdown for a decline in cancer treatment and elective surgeries. But these were consequences of the pandemic: chemo and other cancer sessions were postponed

to protect cancer patients' immune systems; elective surgeries were paused to keep hospital beds free for more urgent cases, and to reduce the risk of patients being exposed to the coronavirus at hospital. Even without a lockdown, these actions would have occurred.

While lockdown triggered a number of serious financial and societal consequences, these must be seen within the context of the broader new global reality that the pandemic has ushered in.

Lobby groups and economists say the extent of our financial decline will be decided by how quickly our economy reopens, but they neglect to note that, when it does, this won't reset the world to the way it was "before". Many people are sick, some are dying. Many more of us are afraid of getting sick, and also afraid of dying. This won't disappear because we can now buy more things. The consequence and cost of the pandemic will be with us for at least my lifespan, and perhaps beyond. ■

Dr Nechama Brodie is a South African author and academic who researches media, violence, data and misinformation.



The Big Picture

Socially-distanced devotion: Followers of Senegal's Layène community pray on the beach in front of the Yoff Layène Mosque in Dakar. The occasion was the Korité festival which marks the end of Muslim holy month of Ramadan, known elsewhere as Eid-al-Fitr. Worshippers all wore masks and prayed at an appropriate distance from each other. (Photo: John Wessels for AFP)

The Continent is produced with the Mail & Guardian, Africa's leading independent newspaper, and upholds the M&G's strict editorial standards. It is published by the Adamela Trust, a not-for-profit organisation founded by M&G journalists that is dedicated to fostering quality journalism. For queries and complaints, or to make a donation, please contact TheContinent@mg.co.za.