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The Continent



The price of getting by

PHOTO: BADRU KATUMBA/AFP



COVER: Headline figures show inflation is falling across much of Africa. But aggregate numbers often mask people's lived experiences. *The Continent* sent reporters into markets in Cairo, Dar es Salaam, and Accra to track prices of everyday essentials – and report on how they've changed over the past three years. For most people, the cost of living remains painfully high.

Yet families are adjusting, with daily ingenuity: preparing smaller portions, stretching meals, buying cheaper substitutes, borrowing what they can – the ordinary calculations of getting through another day.

The South African writer Es'kia Mphahlele called his first collection of stories *Man Must Live*. Nearly eight decades later, we're still trying to.

Inside

7 **Migration:** Europe repackages Rwanda deportations deal – this time it's better, promise

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The Big Annual Survey™

We publish this newspaper each week so that you can learn what's happening on this continent, and share that in conversations with other humans. To do it better, we do this big listening exercise each year (yes, American midterm buzzwords have infected our brains too). Tell us what *The Continent* means to you, does for you, why you share it, and what we can do better. In doing that you'll be taking part in one of the most-answered surveys in all of journalism. Bonus: there are also some illustrations. And a photo with a couch in it.



THE WEEK IN BRIEF

SOMALIA

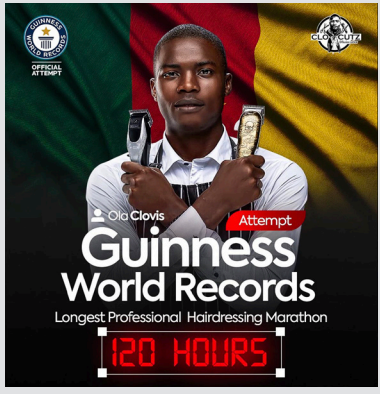
Mogadishu: It's not me, it's UAE

Somalia has ordered Ahmed Alremeithi, the United Arab Emirates' ambassador, to leave the country within 72 hours. Somalia accused the UAE of interfering in its internal affairs, *Al Jazeera* reports. Tensions have flared over Abu Dhabi's alleged support for Israel's recognition of Somaliland, a breakaway region of Somalia. In January, Somalia cancelled all bilateral agreements with the Emirates. Last month, Algeria also cut ties with the UAE for backing Israel and supporting Morocco's claim to Western Sahara.

KENYA

Three athletes censured for doping

The reigning world and former Olympic marathon champion, Peres Jepchirchir, has been banned for three years after testing positive for a performance-enhancing substance, *Al Jazeera* reports. The Kenyan athlete admitted to breaching anti-doping rules and has accepted the disqualification of all of her competitive results since 17 July this year. Two other Kenyans, Veronica Loleo and Ronald Korir, were also banned for anti-doping rule violations.



Hair to the throne: *Clocutz is gunning for Nigerian rival T-Jos's world record.*

CAMEROON

Buzz cut short by power failure

A Cameroonian barber was forced to begin again 23 hours into his Guinness World Record attempt for the longest hairdressing marathon. Ola Clovis, known as Clocutz, began his run on Tuesday, but an electrical outage fried his cables. He restarted his attempt on Wednesday. The current record of 72 hours was set by Nigerian barber T-Jos earlier this year. Clocutz hopes to secure the record by aiming for 120 hours. His livestream was down at the time of going to press, but TikTok updates suggested he was still going strong.



Slice of the action: *While African migrants continue dying in the Mediterranean Sea, generals, strongmen, tribal chiefs and foreign contractors are busy celebrating while carving up and sharing out the Libyan cake.*

GHANA

Presidential jet-getter fails to read the room

Criticism has trailed Ghana's purchase of a $60-million presidential jet after the plane arrived in the country on Monday. President John Mahama described the expense as necessary and justified, claiming it was replacing an ageing aircraft, the *BBC* reports. But the move reads more like a misplaced priority at a time when everyday Ghanaians are struggling with the cost of living. All this against the backdrop of Ghana pursuing an economic recovery plan after years of challenges that led to a bailout from the International Monetary Fund.

ETHIOPIA

Humanitarian aid operations threatened

The International Red Cross says it is struggling to reach all communities in the Oromia region owing to armed conflict and displacement, the *Addis Standard* reports. The organisation said it is escalating efforts but warned that the humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate. The region has faced the brunt of fighting involving federal forces and the Oromo Liberation Army, compounded by intercommunal violence that has disrupted trade and worsened food insecurity. Civilian casualties have been rising since late October.

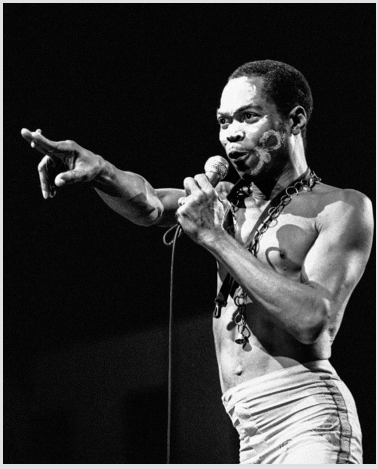


PHOTO: LAURENT REBOURS/AP

Posthumous: *Fela Kuti also received a Grammy Lifetime Achievement award.*

MUSIC

Fela and Sade get their flowers

Fela Kuti, the OG founder of Afrobeat (not to be confused with Afrobeats) has been inducted into the 2026 Rock & Roll Hall of Fame, becoming the first African-born inductee. The award was accepted by his children at the Peacock Theatre in Los Angeles. This came months after the artist, who died in 1997, was awarded a posthumous Grammy Lifetime Achievement award for his lasting contribution to music. British-Nigerian singer-songwriter Sade Adu was also inducted into the Hall of Fame in the performer category.

SOUTH AFRICA

Would-be mercenaries face the law

Four Zimbabweans arrested in South Africa for allegedly attempting to travel to Russia to fight against Ukraine have abandoned their bail applications. They are now seeking plea agreements with the state. The *SABC* reports the accused appeared at the Kempton Park magistrates' court on Tuesday, where they are being tried under South Africa's law regulating foreign military assistance. They were among a larger group of nine Zimbabwean nationals arrested earlier this month as part of a wider intelligence operation into recruitment networks feeding the war.

SIERRA LEONE

Pressure mounts to give up fugitive drug lord

Dutch authorities are again calling on Sierra Leone to extradite one of Europe's most wanted drug smugglers. Jos Leijdekkers has been sentenced to prison in absentia in Europe. He is believed to be at large in Freetown, but Sierra Leone claims it does not know his whereabouts. *Africanews* reports that the Netherlands is now offering a €2-million reward for information leading to the fugitive's arrest. Last month, the European Commission halted budgetary aid to Sierra Leone to pressure Freetown into arresting and extraditing Leijdekkers.



PHOTO: MAHMOUD HJAJ/AP

Sudan jeopardy: *RSF leader Mohamed Hamdan 'Hemedti' Dagalo, right.*

SUDAN

One death sentence is not enough

A court in Sudan has sentenced the leader of the Rapid Support Forces, Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, aka Hemedti, and 13 other senior commanders to death. According to *Sudan Tribune*, the sentence is for looting Sudan's National Medical Supplies Fund during the war. This is Hemedti's second death sentence in one year. The court ordered that the leaders' assets be confiscated, their bank accounts frozen, and that they pay $396-million in damages. It also recommended revoking their citizenship and passports.



The (SUB)TEXT

YUSUF OMOTAYO

This is undoubtedly Aliko Dangote's year – and not only because of his refinery's initial public offering. The continent's richest man has become the darling of African presidents, whose industrial ambitions seem to depend on securing his investment. Dangote, who already operates in 17 African countries, is planning a refinery in Kenya, to the delight of President William Ruto. Two weeks ago, alongside Namibia's president, he broke ground on a fuel storage and pipeline project intended to serve five countries in Southern Africa. Last week, a Ugandan delegation visited him seeking their own refinery. Gabon wants cement and fertiliser factories. Ethiopia, already home to a Dangote cement plant, wants a fertiliser factory too. Tanzania's President Samia Suluhu Hassan still hopes to secure a fertiliser project after missing out to Kenya on a refinery. Increasingly, African governments are banking their industrial ambitions on one man – and hoping his business plans become their development plans.■

NEWS

RWANDA

Europe turns to Africa to dump its undesirables – again

After the failure of the UK's asylum scheme with Rwanda, five EU countries have reworked the controversial deal and made it 'better'. Or so they claim.

YUSUF OMOTAYO

FIVE European countries – Austria, Denmark, Germany, Greece, and the Netherlands – are reviving the controversial plan to transfer rejected asylum seekers to Rwanda from 2027, despite ongoing concerns over its human-rights record.

In a joint statement on Monday, the European Union states claimed this scheme was different, because "Rwanda has acceded to … key UN conventions on human rights, refugee rights, protection of migrant workers, the prohibition of torture, and the protection of children".

When they arrive in Rwanda, the migrants will receive temporary accommodation and be issued with residence permits. They can then choose to integrate into society, return to their home country, or relocate to any country they can enter legally.

In 2022, Rwanda signed a similar deal with the United Kingdom. It was scrapped before it was implemented after the UK Supreme Court declared it unlawful and found Rwanda's asylum system had serious flaws.

Human Rights Watch said Rwanda's domestic and regional human-rights record makes it unsafe for deportees. President Paul Kagame has been accused of suppressing political opposition and stifling free speech while arming rebel groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Migration scholar Professor Loren Landau said that by making Europe dependent on him, "Kagame has essentially written himself a licence for further abuses under his own authoritarian rule".

"Kagame is a core and stable leader with a demonstrated ability to make shrewd deals – and deliver on promises – with minimal regard for rights and law," he said.

Rwanda's ministry of foreign affairs did not respond to questions from *The Continent* by the time of publication. ■

GUINEA-BURKINA FASO

Miners' expulsion sparks diplomatic row

LAMINE TRAORÉ IN OUAGADOUGOU

TENSIONS are rising between Burkina Faso and Guinea after the latter's large-scale expulsion of artisanal gold miners, many of whom are Burkinabè.

Guinea banned illegal artisanal mining in early November, citing severe environmental damage. Since then, 37,000 Burkinabè have been repatriated. Many of them say they experienced violence and some said their belongings had been seized.

The expulsions have sparked a diplomatic row, with Ouagadougou accusing Conakry of mistreating its citizens and failing to notify its embassy.

Guinea suspended Burkina Faso's national television station on Thursday for broadcasting a segment it viewed as derogatory, which included a caricature of President Mamadi Doumbouya.

Political and economic analyst Martin Sawadogo said artisanal mining stems from youth unemployment and noted the dangers inherent in the practice due to the use of toxic products such as cyanide and mercury. He said the repatriation efforts showed Burkina Faso was taking the situation seriously. ■



Heading out: *An artisanal gold miner en route to Burkina Faso carries her belongings to a repatriation vehicle at a stop in Bamako, Mali.*

PHOTO: AFP

CHAD

Presidential promises do little to stem bitter clashes

It will take a lot more than disarming civilians to end deadly clashes, as competition for land and water fuel grows.

ABOUBAKAR NOUR IN N'DJAMENA

CHADIAN President Mahamat Déby Itno has ordered civilians to surrender their weapons to the state after clashes between rival communities early this month left at least 25 people dead.

However, analysts say that disarmament alone won't end the persistent conflicts, which are driven by land disputes and growing competition for water and farmland.

Déby ended a nine-day tour of six provinces on Sunday, promising tougher security measures and warning that anyone found carrying "weapons of war" would be detained. He also dismissed several local officials over their handling of the violence.

The tour took him through Ennedi-Ouest, Wadi-Fira, Ouaddaï, Salamat, Batha, and Hadjer-Lamis.

In Hadjer-Lamis, fighting between the Kreda and Kouka communities killed more than two dozen people in early November. In neighbouring Wadi-Fira, a territorial dispute between the Baoura and Naoura communities has persisted since 2024.

Over the years, climate change has reduced available water and, by extension, arable land, leading nomadic herders and farmers to fight over scarce resources.

Although the president has consistently affirmed his neutrality in the ongoing conflict, farmers frequently accuse local authorities of siding with herders during land and crop-destruction disputes.

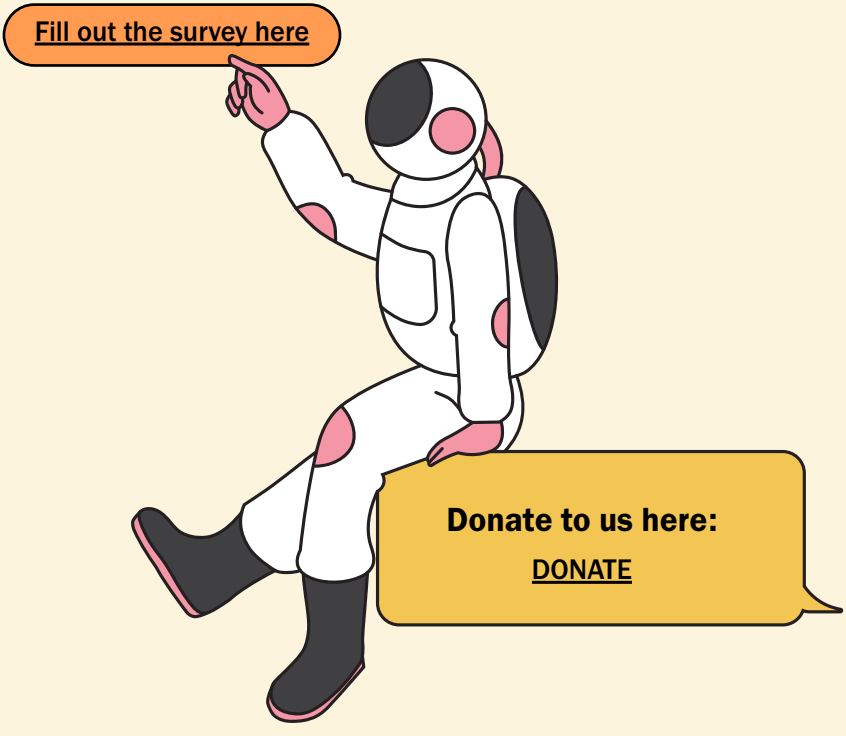
"The disarmament of civilians should not be limited to a specific segment of the population," said political and security analyst Dr Yamingué Betinbaye.

Betinbaye said Déby's tour overlooked Sila and Tibesti provinces, which are also reeling from violent attacks.

He warned presidential interventions risked weakening local authorities and that disarmament could leave communities vulnerable when the state could not guarantee their safety.

Regional analysts have linked high casualties to the availability of illegal firearms flowing from Sudan. ■

The Big Annual Survey™



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Souled out: *A woman waits for customers at her vegetable stall in Accra.* PHOTO: OLYMPIA DE MAISMONT/AFP

FEATURE

The cost of life

MANY official reports – including those from central banks and national statistical bureaus – show that inflation has generally eased or remained relatively low in African economies over the past three years. Yet step into any neighbourhood market and a very different reality unfolds.

To demystify the abstract macroeconomic figures, *The Continent* visited local markets to track the real cost of living over the past three years.

We looked at the price trajectories of basic household essentials from late 2023 to the present: a staple carbohydrate, a common protein, and an energy unit – such as a litre of petrol or a unit of electricity.

To account for different contexts, we also included a "local pain point" – an expense that crushes household budgets in that city. For example, in Dar es Salaam, rent is often paid six months in advance. In Accra or Lagos, that can be a year (or more) upfront.

In the first instalment, we visited the markets and commuter ranks of Cairo, Dar es Salaam, and Accra to document the compromises families make just to eat, cook, and move around their cities. Next week, we travel to Lusaka and Moroni.

EGYPT

Metro fare doubles, cheese triples, and gas nearly quadruples

And meals have to be stretched with peas, beans, potatoes, tomatoes ... you name it.

MAHMOUD ABDELRAHMAN IN CAIRO

THREE years ago, Manal Ahmed could buy half a kilogram of buffalo meat for 155 Egyptian pounds ($5 at the time). She would ask the butcher to cut it into small pieces, then divide it into two bags for her family of four.

Each bag would become a meal, stretched with rice and vegetables.

Today, she struggles to make the meat last. Sometimes it runs out during the first meal, leaving only vegetables for the second.

Ahmed has tried to keep meat in her family's meals by reducing everyone's portions. But the vegetables and other ingredients she uses to stretch those meals have become more expensive too.

"Even potatoes, pasta, and tomatoes have gone up so much," she tells *The Continent.*

A kilogram of fresh meat rose from an average of 310 pounds in November 2023 to 500 pounds in November 2026, a 61% increase. The Egyptian pound also weakened against the dollar over that period.

During the same time, the price of a kilogram of rice rose more slowly, from about 25 pounds to 28 pounds.

In Giza's Al-Haram district, Marwa Mahmoud has made different adjustments. She now prepares more beans and other pulses for breakfast and lunch.

She buys fewer dairy products and has switched some of her cheese purchases to items made with vegetable fats. A packet of Domty cheese that cost about 30 pounds in 2023 now sells for 90 pounds.

But for Mahmoud, the expense does not end with the ingredients. Her home is not connected to Egypt's natural-gas network, so she relies on bottled gas cylinders.

A standard 12.5kg domestic cylinder cost 75 pounds in November 2023. By March 2026, the official price had risen to 275 pounds, an increase of nearly 267%.

Getting around has become more expensive too. A Cairo metro ticket for a journey of up to nine stations cost 5 pounds three years ago but is double that figure today.

For someone making two such journeys each day for 26 working days, the monthly cost has doubled from

260 pounds to 520 pounds, before discounted passes.

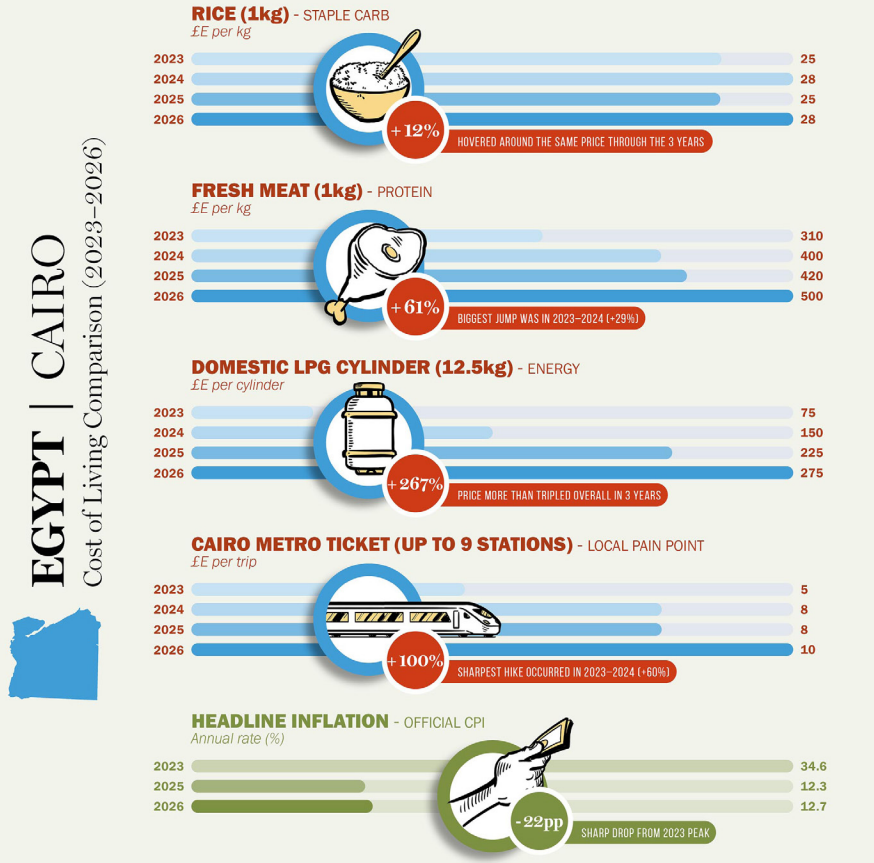
Yet Egypt's annual urban inflation rate has fallen sharply from its peak of 34.6% in November 2023. In October 2026, it slowed to 12.7%, according to the Central Bank of Egypt.

That does not mean prices have returned to where they were three years ago. Instead, they are still rising, just more slowly.

In Ahmed's kitchen, the response is to make each pot of food last longer.

"I add more potatoes, okra, or green beans," she says, "so the meal lasts two days, even if the meat is finished on the first."■

This story was produced in collaboration with Egab



TANZANIA

You think there's a magic beanstalk? You don't know jack

Meanwhile vampire loans are sucking people's livelihoods dry.

SAMMY AWAMI IN DAR ES SALAAM

FOR YEARS, beans had been Rhoda Sprian's main source of protein after meat became too expensive. But now, with a kilogramme of beans costing as much as 4,000 Tanzanian shillings ($1.50), she has given up on them too.

"The last time I ate beans was two weeks ago," Sprian says. "These days, my main relish is mchicha [amaranth leaves]. I can easily buy it from my neighbour at an affordable price."

Sprian earns her living housekeeping and braiding hair. She says she's gradually reduced the quantity of beans she buys over several years. But, since late last year, even buying them twice a month has become a struggle.

At Mwananyamala market in Dar es Salaam, a kilogramme of beans costs between 3,600 shillings and 4,000 shillings. In another neighbourhood, Upanga, it sells for between 4,300 shillings and 4,500 shillings.

According to *The Continent*'s spot checks with market vendors, the price of beans has risen 28% on average over the past year.

Rice prices have also increased. Market trader Joseph Michael says a kilogramme sold for 1,800 shillings to 1,900 shillings at Mwananyamala market in 2024. Today, it costs between 2,200 shillings and 3,000 shillings, depending on the source and quality.

Michael confirms the price of rice rose weeks after last year's election violence. "I believe that is what caused the increase and it has not come down since," he says, adding that some of his regular customers no longer visit his stall as frequently.

Over the past four years, the government has maintained that inflation has remained at less than 5%, with the latest figures putting it at 4.2% this October.

In its June 2026 report, the Bank of Tanzania attributed rising food prices to declining household food stocks from the 2024/25 crop season, compounded by higher transport costs. The latter are due to rising domestic fuel prices caused by the Middle East conflict.

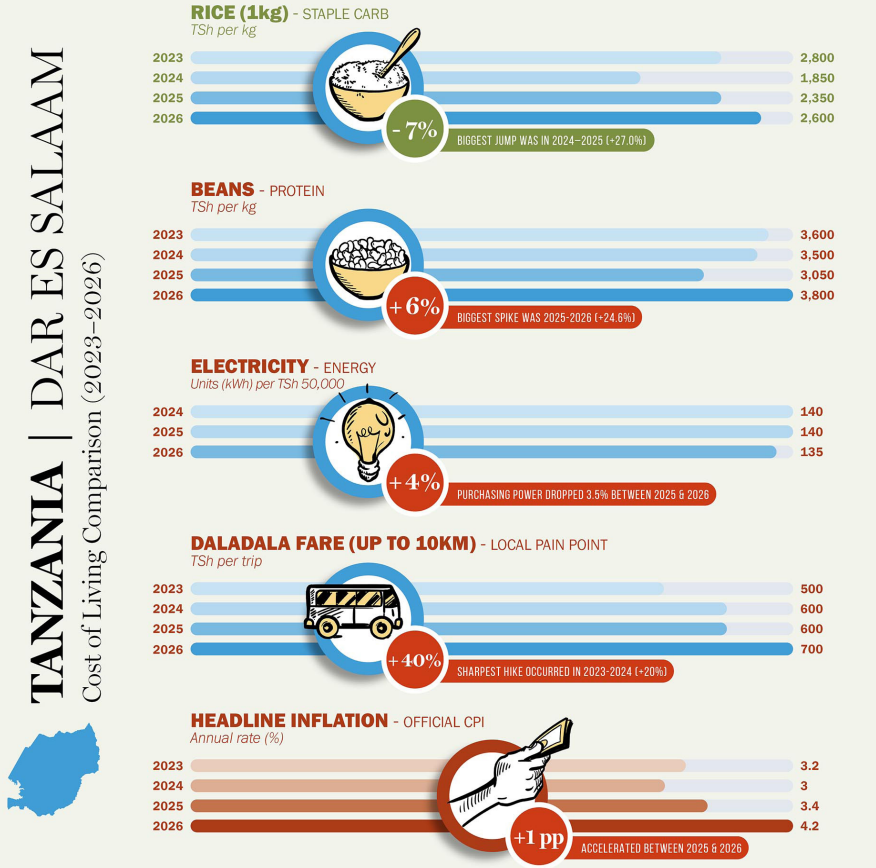
Public transport fares have also been steadily rising. According to the transport regulatory authority, the minimum daladala fare for journeys

of up to 10km increased from 500 shillings to 600 shillings in December 2023 and to 700 shillings in May this year – a 40% hike since the beginning of 2023.

Rent remains the biggest burden. Although Sprian pays 50,000 shillings a month, her landlord requires six months' rent upfront.

For her latest payment, she sought out a 100,000 shilling loan from one of her regular clients. Previously, she relied on informal loans known as kausha damu (blood-sucking loans), with interest rates of up to 20%.

"I often had to rely on those loans to pay my rent," Sprian says. "They are burdensome, but with my income and the rising cost of essential items, I have had no option but to take them." ■



INFOGRAPHIC: YEMSRACH YETNEBERK

GHANA

‘We are not hungry, but we are not full either’

Official inflation rates are slowing down, but that hasn’t trickled down to family budgets.

CALEB AHINAKWAH IN ACCRA

GHANA’S OFFICIAL inflation rate has fallen sharply in the past three years. In November 2023, it was at 26.4%; in October 2026, it stood at 5.5%. By these numbers, life should be getting easier. But for many households in Accra, families are still cutting back on what they eat.

Linda Mensah sells rice at Kaneshie Market in Accra. At home, the Sunday meal she used to prepare for her children has changed.

“I used to cook rice and eggs for my children on Sundays,” she told *The Continent*. “Now the eggs are gone. I buy the smallest bag of rice, and I stretch it with more water.”

Two stalls away, Efua Boateng is making similar adjustments: smaller portions, fewer meals, and cheaper substitutes for eggs. “We are not hungry,” she said. “But we are not full either.”

With the drop in inflation, some prices of basic goods have fallen. But that doesn’t mean the cost of living has returned to where it was.

Petrol illustrates the problem. In November 2023, 50 Ghanaian cedis bought nearly four litres of petrol. Today, the same amount of money buys just more than three. The price has risen by about 25% over the past three years.

Food prices tell a more complex story. Traders at the Dome Market in Accra said that three years ago, a 5kg bag of rice cost between 90 and 110 cedis. By this month, the average price had dropped to 74 cedis.

Eggs have also become cheaper. A crate sold for 100 cedis across Accra markets in August 2024. This month, market traders are selling a retail crate for as low as 65 to 70 cedis, amid a glut.

Yet Mensah now buys rice by the cup rather than the bag. And Boateng has cut eggs from three meals a week to one.

“The children drink more water,” Boateng said. “It fills the stomach.”

Even as the official headline inflation figures look rosy, the effect on individual families’ food baskets is still negative. The price of non-food essentials has been rising even faster – primarily transport, housing, energy, and education – meaning there’s less money left over to afford the ostensibly cheaper food.

Dr George Domfeh, an economist

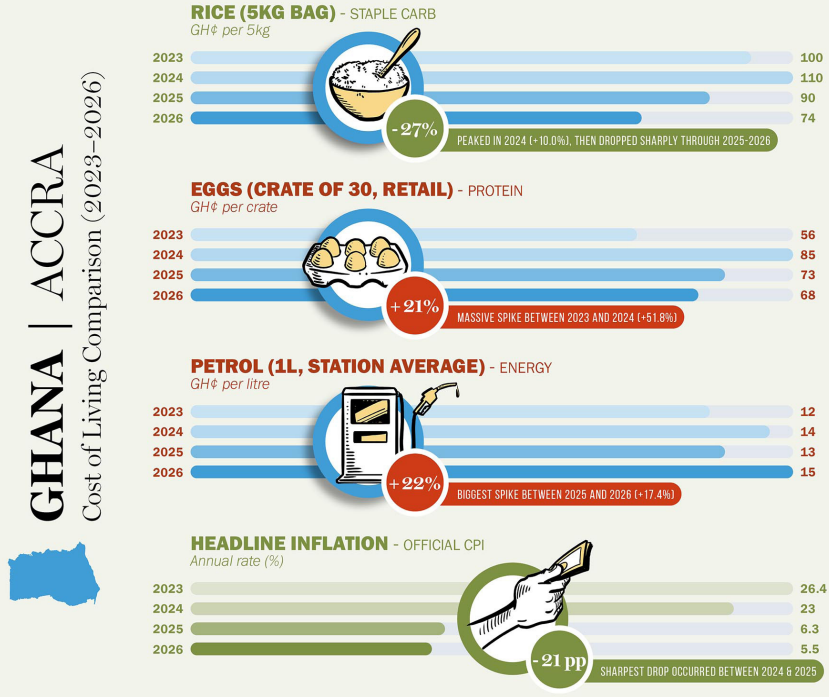
at the University of Ghana, said the headline inflation figures "capture the direction of prices, but not the weight of them in a household where rice and eggs are the whole budget".

Petrol adds another pressure.

Its price depends partly on global oil markets and the value of Ghana's currency. When either changes, transport fares and the final cost of moving goods follow suit.

Domfeh said such shifts reach fares and market prices "within days, because every trader prices in the currency they will need to restock tomorrow".

Mensah has a simpler way of measuring whether things are getting better. "They say inflation is down," she said. "But my bag is still small. Tell me when the bag gets bigger." ■



INFOGRAPHIC: YEMSRACH YETNEBERK

FEATURE

San communities to return to their ancestral land

Lesson for indigenous people: perhaps it takes your lawyer becoming president for your rights to be upheld.



San trackers in Botswana. PHOTO: PAUL WEINBERG/SOUTH

KELETSO THOBEGA IN GABORONE

NEARLY two decades after Botswana's San communities won a landmark court battle to reclaim their ancestral land, the government has approved a plan to return the Central Kalahari Game Reserve (CKGR) to them.

"This restitution acknowledges communities have rights to the CKGR as their ancestral territory," said President Duma Boko in his State of the Nation address last week.

In 2006, Boko was one of the lawyers who represented the San in their successful court challenge against the

Botswana government. Two decades later, he is president and in a position to implement the ruling.

The dispute dates back to 1997, when the government began forcing San communities out of the reserve. By 2002, it had cut off essential services including water, food rations, and healthcare, putting further pressure on the people who remained.

The government argued the relocations were necessary to protect wildlife and provide better services to remote communities. But rights groups, including Survival International and First People of the Kalahari, maintained that diamond exploration and tourism interests were behind the evictions.

In 2006, Botswana's high court ruled the evictions were unlawful and unconstitutional, granting the affected San communities the right to return to the reserve. But the ruling did not end the struggle. Restrictions on access to land and water continued, leading to more legal battles.

Boko's plan follows recommendations from an interministerial committee established in February 2025 to examine indigenous communities' living conditions, human rights, and historical injustices. He described the proposed restitution as the largest structured return of land – 52,000km² – to an indigenous population within a protected area in Africa.

Broader discrimination

The announcement follows a July 2026 report by the United Nations special rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples, Albert Barume. He found indigenous communities in Botswana continued to face discrimination, insecure land rights, and exclusion from public life.

Barume encouraged Botswana to fully implement the 2006 case ruling, enabling the return of all indigenous people with cultural ties to the reserve, ensuring adequate living conditions for returnees, and developing a national action plan on indigenous people's rights to co-ordinate land reforms.

Samuel Stanley, an indigenous legal fellow at the African Communities Resource Rights Alliance, welcomed the government's announcement but cautioned that returning land alone would not undo decades of marginalisation.

"For the San, land is not simply an economic asset or a geographical space. It is the foundation of their identity, spirituality, cultural continuity, traditional knowledge, livelihoods, and collective existence," he told *The Continent*.

He said the San had faced discrimination that extended far beyond land ownership, including exclusion from political decision-making, limited economic opportunities, and a lack of recognition for their languages and culture.

"Returning land without addressing these broader structural inequalities risks restoring territory without fully restoring the rights and dignity of the people," Stanley said. ■

We love to hear from you

UNLESS you're a 2026 subscriber (hi!), you'll remember our most recent Big Annual Survey™, in which 1,481 of you took part. In it, we asked you to tell us about your Happy Place™. We'll be sharing a few of those responses with you this season. Look out for our mascot Astro, who's hiding somewhere in each illustration.



ILLUSTRATION: DIDIER KASSAI

"Freedom Park, on Campbell Street, Lagos, Nigeria. This place used to house the Ikoyi Prisons, but now houses a park for arts and entertainment."

PHOTO ESSAY

A new tradition follows the old

PHOTOS: LUIS TATO/AFP



PAUL BOTES

LAST WEEK, the fourth edition of the Maa Cultural and Tourism Festival took place at Sekenani Gate in the Maasai Mara National Reserve, which lies at the heart of Narok county in Kenya.

Tens of thousands of participants attended the five-day event. The festival, launched in 2023, celebrates Maa heritage while welcoming visitors from around the region, the continent and the world.

Narok, Kajiado, and Samburu counties take turns hosting it. The first edition, also held in Narok, drew 12,000 people from 18 Maa-speaking communities, who straddle both Kenya and Tanzania.

Next, it went to Samburu National Reserve in 2024 and then to Amboseli

in 2025. With its return to Sekenani Gate, this year's festival was again timed to coincide with the annual wildebeest migration from the Serengeti.

This year, some 100,000 visitors came to bear witness to the Maasai's traditions, stories, music, and their adumu jumping dance – and to admire their cattle, beadwork, wrestling, fashion, and poetry. "Esuj erashe ng'ejuk emusana," as the Maa proverb goes: from old customs, new traditions are born.













DATA

Ballot d'or

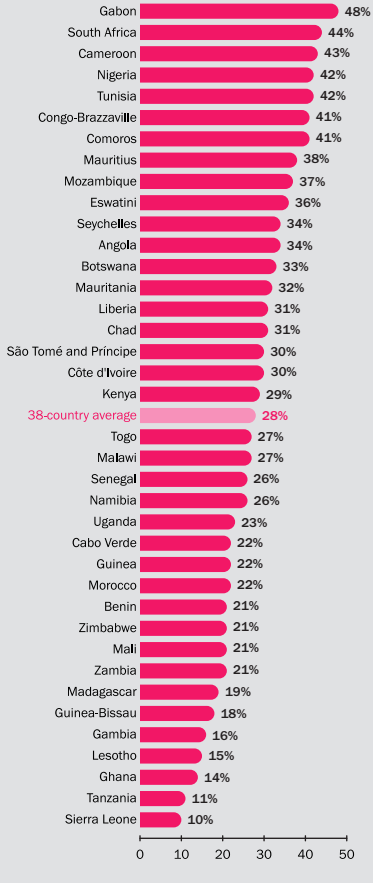
BALLOT SECRECY is considered foundational to a representative democracy. Perceptions of confidentiality are crucial for public confidence in elections.

Do Africans think their votes are safe from prying eyes? Across 38 countries, two thirds (67%) say it is unlikely that powerful people will find out how they voted. But 28% are worried.

The continental average masks much cross-country variation. Close to half (48%) of Gabonese say it is "somewhat" or "very" likely powerful interests can uncover whom citizens voted for, compared to one in 10 Tanzanians (11%) and Sierra Leoneans (10%).

This belief rises as lived poverty increases. It also grows with educational attainment, from 24% among adults with no formal education to 33% among degree-holders. Better-educated respondents may have more access to credible alternative information, such as independent observer reports, or be better able to spot red flags in the electoral process.

Institutional trust matters for democratic credibility. People who don't trust their electoral commission are more likely than trusting citizens to suspect votes won't stay secret (32% vs 23%). ■



AFRO BAROMETER
Let the people have a say

Source: Afrobarometer is 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 +/- two to three percentage points.

REVIEW

Lagos revels in the art of excellence

In Nigeria's cultural capital, a season of artistic contemplation offers calm before the summer storm.

PELUMI SALAKO IN LAGOS

THE LAST month of the year is "Detty December" season in Lagos, when the city is gridlocked with partygoers. But the somewhat calmer atmosphere of November is when galleries, museums, and art venues truly come alive.

West Africa's premier art fair, Art X Lagos, kicks it off. At this year's edition, artist Afeez Onakoya unveiled his body of work, *The Weight of Air*, at O'DA Art Gallery's booth.

Onakoya's paintings feature female figurations painted with charcoal over a pink background. They stretch their limbs in either direction, partially overlapping, as if reaching for something beyond the frame.

"I try to use my figurations to explore the theme of freedom," Onakoya said. "What I want people to feel each time they enter the booth is a sense of fluidity or lightness."

This year's fair, themed "A New Chapter, A New Decade", featured 15 galleries exhibiting works by African artists, including Victor Ehikhamenor, Daniel Atenyi, Dotun Popoola, Nuru Abegaz and Ndidi Dike.

Their works interrogate memory, identity, colonialism, the transatlantic



Rouge gallery: *Afeez Onakoya, sporting an aso oke in fetching salmon, reflects on his work with visitors.*

PHOTO:PELUMI SALAKO





Above: *Residues of Past Encounters II*

PHOTOS: ART X LAGOS

slave trade, inherited narratives, tradition and innovation, and expand the possibilities of artistic expression.

Art X founder Tokini Peterside told *The Continent* the exhibitions showed what it means to move forward while staying connected to the knowledge and cultural traditions that shape Africa.

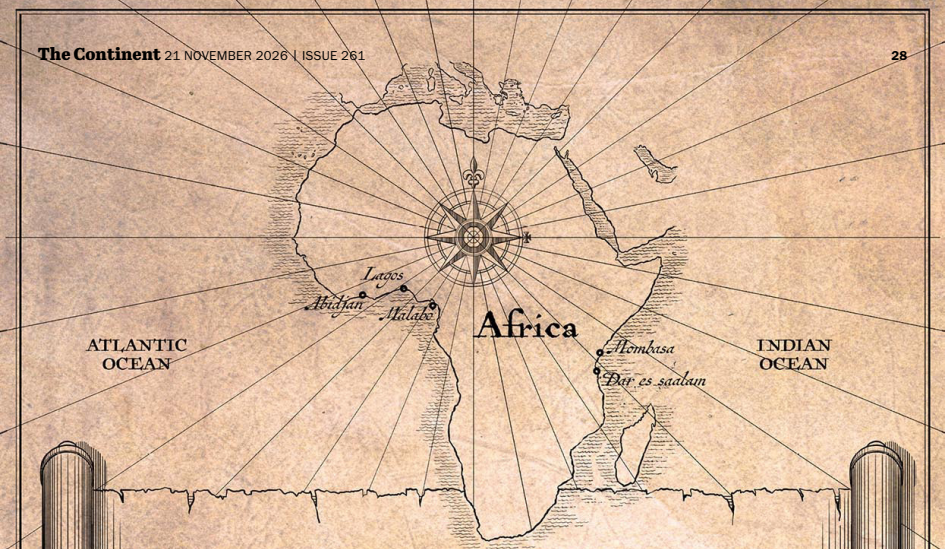
"There is an extraordinary diversity of perspectives, materials, and approaches emerging from the continent," she said. "Artists are moving fluidly between disciplines, engaging with our history, and exploring contemporary experiences in ways that are deeply personal yet universally resonant."

The fair also featured a music concert and a screening of *Mothers of Chibok*, a feature-length documentary by Joel Kachi Benson about the experiences of the parents of the Chibok girls, who were kidnapped from their school in 2014.

Art X also accommodates galleries from other regions of the continent. One of these was the Kampala-based Afriart Gallery, which showcased contemporary Ugandan and East African art.

"The contemporary art scene in Uganda is still growing and not as vast as it is over here," said Afriart's Gloria Coutinho. "This is quite a significant platform for artists to be a part of the conversations."

Although the fair has ended, art enthusiasts across Lagos are participating in other events of the season – the ongoing Lagos Book & Art Festival, the Lagos Biennial, and Aké Arts & Book Festival. ■



FERRY TALES

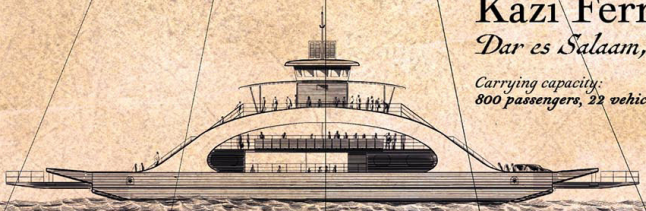
LIMITED SERIES

Curated by Gado | Story by Kizito Makoye

Kazi Ferry

Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

Carrying capacity:
800 passengers, 22 vehicles



Lagferry

Lagos, Nigeria



Pinasse

Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire



Likoni Ferry

Mombasa, Kenya



San Valentine Ferry

Malabo, Equatorial Guinea

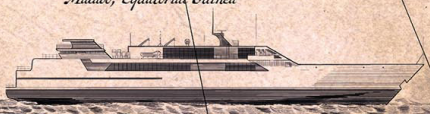


ILLUSTRATION: YEMSRACH YETNEBERK

‘Oh maskini, we cross again’

Kigamboni, Tanzania

KIZITO MAKOYE

THE HARDEST part of taking the Kigamboni ferry is not the sea: it’s getting onto the ferry itself. The wait can be as long as 30 minutes, in the hot sun or drenching rain.

A Kitochi phone radio crackles with Jamhuri Jazz Band, its chorus rising above the noise: “Oh maskini… taabu ni nyingi…” – alas, there are many troubles.

When the ferry arrives and is finally ready for boarding, the gates open and people surge, moving like a tide. There’s a frantic scramble to board, then calm once the vessel leaves the terminal.

As the ferry pulls away across Kurasini Creek, the city loosens its grip. The hooting fades. An Indian Ocean breeze cools the heat. Wooden dhows drift across the harbour as the skyline dissolves into the distance. The crossing itself takes just five minutes.

For more than half a century, the Kigamboni crossing has been one of Dar es Salaam’s most used transport arteries. The Magogoni ferry service – operating vessels including the MV *Magogoni* and MV *Kazi* – moves about 60,000 passengers and more than 1,500 vehicles each day.

The service began in the 1950s to link central Dar es Salaam and the sparsely populated Kigamboni peninsula of farms, fishing settlements, and sandy tracks. As the city sprawled, the pressure on the ferry service swelled along with it.

But its history has been marked by breakdowns, overcrowding, and political embarrassment.

Dar residents still recall the Uniflote scandal of the late 1980s when the government bought a defective pontoon ferry that broke down for good just a month after launching; a symbol both of the state’s procurement failure, and of the public’s frustration.

Even today, mechanical problems on the ferry service are not uncommon, yet people keep queuing up to use it. The ferry remains the cheapest route into the city for many people – a pedestrian ticket costs about 200 Tanzanian shillings (about 8 US cents).

In 2016, the Mwalimu Julius Nyerere Bridge opened. Drivers could bypass queues entirely and crossing became smoother and faster.

But for people without a private vehicle to traverse the bridge, their crossing is counted in the long minutes waiting to board. That’s enough time to hear an old song about struggle, cross a restless creek, and return to the business of living. ■

Kizito Makoye is a Tanzanian journalist, investigative reporter, and human-rights researcher with more than 20 years’ experience covering East Africa

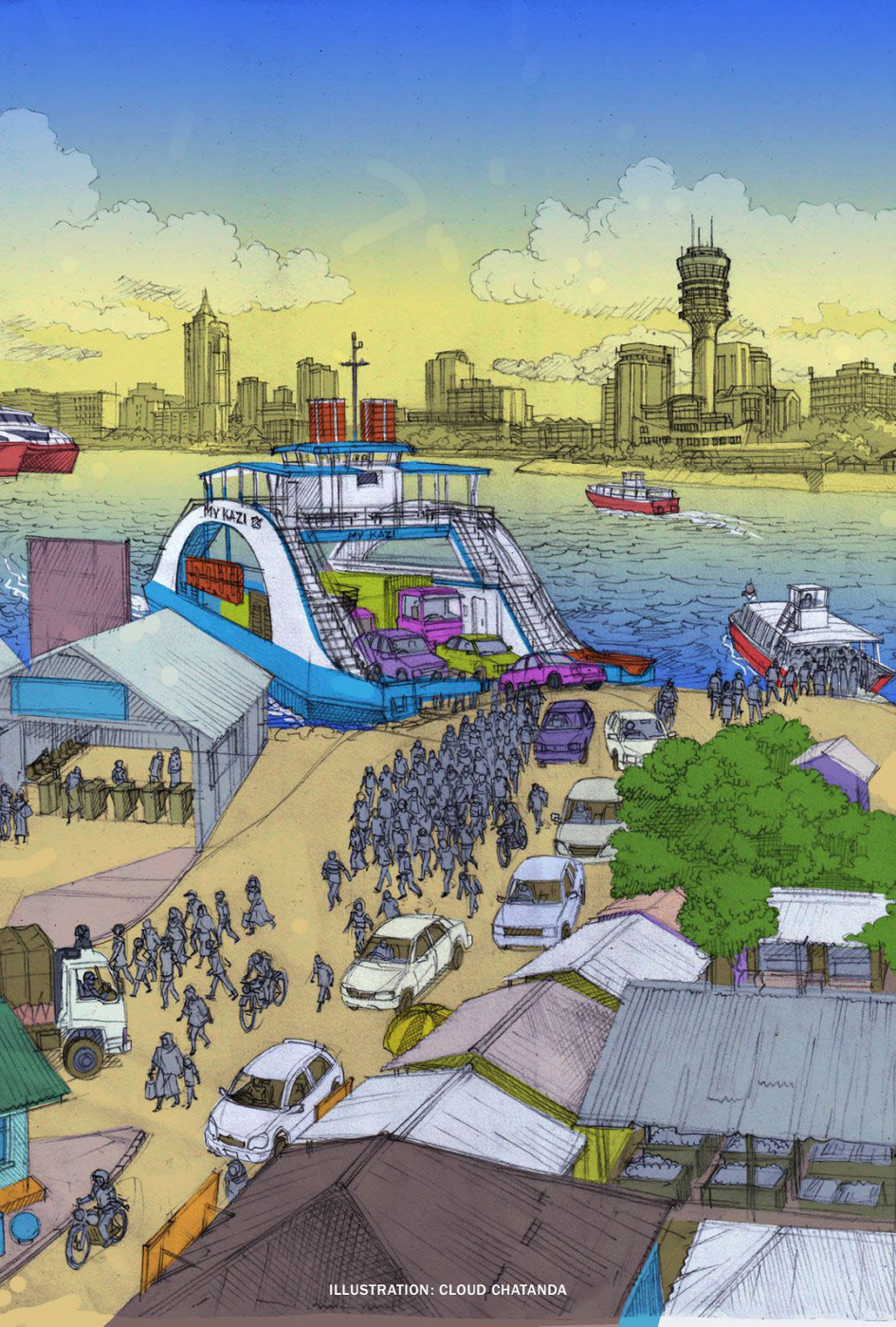


ILLUSTRATION: CLOUD CHATANDA

The Quiz

1 Who is the president of Botswana?
2 Algiers is which country's capital?
3 Which country's name means "coast of ivory"?
4 What is Tunisia's capital city?
5 What is Mauritius's currency called?
6 Who wrote the 1964 novel *Arrow of God*?
7 Which country is musician Baaba Maal from?
8 In which country was prominent US oligarch and tech baron Elon Musk born?
9 What is the demonym for people from Burkina Faso?
10 In what country is the *Door of No Return* in Ouidah (pictured)?



HOW DID I DO?

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

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
"Insisting on calling it the *Arch of No Return* instead of the *Door of No Return* is frankly unhinged."

PHOTO: OLYMPIA DE MAISMONT/AFP

Big Pic

Path not Tekken: Musicians and students parade in Kibera in Nairobi, Kenya to celebrate capoeira, the Afro-Brazilian game and martial art form. Some are dressed in traditional Luo regalia, adorned with towering ostrich feathers.

PHOTO: LUIS TATO/AFP



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