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The Continent



**The price Africa will pay for
America's war on abortion**

Photo: Delwyn Verasamy

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COVER: As much as we might like it to be otherwise, what happens in America does not stay in America. That's why we are paying close attention to the US Supreme Court's expected decision to overturn *Roe v Wade*, which will likely make it a lot harder for American women to exercise their reproductive rights – and, on our continent, reverse a hard-won trend towards reproductive justice (p11).



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Photo: Twitter/M_Farmaajo



SOMALIA

Time to dust off old presidential portrait

On 15 May, Somalia's parliament will convene to select a new president. While the incumbent – Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed, who has been in the presidency since 2017 – is not expected to win re-election, he might be replaced by one of his predecessors. Among the 39 candidates vying for the position, the frontrunners are two former presidents: Sharif Sheikh Ahmed (2009-2012) and Hassan Sheikh Mohamed (2012-2017). There's only one woman in the race, Fawzia Yusuf Adam, a former foreign minister, but she is considered unlikely to win.

INTERNATIONAL

Airline on trial for 2009 Comoros plane crash that killed 152

Yemenia, the national airline of Yemen, is facing trial in France for a 2009 plane crash that killed 152 people. Although most of the people who died were Comorians, the “manslaughter and unintentional injuries” case relates to French citizens – 65 dead and one survivor. Headed for Moroni, the Comoros capital, the ageing Airbus A130 plane was attempting to land in strong winds when it plunged into the ocean, just 15km from the coast.

MOZAMBIQUE

Wouldn't do to help out 'wrong' people

Despite the rising cost of living, Mozambique's government has ruled out subsidising bread and fuel because that might benefit the wrong Mozambicans. “The government wants to subsidise [only] those who cannot pay,” said Prime Minister Adriano Maleiane. He argued that, “subsidising the bakery is not sustainable because everyone will buy that subsidised bread, but that is not what the government wants.” In 2010, the price of bread caused riots in Mozambique that left 10 dead, and the government offered subsidies to ease the cost of living.

ZIMBABWE

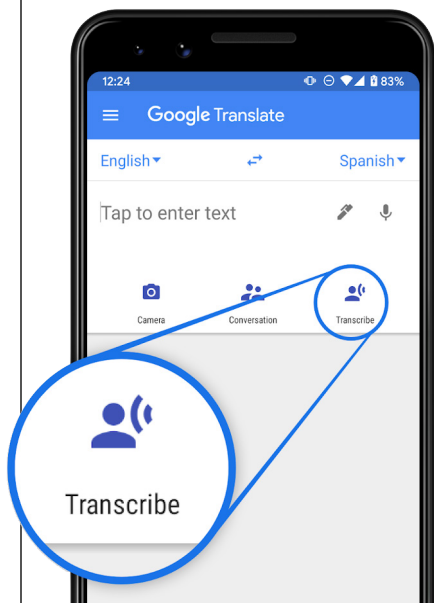
Time to tackle the elephants in a room

This year, 60 Zimbabweans have been killed by elephants and 50 left injured, according to the country's government spokesperson Nick Mangwana. Zimbabwe has the second-highest elephant population in the world after Botswana. Mangwana said that in some areas of the country the elephants "have devoured everything in the fields and are now moving onto properties". Last year, 72 people were killed in elephant-related incidents. Zimbabwe will hold an "Elephant Summit" later this month to discuss the tense issue of coexistence.

TOGO

Militant strikes spread beyond Sahel

Though it had so far been spared violence by the militants who roam the Sahel region, Togo saw its first deadly attack this week. Eight soldiers were killed and at least 13 were wounded. The attack happened in northern Togo, close to its border with Burkina Faso. Benin is also seeing a rise in militant attacks near its border with Burkina Faso. Previously, this violence has been concentrated in Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso, triggering coups in the latter two by soldiers promising to bring peace.



TECHNOLOGY

Lingo bingo: Google ups its Africa game

Another 10 African languages, spoken by about 159-million people, have been added to Google Translate. Bambara, Twi and Ewe, spoken by 32-million in Ghana and Togo; Lingala, spoken by 45-million in central Africa; Oromo and Tigrinya, used by 45-million across Ethiopia, Eritrea and Kenya; Tsonga and Sepedi, spoken by about 21-million in southern Africa; Luganda, spoken by 20-million in Uganda; and Sierra Leonean Krio. Google Translate already supports Zulu, Swahili, Shona, Igbo, Hausa and Amharic.

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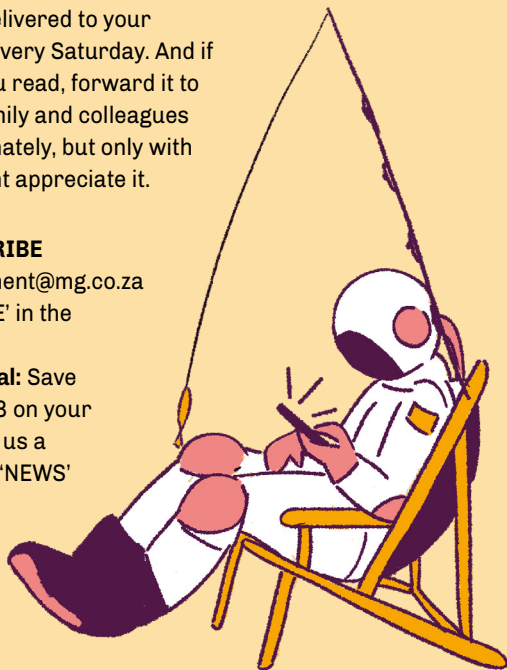
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CLIMATE

Heat is on full blast

Greenhouse gas emissions in the atmosphere have hit 420 parts per million – the highest level on record. These are the gases that trap heat in the atmosphere, increasing global temperatures. The data was released by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Last week in the Philippines, a seven-year inquiry concluded that big polluters are “morally and legally” liable for the damage caused by climate change.

TECHNOLOGY

Facebook face-off

A former Facebook moderator is suing parent company, Meta and Sama, an outsourcing company. Daniel Motaung's suit demands a human rights audit of the Facebook moderation hub run by Sama in Nairobi. It also demands that moderators receive pay equal to Facebook staff, better healthcare and protections for their right to unionise. As reported in *The Continent*, Motaung was fired after attempting to organise his colleagues for collective bargaining.



NIGERIA

Pay up for killer fans

The Nigerian Football Federation has to pay \$154,086 for fan behaviour after their 1-1 draw against Ghana in a World Cup qualifier game this March. The fans

stormed the pitch and an anti-doping official, Dr Joseph Kaungo, a Zambian, died in the chaos. Fifa has also ordered the Nigerian federation to pay the former head coach of the men's national team, Gernot Rohr, \$380,000 for wrongful dismissal. Rohr was fired just before this year's Africa Cup of Nations.



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Stuck in South African limbo

When South Africa decided not to renew the Zimbabwean Exemption Permit, the lives of nearly 200,000 Zimbabwean refugees were thrown into uncertainty. Now they find themselves at the mercy of a corrupt bureaucracy – and a maverick lawyer with close ties to Zimbabwe's ruling party.

Kiri Rupiah

There are nearly 200,000 Zimbabweans in South Africa who are currently living on borrowed time.

They are in the country on a special visa that is now called the Zimbabwean Exemption Permit (ZEP). This visa category was introduced more than a decade ago to accommodate an influx of Zimbabwean refugees who were fleeing political persecution and economic devastation back home.

But late last year, South Africa's Home Affairs Department – amid rising Afrophobic sentiment among South African citizens – announced that it would not renew ZEPs. This decision gives affected Zimbabweans a “grace period” until the end of this year to leave the country, or risk being deported – unless they can find another visa to apply for.

Among their number is Thenjiwe Mhlanga*, who has been in South Africa since 2010. She is married to a Zimbabwean man who is a permanent residence holder, and they have children together. As things stand, she will have to leave the country by 31 December 2022, and leave her family behind – as well as all the unemployment benefits that she currently receives. She is hoping to apply for a spousal permit through her husband's permanent residency. Although she qualifies, she is unsure whether her application will succeed, given the inefficiency and corruption that is endemic to South Africa's visa application process.

Rufaro Gwatidzo*, a distance learner

who has lived in South Africa since he was six, does not qualify under any other visa categories. He believes himself to be South African in everything but name, and cannot imagine a life for himself in Zimbabwe.

This decision gives affected Zimbabweans a ‘grace period’ until the end of this year to leave, or risk being deported – unless they can find another visa to apply for.

But that won't matter when the grace period runs out.

Though stressed about his future away from all he has ever known, Gwatidzo tells *The Continent*: “I'm not oblivious of the fact that when in Rome one must do as the Romans. And if they don't want you it's not fair to impose on them because of your own personal needs and wants.”

Courtroom battle looms

There is one institution that may yet overturn the government's decision not to renew the ZEP: South Africa's courts. A legal challenge is being prepared by the Zimbabwean Exemption Holders Association, on the grounds that the decision was “irrational”.

Leading this challenge is advocate Simba Chitando, a controversial lawyer. His detractors describe him as a maverick of Johnny Cochrane proportions – not necessarily a compliment in the legal profession. Chitando is confident that the courts will overturn the government's

decision to let the ZEPs lapse.

“The minister of home affairs believes cancelling 180,000 ZEP holders from the job market would solve unemployment in the country and increase jobs for South African citizens. The truth is it will do the opposite,” Chitando told *The Continent*. “I would advise Zimbabweans, ZEP holders, and sympathetic South African nationals, to be calm in the face of this crisis, and allow the court process to run its course. There are many who are lobbying government to change their obviously bad decision.”

“The minister of home affairs believes cancelling 180,000 ZEP holders from the job market would solve unemployment and increase jobs for South African citizens. But it will do the opposite.”

Not everyone is convinced that a legal challenge will work – especially if it is led by Chitando, who has close links with Zimbabwe’s ruling party, Zanu-PF. His uncle, Winston Chitando, is Zimbabwe’s current minister of mines, while Chitando himself is the head of Zanu-PF’s Sandton branch in Johannesburg.

For the many Zimbabweans who fled political persecution, this is an unwelcome connection. In a WhatsApp group organised by some Zimbabweans to keep abreast of the ZEP court matters, one person said: “Tirimuno muSouth Africa pamusaka pavo, (we are here because of

them [Zanu-PF]). Can we trust that they’ll even do a decent job?”

Others fear that Chitando’s Zanu-PF links will make the case political, and agitate the South African government, which will in turn “punish” Zimbabweans with even more stringent visa rules – no matter what the courts say.

A court date has not been set yet.

Uncertain futures

While ZEP holders wait for the legal process to take its course, many are already dealing with the fallout from the decision. Some banks, although aware of the grace period, are refusing to replace lost bank cards or open accounts; while some traffic departments will not renew the driving licences of ZEP holders.

Those who are looking to apply for another visa will have to navigate South Africa’s notoriously corrupt application process. A 2016 report by the Corruption Watch watchdog organisation described a “cartel-like” network of officials, runners and facilitators who prey on those seeking assistance.

Ironically, for some ZEP holders, this corruption may be their only hope of staying in the country legally. “If kana zvanetsa, and things become difficult, I will just ‘lose’ my passport and start again. I just want to take care of my family. It’s like they want to push you into doing criminal acts to survive,” one ZEP holder, who asked to have his name withheld, told *The Continent*.

South Africa’s Home Affairs Department did not respond to repeated requests for comment for this story. ■



Photo: Zach Gibson/
Getty Images via AFP

The US's renewed assault on reproductive rights may become a proxy war in Africa

Just as Africa begins to relax restrictions on abortion, US conservatives and Republicans may be encouraged by a reversal of rights at home to put more money and political muscle into resisting the progressive trend here. It's happened before.

Laura López González

According to a draft Supreme Court judgment leaked earlier this month, the United States is poised to overturn its national protection on the right to abortion. The leaked court majority

opinion appears to strike down the 1973 decision famously known as *Roe v Wade*, which made it illegal for individual states to ban abortion.

If it does become law in June or July, the overturning of *Roe v Wade* will be the climax of a carefully orchestrated,

decades-long campaign by US conservatives against reproductive rights at home.

It may also be a harbinger of things to come in Africa.

“We are all too familiar with the pernicious impact US policies can have on reproductive rights beyond its borders,” says Kylie Harrison, global communications manager at non-governmental group MSI Reproductive Choices. The organisation provides contraceptives and safe abortion in at least two dozen countries. Harrison joins others who fear that dismantling the right to abortion in the US will embolden anti-choice groups globally.

Republican US presidents have made what’s commonly known as “the global gag rule” a hallmark of their administrations since 1984. The gag rule blocks US funding to foreign organisations that perform or promote abortions abroad, even if this is funded with other donors’ money.

Overturing *Roe v Wade* by itself does not change official US foreign policy. However, it does unravel draft legislation that is before Congress, which seeks to permanently restrict the United States from placing conditionalities, such as the gag rule, on aid to countries.

The effect on a more liberal Africa

This would happen just when more African countries are moving to expand access to abortion. Although the continent is seen as largely conservative on the issue of abortion, African countries have steadily relaxed restrictions on the procedure over the last decade. At least 10 countries, including Benin, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone, and those in the East African Community, have recently taken steps toward increasing access to safe abortion. Benin, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Zambia and South Africa allow for abortions if the pregnancy threatens a person’s socioeconomic status. Most



Supreme injustice:
If the ruling barring American states from banning abortions is struck down as feared, US funding around the world, even for unrelated causes, may be put at risk.

Photo: AFP



**Uncertain
future:
Reproductive
rights are
under serious
threat in the
United States.**
Photo: AFP

nations permit terminations to safeguard pregnant people's health and many include provisions for survivors of rape and incest, according to data from the Center for Reproductive Rights.

Only ten of the 54 countries on the continent still ban the procedure altogether. In contrast, more than half of all US states will likely ban abortion once there is no federal law stopping them.

Emboldened by a more restrictive environment at home, future Republican presidents may decree even harsher versions of the gag rule to exclude aid beneficiaries in countries that move to expand access to abortion.

South Africa, which has one of most liberal abortion laws in the world, was one of the top five countries most affected by Trump's expanded version of the gag rule. Trump, whose most loyal base was the Christian nationalists who push for

domestic laws like the overturning of *Roe v Wade*, expanded the global gag rule to restrict almost 20% of the money disbursed to countries by the Global Fund to Fight Aids, tuberculosis and malaria. Where previous Republican presidents had restricted only directly funded organisations, Trump's version also gagged smaller organisations that did not take US money but that were linked to bigger groups that did.

In the world after *Roe v Wade*, "the form that the gag rule comes back in may morph to be more restrictive or less restrictive, depending on how the Republican party moves." That's according to Brian Honermann, public policy deputy director at the Foundation for Aids Research. "The attacks on gender equality that are going on at the moment and the direction of the Republican Party suggests that it will be substantially worse."



Wronging rights: Anti-abortion activists protest at a clinic in Washington. If *Roe v Wade* falls, hard-won progress in Africa may be halted or even reversed.
Photo: Drew Angerer/Getty Images

Is it possible to fight back?

To pre-empt restrictive US conditionalities that may come with future aid, Honermann advises countries to protect themselves now. “Countries have the ability in their own domestic laws to shore up and protect the rights of their citizens by taking appropriate legislative action to uphold sexual reproductive rights, including good laws on informed consent and protecting abortion,” Honermann says. “It’s very hard for the US government to order people to provide services in a way that violates the law.”

However, a lot happens outside official law and policy – in the US and Africa. Overturning *Roe v Wade* would be the culmination of decades of legislative and legal manoeuvring by conservatives, including orchestrating rightward shifts

in their country’s courts. They do similar manoeuvring outside their borders. US coalitions already spend millions in “dark money” to support opponents of abortion and gay rights around the world, a 2020 openDemocracy investigation found. In Africa, they spent more than \$50-million in the decade before 2019.

Their win at home may encourage them to double down elsewhere.

In Africa, their renewed zeal would be met with much less civil society resistance than has held conservatives at bay in the US since 1973. “The US is a country where people can still fight for what they believe in. The civil society is strong,” Boniface Ushie, a research scientist at Kenya’s African Population and Health Research Center, says. “That’s not the case for African countries ... given the kind of oppression and repressive laws and regimes that we have.”

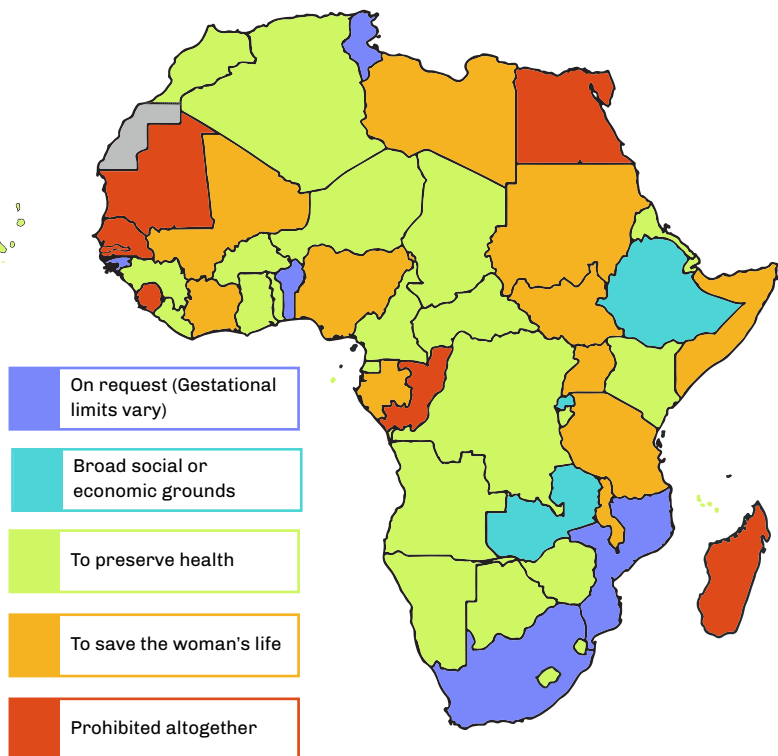
Should American conservatives go on to reverse the continent’s current trajectory towards less abortion restrictions, they may worsen its already alarming maternal mortality and illness. Ushie says: “We have always known it: Wherever the law prohibits abortion, it doesn’t reduce abortion. What it does is that it increases unsafe abortions.”

The World Health Organisation says that in developing countries, 220 deaths happen for every 100,000 unsafe abortions and an estimate from 2012 indicates seven million women per year were treated in hospital facilities for complications of unsafe abortion.

It’s not a situation that needs to get any worse. ■

Africa's abortion laws

At a glance, Africa looks quite restrictive of abortion – but this has been changing steadily over the years. However, gender equality, including the right to safe abortion, is facing a growing backlash in the West, and in the United States in particular. Decades of legal manoeuvring, “dark money” funding and political organising by ultra-conservative Christians is pushing such countries to back away from reproductive justice positions they had long normalised. These battles may morph into proxy culture wars in Africa – in some ways already have – reversing the continent’s current trend away from restricting what people can do with their own bodies.



Data collected from Center For Reproductive Rights on 13 May 2022

10 things you should know about abortion

Seeing as the issue has become so highly politicised and emotive, here are a few facts about abortion in Africa and around the world

Kiri Rupiah

1_ Unintended pregnancy rates are highest in countries that restrict abortion access and lowest in countries where abortion is broadly legal.

2_ There are 26 countries in the world where all abortions are illegal and 39 countries where abortion is illegal unless it saves the life of the pregnant person. Abortion is available on request in 67 countries.

3_ According to a 2018 Guttmacher Data Center factsheet, abortion is not legal for any reason in 10 out of 54 African countries. These are Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Gabon, Guinea-Bissau, Madagascar, Mauritania, São Tomé and Príncipe, and Senegal.

4_ Abortion is allowed for any reason, up to a certain stage of pregnancy, in four

African countries: Cape Verde, South Africa, Tunisia and Mozambique.

5_ Benin, Ethiopia, Rwanda, South Africa and Zambia are the only African countries that allow an abortion based on socioeconomic grounds.

6_ According to the World Health Organisation, 45% of all abortions are unsafe – and the majority of unsafe abortions happen in developing countries.

7_ Criminalising abortion does not stop abortion. Research shows it just makes abortions more dangerous. The World Health Organisation says unsafe abortion is a leading – but preventable – cause of maternal deaths and morbidities.

8_ According to research by the Hans Siedel Foundation, the risk of dying from an unsafe abortion is higher in Africa than anywhere else in the world.

9_ In 2005, the African Union passed the Maputo Protocol, an international human rights instrument which urges states to “protect the reproductive rights of women by authorising medical abortion in cases of sexual assault, rape, incest, and where the continued pregnancy endangers the mental and physical health of the mother”.

10_ The United States government’s Mexico City Policy prohibits funding for foreign NGOs that perform or promote abortion as a method of family planning in USAID recipient countries, or that provide financial support to another foreign NGO that does. The policy applies not only to primary recipients of applicable foreign assistance but also to foreign NGO subrecipients. ■

Uganda

Last round: A bartender fills up large mugs of enturire. Photo: Shemei Agabo



Climate change is killing one of Uganda's favourite brews

Sorghum does not grow well in rising temperatures – and you can't have sorghum beer without good sorghum

Andrew Arinaitwe in Kampala

Grainy, sweet, refreshing – just a few sips will leave a dizzy cloud over your head, that slowly fades away to leave you in the mood for long-winded conversation. Served in giant wooden mugs, enturire is a sorghum beer beloved by the Bakiga people in south-western Uganda, near the

border with Rwanda.

But as local sorghum supplies dwindle, the future of this alcoholic beverage is under threat.

“Do you prefer it with pepper or honey?” asks a waiter at Kibuye Enturire Experts in Nansana, on the outskirts of Kampala. The venue is filled with men who speak the Rukiga language, their

tables littered with mugs. A wooden saucer ventilated by a tiny hole sits on top of each mug, and the men sip their drinks through straws. Between sips, they place a paper covering over their straws to keep any nearby flies from trying their luck.

The discussions here are as loud as they are meandering, patrons offering more than their two cents on subjects ranging from politics to religion. Takeout customers occasionally come in with five-litre plastic jerrycans to stock up.

But this unique atmosphere might soon become a thing of the past: a new documentary by Ugandan journalist Shemei Agabo has revealed the key ingredients for enturire are going extinct thanks to climate change.

The mouth-watering drink is made by fermenting sorghum – but not just any kind of sorghum. Two special varieties of the plant are brewed together: a long grained red-coloured strain known locally as kyatanombe; and buhuuli, a white sorghum. The two varieties appear to grow only in Kigezi – the region known as the Switzerland of Uganda for being hilly and very cold. But this area has been getting warmer, which is in turn affecting its sorghum harvests.

“I used to plant a quarter acre and harvest about 300 kilograms of sorghum,” Million Orinawe says in Agabo’s documentary. But yields declined because of the changing weather, so Orinawe switched to Irish potatoes instead.

Enturire brewers have tried varieties of the crop bought from elsewhere but have so far failed to recreate the original taste of the beverage, Agabo says. “Some breeds

came in from Rwanda while others come from as far as Soroti district [in the east of Uganda],” Agabo told *The Continent*. The foreign sorghum varieties only seem to reduce the quality of enturire.”

In the documentary, brewer Alice Asiimwe says she worries the craft might die out in her lifetime. She has been brewing the drink for 30 years, and is the fourth generation of her family to do so.

Enturire brewers have tried varieties of sorghum bought from elsewhere but failed to recreate the original taste.

Agabo’s own interest in enturire began when he attended weddings in Kigezi. Wedding venues were dotted with drums filled with the enturire rather than exotic foreign beverages. “We don’t do sodas,” friends would tell him. They might have to start, now.

Agabo hopes the documentary will help to bring the issue of climate change alive. “I wanted to bring the conversation of climate change into our local context,” Agabo says. “If a Mukiga (person from Kigezi), or any person that knows this drink, watches TV, they will pay attention and now connect it to climate change,” he hopes. “If you just tell them it’s affecting sorghum, they will switch off.”

Still, he wishes something could be done to save enturire and preserve the social fabric of the community that invented it. “If this drink stops or becomes expensive, the locals will stop meeting,” he says. ■

SPONSORED

The sky's no limit for the SA province bridging its digital divide

Fearing the impact of low internet access, one of South Africa's poorest provinces is building hi-tech laboratories for students to learn about agriculture, astronomy, mining and solar energy

Zibusiso Radebe

Nearly two thirds of South African households can't access the internet with any degree of reliability.

Students in this position find themselves being locked out of what is an increasingly technologically-driven economy – and this in turn only serves to further entrench the country's digital divide.

The Northern Cape, the country's largest province but also one of its poorest, thinks it has a solution to this problem. It is introducing 10 “cyber labs” across the province.

These are high-tech facilities that will

give learners access to high-resolution touchscreens, 3D animations and interactive educational content. They are designed to operate even when offline, so that students can continue to learn even when the internet connection drops.

The cyber labs break their focus into four zones, which are also the economic drivers of the province: agriculture, astronomy, mining and solar energy.

For example, learners will take virtual tours of a mine to see how diamonds are dug up and processed. Some of the subjects that will be taught in the labs include mathematics, physical science, and robotics.

Speaking at the launch recently of one of the cyber labs in the provincial capital, Kimberley, provincial education department head Moira Marais said the cyber labs will also help learners be responsive to the demands of the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

“The world in which our children are functioning is a world of huge technological change,” she said.

The Northern Cape is well placed for this. Its capital was one of the first cities in the world to have electric street lighting, thanks to the wealth of its diamond industry.

It's now home to the MeerKAT radio telescope – one of the world's most sophisticated telescopes – and the world's biggest science project, the Square Kilometre Array. ■

This reporting is supported by ABSA. The Continent retains full editorial control.

How free is your media?

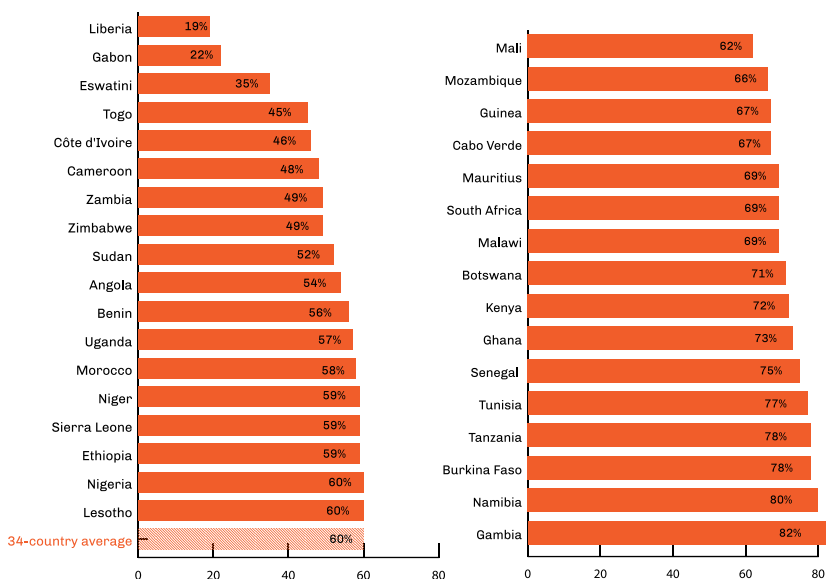
How free is the news media in your country?

Across 34 African countries that Afrobarometer surveyed in 2019/2021, six in 10 citizens (60%) said their country's media were "somewhat" or "completely" free to publish without state interference. It's the majority view in 26 countries,

though very few Liberians (19%) and Gabonese (22%) agree.

A free media is what 62% of Africans say they want. Even more (73%) – including a majority in every surveyed country – say they want a watchdog media that will "constantly investigate and report on government mistakes and corruption".

**Percentage indicating media is somewhat or completely free
| 34 African countries | 2019/2021**



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 +/- two to three percentage points.

Uncertain future:
Journalist Samuel
Getachew poses with
displaced children
from Afar. Photo:
Samuel Getachew



‘The war in Ethiopia has shattered me’

Samuel Getachew spent the past six years as a journalist in Ethiopia, reporting for local and international outlets, including The Continent. Ethiopia is an exceptionally difficult place to be a journalist, but this did not stop him from telling the stories of people from all over the country, and all walks of life. When Ethiopia went to war with itself, those stories became tragedies.

Samuel Getachew

In 2015, during a deep conversation with the Somali-Canadian humanitarian Ilwad Elman in Toronto, I asked her about the process of moving back.

I was impressed that she had gone back to Somalia from Ottawa in order to contribute to its development after her own father, an educator, was killed there

for doing exactly that.

I left Ethiopia as a youngster, and I was not sure how I was going to follow in her footsteps. There was much to contemplate, yet Ethiopia had always fascinated me.

Many of my friends were moving back for business opportunities or to take over a family business. That was not what I wanted to do. I wanted to do journalism.

Ethiopia was a nation infamous for

its lack of a free press, where the state regularly prosecuted journalists and where many heroes of journalism ended up behind bars or in exile.

But when I arrived in 2016, Ethiopia was changing. I came for a month-long vacation with a return ticket – but I decided to make Ethiopia my home. Within weeks of my arrival, I would walk into one of the largest papers offering my services for free, to begin my career as a local journalist. It was then that I found my true calling.

It was an exciting time. An era of darkness was beginning to see light. A young, relatively unknown politician was about to become prime minister, and he would talk about the things that mattered: human rights, democracy and even peace with Eritrea, the once arch-enemy. For his efforts in brokering that peace, he won a Nobel Peace Prize in 2019 – an unimaginable achievement for someone from Ethiopia, which has for decades been better known for famine, war and the displacement of its people.

I was privileged to travel the length and breadth of the nation at this time of momentous change. Low pay and limited resources did not limit my work. I didn't want to report from the corridors of five-star hotels, but by traveling the country and having real conversations with people – which I did despite the terrible public transport and the chronic insecurity across Ethiopia's villages and towns.

The highs were high and the lows were low. I was robbed. Guns were pushed in my face. I was threatened by powerful people. No mind, I told myself: the



Devastated: An Amhara elder describes losing his loved ones in the ongoing conflict. Photo: Samuel Getachew

stories I was able to tell made it all worth it.

I never imagined then that I was about to become a war reporter.

In fact, nothing could have prepared me for what has transpired in Ethiopia in the past 16 months. The ongoing conflict has shattered me as a human being and has made me question my own humanity, and my profession.

In Tigray, I remember visiting the village of Aḅi Adi, where I spoke to local medical practitioners about the rapes



On the move: An old taxi from the Derg era, called 'weyeyet', transporting goods to the local market in Addis Ababa. Part of Samuel Getachew's *Everyday Ethiopia* series, which documents ordinary life across the country.

and killings that had taken place. I saw hospitals with few resources and many patients, and mothers begging us to take their children to the regional capital Mekelle so that they would not be raped in the village.

I spoke to a father who had been forced to watch as four of his five children were killed; he fell to the floor in devastation as he recounted his story. The photographer I was with, Lynsey Addario, wept behind the camera.

Visiting Amhara was no different. I visited with John Sparks of Sky News and heard endless testimonials of rape, destruction and displacements of my fellow Ethiopians. I heard from children young enough to be my own as they gave details of what happened to them and as their mothers wept hopelessly. I wonder what the future holds for these children, and for their nation.

And in Afar, an area of nomads, we may never be able to name or even count

the many who have perished.

These are just a few examples; there are many more.

There is no doubt that my hope for this beautiful nation has been diminished. Yet I still believe in the power of journalism – even if it is not as powerful as I once thought.

Every moment I spent as an Ethiopian has been a blessing, but I feel I have failed the many people who opened up to me, telling me in their own ways how much this conflict has affected them. Those who hoped that by telling me their story, something would change. For the millions of people displaced by this conflict, and the hundreds of thousands who have been killed, that change never came.

We should all know their faces, and their names. My single greatest regret is that I was not able to tell every story of those who confided in me; of each of the many tragedies I encountered in my reporting on this conflict. ■

The propaganda wars: How Ethiopia restricts foreign press

The Continent*

On Friday, the Ethiopian government revoked the media licence of *The Economist's* correspondent in Ethiopia, Tom Gardner, accusing him of failing to heed the Ethiopian Media Authority's "verbal warnings and written reprimands", which instructed him to fall in line with the state's bespoke brand of "professional" media ethics.

The move against Gardner, who is British, comes as no surprise given the country's increasingly poor treatment of foreign journalists – not to mention its targeting of journalists from Ethiopia itself.

In mid-December, an unusual "documentary" was broadcast on state television in Ethiopia. It was produced by the country's federal police. The subject of the documentary was a journalist, Amir Aman Kiyaro, and his alleged crimes.

Thirty-year-old Amir works for the Associated Press (AP), one of the world's biggest news agencies, and was arrested while reporting on the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) – an insurgent group operating across Ethiopia's Oromia region and designated as a "terrorist organisation" last year.

In their documentary, the police claimed Amir and his colleagues were doing more than just reporting: the police accused them of "committing crimes" like "interviewing fighters and commanders of an OLA wing and taking footage of military trainings" and "promoting a terrorist organisation internationally". Several international media outlets, including the AP, were accused of circulating propaganda with the intent to "dismantle" the country.

As far as Amir is concerned, he was just doing his job. When *The Continent* spoke with him earlier this month, Amir was out of prison, on bail. By the time he was released in early April, he had been behind bars for 125 days.

Now, as they await his court trial, Amir and his lawyers say they believe the authorities should be held responsible for going to such extreme lengths to conflate journalism with terrorism.

"This is not just an attack against me; it is an attack on journalism and press freedom," said Amir of the documentary. "I was doing the ABCs of a balanced story, my job as a journalist. Sadly, they believe interviewing a group they declared a terrorist makes the journalist a terrorist."

Amir's persecution is just one chapter

in what amounts to a concerted attack against international media by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's government.

Threats and intimidation

Another casualty of this propaganda war is Simon Marks, an Irish journalist who first arrived in Addis Ababa in September 2019, reporting for *The New York Times* and other publications.

"When I arrived, there was a lot of optimism," recalled Marks. Even when regional conflicts began to intensify, "access and freedom remained good." But in May 2021, he was deported. Ethiopian authorities gave little explanation for their abrupt action but media watchdogs saw it as potentially related to his coverage of atrocities by government forces in Tigray.

"Simon's expulsion was a symptom of a broader hostility to international coverage that has also manifested itself in other ways, including the March 2021 arrest of local fixers and journalists," said Muthoki Mumo, the sub-Saharan Africa representative of the Committee to Protect Journalists. Since then, the state and its allies have been relentless in their criticism of foreign media, and especially western media.

"Simon's expulsion was a symptom of a broader hostility to international coverage."

In November 2021, the Ethiopian Media Authority issued warnings to CNN, BBC, AP and Reuters, accusing them of biased reporting and "seeking

to discredit the country's leader", while threatening to revoke their licences.

In some of the country's privately-owned pro-war press, these accusations have been taken even further. In December 2020, only a month after the civil war began, *Fiteh* magazine said some foreign journalists were working with the United Kingdom to save the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front.

On social media, foreign journalists have repeatedly been the targets of angry social media campaigns.

Meanwhile, the central government is making it harder for journalists to do their jobs by making it difficult to obtain reporting accreditation, according to some that spoke to *The Continent*.

Taking their cue from Addis, regional authorities and informal groups outside the capital are even less generous. "The worst that the federal government can do is deport me," said one foreign journalist; but away from the centre, the risks can range from being beaten up to detention.

Consequently, atrocities in the restive regions of Oromia and Tigray have been under-reported. The ability of journalists to hold power to account has been undermined.

Against all odds, some of those targeted remain hopeful. Marks is optimistic the situation will improve and he will be allowed back in Ethiopia.

"If you look at the bigger picture, it's a work in progress," he said. ■

**The names of the researchers on this piece are known to The Continent and kept secret for their safety.*

Mwai Kibaki and the limitations of brilliance

The economic policies of Kenya's third president helped to build the country. But his self-serving politics damaged the fabric of the nation, and Kenya has yet to recover.

Isaac Otidi Amuke

Mwai Kibaki – Kenya's third president, who died on 21 April aged 90 – was (and will possibly be for a long time to come) not only the country's most educated head of state but also its most affable, live-and-let-live leader.

Boasting two degrees earned in the 1950s – a first class in economics from Makerere University and a distinction in public finance from the London School of Economics – Kibaki was among a handful of pre-independence Kenya sophisticates who situated themselves at the apogee of state power.

Starting off as the independence party Kenya African National Union's (Kanu) executive officer, Kibaki served as permanent secretary in the treasury in Jomo Kenyatta's first government, then as assistant minister of finance, minister of commerce, and finally minister of finance.

Following Kenyatta's death in 1978, Daniel arap Moi made Kibaki his vice president, before relegating him to the

ministry of health in 1988. In 1992, with his fortunes dwindling within Moi's Kanu, Kibaki defected to the opposition, where he subsequently became leader of the official opposition and later president of the country.

With four decades in government and the academic credentials to match, Kibaki was supposed to be job-ready by the time he became president (unlike both of his predecessors).

At the time of his election in 2002, Kenyans had had enough of Moi's 24-year tyranny (an on-steroids continuation of Kenyatta's 15-year autocracy), such that when Kanu imploded as a result of Moi handpicking Kenyatta's son Uhuru to succeed him, the Kanu renegades had little choice but to cross over to the united opposition, where Kibaki was the tentative compromise candidate. With the endorsement of the new arrivals, Kibaki beat Uhuru resoundingly. Kenya would change forever, or so we thought. This blind optimism would prove disastrous.

For the entirety of his political career, Mwai Kibaki had always played it safe,



Lingering legacy:
Mwai Kibaki at a rally
ahead of the elections
in 2002 that saw
him replace Daniel
arap Moi as Kenya's
president. Photo:
Alexander Joe/AFP

staying loyal to Kanu and occasionally working to entrench the once-upon-a-time behemoth, like in 1982 when as vice president he successfully moved a motion to make Kenya a de jure one party state, shrinking political liberties. It was therefore an open secret that Kibaki was a system man, albeit an educated one whose brilliance and gentlemanly mien allowed him to get away with keeping the company of despots.

He was not a natural fit for the opposition, which he only joined because he no longer saw a future for himself within Moi's wobbling Kanu.

Not too long before he moved across the aisle, he had – in an I-am-joking-but-I-am-not-joking moment – remarked during the clamour for multipartyism that ousting Kanu from power was akin to attempting to cut down a fig tree using a razor blade.

And although he did ultimately oust Kanu from power, his administration failed to deliver on the political change that it had promised voters – even as it

successfully kickstarted the country's economy.

The party support was predominantly “Gema” (drawn from the Gikuyu, Embu and Meru groups in eastern Kenya), meaning it alienated Kenyans who didn't place their ancestry at the foot of Mount Kenya. Kibaki allowed his presidency to be hijacked by these narrow interests, turning it into a self-enriching and self-perpetuating institution for the benefit of a select minority – a tradition that continues today.

In the end, the government led by the man who was supposed to cure Kenya of ethnically divisive politics became the purveyor of the gasoline that saw the country driven to the precipice of the abyss following the bungled 2007 general election. His legacy ensures that, as Kenya prepares for another election this year, the conversation is dominated by talk of the ethnicisation of politics and the fear of political violence, rather than on the policies that will improve the lives of ordinary Kenyans. ■

Over-troped *Blood Sisters* shines thanks to plucky stars

Wilfred Okiche

On paper, Nollywood's high-output, low-impact creative model would seem like the perfect fit for Netflix. But Netflix has struggled in Nigeria, reaching a new low in January with the release of the ghastly comedy *Chief Daddy 2: Going for Broke*, which generated a wave of hostile reactions among audiences.

But EbonyLife, the studio behind *Chief Daddy*, may have redeemed itself with *Blood Sisters*. The four-part miniseries is an addictive dramatic thriller that deploys a star-studded cast as well as best-in-class technical standards to tell a supremely entertaining story about class divisions and the curse of the patriarchy.

Directed by Biyi Bandele (*Half of a Yellow Sun*) and Kenneth Gyang (*Òlòturé*), *Blood Sisters* follows Sarah (Ini Dima-Okojie) and Kemi (Nancy Isime), on the run from the law after the abusive scion of an influential family goes missing.

Established Hollywood tropes are blended with the localisation instincts garnered from South Africa's formidable episodic tradition. Ideas are harvested from *Thelma & Louise*, *Succession* and



noir films of the 1940s and 1950s.

The writing suffers from all this lifting, stretching credulity and forcing mercifully experienced actors to breathe life into anaemic characters. So *Blood Sisters* really shouldn't work, but somehow it does, thanks to an exciting premise told with gusto and excellent production values.

For the first time since Genevieve Nnaji's *Lionheart* was announced as the debut Nollywood original title in 2018, local industry sensibilities and Netflix's strategic pursuits appear to have melded into a credible whole. One that could point to a viable pathway for future collaborations. ■

Blood Sisters is streaming on Netflix.

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

"The highest elephant in the world told me its secrets."



Photo: Getty Images

1_ Mauritius has both a presidential and a prime minister. True or false?

2_ Which country has the highest elephant population in the world?

3_ Mobutu Sese Seko was a former president of which country?

4_ Which Nigerian artist just became the first to debut at No. 1 on the Billboard Hot 100?

5_ What is the capital of Guinea?

6_ English is one of Morocco's official languages. True or false?

7_ Which city's skyline is pictured? [Hint: The Britam and Times Towers

are found here.]

8_ Ngugi wa Thiong'o wrote the 1958 novel *Things Fall Apart*. True or false?

9_ Kevin Anderson just retired from tennis. Which country is he from?

10_ The British Empire established a so-called protectorate in 1907 called Nyasaland. What is it called today?

HOW DID I DO?

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

Would you like to send us some quiz questions or even curate your own quiz? Let us know at letters@thecontinent.org

Beauty is in the eye of the poll-holder



**Continental
Drift**

Samira Sawlani

This week our lord and saviour Rihanna announced that her make-up and skincare brand Fenty Beauty, would *finally* be available in some African countries.

The excitement is off the charts, dear reader – as of course you know, so ready we are to apply the kind of highlighter that will blind our enemies, mascara to make our lashes visible from space, and of course perfume that may even mask the smell of all the tear gas going around.

While we pride ourselves on looking our best, it's of course our dear leaders we're thinking of. How happy must they be, now that they can indulge in a little extra vanity without having to charter a private plane to Paris to stock up. Admittedly, some of them are perhaps not quite vain enough, and could with some extra help in that department. Because if there is one time you want to make sure your appearance is impeccable, it's when you are vying for votes. So Fenty's arrival is perfectly on time for Somalia's upcoming presidential election.

Thirty-nine candidates will be running



Against the odds: Somalia's former foreign minister Fawzia Yusuf Haji Adam is the only woman running for president. Photo: Twitter/FawziaYusufAdam

for president – including the incumbent, Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed aka “Farmaajo”, as well as former presidents Hassan Sheikh Mohamoud and Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed, not to mention the only woman candidate – former foreign minister Fawzia Yusuf Haji Adam.

The lead-up to the long overdue polls has been complicated by conflict between Farmaajo and his prime minister, so the election of a united government is something Somalis are likely to be hoping for.

Rouge trader

Life after presidency is not a subject too many of our leaders are familiar with, but for those such as President Buhari of Nigeria who is currently completing his final term, perhaps becoming a Fenty Beauty Ambassador or Fenty Beauty influencer may be an option?

Alas if members of Buhari's cabinet were hoping he would treat them to a makeover as they head out on the campaign trail, they are likely to be disappointed: he's already issued a directive ordering all cabinet ministers who plan to run for public office in next year's election to resign by this coming Monday.

Whether this should apply to the governor of Nigeria's Central Bank, Godwin Emefiele, has been a matter of intense debate amid reports he has his sights set on Buhari's job, but reckons he shouldn't have to resign because he is a "public servant" not a political appointee.

A brand new you!

If you use make-up, dearest reader, it's most likely to enhance your already exquisite beauty, but there are also those among us who might also find it useful in creating a disguise to help sneak out of the country. We wonder if Guinea's former president, Alpha Condé, might count himself among this covert cohort.

Authorities have now opened a judicial investigation into Condé and his crew, with charges ranging from murder, sexual assault and rape to enforced disappearances and attacking the national economy. The public prosecutor has called on anyone affected by election violence

during the 2020 polls to come forward with information. The real question is how much Fenty would you need to slip past the Querying Eye for the Crooked Guy.

Staying with Guinea, there is little doubt that current leader Colonel Doumbouya already has a good skincare game. What's his secret? Good diet? Regular facials? A nice relaxing coup?

Whatever the answer, Doumbouya's complexion is not distracting his critics in the opposition, who have rejected his plans for a 39-month transition towards elections and civilian rule. This week the country's temporary parliament voted to adopt a 36-month timeline instead. While the junta may not be losing sleep over the three-month difference, opposition figures have rejected the timeline altogether, leading to fears of another political crisis.

The words you omit speak volumes. The stories you silence, we hear. The trust you break, we feel.

We end this week on a sombre note: the Al-Jazeera journalist Shireen Abu Akleh was shot dead by Israeli forces. A hero to many, Shireen's death is another example of Israel's continued violence against Palestinians. We're troubled by the response of some media houses and members of the international community of fencesitters. To them, we say: The words you omit speak volumes. The stories you silence, we hear. The trust you break, we feel. Be better. ■

Bad education: The politics of fake degrees heap shame on Sierra Leone

Ibrahim Barrie

On 26 March, Dominion Christian University (DCU) was filmed conferring fake honorary PhDs to Sierra Leoneans under mango trees – despite the Tertiary Education Commission having stated that they were not accredited to do so. The shameful incident subsequently went viral, raising critical questions about the quality of education in Sierra Leone and beyond, including why the DCU had not been shut down much earlier, and how many people had secured fake degrees?

For academic institutions, fake degrees bring massive reputational risk. For a country, fake qualifications can undermine the willingness of foreign investors to set up shop, and promote a lack of accountability within the political system. The most worrying consequence of such practices is that they destroy the value of working hard. As Nelson Mandela asserted, “Education is the most powerful weapon we can use to change the world.”

There is therefore no room for compromise within the sector.

But what can be done? The DCU vice chancellor, Dr Ezekiel Bangura, was arrested and the DCU shut down, but other institutions continue to operate in similar fashion. As the Academic Staff Association of the University of Sierra Leone said, it is especially concerning that fraudulent institutions “have been operating in the country publicly and abrogating to themselves the authority to award higher degrees [such as PhDs, for example] to prominent persons highly placed in the public and private sector”.

Why has this situation been allowed to persist? One explanation is that many of those in power don’t want people to look too carefully at their own degrees.

Dr John Lahai, a former lecturer at the University of Sierra Leone, has pointed out that senior figures in the police and parliament have PhDs issued by the so-called Africa Graduate University of Uganda. Given that the TEC has stated that this institution is not recognised in Sierra Leone, they have a vested interest in shielding fake educational establishments.

So even though Sierra Leone and other countries are in urgent need of a comprehensive audit of their educational systems and the qualifications of their members, this is unlikely to happen any time soon. ■



Ibrahim Barrie teaches Research and Public Policy at the University of Makeni. This analysis was produced in collaboration with Democracy in Africa.

The Big Picture

Photo: Sameer Al-Doumy/AFP

Adrift: Migrants wait for help from the Abeille Languedoc rescue ship after their boat's generator broke down in French waters while they were trying to cross the Channel to the United Kingdom, off the coast of Boulogne-sur-Mer this week. The Abeille Languedoc is an ocean-going tug specialising in the rescue of ships in distress. It has been moored in Cherbourg for 26 years, monitoring the waters between the Cotentin and the Pas-de-Calais.



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