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Damming the Nile

Tensions rise as the rainy
season approaches

(Photo: NASA via AFP)

Nobody owns water

The water cycle is one of nature's most beautiful phenomena. In the north-eastern corner of this continent, it drives a mighty river, the Nile, and brings life to the arid land around it. Falling thousands of kilometres away from the Mediterranean, in the Ethiopian highlands, that water used to move almost uninterrupted on the way to feeding Egypt. It created an empire. It now sustains an economy with over a hundred million people. Billions of animals and plants would not otherwise exist.

Water is, after air, our most precious commodity.

The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam rudely interrupts the water cycle. It gives Ethiopia unprecedented control over how much water reaches the downstream countries, Sudan and Egypt, both of which are almost totally dependent on the Nile. With this control comes great power. And with great power comes great responsibility.

Nearly a decade's worth of negotiations between the three countries have failed to result in any agreement over how best to share the Nile's water. With just weeks to go before the dam starts to fill up (see page 19), this is a potentially explosive situation. Senior

Egyptian politicians and business leaders have already threatened to go to war if they do not receive what they feel is their fair share of water. This is a country not used to being vulnerable, and it shows.

The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam gives Ethiopia unprecedented control over how much water reaches the downstream countries, Sudan and Egypt, both of which are totally dependent on the Nile

But regardless of the behaviour of Egypt's government, the lives and livelihoods of millions of Sudanese and Egyptians are on the line – many of whom don't like their governments either.

It is up to Ethiopia, as the upstream country, to make sure that the water flows in a fair and equitable manner, and to remember that nobody owns the water that passes through its borders. ■



After a decades-long legal dispute, the International Court of Justice ruled last year that the Chagos Islands (in the middle of the Indian Ocean, just under the Maldives) belong to Mauritius, not Britain. The United Nations has now updated its official world map to reflect that ruling. Not that Mauritius has any real-world authority over the islands: it remains the site of a major US military base, and Britain is refusing to cede control. Meanwhile, the Chagos Islanders who were brutally forced off their land by British soldiers in the 1960s remain in limbo, unable to return home. (Map: United Nations Geospatial Information Section)

Inside:

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In the headlines this week

Samira Sawlani

Tanzania, Malawi, Burundi and Uganda

As you might have read in these pages recently, Facebook is planning to hook us up with superfast internet, so it's no wonder many African leaders are racing to update their profiles and relationship statuses.

In Tanzania, John Magufuli is still “married” to the presidency — and hoping to renew his vows as he positions himself as the ruling party's candidate for the October polls.

In Malawi, President Peter Mutharika's status has been “it's complicated” since the results of last year's elections were annulled. But now he's courting again, telling crowds that Malawi will be “like America if they give him another five years”. We hope “like America” doesn't mean a hot mess of pandemics, police brutality and presidential breakdowns.

Meanwhile, General Évariste Ndayishimiye has gone from “single” to “in a relationship” with the people of Burundi, after being sworn in as president following the death of Pierre Nkurunziza.

And, in Uganda, musician-turned-parliamentarian Bobi Wine has updated his profile to reflect his “civil union” with senior opposition politician Kizza Besigye, as they form a “united force



Sworn in: Burundi's new president Évariste Ndayishimiye at his inauguration at the Ingoma Stadium in Gitega on Thursday (Photo: Tchandrou Nitanga/AFP)

for change” to prevent a sixth term for President Yoweri Museveni.

Guinea

Listening to one's partner is the foundation of most healthy relationships, although Guinea's president does not seem to be heeding this wisdom. Last year, President Alpha Conde, when asked if he would run for another term, said: “It depends on the will of the people.”

But now that the people are expressing their will, the president does not appear to be willing to listen. Widespread protests earlier this year were met with a brutal response from



United front: Ugandan popstar-turned-politician Bobi Wine has joined forces with opposition leader Kizza Besigye (Photo: Luke Dray/Getty)

security forces which has seen citizens locked up, injured and killed. Now a coalition of opposition and civil society groups are resuming demonstrations – if they shout loud enough, maybe Conde will be forced to listen.

Niger

Speaking of unhealthy relationships: the authorities in Niger may want to reconsider how they interact with social media after arresting journalist Samira Sabou for, you guessed it, a Facebook post.

They pounced on Sabou not just for her post, concerning an audit at the ministry of defence and its alleged connection with President Issoufou's son, but also cited a comment made by someone else entirely.

Had Niger left the matter alone, the post would have been seen by a fraction of the audience it ultimately reached. Talk about shooting yourself in the likes.

South Africa and Nigeria

President Cyril Ramaphosa called a

South African “family meeting” this week to give a stern lecture to the men of the country as part of a televised national address.

He said gender-based violence had become a “second epidemic”, as 21 women and children were murdered in the past few weeks under lockdown. He spoke their names, and put the country's men on notice.

But it's not just South Africa, is it? Reports from across the world, and, indeed, our continent, show a dramatic rise in gender-based violence during the pandemic.

In Nigeria, for example, women took to the streets in protest after the rape and murders of two students, Uwaila Vera Omozuwa and Barakat Bello.

This week the “Day of the African Child” was marked with much fanfare, just as Women's Day was in March. How many were killed or abused that day? A good word without good action is as hollow as a Big Man's Facebook status: It's not complicated, it's a damn lie. ■

THE WEEKLY PAN-AFRICAN NEWSPAPER

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The Continent
with Mail & Guardian

The Week in Numbers



(Photo: Bloomberg)

\$30,000

The price per tonne of cobalt, an essential component of Tesla's lithium-ion batteries. Tesla announced a deal with mining company Glencore to source its cobalt from the Democratic Republic of Congo, despite Glencore being repeatedly implicated in corruption allegations.

\$185

The price of a passport for citizens of the Democratic Republic of Congo, making it among the most expensive passports in the world. The government announced that it is looking for a new passport manufacturer, and intends to drop the price.

3

The number of men who this week claimed to be the legitimate national chairperson of Nigeria's ruling party, the All Progressives Congress. The party has been rocked by infighting after a vote of no confidence in chairperson Adams Oshiomhole was upheld in court.

21

The number of women and children murdered in South Africa over the past few weeks, in what President Cyril Ramaphosa described as a "second epidemic". "As a man, as a husband and as a father, I am appalled at what is no less than a war being waged against the women and children of our country," he said.

\$75

The monthly Covid-19 allowance granted to all Zimbabwean civil servants. This comes after health workers went on strike to demand payment in foreign currency. Runaway inflation has reduced the purchasing power of the Zimbabwean dollar, which was reintroduced a year ago.

Côte d'Ivoire

Exiled minister wants to come home

Leanne de Bassompierre

Exiled former Côte d'Ivoire cabinet minister and youth leader Charles Blé Goudé has called on authorities to allow him back home in the spirit of national reconciliation.

Blé Goudé, along with former President Laurent Gbagbo, was acquitted last year of all charges of crimes against humanity by the International Criminal Court in The Hague. Although he was conditionally released, Blé Goudé still faces an appeal against that acquittal, which begins on Monday.

Speaking in an online press conference from The Hague earlier this week, Blé Goudé said: "I want to come home. I am not Dutch. I am not European."

In December, an Ivorian court convicted Blé Goudé in absentia on charges of murder, rape and torture related to the conflict that followed the disputed 2010 vote, and sentenced him to 20 years in prison. He said that this

sentence should not prevent his return. "Everything that's political can be resolved politically," he said in response to questions.

There are less than four months before Côte d'Ivoire votes to elect a new leader. It is expected to be the tensest election since President Alassane Ouattara took office in 2011, following five months of post-electoral violence triggered by Laurent Gbagbo's refusal to concede defeat. The October 31 vote will pit Ouattara's handpicked successor Amadou Gon Coulibaly, 61, who remains on extended medical leave in France, against a yet-to-be-announced candidate from Henri Konan Bedie's Democratic Party of Côte d'Ivoire.

There are less than four months before the vote for a new president

Although the 48-year-old Blé Goudé is thought to have presidential aspirations, he will not be contesting this vote. Another prominent absentee from the ballot is Guillaume Soro, the former national assembly speaker and rebel leader who was convicted in absentia on embezzlement charges. ■

Somalia

A tale of two communiqués

Simon Allison

On Sunday evening, after several hours of talks between the presidents of Djibouti, Ethiopia, Somalia and Somaliland, Djibouti's ministry of foreign affairs released an official communiqué. The purpose of these talks, it explained, was "to help the two leaders from Somalia and Somaliland to resume dialogue on the relationships between the two countries".

Whoops.

Somalia energetically opposes any suggestions that Somaliland is a country – that's at the crux of their dispute. In this it is backed up by the African Union, the United Nations and every other country in the world, none of whom formally recognise Somaliland as a country. Officially, the breakaway territory is considered to be part of Somalia.

Somaliland's leaders, on the other hand, say that the territory declared itself independent in 1991, and has been self-governed ever since then, complete with all the trappings of state – it has its own flag, currency, national anthem and army. This makes it a de facto country, they argue, regardless of what anyone else says.

REPUBLIQUE DE DJIBOUTI
UNITE - EGALITE - PAIX

الجمهورية الجيبوتي
الوحدة - المساواة - التضامن

MINISTÈRE DES AFFAIRES ÉTRANGÈRES
ET DE LA COOPÉRATION INTERNATIONALE

وزارة الشؤون الخارجية والتعاون الدولي

LE MINISTRE

السفير

التفاهل الرسمي باسم الحكومة

التفاهل الرسمي باسم الحكومة

COMMUNIQUE

مذكرة

Upon the initiative of H.E Ismail Omar Guelleh, the President of the Republic of Djibouti, the leaders of the region:

- H.E Abiy Ahmed Ali, Prime Minister of Ethiopia,
- H.E Mohamed Abdillahi Mohamed Farmaajo, President of Somalia,
- H.E Moussa Bihi Abdi, President of Somaliland,

Held a consultative summit meeting in Djibouti on June, 14th 2020, in order to help the two leaders from Somalia and Somaliland to resume dialogue on the relationships between the two countries.

The leaders recognize the importance of Djibouti's role in peace building and peace making in the region.

Prior to this historic event, several rounds of negotiations were undertaken in the past with little progress.

The President of Somalia and the President of Somaliland have come to an understanding that a technical committee comprised of members of the two delegations will resume

1

Language of diplomacy: The original communiqué which referred to Somalia and Somaliland as 'two countries'.

The talks in Djibouti were supposed to help resolve this stalemate between Mogadishu and Hargeisa. Instead, the unfortunate phrasing of the communiqué just highlighted the central problem between them.

It didn't take long for Djibouti's foreign ministry to realise its error, and issue a new communiqué. This time, the language was a little clumsier, but much more diplomatic. The talks, it said, were designed "to help the two leaders from Somalia and Somaliland to resume dialogue on the relationships between Somalia and Somaliland".

The gaffe did not appear to unduly influence the talks, which went about as well as expected: the two sides agreed to further talks, and to set up commissions to examine specific areas of contention, such as airspace, aid and security. ■

United States

The police strike again

Chika Oduah in Atlanta

Another one. June 12, a mere three days after George Floyd was buried next to his mother in his hometown of Houston, Texas – his body barely even cold in the grave, as the old saying goes – another African-American was fatally shot in the United States by a white police officer for a seemingly baseless offence.

Twenty-seven-year-old Rayshard Brooks had fallen asleep in his car at a drive-through of Wendy's, a fast-food hamburger restaurant. Other customers were forced to drive around him.

Police officers arrived and conducted a sobriety test, which Brooks failed. He admitted that he had drunk “one and a half margaritas” at his daughter's eighth birthday party. He asked the officers if they could supervise him as he locked up his car and walked to his sister's house nearby. Instead, the police moved to handcuff him, but he resisted and fled. One of the officers fired three shots, two of them hit Brooks in the back. He was pronounced dead at a hospital, from blood loss and organ injuries.

The similarities of the circumstances around Floyd and Brooks' deaths are

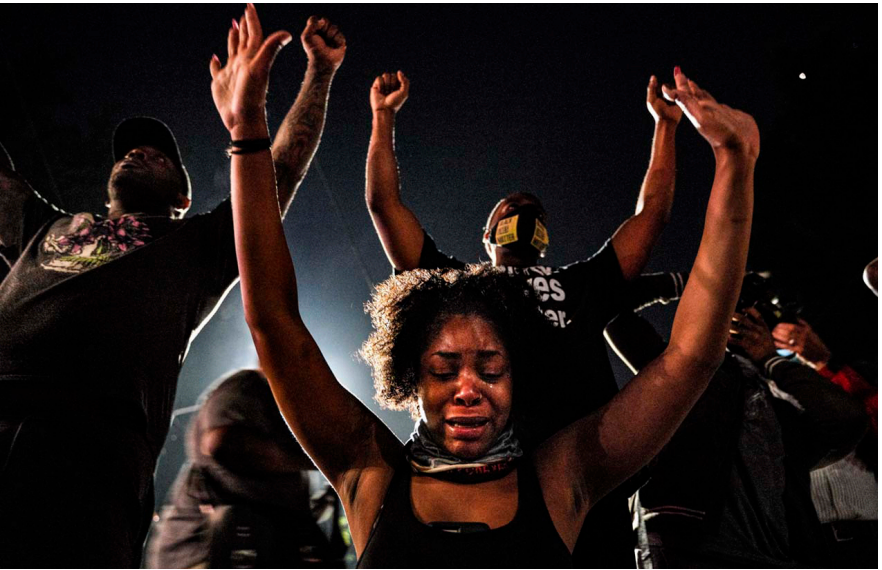
disturbing.

Both deadly encounters unfolded in a very public space – the street. Cameras captured their struggle as they tried to stay alive. Viewers heard Floyd gasping for breath. Viewers watched Brooks struggle to get away from the grip of two officers. Both men were killed by police officers who had multiple complaints against them (18 for Floyd's killer and 12 for Brooks') and had a history of excessive use of force. Both men lay on the ground with their bodies slipping into weakness, as police looked on.

Atlanta city officials are reviewing the police's use-of-force policies and aim to ensure that officers are familiar with de-escalation tactics

But there are differences, too.

Floyd died in Minneapolis, a predominantly white city in America's Midwest; Brooks was shot in Atlanta, a southern city with a deep African-American heritage. The biggest difference was that Floyd lay unarmed, pinned under an officer's knee, while Brooks' had managed to break free from the officers and ended up snatching one



Repeat of recent history: Protests were staged again in Atlanta on June 14 and beyond after police shot and killed 27-year-old Rayshard Brooks (Photo: Ben Hendren for Anadolu Agency)

of their tasers.

Insinuations that Brooks was not innocent are coming forward. Critics have begun digging into his past to look for dirt. An interview that Brooks gave in February has resurfaced. In it, he says he was incarcerated for financial credit fraud and false imprisonment.

Right-wing media outlets are highlighting Brooks' misdemeanors. Britain's *Daily Mail* ran this headline: "EXCLUSIVE: Rayshard Brooks was on probation for four crimes – including cruelty to children – and faced going back to prison if charged with a DUI, when he was found asleep and intoxicated at Wendy's drive-thru."

Brooks' wife, Tomika Miller, is trying to preserve her late husband's name for their three daughters, aged 8, 2 and 1. She says he was a family man. When Brooks was killed, his eight-year-old was still wearing her birthday dress, and was excited for her father to take her skating the next day. His Facebook page features charming photographs of his daughters.

Miller said her husband was her best friend. At a press conference she said: "Even though I can't bring my husband back, I know he's smiling down because his name will forever be remembered. There's no justice that can ever make me feel happy about what's been done."

Demands for justice grew louder as

protesters staged more demonstrations in the wake of another tragic shooting. Atlanta residents took to the streets to mourn their own. Protesters burned down the restaurant where Brooks' confronted the officers. Orange and red flames licked the night sky as young people shouted "no justice, no peace" in the background. Authorities are looking for who started the fire.

Meanwhile, conversations around police reform are gathering momentum.

Atlanta city officials are reviewing the police's use-of-force policies and aim to ensure that officers are familiar with de-escalation tactics. This week, President Donald Trump acknowledged that "some officers have mis-used their authority" and signed an executive order that would serve as a guideline for police reform. The order included a ban on chokeholds and a call for police departments to collaborate with social workers and experts on substance abuse, homelessness and mental health.

But many say that Trump's reforms are too little, too late.

The "De-Fund the Police" campaign is gaining unprecedented momentum with some proponents calling for a slash in police budgets and a redistribution of funds to better serve communities, while others are demanding an end to the entire police system as we know it. Minneapolis City Council members unanimously voted to disband the local police force and work towards setting up an experimental community-led public safety model. Districts and institutions



Stinging reaction: In response to police brutality protests, numerous cases of police brutality have been reported (Photo: Ben Hendren for Anadolu Agency)

around the US are severing ties with law enforcement departments.

Activists say the American police system has been militarised to target African-Americans. Statistics from the US Census Bureau show that there's a higher chance for African-Americans to be fatally shot by police than other races. They are also imprisoned five times more than white Americans are.

In these pressing times, more and more Americans are confronting the nation's endemic racism and supporting calls for change, but President Trump's lacklustre response could spark division in a charged nation.

The United States seems to be on the cusp of what could be a revolution that has not been seen since the tumultuous 1960s.

This time, the revolution will be televised. ■

The Cameroonian rhythm that set the world on fire

How Manu Dibango's hit
became the most sampled
African song in history

Refiloe Seiboko

Mama-ko, mama-ssa, makomako-ssa.

This inimitable chant comes from Emmanuel N'Djoke “Manu” Dibango’s iconic 1972 hit *Soul Makossa*. It was initially a B-side he recorded for the African Cup of Nations, which was being hosted in his home country of Cameroon that year.

Dibango is the most sampled African artist of all time, with more than 125 samples and covers recorded, according to Sample Chief, a digital platform dedicated to African music.

Soul Makossa was embraced by many African-Americans who had begun embracing their African roots, catalysed by the “Black is Beautiful” movement and the TV show *Soul Train* which was beginning to gain mainstream attention.

It became a huge hit in the United

States, but because there weren’t many released copies of the track, it was covered by numerous bands. At one point there were nine versions of *Soul Makossa* on Billboard’s global charts.

Legendary US group Kool and the Gang’s 1973 megahit *Hollywood Swinging* was inspired by the track, and Beyoncé used it in live performances in 2018. Both Michael Jackson and Rihanna have faced legal action for interpolating Dibango’s famous phrase without permission.

Primarily written in the Duala language, the song plays with the word “makossa”, which loosely means “I dance”. The legendary saxophonist and songwriter released more than 70 albums in the six decades he was active and is regarded as a pioneer of afro-jazz and afro-funk music.

Dibango passed away in March after contracting Covid-19. ■





Future filmmaking: Production companies in Nigeria are implementing a whole new set of regulations when producing films (Photo: Up North/Anakle Films)

Lights, camera, Covid

Nollywood learns how to make a movie in a pandemic.

Timileyin Omilana

Before the coronavirus pandemic, director Adebola Ogunshina had the perfect script for his romance movie, filled with emotional highs and lows and intimate love scenes.

Then the pandemic struck.

Adebola – a seasoned Ibadan-based director and scriptwriter – found that Covid-19 has, in every sense, delivered the kiss of death to that script. He now finds himself in the unenviable position of having to rewrite it to incorporate “creative social distancing” into those love scenes.

“We have to keep pushing because it is a love story, but we cannot bring two lovers together at this time,” Ogunshina

told the *Mail & Guardian*. “We ought to have started in May but now we are looking at July to start shooting.”

The simple act of two lovers pressing lips together now feels out of sync in a post-lockdown world. “I cannot bring people together on set for a movie where they have to kiss,” Ogunshina said. “It doesn’t make any sense. So I have started re-working the script and thinking of another angle.”

For weeks now, filmmakers in Nigeria have been trying to figure out how they can proceed with projects they had to postpone because of Covid-19.

The fallout for the Nigerian film industry has been significant. Many

of the million-odd people who earn a living from Nollywood are suffering financially, while coronavirus containment measures are making it more difficult to make movies.

Nollywood has already lost around 3-billion naira (\$8.33-million) since mid-February thanks to the pandemic, according to Moses Babatope, chief operating officer of Filmhouse Cinema.

The film production process is broad, requiring a number of different groups — actors, sound producers, cinematographers, hair and make-up artists, set decorators, costume designers, cameramen and sound producers — to work together seamlessly. Although filming as such was not prohibited by the emergency restrictions imposed on some parts of the country, it was practically impossible to shoot anything while following safety guidelines.

Ogunshina said that the inability to shoot means more people in the industry “are going broke”.

A single infection could derail the production – and perhaps even the production company

“The industry is like a village — when you give a rule that you cannot be more than 20 people in one place, people will rather not shoot. And if they don’t shoot they will not make money,” he said.

Although the government has now eased most restrictions, the reality of



Covid crew: Production teams have been significantly cut, with some working with between seven and 10 crew members from the average 25
(Photo: Up North/Anakle Films)

the pandemic continues to complicate things. But slowly, producers and directors are adapting to the new normal.

Producers are having to work with fewer crew members on set, to allow for social distancing. Face masks and sanitisers must be provided for crew members and cast. Additionally, everyone on set is required to sanitise their hands every 30 minutes during the shoot. These additional measures are making production costs much more expensive.

But they are considered absolutely necessary. After all, a single Covid-19 infection on set could totally derail the production – and perhaps even the production company itself.

Ogunshina said productions now struggle to get eight scenes completed in a day, compared with at least 18 scenes



Directing at a distance: Crews are now observing social distancing, wearing masks and frequently sanitising their hands (Photo: Florian Plaucheur via AFP)

prior to the pandemic. In Ibadan, in Oyo State, there is still an 8pm-5am curfew in place – which means there can be no night scenes in Borokini, the Yoruba-language telenovela that he is shooting there.

Adeleye Fabusoro, another Nigerian filmmaker, said the coronavirus has caused a very big “loss in terms of money, in terms of time value and also in the economy of the industry”.

Fabusoro has “drastically” reduced the crew members for his soap opera from 25 to 10. The reduction in crew is designed to help film producers navigate the current financial troubles of the industry. He added that close-up shots are now being prioritised over wide and medium shots, in order to limit the interactions of actors on set.

This makes everything slower. “Projects that we expect to have finished in the first quarter of the year are still lingering,” Fabusoro said.

Imoh Umoren, a Nigerian director and producer, was in the middle of filming a new series called *Channel 77* when lockdown forced them to halt production. Another film, currently in pre-production, will go ahead – but with strict precautions in place.

“We are going to test everybody before we go on location and everyone will be housed together to reduce the risk of coming to work from different places,” Umoren said.

For films that do get completed, another challenge awaits: the loss of revenue thanks to the widespread closure of cinemas. In 2019, Nigerians spent 6.7-billion naira (\$15-million) on cinema tickets.

“We are going to test everybody before we go on location, and everyone will be housed together to reduce the risk of coming to work from different places.”

“Because cinema is the first window for us, we have to go through that window otherwise we will lose a significant point of revenue we had projected,” said Ekene Mekwunye, a filmmaker whose film is still awaiting release. “We are confused as we speak right now because even if cinemas open next month, which movies are going to cinema? I don’t even know because we have a backlog of three months.” ■

In Bulawayo, the taps run dry

Kudzai Mashininga

Ronald Moyo is a caretaker at a shopping centre in a leafy suburb of Zimbabwe's second city, Bulawayo. His shift is supposed to end at 4pm – but now, thanks to the water crisis, it feels like it never ends.

Since last year, the city council has been steadily decreasing the amount of water available to residents. As of last month, water is only available overnight, between 5pm and 7am. If you turn on the taps at any other time, nothing comes out.

For Moyo, this means that he must spend his evenings doing all the tasks that require water.

“After doing my daytime job, I rest a bit and start filling the water tanks in the evening. I then water the lawn and flowers. After that I turn to my home to do any job that requires water. Sometimes I end up going to sleep at 3am,” says Moyo, who lives on the shopping centre premises.

Zimbabwe is currently experiencing its lowest rainfall since 1981, according to the United Nations. Bulawayo and surrounds have been especially hard-hit. The city has had to decommission three of its six supply dams, and the other three are at less than 30% capacity. An ageing, poorly-maintained

water supply system only makes things worse.

Many residents don't have any water at all, and have to queue for hours to fill their buckets from municipal water tankers. The cuts may soon be extended to industrial and mining areas – compounding Zimbabwe's already severe economic woes.

Bulawayo and surrounds have been especially hard-hit. The city has had to decommission three of its six supply dams, and the other three are at less than 30% capacity

Bulawayo City Council says it requires \$22.75-million to fix the water crisis. But this money is not forthcoming. The government claims it does not have the necessary foreign exchange reserves. Mthulisi Hanana, the director of a local NGO, has another explanation: “Government has no will to solve the problem...[it] punishes the region for supporting [the political opposition]”. ■

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

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



QUESTION 8
BONUS
POINT!

1. Tripoli is the capital of which country?
2. Who was the first African player to play in the NBA?
3. In which country is one most likely to drink Tusker beer?
4. Which country has won five African Cup of Nations titles, including consecutive titles in 2000 and 2002?
5. In which country was the Cullinan Diamond, the world's largest rough diamond, found?
6. What is the currency of Sierra Leone?
7. Évariste Ndayishimiye is the president of which country?
8. The Djinguereber Mosque (pictured above) is in which country? (Bonus point if you name the city too!)
9. Who was the first prime minister and president of Ghana?
10. True or false: The Gambia is the continent's smallest mainland country (by area).
11. Which country is bordered by Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Tanzania and Uganda?
12. What are Chad's two official languages?

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

"I read Marcus Garvey before bed."

Damming the Nile

In a few weeks, when the rainy season arrives, water will finally begin to flow into the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam. Expect regional tensions to rise along with the water level.

Samuel Getachew and Simon Allison



Power play: For better or worse, Ethiopia's new dam will fundamentally alter East Africa's geo-politics (Photo: Eduardo Soteras for AFP via Getty)

When the late Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi unveiled his plan to build Africa's largest hydroelectric power plant in 2011, he gave it a title in keeping with its ambition.

Nearly a decade and \$4.8-billion later, the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam is nearly complete. And so, Meles might argue, is Ethiopia's rebirth as a continental superpower.

Nestled deep in the Blue Nile Valley, not far from the border with Sudan, the dam is an extraordinary construction: 155 metres high and 1,780 metres long, with a reservoir that can hold 72-billion litres of water and 16 turbines that will be able generate 6,000 megawatts of power – more than double Ethiopia's current capacity. It is the eighth largest dam in the world.

Even more remarkable is that Ethiopia – a lower income country that is among the world's poorest by GDP per capita – financed construction of the dam itself, through a combination of government bonds and

donations.

But before any of the promises of the dam can be realised – before Ethiopia's already booming industrial sector gets a massive boost from cheap, reliable electricity; before the country starts exporting its new power, both literal and metaphorical, to its neighbours; and before access to electricity can be extended to the 56% of Ethiopians who currently go without – the dam must be filled.

Do you know how long it takes to fill a dam with 72-billion litres of water? The futures of several nations may hinge on the answer to this question.

Worried neighbours

The serene Lake Tana in the Ethiopian highlands is the source of the Blue Nile. The highland soil is what gives the river its name: silt darkens the river's waters, making it look blue in certain light.

From there, the river heads south-west, winding its way through deep canyons, before slowly bending northwards. As it descends, it moves first into Sudan – where, in Khartoum, it joins up with the White Nile – and then into Egypt.

Most of Egypt is divided into two deserts, the Eastern Desert and the Western Desert. The dividing line between the two is the Nile River, which feeds a narrow green ribbon of fertile farmland. Most of Egypt's population of 100-million live along this green ribbon, and the country depends on the Nile for 90% of its water needs.

For Egypt, the Nile is synonymous with life itself.

Egypt is worried. For millennia, it has enjoyed an almost entirely uninterrupted supply of Nile water. Never before have any of the countries upstream been able to exert any meaningful control over the river – but soon, Ethiopia will have the power to turn Egypt's taps on and off.

In theory, Egypt is protected by the terms of a 1929 treaty which guarantees it access to the majority of Nile water. That treaty and its amendments were negotiated between Egypt, Sudan and the British imperial government, which took it upon itself to represent the upstream countries. But Ethiopia has rejected the terms of that treaty, and in building the dam has effectively ripped it up.

Now Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan have to come to a new agreement on how to manage this most fundamental of resources – and the talks are not going well.

“Egypt is not open to accept Ethiopia's legitimate right to use Nile waters and wants to put the whole river under its control,” said Ethiopia's



**Immovable objects:
Neither Ethiopia nor
Egypt have given
much away during
negotiations** (Photo:
Eduardo Soteras for
AFP via Getty)

foreign minister Gedu Andargachew.

His Egyptian counterpart, Sameh Shoukry, sees things differently. “Egypt has adhered to the approach of negotiating with the Ethiopian side and exercised sincere intentions to reach an equitable agreement for the two parties,” he said, adding that Ethiopian negotiators have been “intransigent”.

The latest round of talks – there have been many over the course of the last nine years – broke down on Wednesday. They were hosted in Khartoum, with Sudan finding itself in the middle in more ways than one: although it too is heavily reliant on the Nile, it enjoys better relations with Addis Ababa and stands to benefit from cheaper electricity.

One issue under discussion is how long Ethiopia will take to fill up the dam – Ethiopia is pushing to do it in just six years, while Egypt would prefer 12. The faster the dam fills, the less water makes its way through to Sudan and Egypt. This is all the more pressing because Ethiopia’s rainy season is supposed to start next month, and Ethiopia wants to begin the filling process. If no agreement is reached, on this and on other key disagreements such as the establishment of a formal dispute resolution mechanism, Ethiopia has said it will proceed unilaterally.

“Whether Egypt takes the case to international bodies or threatens to go for a war, no force can stop us from using our own water resource,” said foreign minister Gedu. Gedu is referencing specific threats. Just days ago, Egypt said it wanted to take the matter before the United Nations Security Council. And prominent figures close to the government in Cairo have repeatedly raised the spectre of conflict. Last week, Naguib Sawiris, a billionaire businessman with close links to President Abdel Fatah al-Sisi, tweeted: “We will never allow any country to starve us, if Ethiopia doesn’t come to reason, we the Egyptian people will be the first

to call for war.”

Regional tensions rising

In early June, a report appeared in South Sudanese media claiming that Egypt had reached an agreement with South Sudan to build a military base in the town of Pagak – just across from the Ethiopian border. This report was swiftly denied by South Sudan’s government.

“The people who are saying there are [Egyptian] bases in South Sudan are forces of destruction who want to create conflict between us and Egypt, between us and Ethiopia and other neighbouring countries,” deputy foreign minister Deng Dau Deng told the *Mail & Guardian*.

At around the same time, a leaked document – an end user certificate seen by the *M&G* – shows that the government of Somalia was preparing to receive a donation of weapons from Egypt earlier this year. The consignment included 1,200 AK-47s, 636 pistols, 50 rocket-propelled grenade launchers and 36 sniper rifles. It is unknown whether the weapons shipment went ahead. “That’s not something I’m aware of,” said an Egyptian foreign ministry spokesperson.

There’s reason to be sceptical about suggestions that Egypt is trying to forge military alliances with Ethiopia’s neighbours, said William Davison, the Ethiopia researcher for the International Crisis Group. If anything, such activity would be counterproductive – it would just strengthen Ethiopia’s resolve. “Frankly it seems to be just as much in the interests of Ethiopia if the government is looking to rally the people against external forces,” he said.

There is no doubt, however, that Egypt is putting in an enormous diplomatic effort to rally regional support. Egypt’s foreign minister has been crisscrossing Africa – a continent that Egypt has historically neglected – in a bid to win allies. In March alone Shoukry visited South Africa, Burundi, Tanzania, the Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan, Niger and Rwanda.

Already, the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam is changing geopolitics as we know it – leaving Ethiopia holding all the cards. “The dispute may remain unresolved for a long time” if Egypt does not consider changing its current position, said Demeke Achiso, an international relations lecturer at Addis Ababa University.

For better or worse, Meles Zenawi – as his dream finally becomes a reality – would be proud. ■

With additional reporting from David Monodanga in Juba and Amanda Sperber in Nairobi

Ahmed Divela: The journalist who was shot in cold blood

He was one of Ghana's most fearless investigative journalists. This edited excerpt about his killing is from *Faces of Assassination*, a new book published by the Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime. The book assembles 50 profiles of people who have been assassinated by criminal groups since the start of the millennium.

With the exception of the public execution of corrupt state administrators by the military government of Jerry Rawlings in 1979, no other killing in Ghana has had as deafening a ricochet as that of journalist Ahmed Hussein-Suale Divela. Grabbing media headlines and dominating public discourse in cities and far-flung villages alike, everyone is talking about the man who lived and worked in the shadows, but whose death transformed him into a public hero.

On the night of January 16 2019, two men on a motorbike trailed a blue BMW, zipping through the streets and roads of Madina, a suburb of the Ghanaian capital, Accra. As the motorbike levelled with the car, a gun was fired at the driver, forcing him to swerve and crash the car into a roadside store. One of the men then calmly walked up to the BMW and fired two more shots at the man



Quieted questioner: Thirty-one year-old journalist Ahmed Hussein Suale was killed last year on a roadside by gunmen believed to be hired assassins. 'No tangible' progress has been made in the case of his murder (Photo: supplied)

behind the wheel. Then, turning to face the motley crowd watching from a distance, he smiled and raised a finger to his lips.

Because the gunmen did not appear to be in a hurry to make a getaway, many of the people in the crowd concluded that what they had just witnessed was the shooting of a midnight film scene by some quirky director from Ghana's movie industry.

But there was no camera crew and no lighting technician directing his floodlight at the dimly lit scene. The gunmen disappeared, and the crowd inched closer to the car, with its shattered left window. The man behind the wheel was dead. This was no movie; the blood was real.

Jonas Nyabor, a journalist with Ghana's Citi FM, said that Divela's killers were without a doubt paid assassins. "Obviously, they were trained marksmen who shot with military precision. They did not waste any bullets. All three shots hit their targets: one to the neck, the others to the chest."

Divela, 31 years old when he was killed, was a native of Wulensi, a Muslim-community village about 400km north of Accra. After graduating with a degree in political science from the University of Ghana in 2012, he chose the tough and dangerous turf of investigating organised-crime groups as a career path. This he pursued in the manner of a supercop. Divela's biggest influence was Anas Aremeyaw Anas, an internationally acclaimed Ghanaian undercover reporter whose work has

been acknowledged by the likes of Barack Obama.

Divela was a determined apprentice, quickly learning the ropes at Anas's undercover outfit, Tiger Eye. Unfazed by high-risk conditions, Divela was known for never allowing anything to stand between him and a big story. In a pained remark following the killing, Anas acknowledged Divela's position as second-in-command of the team that pulled off two of Tiger Eye's most successful assignments – "Ghana in the Eyes of God" and "Number 12".

"Ghana in the Eyes of God", a 2015 undercover investigation of the country's criminal-justice system, caught on camera 30 judges and dozens of judicial officials accepting bribes for helping to subvert the course of justice. Seven high-court judges were exposed and suspended as a result.

"Number 12" blew the whistle on corrupt football referees across Africa who had taken bribes to fix matches. A number of Ghanaian referees and Kwesi Nyantakyi, head of the Ghanaian Football Association, were caught accepting money from Tiger Eye journalists posing as intermediaries. In addition to Nyantakyi, who was banned from football for life, the sting implicated 77 referees and 14 officials.

In response to an email enquiry about the state of the investigation into Divela's death, Samuel Appiah Darko, a lawyer representing Tiger Eye, said: "Police investigations can best be described as slow. Nothing tangible has come up so far." ■

What's the deal with Africa's Covid-19 statistics?

Nanjala Nyabola

Since coronavirus first hit the continent, there has been rampant speculation that the continent's statistics just aren't right.

Some of this criticism was essentialist dismissal from a gallery programmed to expect African countries to fail. Some of it was denial that a disease that was devastating wealthier countries could simply be spreading slower in the poorest countries in the world.

And even as the numbers of infected people on the continent continues to rise, there is still a significant discrepancy in the way statistics for Africa are being read compared to those in other regions.

African countries are caught in unarticulated but omnipresent debates about the epistemology of statistics: the debate is not really about the numbers, but what we believe to be possible within our constructions of the idea of Africa.

So, for example, the criticism that Africa must be counting the “wrong way” skips over the fact that almost all countries in the world are doing something similar.

Two approaches have emerged when

it comes to Covid-19 numbers. The South Korean approach was to find everyone who has ever caught or been exposed to Covid-19 and test them all. But this requires an amazing infrastructure and many countries have gone down a different route, testing a statistically significant sample of the population to get a sense of how the disease is moving.

Although this is not as good, it is good enough. It therefore makes no sense to criticise African governments for not doing 100% testing, even though admittedly many countries can and should be testing more.

Either way, the most revealing numbers for Covid-19 in Africa will never be the absolute totals. More revealing is how the numbers change over time – and if these push governments to finally put serious money into public health to address the weak systems that allow diseases to spread. ■

Nanjala Nyabola is a writer and political analyst based in Nairobi, Kenya. This analysis was produced in partnership with Democracy in Africa



We need to end voluntourism – and the white saviour complex in which it is embedded

Rosebell Kagumire

On many flights into East Africa – particularly those from Europe and the United States – one particular sight is inescapable: the missionaries and voluntourists in their loudly-labelled t-shirts (“God loves Uganda, we love Uganda!”) en route to build a village school or run an orphanage.

Usually white, often American, they say they are here to help, but ultimately represent a deeply unequal and exploitative system – one that gives privilege to whiteness and allows black bodies to be used for their own personal development.

Among the most serious examples is that of Renee Bach, who first came to Uganda in 2008 as an unskilled 19-year-old. She returned to set up an NGO in Jinja in 2010, and started taking in malnourished children, despite having no medical training or any other relevant experience. What she did have was a “calling” to save black babies in Africa. Over the course of a decade, 105 children died under her “care”.

The world is suddenly realising that Black Lives Matter – so what about these lives? What are we doing to make sure

this does not happen again?

Bach is now being sued by relatives of the deceased in a Ugandan court. But the stories of harm in the guise of help keep coming.

Gregory Dow, a 61-year-old American Christian missionary, has just pleaded guilty to sexual conduct against girls at an orphanage he founded and ran in western Kenya. The girls were aged between 11 and 13.

Voluntourism is rooted in unequal power and unequal wealth that is built on the exploitation of generations of people in the global south. It is sustained by the belief in white supremacy, and often requires the infantilisation of the people that are supposedly being helped. It also undermines existing community responses and social safety nets – which, after the voluntourists have taken their selfies and gone home, are all that will be left.

The Covid-19 pandemic and accompanying travel restrictions have made this even clearer. In the absence of regular influxes of voluntourists, the work of local humanitarians has been more visible than ever before: the

activists who educate communities on necessary behavioural changes to prevent the spread of the virus; the volunteers who sanitise public spaces and buildings; the charities that are providing food and healthcare to plug the gaps left by the struggling economy.

We have to see possibilities outside institutionalised care of orphaned and vulnerable children. We are the ones we have been waiting for, Alice Walker said; we have always relied on the inner light in times of darkness.

The coronavirus has forced us to practise physical distancing. But now is also the time to distance ourselves from systems and practices that ultimately do more harm than good.

It's time to divest from voluntourism. New approaches to our work in our communities that do not centre on donors but on dismantling unequal systems – both local and global – are the way to go.

Among such systems are Africa's visa regimes, which make it easier for American volunteers to travel around the continent than it is for African citizens (US passport holders can access 65% of African countries without a visa on average. Although it varies from country to country, Africans can travel visa-free to just 53% of the continent). This makes it difficult if not impossible for Africans to volunteer on their own continent.

It makes no sense that a teenager from Utah should be able to walk into a charitable organisation whenever she wants and yet African youth – 65%

of the continent is under the age of 25 – are chronically underemployed and unemployed, and struggle to develop professional experience.

Voluntourism is rooted in unequal power and wealth, built on the exploitation of people in the global south

It makes no sense that untrained westerners come to Africa to build orphanages, while the violent, racist systems that create poverty in the first place remain intact. They remain unbothered by these systems even in their own immediate communities and countries where black lives continue to be disposable.

If they really wanted to make a difference, would-be voluntourists would instead lobby their own governments to shut down the tax loopholes which enable billions of dollars to escape Africa through illicit financial flows, or to relieve the debt which is crippling the ability of African governments to fund and explore meaningful development pathways.

There are ways to help alleviate poverty in Africa. Voluntourism is not among them. ■

Rosebell Kagumire is a feminist writer and award-winning blogger. She is the current curator and editor of African Feminism- AF, a platform that documents narratives and experiences of African women on the continent and in the diaspora.



Botswana's president goes shopping for a farm

But the normal rules don't apply to him. **Calistus Bosaletswe, Joel Konopo and Ntibinyane Ntibinyane**

Ol' Masisi had a farm: President Masisi is already involved in commercial livestock production and horticulture (Photo: Monirul Bhuiyan for AFP)

In south-west Botswana, near the border with South Africa, the government owns some prime farmland – Banyana Farms. The land was originally bought in order to promote commercial cattle farming in Botswana.

Last year, Banyana Farms – a state-owned company – decided to lease out several large ranches on the property, and designed a competitive tender process to do so. After all, this is valuable real estate, and the lease is for 14 years.

The biggest ranch, the 49 square kilometre Portion 2, attracted considerable interest. The 39 bidders have now been whittled down to a shortlist of three. On that shortlist is a familiar name: Mokgweetsi Masisi, the president of Botswana.

In Botswana, it is not illegal for presidents to engage in commercial enterprises. But it is frowned upon –

especially when there is any suspicion of conflict of interest.

Plenty of suspicion surrounds this transaction.

In Botswana, is it not illegal for presidents to engage in commercial enterprises. But it is frowned upon

The INK Centre for Investigative Journalism saw the tender documents for the ranch, which lay out the conditions which all potential bidders must meet. Two major conditions are that bidders must pay a visit to the farm; and must submit to an interview with the Banyana Farms assessors at the offices of Botswana's Attorney-General.

President Masisi met neither of



Legal tightrope : Representatives of the president were sent to view the farm (Photo: Monirul Bhuiyan for AFP)

these conditions. Instead, he sent representatives to view the farm; and arranged for the interview to take place in State House in Gaborone.

Even more seriously, the tender documents specify that bidders should not already own a ranch in Botswana at the time of bidding. But Masisi is engaged in commercial livestock production and horticulture at Matseta near Gaborone, where he grows vegetables and rears cattle and small stock. His family inherited a farm at Sekoma where there is commercial livestock production. He is also said to have a feedlot in Moshupa and farms at Tshele and Morupule.

The office of the president declined to respond to questions sent by the INK Centre. The ministry of agriculture, under whose remit Banyana falls, responded only to say that questions would be forwarded to the Office of the President.

Although he has so far declined to answer INK's questions, the president's

spokesperson Batlhalefi Leagajang told radio station Gabz FM that the president "doesn't have farms elsewhere". Pressed by the anchor Kealeboga Dihutso to explain further, Leagajang said the President did have "agricultural land". He did not clarify the difference between a farm and agricultural land.

"I know he [the president] is interested in Banyana Farms," Leagajang said.

Asked if it is ethical for Masisi to do business with the government in his personal capacity, Leagajang told the Gabz FM anchor, Kealeboga Dihutso, that the president does not sit on the board of Banyana Farms and is not involved in procurement.

President Masisi should not have been given preferential treatment

Micus Chimbombi, a former permanent secretary for the ministry of agriculture who is now an opposition politician, said that President Masisi should not have been given preferential treatment. He added, however, that it is difficult for public officers – such as the board of Banyana Farms – to resist pressure from politicians. "In principle they can resist but in practice that could make the outcome of their decision tilt in favour of those individuals," said Chimbombi. ■

This is an edited version of an investigation by the INK Centre for Investigative Journalism. The full story is here: <https://bit.ly/BanyanaFarms>



The Big Picture

Turning the tide: Fighters loyal to the Libyan Government of National Accord – the government that is recognised by the United Nations – celebrate after taking back territory south of the capital Tripoli. Tripoli had been under siege for more than a year by forces loyal to strongman Khalifa Haftar, who even controlled the city's civilian airport. Haftar still controls significant territory in the east of the country, however. (Photo: Mahmud Turkia for AFP)

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