

The Continent

with Mail & Guardian

No vaccine, no access

The trouble
with a vaccine
mandate on an
unvaccinated
continent



Photo: Zinyange
Auntony/AFP



COVER: In Zimbabwe, you can't go to a restaurant without a vaccine certificate. In Morocco, you need a vaccine pass to go to the cinema. But Kenya is about to go much, much further, making it compulsory for every adult to get a vaccine or else be excluded from public services. But fewer than 5% of Kenyans are vaccinated, and the country doesn't have enough doses to cover the rest (p10).

Inside:

- **Nigeria has a new, ambitious climate law.** It also has weak governance and elites that rely on selling oil (p7)
- **DRC to investigate Kabila** after media exposé (p9)
- **Deleting Facebook:** In Africa, it's not so simple (p18)
- **Afrobarometer:** Is social media a bad thing? (p20)
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- **We speak to the director of *I Am Samuel*,** the film that was too real for Kenyan censors (p25)
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THANK YOU

Over the past few months, *The Continent* has participated in some of the world's biggest investigations. We were a publishing partner for the Pandora Papers; the first African newspaper to access the Facebook document leak; and we're part of the Congo Hold-Up investigation. We can do this because we believed that readers – you – want quality journalism. In 66 editions we've been able to prove this with your help, from the ideas you send us, to each new person who sits down with a copy of *The Continent* because you shared it with them. Thank you.

ETHIOPIA

Leading from the front, or PR stunt?

Ethiopia's Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed is leading the war against the Tigrayan rebels from the front lines, according to his Twitter account, which released footage of him on patrol in sunglasses and military fatigues. Some analysts have suggested that this is a propaganda stunt designed to divert attention from the Ethiopian army's recent reverses. Either way, the front is a dangerous place, as the late President Idriss Deby Itno of Chad discovered in April this year, when he went to fight rebels and then died.



Fatigued: You probably can't see him because of his camouflage uniform, but this is actually a picture of Abiy Ahmed.

Joining Abiy at the front, according to the government, are Olympic runners Haile Gebreselassie and Feyisa Lelisa.

WILDLIFE

Too many Africans, too few lions

William Windsor, a British duke who is second in line to the throne, said that wildlife and wild spaces in Africa are under pressure from human population growth and this is "a huge challenge for conservationists". His comments have been widely interpreted as suggesting that Africans have too many children. He has three, nearly double the birth rate in his country. Contraception is generally free and widely available in Britain, unlike in many African countries. He has been widely criticised for the remarks.

COVID-19

Omicron: the new Covid-19 variant

South African epidemiologists have identified a new "super variant" of Covid-19 that may be more transmissible than previous strains. Although little is yet known about the effects of this variant, assigned the Greek letter "Omicron" by the World Health Organisation, it has officials around the world so worried that some countries have banned flights to and from southern Africa. "It has many more mutations than we expected," said Tulio de Oliveira, director of the KwaZulu-Natal Research and Innovation Sequencing Platform.

LANGUAGE

World Swahili Day

Unesco, the United Nations Agency for culture, has designated July 7 as the day to celebrate the Swahili language each year. It's the first time any African language has been officially feted by the UN. Nobody tell Unesco that, in many parts of east Africa, every day is Swahili Day.

NIGERIA

Open the money tap

To compensate for its plan to phase out fuel subsidies, the government will make direct cash transfers to the poor. Starting in July next year, as many as 40-million people may be eligible for monthly payouts of 5,000 naira (\$12.20) each, for between six and 12 months.



Photo: Brenton Geach/Gallo via Getty

SOUTH AFRICA

'Hell no, Shell'

Large crowds gathered at the Cape Town harbour last week to “unwelcome” the *Amazon Warrior*. The ship was hired by Shell to search for oil and gas deposits

under the seabed. Environmentalists say that noise from the airguns that the ship will fire in its surveys will harm marine life – and that oil exploration flies in the face of global efforts to switch from fossil fuels to renewable energy. An online petition against this expedition was signed by more than 150,000 people.

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HORTICULTURE

Malawi Mike drop

Malawi's agriculture minister has appointed none other than Mike Tyson as the country's official cannabis ambassador. Tyson, the one-time heavyweight champion of the world, and convicted rapist, now runs his own cannabis business, and claims that the drug helped to improve his mental health. Malawi legalised marijuana for medicinal use in early 2020. The landlocked southern African country is home to Malawi Gold, an iconic marijuana strain known for its energising properties.

SOMALIA

Al Shabaab blast hits Somali school

Eight people were killed and another seventeen were injured in an explosion that rocked the capital Mogadishu on Thursday. Militant group Al Shabaab has claimed responsibility, saying it had intended to hit a passing United Nations convoy. It has not yet been made clear whether the UN convoy was in fact hit by the attack, but it has been confirmed that a nearby school – the Mocaasir Primary and Secondary School – was caught up in the blast, and that schoolchildren were among the casualties.

MUSIC

Africa represents at the Grammys

There are plenty of African artists among the nominees for the 64th annual Grammy Awards. Angélique Kidjo features repeatedly for her album *Mother Nature* (Best Global Music Album, Best Global Music Performance), which includes collaborations with the likes of Burna Boy. Other notable nominations include Femi and Made Kuti (Best Global Music Album), along with Wizkid and Tems (Best Global Music Performance) and Black Coffee (Best Dance/Electronic Music Album).

Nigeria

Africa's biggest economy passes ambitious climate law

Nigeria's elites built an unequal economy by selling oil. They didn't invest much of the proceeds into their people. The climate crisis means the country can't sell oil for much longer. And communities will be hard hit by intensified droughts, floods, crop failures and rising sea levels.

A new climate change law seeks to fix all of this. Passed just last week, it follows on from President Muhammadu Buhari's commitment at COP26 – the big global climate change conference held earlier this month in Scotland – that Nigeria will hit zero overall carbon emissions by 2060.

It requires the government to set five-year budgets for carbon, capping emissions for each sector of the economy. The first one is due next November.

The nuts and bolts are to be overseen by the national environment ministry.

Like in South Africa, a National Council on Climate Change will be created to allow different parts of government to work together with civil society and companies.

In theory, this will mean Nigeria will lower its carbon pollution, but it is unclear how this new commitment to carbon zero squares with the country's other flagship projects, such as the \$12-billion oil refinery being built by Aliko Dangote (Africa's richest person).

Whereas Gulf states have diversified their economies, funded by oil revenue, Nigeria has delayed, and is running out of time. *The Continent* reported in June that if the price of oil drops to \$35 a barrel in the 2030s – as the International Energy Agency predicts – Nigeria will lose a third of its annual budget. ■



Fossil fool: Africa's richest person is building a multibillion-dollar oil refinery outside Lagos

South Africa

Sundowns crowned African champions

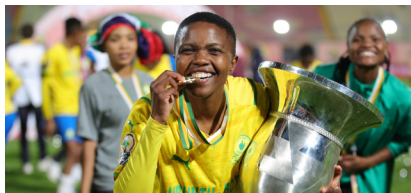
Daniel Ekonde

On Sunday, Mamelodi Sundowns became the first football club to win the African Women's Champions League trophy. The club beat Ghana's Hasaacas Ladies 2-0 in the final of the brand new competition.

This makes Mamelodi Sundowns, based in the South African capital Pretoria, the only club in Africa to have won both the women's and the men's Champions League titles (the latter in 2016). Until next year, at least.

The women's tournament works a little differently to the men's. It was held in Egypt over an intense two-week period, with eight teams participating. The format is designed to keep costs down, and to promote the women's game, which has been historically overlooked by Africa's biggest clubs.

The men's tournament takes place over the course of a season, with teams criss-crossing the continent extensively to play matches both home and away. This can



be prohibitively expensive: for example, Tanzania's Simba Sports Club forked out \$1.1-million to participate in group stage games in 2020/2021, but received only \$500,000 in prize money after being eliminated in the quarterfinals.

For Ugandan sports journalist Usher Komugisha, Sundowns' triumph came as no surprise. "It's just a reflection on how South Africa has invested in women's football – not just at [national] level but at club level. It is an opportunity for other big clubs on the African continent – you know, Al Ahly, Zamalek, Wydad [Athletic], Orlando Pirates, Kaizer Chiefs, to consider having women's teams."

The Confederation of African Football wants all teams taking part in the men's tournament next year to field a women's side too. Currently, only a handful of African nations – Cameroon, Morocco, Ghana, Nigeria, South Africa and Zambia – have a professional women's league.

Berthe Abega, a striker with Cameroonian league champions AWA FC, welcomed the new continental tournament. "The competition has given us hope," she told *The Continent*. ■

DRC

The power of journalism

Last week, journalists revealed corruption linked to Joseph Kabila. Now a judicial inquiry is probing the former president.



It's official: the Congolese government is investigating corruption allegations against former president Joseph Kabila, related to the alleged disappearance of \$138-million in state funds during his tenure.

These allegations were first revealed last week by journalists and researchers who are part of a major global investigation known as Congo Hold-Up. The investigation was based on the leak

of some 3.5-million documents – the largest such leak in African history – that showed a pattern of seemingly corrupt transactions involving Kabila's inner circle and BGFIBank, central Africa's largest bank.

The leak was obtained by PPLAAF, the Platform to Protect Whistleblowers in Africa, and the French investigative unit Mediapart, and shared with the European Investigative Collaborations network. The documents were trawled through by a consortium of investigators representing 19 different media houses across 18 countries, including *The Continent*, as well as five NGOs.

Government spokesperson and communications minister Patrick Muyaya confirmed that an investigation had been launched. "We as a government cannot remain on the sidelines in the light of such allegations," he told the news agency AFP.

Kabila did not respond to requests for comment prior to publication of the investigation, and has made no formal statement subsequently. BGFIBank's holding company, in a statement released this week, questioned the authenticity of the documents but added that "it strongly condemns acts contrary to the law and to ethics which may have been committed in the past... of which its employees could possibly have been perpetrators or accomplices to varying degrees." ■

Kenya

Maths: Only 5% of Kenyans have been vaccinated. It's a supply, not a demand issue. Photo: AFP



No vaccine, no access

Soon it will be compulsory for anyone seeking to use public services in Kenya – including schools, hospitals and transport – to present a Covid-19 vaccination certificate. How is this going to work in a country where fewer than 5% of the population have been vaccinated?

Soila Kenya

To accelerate Covid-19 vaccination rates in the country, Kenya plans to deny the unvaccinated access to public services. This would affect everything from going to schools and using public

transport to immigration services and visiting hospitals and prisons.

“Everybody seeking in-person government services should be fully vaccinated and proof of vaccination availed by December 21st, 2021,” said the health minister, Mutahi Kagwe, in a

**Mind the gap:
Only vaccinated
Kenyans will be
able to access
public services.**

Photo: AFP



public address on 21 November.

The move is surprising considering that Kenya rescinded an earlier directive mandating that government employees receive the jab or face disciplinary action. “It’s very important that we are not left behind in this world order especially because we are a tourism destination of choice,” Kagwe said.

But in a country where only 4.5% of the population has been fully vaccinated, this measure leaves very many behind.

Monica Njeri, a household manager and a mother of four, has twice sought the vaccine at a public hospital and has twice had to leave still unvaccinated.

“On the queue, you still see people arriving after you and jumping the line to get vaccinated. Then once it’s your turn they tell you they have no more vaccines. It’s very unfair,” said Njeri.

The measures mean she will no longer be able to use public transport between her home and workplace, the client’s house. “How will I go see my kids? Two of them are in boarding school,” she said.

Even if she gets vaccinated in the

next few weeks, Njeri does not have a smartphone with which to get the digital vaccine certificate that the Kenya government is issuing as proof.

With the new move, Kenya joins a small number of countries in the world to make vaccination against the coronavirus mandatory for all citizens. However, Indonesia, for example, has administered 224.9-million jabs of the vaccine to its population of 273.5-million. Kenya has administered only 6.5-million jabs to its population of 53.8-million.

Elsewhere in Africa, the Zimbabwean government mandated vaccination for its 500,000 employees.

Uganda requires it for health workers and teachers, and won’t reopen schools (shuttered in March 2020) until all school workers are vaccinated.

South Africa is considering vaccine mandates for specific events, like a Justin Bieber concert slated for next year.

The Kenyan health minister justified the new directive saying that over 95% of the severe Covid-19 cases filling up the hospitals are unvaccinated people. He

then announced a 10-day vaccination drive starting on 26 November. In just 10 days, Kenya will have to inoculate the 95% of its citizens it has not fully vaccinated over the past several months, when the effort has been plagued with vaccine and syringe shortages.

Should the government fail to dramatically increase vaccination before December 21, citizens may find themselves face to face with the security forces who enforced earlier Covid-19 measures like lockdown and curfew. At least 20 deaths were connected to the Kenya police's use of brute force, when it was charged with enforcing earlier restrictions nearly two years ago.

Meanwhile, on October 20, during the country's Mashujaa (Heroes' Day) celebrations, the health ministry announced a target of 10-million vaccinations administered by the end of 2021. That would cover fewer than 20% of the currently unvaccinated, whom the health minister will want to show proof of vaccination or be denied public services.

Monica Njeri and other Kenyan citizens who might not get the vaccine are at risk of being left behind by the Kenyan government, much like when it locked the country down with no contingency plans for workers like her, who could not work from home.

"I'll keep trying, though," said Njeri. ■

EDITOR'S NOTE

WHY KENYA AND ITS PEERS DIDN'T GET VACCINES

Around five percent of Africa's population have had a Covid-19 vaccine.

This is a manufactured crisis. Kenya, like most other countries on the continent, paid for vaccines upfront. It joined Covax, an international sourcing and sharing initiative in partnership with the World Health Organisation, through which countries pool their buying power and get more vaccines for more people.

But then Western countries put themselves first. They ordered more vaccines than they needed (the United Kingdom ordered 400-million doses for its 67-million people). Secret contracts with manufacturers put them at the front of the queue.

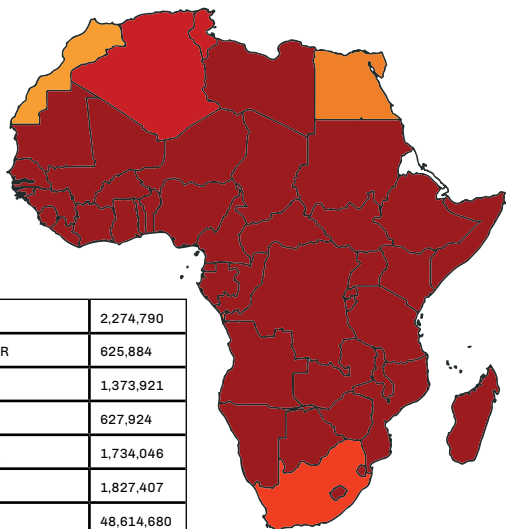
So people in rich countries started getting vaccinated a year ago. The WHO estimates that 5,000 Kenyans have died in the interim.

This ought to have shifted in the first half of this year, as manufacturers, in particular the Serum Institute of India, began fulfilling their contracts to African countries. Then India started to unravel as Covid-19 hit hard. The Institute prioritised its own country.

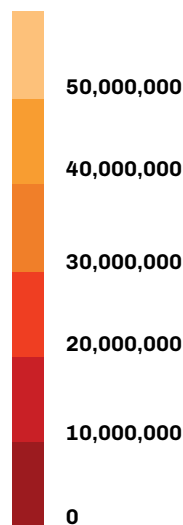
Covax, which had placed its bets on the Institute instead of spreading the risk, had a real problem. Kenya, like its peers, had spent scarce resources. It didn't have extra money lying around to go and buy from another supplier that might deliver faster.

Now it is relying on charity, with the PR-friendly sight of donations of vaccines from wealthy nations arriving in airplanes. Those vaccines arrive at the last minute, near their expiry date, and put enormous pressure on the medical system where they land.

How many vaccines has your country administered?



ALGERIA	12,008,974	LIBYA	2,274,790
ANGOLA	9,026,310	MADAGASCAR	625,884
BENIN	383,501	MALAWI	1,373,921
BOTSWANA	1,352,557	MALI	627,924
BURKINA FASO	661,796	MAURITANIA	1,734,046
BURUNDI	1,329	MAURITIUS	1,827,407
CAMEROON	859,760	MOROCCO	48,614,680
CAPE VERDE	539,908	MOZAMBIQUE	9,706,476
CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC	422,496	NAMIBIA	649,840
CHAD	249,651	NIGER	963,041
COMOROS	476,350	NIGERIA	9,640,048
CONGO	625,579	RWANDA	8,748,557
COTE D'VOIRE	3,845,788	SÃO TOMÉ AND PRÍNCIPE	114,251
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO	167,791	SENEGAL	1,903,098
DJIBOUTI	99,679	SEYCHELLES	175,390
EGYPT	36,906,765	SIERRA LEONE	744,826
EQUATORIAL GUINEA	443,135	SOMALIA	964,433
ESWATINI	293,353	SOUTH AFRICA	25,123,452
ETHIOPIA	6,890,413	SOUTH SUDAN	218,154
GABON	277,979	SUDAN	1,659,666
GAMBIA	268,008	TANZANIA	1,0001,610
GHANA	3,493,688	TOGO	1,507,722
GUINEA	2,443,497	TUNISIA	10,292,254
GUINEA BISSAU	363,573	UGANDA	4,751,422
KENYA	6,597,597	ZAMBIA	1,040,604
LESOTHO	617,671	ZIMBABWE	6,454,719
LIBERIA	589,628		



*Data collected from Africa Data Hub, accurate as of November

World

Vaccine mandates around the world

Kenya is not the first country to think about introducing a Covid-19 vaccine mandate – although, with fewer than 5% of all Kenyans covered, it is by far the least vaccinated. Here are a few other examples from around the world:

Italy

73% of 60-million vaccinated

Italy is about to tighten its vaccine mandate. Currently, only healthcare workers must be vaccinated (all other workers must be vaccinated or have a recent negative test). Starting December 15, this will extend to all school staff, policemen and soldiers. A vaccine will also be required for anyone wanting to go to a restaurant, a movie, or watch a Serie A game.

Canada

77% of 38-million vaccinated

Canada has placed government employees who refuse the vaccination on unpaid leave. Anyone who wants to travel by air, ship or train must be vaccinated.

Indonesia

42% of 270-million vaccinated

Indonesia has one of the strictest vaccination mandates in the world, making it mandatory for all adults to have the jab. The government can issue a fine in excess of \$350 to anyone who refuses to be vaccinated.

Austria

66% of nine-million vaccinated

Austria is the first European country to introduce a blanket vaccine mandate. By February 1, all adults must be vaccinated. It is not yet clear what penalties will be faced by people who refuse to get the jab.

Costa Rica

62% of five-million vaccinated

Costa Rica is the first country in the world to make Covid-19 vaccinations mandatory for children. This is common practise in most of the world for other major diseases like polio, measles, hepatitis B and diphtheria.



Covid vaccine mandates are inevitable – but it's too soon for them here in Africa

Vaccinations will eventually be mandatory here on the continent, but governments must first make them available to everyone, everywhere, before attempting to punish the unvaccinated.

Catherine Kyobutungi in Nairobi

As an epidemiologist working in Kenya I was very surprised by the government's plan to restrict public services for the people who are not fully vaccinated against Covid-19. Richer countries like the US and EU are facing serious challenges with enforcing such mandates. Where is Kenya's confidence coming from?

The country is still struggling to bring vaccine doses into the country and get them to those who would like to get the jab as soon as they can. While vaccine supply has improved in the past few months, it is still erratic, and largely dependent on donations from rich countries who have already broken a string of promises to deliver doses to African countries.

Kenya's latest strategy is premised on an expectation that it will receive an additional eight-million doses, but so many such projections have failed to come to pass that there is reason to be skeptical

that this time will be different.

Even if the rich countries do send sufficient vaccines, expecting uptake to increase dramatically between now and Christmas is a tall order. Restriction of services to the unvaccinated is supposed to start on December 21.

Even though the vaccination rate is approaching 25% in Nairobi, the full vaccination rate in some counties of Kenya is still below 1%. Like other health services, vaccines are not finding their way to the country's most marginalised counties. Until anyone anywhere in Kenya can get a vaccine whenever they want it, mandates are not the best strategy.

That said, I do see where the government is coming from. Countries are watching how the delta variant is wreaking havoc in highly vaccinated populations. Any country which wants to control Covid-19 once and for all needs to achieve herd immunity and the fastest way there is near-universal vaccination. For Covid-19 herd immunity, it has been

Armed response: Mandates are not new, but if supply and access issues mean people can't actually get a shot in the arm, then you're shooting yourself in the foot. Photo: Brian Ongoro/AFP



estimated that as much as 90% of the whole population needs to be vaccinated.

Even though Africa has not had the same scale of diagnosed cases, hospitalisations and deaths, every wave has put an untenable strain on the healthcare system. Countries cannot afford repeated Covid-19 waves. They disrupt the economy, schooling, and other health programmes. Meanwhile, erratic supply disrupts even the best laid vaccination plans.

It is tempting for our governments to resort to whatever measures might maximise uptake, whenever doses are available in the country.

Nevertheless, a vaccine mandate in Kenya is premature. You *cannot* have mandates until you have addressed your access issues.

Vaccine mandates are not new. Herd immunity for many other vaccine-preventable illnesses has been achieved by instituting mandates. If asking individuals to take vaccines they do not want seems controversial to you, remember that

the coronavirus is airborne and/or transmitted through droplets suspended in the air. The simple acts of breathing, talking, sneezing, laughing and singing, can result in the virus being passed from one individual to another. So, while it's important to consider the personal freedom not to be vaccinated, what about the personal freedom not to be infected by simply existing?

There has also been a failure of public health communication. Mandates must be accompanied by continued public awareness campaigns to ease people's vaccine hesitancy.

African countries should only deploy mandates once they have cleared the accessibility bar.

Right now, more effort needs to go into easing access for everyone, before considering punitive measures against those still unvaccinated. ■

Catherine Kyobutungi is the Executive Director of the African Population and Health Research Centre in Nairobi

World

Can Facebook be trusted to invade our privacy?

Facebook says it must track us to keep us safe, but it is failing to keep its end of the bargain

ANALYSIS

Claire Wilmot

In countries without robust data protection laws, whenever you access a Facebook page or a website that uses Facebook plugins, the company downloads a tiny but powerful text file onto your computer or smartphone.

This file is called a “datr” cookie. It is so powerful because it allows Facebook to track the browser activity of anyone (even non-Facebook users) for up to two years.

In other words, it lets Facebook gather data about where you go on the internet. This helps it to sell adverts targeted at you, based on your online behaviour. Facebook also says it helps to make the platform safer by detecting and preventing fake or harmful networks of accounts.

If this sounds like an invasion of privacy, you might be right. The cookie has been the subject of a number of legal actions, including in Belgium, where the country’s Privacy Commission ruled that datr cookies violated the country’s privacy laws. In that case, in an attempt to justify the infringements on privacy, Facebook argued that the primary purpose of the datr cookie was to make Facebook safer.

Facebook’s own internal documents, leaked to *The Continent* and other international media, tell a different story. They show the datr cookie helped Facebook’s integrity team to identify a co-ordinated network of accounts that was spreading hate speech and disinformation in Ethiopia. Thanks to the cookie, Facebook could trace all but two of the 22 accounts in the network to a single user.

But as *The Continent* reported, this network remains active – and is still spreading incitements to violence.

For years, Facebook and others have peddled the idea that security trumps privacy. And yes, in this case, the datr cookie *was* used to detect a harmful network – but nothing was done to mitigate that network’s harm.

So what function do these invasive measures really serve? ■

Claire Wilmot is a freelance journalist and a researcher at the London School of Economics.

Should we delete Facebook? It's not really that simple

For many Africans, Facebook is the internet.

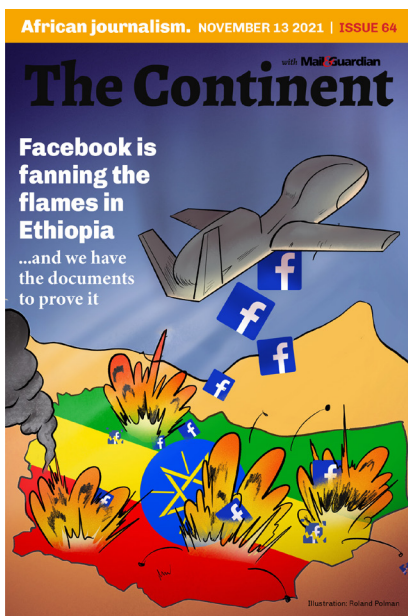
Rosemary Ajayi

The first time I personally experienced the weaponisation of Facebook was in 2009. I had fallen out with a well-known activist in real life, which then led to me being subjected to a targeted harassment campaign on Facebook, including the use of a fake Facebook profile and a suggestion that I should be shot.

Despite submitting a five-page report, Facebook failed to provide any support.

Over a decade later, Meta – Facebook's newly-rebranded holding company – is still slow to protect users in Africa, particularly when it comes to non-English language content (as highlighted by *The Continent's* recent investigation into Facebook's role in spreading hate speech in Ethiopia).

However, in spite of renewed calls to #DeleteFacebook in the wake of the recent revelations detailed in the leaked Facebook Papers, I do not believe that



deleting Facebook is the right approach for African users.

While it might be possible for many in western countries to quit Facebook with minimal inconvenience, for people across Africa, it is not quite as simple.

Let's consider the role played by Facebook in everyday African lives beyond building communities and promoting businesses. Understanding these roles might lead to a necessary shift in focus from "Should we delete Facebook?" to "Is it even possible to delete Facebook?"

Across Africa, Meta is stepping in where governments have failed their citizens. The company has worked very

hard to build relationships with African tech leaders, entrepreneurs, universities, civil society and even governments. While the leaked Facebook Papers show that the company is under-investing in markets outside the United States, many in Africa take no offence from this, particularly as Meta is a private enterprise which already makes Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram available at no financial cost.

Let's consider the role played by Facebook in everyday African lives beyond building communities and promoting businesses. Understanding these roles might lead to a necessary shift in focus from 'Should we delete Facebook?' to 'Is it even possible to delete Facebook?'

In addition, the company pays taxes and provides employment on the continent. It supports female entrepreneurs through She Means Business. It is investing in businesses, innovation hubs, digital rights organisations and media literacy programmes in schools. The company has also funded fact-checking initiatives in Africa since 2018, and continues to work with a diverse range of stakeholder groups to protect elections in Africa. Meta is working with the Nigerian government to help boost the tourism sector post-Covid. No other social media company gives back to Africa in this manner.

But even if Africans could afford to reject funding from Meta and were prepared to purge the company from our lives, how do we make this happen when the company is investing heavily in infrastructure to bring Africa online?

Through its Free Basics initiative, the company provides free access to a selection of websites including job boards and healthcare portals.

In Nigeria, Meta is working with several state governments on fibre connectivity projects. And, the company is currently working with partners to build 2Africa, an undersea cable which will serve several countries in Africa, Europe and the Middle East.

Because of these deep connections on the continent – and the sheer ubiquity of Facebook's services – any criticism of the company is often dismissed by African tech and civil society actors.

But the Facebook Papers have shown us that these unprecedented opportunities come with the potential to cause very serious real-world harm.

So even if we do not delete Facebook, we need to be pressing our governments, and Facebook itself, to take the safety of its African users a lot more seriously. ■

Rosemary Ajayi is the disinformation lead at the Digital Africa Research Lab.

Do you think we should be deleting Facebook? Send us your thoughts (in 100 words or less) by emailing letters@thecontinent.org

Is social media a good thing?

When it comes to social media, Africans have a pretty clear-eyed view of the pros and cons.

Among the 72% of Africans who have heard of platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and WhatsApp, large majorities say social media makes people more informed about current events (89%) and helps them have more impact on political processes (73%). That's according to Afrobarometer surveys in 34 African countries between late 2019 and mid-2021. But large majorities also think social media makes users more likely to believe false news (75%) and more intolerant of those with different views (62%).

So, overall, is social media a good thing or a bad thing?

By more than two to one, Africans say

the effects of social media on society are positive (57% – vs 24% who see them as negative).

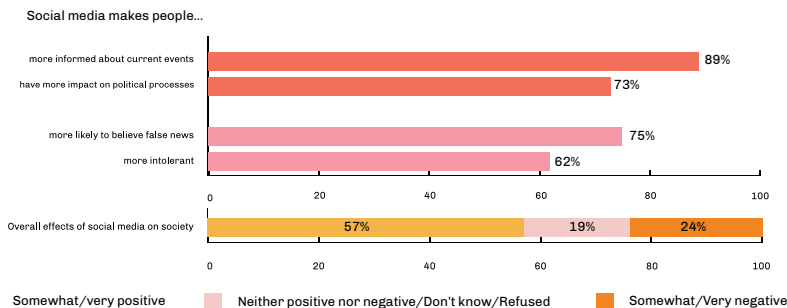
Positive exceeds negative in all surveyed countries except Mali and Tanzania, where the two sides are tied.

It makes little difference whether or not respondents are pro-democracy, or whether or not they trust their country's ruling party: their views on the overall impact of social media are about the same.

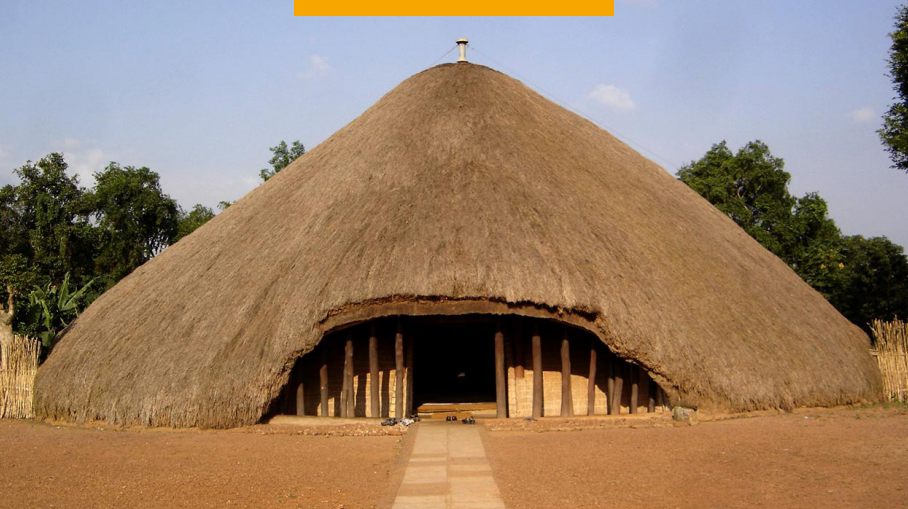
And whether good or bad, social media's effects are likely to keep growing.

On average, across the 31 countries where we have asked this question since 2014/2015, the proportion of citizens who get news from social media “a few times a week” or “every day” has doubled – from 21% to 41%.

Effects of social media | 34 African countries



Source: Afrobarometer, a non-partisan African research network that conducts nationally representative surveys on democracy, governance, and quality of life. Face-to-face interviews with 1,200-2,400 people in each country yield results with a margin of error of +/- 2 to 3 percentage points.



The Restoration: Buganda's royal tombs return

Colonial invasion and the creation of the Ugandan state meant one of the country's royal resting places fell into neglect. More recently, a fire laid waste to the world heritage site. But soon the site will again be open to those wishing to pay their respects.

Andrew Arinaitwe in Buganda

Prince Daudi Chwa takes off his shoes before approaching the sacred Kasubi royal tomb in which his grandfather is buried. The tomb's restoration, following a devastating fire in 2010, is nearly complete.

"We are gathered here," says Charles Peter Mayiga, the prime minister of Buganda, "to perform one of the most

important rituals: the thatching of the mausoleum called Muzibu-Azaala-Mpanga."

The Bantu kingdom of Buganda exists somewhat uneasily within the larger Uganda: running a parallel parliament and cabinet, but subject to the country's rulers. Four of its most recent kings are buried in Muzibu-Azaala-Mpanga, which translates idiomatically as "only the ruthless can bring forth the powerful".



Remembering the kings: A portrait of a kabaka (king) and spears, at the Kasubi Tombs in Kampala, the resting place of Buganda's kings. Photo: David Turnley/Corbis/VCG via Getty Images

The mausoleum is a dome-shaped hut, 7.5-metres high, woven with reed pillars, with bark cloth curtains and a grass thatched roof. It dates back to 1882 and sits on a 26-hectare site. The kingdom itself was unified as early the 13th century, and there are some 30 other royal burial grounds.

First built by Muteesa I – king at the time European imperialists first established contact with Buganda – the tombs have stood through time, but not without trouble.

Macai Nakabale, the 72-year-old head of the royal thatchers' clan, remembers the sorry state they were in when he was a teenager: "The tomb was destroyed, with its roof partly leaking. The kingdom had been abandoned because of the political

tension from the 1966 crisis."

Buganda has long had a strained relationship with the country the British made around it. The kingdom was abolished when, in 1966, Uganda's prime minister invaded the palace of Buganda's king and sent him into exile. For decades afterwards, traditional rulers like Muteesa II, the deposed king, were outlawed in Uganda.

In 1993, however, Uganda's then and current president, Yoweri Museveni, agreed to lift the ban on traditional rulers, and Mutebi II, a son of Muteesa II, was crowned Kabaka – king of Buganda. The Baganda – people of Buganda – were then able to begin renovating some of the kingdom's royal sites, including the Kasubi tomb. In 2001 the site was declared a Unesco world heritage site. The UN agency called it "a masterpiece of human creativity". Then, on 16 March 2010, it was nearly destroyed by a fire, the cause of which is still a mystery.

One of the tomb's caretakers, Esau Makumbi, who is now 96 years old, told *The Continent* he was there the evening the fire started. Suspicions of arson drove nearby Baganda to riot at the site. "Tear gas was released and bullets were fired,"



Grave undertaking: The royal tombs were in a dire state after decades of neglect and a ruinous fire. Photo (right): Grace Matsiko/AFP via Getty Images

Makumbi recalls. “Inside the tomb we lost everything – including historic letters.”

Today is a better day.

Prince Daudi Chwa, who is representing the Kabaka (king), starts off by handing over a red bull to be slaughtered. The tomb and grounds will be covered by the blood of the bull, protecting them from future tragedies.

Providing more mundane protection, the Japanese government has donated a \$500,000 fire-fighting system and large water tanks now dot the grounds. The tomb's frame has also been protected with fireproof paint.

Restoring the tomb and grounds



has cost close to \$2-million – a worthy investment in Buganda culture, but also in the Ugandan economy: Before the 2010 fire, two in every 10 tourists visiting the country included Kasubi tombs – just 15 minutes from Kampala's central business district – on their itinerary. With the tomb closed, Kyewalabye Male, the kingdom's tourism minister, says over six billion Uganda shillings (\$1.7-million) has been lost.

Prince Chwa hands four bundles of tightly rolled grass to the main thatcher, to kick off the ceremony of roofing the almost finished tomb.

Across the field the bull is being dragged away. Two men hold tightly to its horns, pulling it while another pushes it forward from the rear.

The bull's resistance suggests it may know that its ending is not going to be a pleasant one. But the ritual must be done to avoid future catastrophes.

For Baganda, a part of their history has been restored. ■



Reed'n right: Thatchers work on the the sacred Kasubi royal tomb in the kingdom of Buganda.





Banned in Kenya: The queer film that incensed the censors

***I am Samuel*, Pete Murimi's debut feature-length documentary about the struggles of a gay Kenyan man, is available to stream worldwide – except in Kenya, where it has been banned by the classification board.**

Wilfred Okiche

Ahead of *I am Samuel*'s October release, the Kenyan Film Classification Board in a press conference announced that the film was banned from screening in the country.

Why? Because *I am Samuel* supports the activities of LGBTQI+ people. In the censors' words, Pete Murimi's film "blatantly violates Article 165 of the Penal Code that outlaws homosexuality..." and "Article 45 of the Kenyan Constitution, which recognises the family as the basic unit of society and defines marriage as between two persons of the opposite gender".

Murimi has been working for at least 20 years as a journalist and television documentarian, winning numerous awards – including the CNN

MultiChoice African journalist of the year – for work drawing attention to human rights and social justice issues. He approached his debut feature-length film *I am Samuel* with the same sense of purpose.

I am Samuel, filmed over five years beginning in 2014, follows a modest young Kenyan man as he navigates love and life in an acutely homophobic country. The documentary premièred at Canada's Hot Docs Documentary Festival in 2020 and went on to screen at over 25 festivals before releasing globally.

"They gave it a restriction rating, which means it is illegal to be shown in Kenya," Murimi tells *The Continent*. He says his team is mulling over how best to engage with the government agency over the decision.

It isn't the first time the classification board has gone this route. In 2018, a similar ban was slammed on *Rafiki*, the film about a romance between two teenage girls, directed by Wanuri Kahiu – despite the fact that *Rafiki* was the first Kenyan film to screen in competition at the Cannes Film Festival. Kahiu went to court, but found little respite as Kenya's high court ruled against *Rafiki's* freedom of expression in its long-delayed verdict last year.

In 2015, *Stories of Our Lives*, an anthology of five short films dramatising true stories of queer life in Kenya, was banned for promoting homosexuality.

Even though he expected some kind of pushback, Murimi says he had hoped for a different outcome: *I am Samuel* is fact-based, about a real human being. Surely, they would respect the constitutionally guaranteed right of freedom of expression?

No.

Murimi views the ban through a journalistic lens. "I consider it wrong to censor what we can and cannot cover. It is our job to mirror society, and I think that stories of the LGBTQI+ community are important. It is a very dangerous, slippery slope we are on," he says. "Today it is LGBTQI+ rights, tomorrow it could be freedom of expression. And it is already an attack on freedom of expression anyway to decide what is convenient and what isn't."

Homosexual intimacy is criminalised under colonial-era penal laws, which outlaws "carnal knowledge against the order of nature and indecent acts between males," punishable by up to 14-year prison sentences. This has made the LGBTQI+ community, particularly those unprotected by wealth





or privilege, vulnerable to hate crimes.

Murimi wanted to make a film that explored what it was like for the majority of the country's queer demography. He enlisted his friend and frequent collaborator, Toni Kamau, who owned the production company We are Not the Machine and they raised funds from documentary grants.

Murimi found himself drawn to the complicated but ultimately loving relationship existing between Samuel and his parents, particularly his father, a Pentecostal pastor. This is captured on screen, adding a refreshing poignancy to *I am Samuel* that steers the film away from hopelessness.

Although Murimi says he was personally never in any danger during the shoot, for Samuel the realities of living as a gay man were quite different. During the shoot, Samuel had to move homes a couple of times after he was threatened with violence; one of these episodes is depicted in the film.

Still, producer Kamau is resolute. "I love telling stories about outsiders, rebels and changemakers ... They are the ones who make society better, by challenging it. I generally believe everyone has a right to share their story, period."

I am Samuel exists to complement the efforts of activists and advocates drawing attention to the situation in Kenya.

Samuel himself tells *The Continent*: "It was a way of coming out to the society and to make people stop thinking that being gay is Western culture. This film is about the LGBTQI+ community, what we go through. I was laying a foundation for people to at least understand who we are, knowing that we are not different from them." ■

THE QUIZ

0-3

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

4-7

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

8-10

"I have a firm grip of all the big hot potato issues. Ow."



1_ Maakouda is a food popular throughout the Maghreb, especially in Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia. What is its main ingredient?

2_ Who was the first African head of Greenpeace?

3_ Which South Sudanese model (pictured) was discovered at an outdoor market in 1995 in Crystal Palace, London?

4_ What was the name of the song released in November 1997 by Congolese singer Papa Wemba featuring an all-star line-up of Bayete, Jabu Khanyile, Lagbaja, Lourdes Van-Dunem, Wally Badarou and Youssou N'Dour?

5_ Which country imposed sanctions on the International

Criminal Court's former chief prosecutor Fatou Bensouda for investigating alleged war crimes?

6_ Lake Kivu is a freshwater lake which is part of which series of lakes?

7_ Who is the prime minister of Ethiopia?

8_ How many countries comprise Lusophone Africa (where Portuguese is an official language)?

9_ The Gambia is surrounded by which other country?

10_ What does the 'SARS' in #EndSARS stand for?

HOW DID I DO?

WhatsApp 'ANSWERS' to +27 73 805 6068 and we'll send the answers to you!

HH's first 100 days

Zambia's president came to power on a wave of optimism. Has he delivered?

Ernest Chanda

On 24 August 2021, Hakainde Hichilema took the oath of office as Zambia's seventh president after inflicting a comprehensive election defeat on incumbent Edgar Lungu. He inherited a country with a major debt crisis that is in a period of economic decline, and a population that expects rapid improvements.

So what has he achieved in his first 100 days? On governance, Hichilema has restored the rule of law and allowed free speech. Formerly banned radio and television stations are now operating. He also impressed by issuing an early announcement that required the police to remove party cadres/activists from bus stations and other areas to prevent them from extorting money. This is a major change to the Lungu era.

But in other areas the situation is less clear cut. His supporters expected Hichilema to also go full throttle on the fight against corruption, but some think he has been too soft, with many in his

party and outside expressing displeasure. This is despite Hichilema promising to establish fast-track courts for economic crimes when he opened parliament on September 10.

On the economic front, he has tried hard to boost the economy by first stabilising the Kwacha, and second by increasing the Constituency Development Fund from K1.6-million to K25.7-million to actualise decentralisation in the 2020 budget. Constituency projects are also intended to create jobs to tackle high unemployment – a critical issue if Hichilema is to retain the support of young Zambians.

But while relations between the government, foreign donors and the International Monetary Fund have improved, there has yet to be any concrete progress over the two most pressing issues facing the country: economic bail-out and debt-restructuring on the one hand, and the management of the country's economically and symbolically important copper mines on the other.

Hichilema's plea has been that people must give him time as he restores order. This is a reasonable request given the challenges he faces. But for the hungry and unemployed such patience is not a luxury they can afford. ■



Ernest Chanda is a journalist and an editor of The Mast, an independent newspaper. This analysis was produced in collaboration with Democracy in Africa

Rise and shine



Continental Drift

Samira Sawlani

Morning routines have become quite the hot topic of late. How we wake up to birdsong and wind chimes, how we align our chakras while saluting the sun, how we sip delicately on our hot water with lemon, meditating on the day ahead.

(Or how we fall out of bed flat onto our faces as we reach for our phones to turn off their screeching alarms, before blearily administering piping hot coffee directly into our veins.)

Yes we do love our mornings, almost as much as we love our leaders. Which has us wondering how they go about their own morning rituals.

Croissant or cross uncle?

Does President Kenyatta sit at the breakfast counter, coffee mug in hand, having a giggle as he reads the Pandora Papers, much like we do the comics?

Perhaps President Biya meditates upon the beautiful mountains in Geneva as he plans his next visit to Cameroon, while colonels Doumbouya and Goita engage in some vigorous physical exercise, asking their aides to pretend to be presidents who they can attempt to overthrow.

Among them may also be the pious, who start their day on their knees in prayer, calling upon God to protect them from the mean things the opposition and pesky human rights activists keep saying about them.

Screen time or scream time?

One of the things the experts say we shouldn't be doing first thing in the morning is look at our phones, but I suspect most of us are guilty of opening our Twitter to see who is fighting who, checking Instagram to see whose perfect life we'd like to be lied about to today, and of course posting the next bit of personal information on Facebook for old Zuck to monetise.

Seems the government of Burkina Faso is so concerned about this bad habit that in the interests of public health, they've decided to block mobile internet.

How very zen.

Unlike last week, when the country saw protests demanding the resignation of President Roch Marc Christian Kaboré after a deadly attack in Inata, in which 49 gendarmes and four civilians were killed. Meanwhile when the social media ban began last Sunday, protesters tried to block a French convoy, which led to people being injured after soldiers are said to have fired at them.

Perhaps Kaboré is taking inspiration from authorities in Sudan who shut down



Windsor Knot:
William Arthur
Philip Louis
Mountbatten
Windsor decided to
share his thoughts
on Africa with us.

the internet a month ago after Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok was removed from the role by General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, setting off anti-coup protests across the country.

Hamdok was reinstated this week and access to messaging and social media platforms have been restored, meaning the people of Sudan can look at their phones first thing in the morning all they want. Except of course for the forty people killed when security forces fired at protesters.

Will.U.STFU?

Many of us need a few minutes of silence in the morning, before starting our day. Some calm before the storm, if you will. But there are those who should consider spending their entire day in silence.

Take William Windsor: This week the British hair-not-apparent said these actual words: “The increasing pressure on Africa’s wildlife and wild spaces as a result of human population presents a

huge challenge for conservationists.”

A wealthy, white, British man telling us about the problem with those pesky Africans and all the gosh darn children they keep having. Why, the number of children of the average woman in Africa is *more than half* the number of children that his own country’s distinctly average prime minister has fathered. The audacity.

Class act

Speaking of kids, ask them about their morning routine and most will say it involves getting ready for school.

For adolescent mothers and pregnant students in Tanzania, however, this has not the case after the late John Magufuli, imposed a presidential ban upon them going to school. This week, though, the country’s minister for education at last announced a lifting of the ban – meaning these girls will finally be allowed to continue with their education.

Now that’s the kind of news we love waking up to. ■

THE BIG PICTURE

Troubled waters: Lake Kivu straddles Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo, and is home to about two-million people, many of whom make a living through fishing and transport. The lake contains huge quantities of methane, which, if extracted, could be worth \$42-billion. But scientists worry any change to the lake's ecosystem could release the highly volatile gas into the air where it could ignite – with devastating consequences. Photo: Moses Sawasawa/AFP



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