

SPECIAL
ISSUE

JUNE | JULY 2025

Forbes

AFRICA

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11TH ANNUAL

30 UNDER 30

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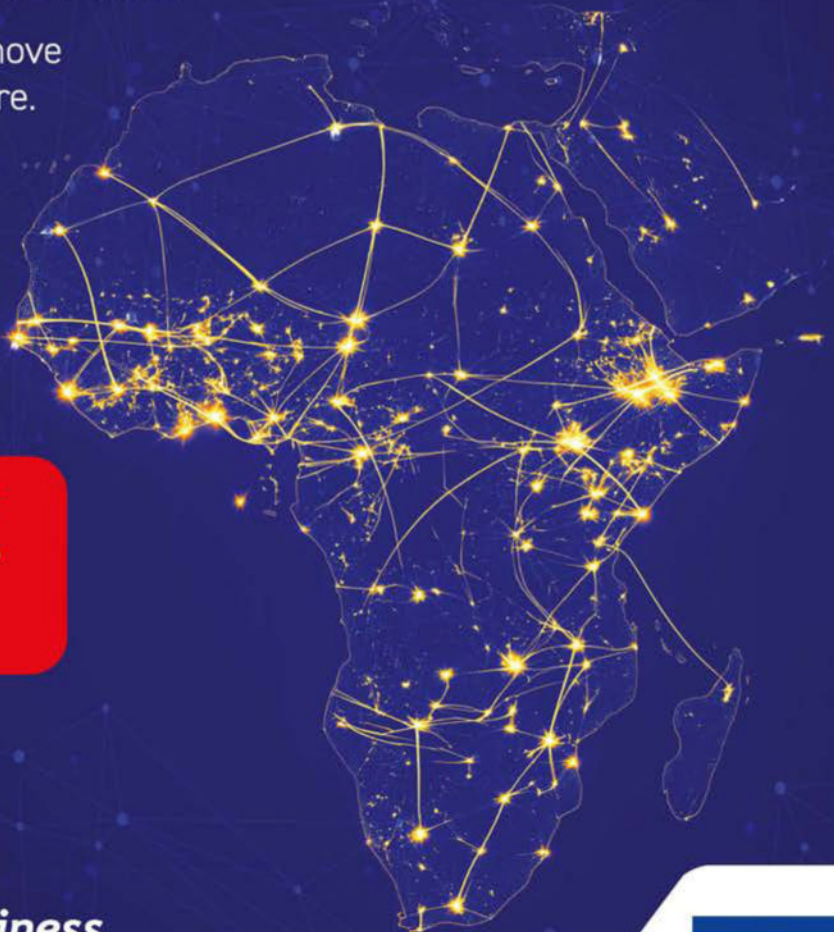
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The Builders Of Now

Africa is a sum of all its parts, and each part matters.

What holds the tapestry together is a coalition of cultures, a diorama of diversity, a mosaic far from the monolith that Africa is often reductively perceived as.

I write this note on Africa Day on May 25, and the image that speaks powerfully to me of the continent is plural, heterogenous, layered, yet held together by sub-cultures and the abundance of its interwoven parts.

So, it can never be a single narrative for Africa—it is many Africas in one, working in tandem. Rich, resolute and rushed.

It is this dynamic complexity that gives rise to a new wave of entrepreneurs, many under 30, who are the Ozempic of the economy, trimming out the excessive frills and fanfare and going straight for the results.

The truth is out there: that more than one in four people on earth will be African by 2050.

Across the continent, these young innovators are creating solutions that are both astutely local and globally relevant. They are testing their tensile strength developing AI tools trained for the local context, digitizing rural healthcare, and launching climate-tech startups. They are not waiting for validation from the West. Innovation is not imported—it's stamped as homegrown, and then panel-beaten and scaled.

Capital is being pumped into ideas that speak the language of the continent and its culture. The rules of engagement are being rewritten by these promising young entrepreneurs, who are building their economic muscle and setting their own pace.

This issue explores these intersections, and the power that lies in the totality.

There is artificial intelligence and then there is African intelligence. So just as gold and bitcoin soar to seductive record-breaking highs, these young people want in too, waving original AI-induced ideas and shaking hands with the czars of capital on collaborative platforms.



Empowered by the echo chambers of social media, they are increasingly vocal. Not for them the new template of American (un)diplomacy or the fog and fracas of war.

This issue celebrates their impatience and unapologetic ambition. As one young list-maker says: "Success doesn't care where you come from, it cares how consistent, obsessed, and relentless you are." This is not a fleeing moment—with voice and momentum, they are the architects of now. **F**

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South Africa Ready To Advance Its Integrated Energy Future

THE SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL PETROLEUM COMPANY (SANPC), A STATE-OWNED ENTITY, HAS OFFICIALLY DEBUTED, MARKING THE BEGINNING OF A NEW CHAPTER IN SOUTH AFRICA'S ENERGY TRANSFORMATION JOURNEY.



The SANPC Bill empowers the company to streamline regulations and centralize import controls

At the helm of the transformation at the South African National Petroleum Company (SANPC) is CEO Godfrey Moagi, named the only South African on the African Energy Chamber's (AEC) 'Top 40 Movers and Shakers to Watch in 2025'.

The AEC's annual list celebrates leaders who exemplify innovation, strategic vision, and tangible impact in Africa's energy sector. Moagi's inclusion reflects his alignment with the AEC's core pillars: energy security, investment mobilization, and local empowerment.

"The Top 40 list recognizes those driving Africa's energy future through collaboration and transformative policies," says NJ Ayuk, Executive Chairman of the AEC.

The SANPC's debut at Africa Energy Week (AEW) 2024, held from November 4-8 in Cape Town, South Africa, marked the first leg of the company's Investor Roadshow Program, where it presented its vision to stakeholders across Africa, the Middle East, and Europe. The roadshow

serves as a platform for forging strategic partnerships, promoting SANPC's role in energy security, and positioning the company as a leader in Africa's energy sector.

The SANPC merges three key historical entities in the industry: iGas, PetroSA, and the Strategic Fuel Fund (SFF). The merger, a strategic decision designed to unify and streamline South Africa's energy resources, brings together vital infrastructure, expertise, and market opportunities under one roof.

Moagi stresses that the consolidation will eliminate inefficiencies, optimize ZAR1.5 billion (\$81.9 million) in operational synergies, and unlock a ZAR95 billion (\$5.19 billion) market opportunity critical for sustainable growth in an increasingly competitive global energy market.

At AEW 2024, the SANPC hosted a networking stakeholder breakfast session with Gwede Mantashe, Minister of Mineral and Petroleum Resources, affirming the company's mandate.



South African
National Petroleum
Company (SANPC)
CEO, Godfrey Moagi

“SANPC represents a new era for South Africa’s energy landscape,” he said. “To improve operational efficiency within the Central Energy Fund (CEF) value chain and deliver shareholder value, we sought to minimize duplications that inhibit the group from being a catalyst to reigniting the South African economy.”

South Africa faces significant energy security threats due to reliance on imports and reduced refining capacity. With imports already covering 65% of refined fuel needs, a figure projected to cost the economy ZAR170 to ZAR174 billion (\$9.2 to \$9.5 billion) annually by 2025, SANPC is prioritizing local infrastructure to stabilize supply chains. The country’s refining capacity plummeted from 80% in 2010 to 35% in 2022, driven by aging infrastructure and underinvestment.

One of SANPC’s flagship projects under evaluation is the revitalization of the Gas-to-Liquids (GTL) refinery in Mossel Bay—a town in the Western Cape province—a legacy

asset currently non-operational due to feedstock shortages. The company is also assessing opportunities to convert shuttered refineries like Sapref into integrated petrochemical hubs, aligning with global trends to diversify into chemicals and offset volatile fuel margins.

Guided by the SANPC Bill, which empowers the company to streamline regulations and centralize import controls, SANPC aims to reverse import dependency. The bill proposes tying fuel pricing to local refining costs, disincentivizing profit-driven import substitution by international oil companies.

Moagi’s regional vision aligns with the AEC’s emphasis on cross-border collaboration to address Africa’s energy deficits. At AEW 2024, he championed partnerships with Namibia in the shared Orange Basin, where joint development of offshore gas resources could benefit both nations.

“By working together, we can close SADC’s [Southern African Development Community] projected 70% refining deficit by 2030 and create a unified, resilient energy sector,” Moagi remarked.

Globally, SANPC is leveraging partnerships with industry leaders like Petrobras to harness deepwater expertise while adhering to the AEC’s call for local capacity-building.

“We look to Petrobras’s approach as a model for how we can harness South Africa’s offshore resources, especially in the Orange Basin,” Moagi noted.

In the wake of evolving global megatrends, SANPC will operate in an increasingly volatile, unpredictable, and disrupted world. South Africa’s fragile economy, with its urgent need for state-owned enterprises (SOEs) to drive infrastructure and industrial growth, underscores SANPC’s

role as a catalyst for structural reform along the energy value chain.

“We are open to learning from global leaders, but our primary goal is to create a sector that serves South Africa’s people and strengthens our economy,” Moagi emphasized.

In May 2025, SANPC participated in the Invest in African Energy (IAE) Forum in Paris, where Moagi will engage with global investors under the theme: ‘Pioneering Africa’s Energy Boom: Strategic Investment for Maximum Returns’.

“We are working toward a future where Africa is a net energy exporter, and SANPC is at the forefront of this transformation,” Moagi concludes.

As SANPC advances an integrated energy future, it will address South Africa’s energy challenges, foster regional growth, and solidify its place as a cornerstone of Africa’s energy renaissance.



EXPORTING OURSELVES TO THE WORLD

By Chanel Retief

The season is going to blow your mind,” Connie Ferguson tells FORBES AFRICA a month before the release of the long-awaited Netflix South African drama series, *Kings of Joburg*.


“I think at the core, *Kings of Joburg* is about family,” adds the popular South African actor, filmmaker, producer and businesswoman, about the third season of the hit show in which she plays Veronica. “It’s new antagonists, new battles, new storylines. It’s a very exciting season.”

Created by Shona Ferguson, Ferguson’s late husband, the franchise gained popularity in 2020 and was the number one most-watched show on Netflix in South Africa for over three weeks.

In the last couple of years, there has been a big push towards more African content on global platforms like Netflix. The creative industries contribute significantly to the South African economy, accounting for 2.97% of the nation’s total economic output in 2020, according to South African Cultural Observatory. Ferguson says that it is important that if you want the stories to be authentically told, they need to be told directly by Africans.

“Because the world thinks they know us and they really don’t. We can’t be entertaining, for example, American stories and telling American stories, when we should be focusing on telling our stories, because that’s who we are. We want the world to also get to authentically know us and who we are. We are exporting ourselves to the world.”

Known to the entertainment world for her role as Karabo Moroka in South African soap opera *Generations* which she began playing in 1993, Ferguson says she has always been passionate about ensuring that there are young people in creative spaces able to navigate it well.

“I believe in succession,” Ferguson adds. “Because people die with their talent, people die with their ideas, and they haven’t imparted anything to anyone. So you want to make sure, at least, I want to make sure that when I go there’s someone left behind who will say, ‘I learned this from Aus Connie, or got this opportunity [because of her]’. For me, that’s like a form of succession. You’re leaving a legacy behind, and you are empowering the next generation of our filmmakers.” 

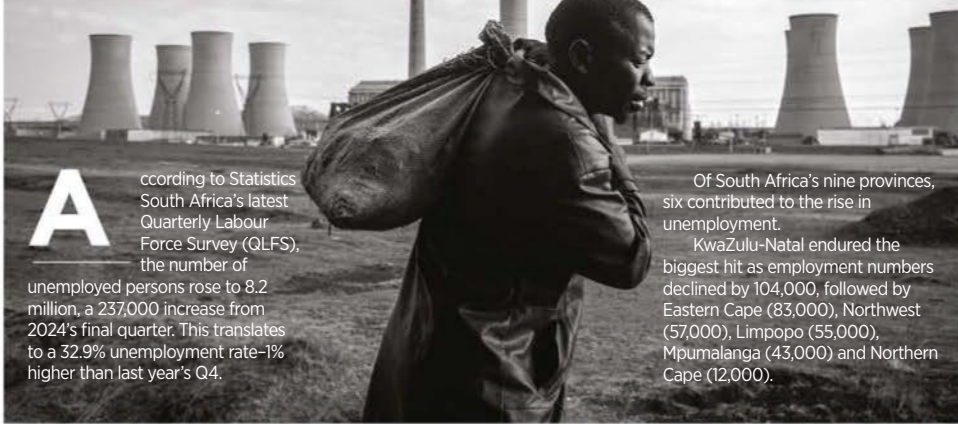


WORLD BANK'S \$350 MILLION GRANT

The World Bank approved a \$350 million grant to support Malawi's Mpatamanga Hydropower Storage Project. The approval came in May for the 358.5MW project which aims to expand electricity generation capacity and connect over one million people to the grid.

Reuters reported that the board of directors approved the grant to support a large hydropower storage project in Malawi that will significantly increase the southern African country's generation capacity which will also include creating "thousands of jobs".

UNEMPLOYMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA RISES SHARPLY IN Q1 2025



According to Statistics South Africa's latest Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS), the number of unemployed persons rose to 8.2 million, a 237,000 increase from 2024's final quarter. This translates to a 32.9% unemployment rate—1% higher than last year's Q4.

Of South Africa's nine provinces, six contributed to the rise in unemployment.

KwaZulu-Natal endured the biggest hit as employment numbers declined by 104,000, followed by Eastern Cape (83,000), Northwest (57,000), Limpopo (55,000), Mpumalanga (43,000) and Northern Cape (12,000).

MOBILE INTERNET GENDER GAP NARROWS

By Oluwatomisin Amokeoja



The mobile internet gender gap in sub-Saharan Africa continues to shrink, falling from 36% in 2022 to 29% in 2024, according to the *Mobile Gender Gap Report 2025* published by GSMA.

This marks the second consecutive year of progress in a region historically known for having the highest proportion of women excluded from mobile internet access.

While men's adoption rates have plateaued, rising just one percentage point from 53% to 54%, women's usage increased more significantly from 36% to 39%, helping to close the divide.

"Sub-Saharan Africa stands out as the only region where the mobile internet gender gap has continued to narrow," Claire Sibthorpe, Head of Digital Inclusion at GSMA, says to FORBES AFRICA. "This is a positive achievement in a region with a relatively high mobile internet gender gap, especially as progress has stalled across low- and middle-income countries overall in the last year."

Despite the gains, the gap remains substantial: around 205 million women in the region—roughly 61% of the adult female population—still do not use mobile internet. The reasons are multifaceted, including affordability, limited digital literacy, safety concerns, and restrictive social norms.

Smartphone ownership is closely linked to internet usage. The report notes that when women do own smartphones, their internet adoption rates almost equal those of men. But the high cost of devices continues to be a key barrier. GSMA is advocating for targeted interventions such as handset subsidies, financing models, and public-private partnerships to make smartphones more accessible.

"Connecting women is not just about technology—it's about economic inclusion," Sibthorpe adds. "When women are online, they gain access to opportunities in education, healthcare, financial services, and entrepreneurship, which benefits the entire economy."



MONEY AND MOMENTOUS OPPORTUNITY FOR AFRICA IN NEW-LOOK FOOTBALL TOURNEY

By Mark Gleeson

World football's governing body FIFA are hoping the new-look Club World Cup, which will be hosted in the United States in June, will mark a new era for the game and develop a four-yearly competition that has as much relevance and reverence as the World Cup for national teams.

Africa will play a part in the new vision: there are four clubs from the continent among the 32 teams that have qualified for the tournament, which will kick off on June 15.

It includes Mamelodi Sundowns, who are through to this season's African Champions League final later in May and will be hoping to make some impact on the new-look Club World Cup.

It is a momentous opportunity for a South African side, rubbing shoulders with the most successful club sides from across the globe over the last years.

Egypt's Al Ahly, Wydad Casablanca from Morocco and Esperance of Tunisia are the other three African clubs who have qualified on the basis of their performances in the last four years of the African Champions League competition.

In their group, Sundowns have been drawn against Borussia Dortmund, who were runners-up in the UEFA Champions League last season; Rio de Janeiro giants Fluminense and Ulsan from South Korea.

It will be something of an upset if the Pretoria club progress past the first stage but even if they return home without a win, the tournament promises to be a massive learning curve and its financial spin off means Sundowns are set to continue their long-standing hegemony on the local scene.

They will reportedly receive a minimum of \$9-million for participating in the tournament, with more money on offer for any victories they might achieve; \$2 million is paid for winning group stage games, \$7.5 million for playing in the round of 16 and \$40 million to the team that wins the final at MetLife Stadium near New York on July 13.

FIFA aims to share \$250 million among clubs worldwide who did not qualify for the tournament. But it is not yet clear how many clubs will be paid, or how much they will get.

The \$1 billion Club World Cup prize pot is more than double the \$440 million that FIFA shared among the 32 federations whose teams played at the 2022 World Cup in Qatar, further proof of their desire to make this new project work.

It is massive money for Sundowns to continue to buy the best players and extend their record-breaking run of championship success in South Africa's Premier Soccer League.

Fitness Apparel Brand Focused On Accountability, Impact And Authenticity

REVENGE FIT APPAREL IS MORE THAN JUST GYM WEAR—IT REPRESENTS A LIFESTYLE ROOTED IN RESILIENCE AND REDEFINES WHAT IT MEANS TO SHOW UP FOR YOURSELF.

With the South African gym apparel market expected to hit \$1,330.2 million by 2030, per Grand View Research, it's clear that there is value in staying healthy, and dressing the part while you do.

Sbahle Sithole launched SMAIS Bricks in 2020, redefining brick manufacturing in a male-dominated industry, but she had already discovered her true passion two years earlier—Revenge Fit Apparel, an athleisure brand born out of personal frustration and an ode to the importance of self-discipline.

The Right Foundation

With the launch of SMAIS Bricks, Sithole sought to make a difference in her community.

“There was this informal settlement I used to drive past all the time. It never changed.

So, I sought to build houses for the people as my first CSI project,” she explains.

Despite the challenge of launching the business a few months before the world shut down, Sithole persisted, and even earned recognition in countries like Tanzania.

Unfortunately, the business became increasingly difficult to manage, especially after her father's passing. His support was vital in navigating the space, and Sithole admits she struggled in his absence.



Sbahle Sithole

“After he passed, it all fell on me.”
Sithole didn’t give up on her entrepreneurial dreams though. Instead, she pivoted.

“The construction business taught me a lot, but Revenge was always my first love.”

Birthing Revenge

Despite the name, Revenge Fit Apparel wasn’t birthed for retribution, but rather because its founder began to make healthier choices.

“I started going back to the gym, but I hated it because I couldn’t find pants that fit right. My lower half is heavier, and everything just felt uncomfortable,” Sithole explains with a laugh.

This challenge sparked an idea and before long, Sithole was researching, sampling fabrics, and designing the perfect fit for women like her.

Despite the growing demand for fitness apparel in the country, Sithole took her time to test out the clothing—five years to be precise—so that upon its launch in 2023, her brand could compete with leading athleisure brands in the market.

As for the name, she explains that “Revenge is not about getting back at someone. It’s revenge on yourself—for all the times you said you’d start something and didn’t. It’s a ‘you versus you’ thing... That’s why gyms are filled with mirrors. You’re your own competition.”

Disciplined Self-Improvement

As an entrepreneur, and fitness fanatic, Sithole has adopted discipline as her ethos.

And, with self-improvement as the core goal behind Revenge, Sithole explains that this particular messaging, and the brand’s identity, go beyond active-wear.

“It’s about showing up for yourself, pushing through, and doing what you said you would.”

Now with the brand approaching its second year, Sithole is still very much hands-on, taking up the roles of CEO, designer, creative director, and model—which can take its toll.

“It’s tough not having a team to bounce ideas off. I have to rely on myself a lot.”

Despite the weight of the many hats that she wears, Sithole plans to widen Revenge’s offerings to include a menswear line, footwear, and, eventually, a physical gym.

“It’s not just about clothes. I see Revenge as a life-style.”

Fearlessly Taking Up Space

While she’s moved away from the construction business, Sithole continues to honor that chapter of her



life by hosting the Female Industrialist Seminar, a space for women in male-dominated industries to network, share and empower one another.

“It was refreshing to inspire people—women and men—who were shocked, yet impressed, that I threw myself into construction,” she says.

Whether it’s layering bricks or outlining a two-piece gym set, Sithole’s passion has proven that the success of a business goes beyond profit and is rather about impact, authenticity, and accountability.

“The construction business taught me how to be brave. Revenge taught me how to be me.”





TRAILBLAZERS UNDER

30

IN THE HOT SEAT CREATING A NEW ARCHITECTURE FOR CHANGE IN AFRICA

NO ONE HEARS MORE 'NO'S' OR HAS MORE DOORS SLAMMED IN THEIR FACE THAN A YOUNG PERSON CHASING A DREAM AND TRYING TO SOLVE A FORMIDABLE PROBLEM. BUT ASK ANY OF THESE YOUNG AFRICANS, AND THEY WILL TELL YOU THAT EVERY SETBACK HAS BUILT THEIR RESILIENCE. IF NO ONE OFFERS THEM OPPORTUNITIES, THEY WILL CREATE THEM, AND ACROSS SECTORS, WITH AN UNSHAKEABLE PASSION FOR NATION-BUILDING AND DEVELOPMENT. HERE ARE THE FINALISTS OF FORBES AFRICA'S 11TH EDITION OF THE ANNUAL 30 UNDER 30 LIST.

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More than a year ago at the Africa CEO Forum in Rwanda’s capital Kigali, the nation’s president, **Paul Kagame**, said: “The more united Africa is, the more productive our engagement with partners will become. Integration, for Africa’s business community, is an opportunity to grow our markets, and become more competitive. Africa does not have to ask for a seat at the table.”

Propelled by ambition and motivated by success, FORBES AFRICA’s 30 Under 30 Class of 2025 wholeheartedly epitomize this sentiment, but they don’t just want to ask for a seat, they want to build it and occupy those prized positions. And not alone—but as a collective.

They unanimously follow the Millennials-Generation Z dictum of “standing on business”, which is doing exactly what they have set out to do and making it, come what may.

They believe that leading from the front as role models is the only way they can do away with some of Africa’s biggest problems, one of them being rising unemployment. For a continent with the world’s youngest population, they know this is not a heartening scenario, and are hence impatient to change the narrative about themselves.

Let’s take Africa’s biggest economy. As of May 2025, the number of jobless individuals in South Africa has risen to a staggering 8.2 million. In a country with a population of 60 million, according to the Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS), young people (aged between 15–34) remain the most at risk; the number of unemployed in this

demographic rose to 4.8 million; 151,000 more than the previous quarter.

The numbers from the other regions of the continent are not encouraging either. The Federation of Kenya Employers states that approximately 35% of young people in Kenya are unemployed. According to the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS), the youth unemployment rate for individuals aged 15–24 stood at 4.5% in 2023, a slight decrease from 4.6% in 2022. However, the graduate unemployment rate was significantly higher at 15.2%. Last year, *Reuters* reported that in the third quarter of 2023, Nigeria’s unemployment rate increased to 5%, up from 4.2% in the previous quarter. However, the unemployment rate among young people aged 15–24 rose to 8.6%, from 7.2%.

For most of the under-30s in this year’s cohort, it’s not just about solving the scourge of youth unemployment but ensuring that success and succession is a part of building brands and businesses. Future-proofing is the way to go.

Alongside industry and sector-wide changes—as reflected on this list—is the pressing need to integrate artificial intelligence (AI) into all their efforts and enterprises. Many on this list confirm that they have built their businesses around AI and are finding new ways to ensure that Africa is not left behind—cerebrally or technologically—in any sector. They are leveraging the ‘power’ of AI and generative AI as a complement to success.

Take one of the covers stars in this issue, Ghanaian entrepreneur Darlington Ahiale Akogo, whose company MinoHealth AI Labs has developed AI systems for automated diagnostics within the healthcare sector; this would be for ascertaining conditions such as pneumonia, fibrosis, hernia, and pleural effusion with chest X-rays, and breast cancer with mammograms. They have also developed AI systems for the screening of malaria, Covid-19, as well as tuberculosis-related damages; and are currently testing and improving these AI solutions.

Akogo believes that this is the next frontier to solve a number of issues in healthcare, such as resource restraints. He says: “This is the reality, it’s happening. The AI system is essentially currently more of a co-pilot, an assistant, which means that it would draft a medical report but you still need a radiologist to sign off on it. But for us, that’s not the end of the solution. That’s not the end of the job.

“The reality is that there are countries like Sierra Leone, Liberia, that have less than five radiologists. If you have an AI system and you still need a human to sign off on everything, that hasn’t solved the problem. So, we need to get to a point where, essentially, the AI system is so good that you can take it to the most remote part of Africa or Asia, whatever the case is, leave it there and trust it to

be able to ensure that every person will have high quality access to healthcare.”

As Chief Technology Officer and Co-founder of Engage Mx from South Africa, Dr Bradley Max Segal, though a skeptic, understands. He adds that everything has to be evidence-based, as the growth of AI has been amazing, yet dramatic, over the last few years. “I think there’s a lot of very good foundational science and good evidence for much of the AI and machine learning bits,” Segal says. “No one really knows what is going to happen. There’s this massive requirement for evidence, this requirement for transparency, and I think people working in health are uniquely suited to building things that actually have good evidence, making sure they do the things they are claiming to do. And so, I think the skepticism is very well-deserved, and we should be skeptical about some of the more amazing and fantastical claims that these tools can make.”

This year’s under-30s remain steadfast in the narrative that there is no greater time to be African than now. Self-made they are, but they also acknowledge the people who have helped them build what they believe is just the beginning of their growth story.


“I think it’s impossible to be self-made,” Sacha Feinberg-Mngomezulu, South African Springboks and DHL Stormers rugby player, tells FORBES AFRICA. “I think I’ve self-made a lot of my ambitions and my dreams and all my visions and mood boards and the things I’ve tried to attract for myself. But the support systems, the coaching, the belief, I think

that’s what really sets you apart before you can kind of do it yourself. And I think I’ve had the best support structure and for me, that’s just priceless.”

In agreement is Mas’ooda Varachia, CEO and Founder of Raven Technologies, which specializes in developing and deploying smart solutions that help businesses and individuals optimize operations, improve efficiencies, and enhance overall performance in urban and rural Africa.

“I don’t truly believe that I am 100% self-made. I think it takes greatness to develop greatness... And so, I believe that for me to be great, I need to be surrounded by greatness; I need to see greatness in the next person. And I’ve been fortunate,” she says.

Africa’s creative sector continues to shine globally, generating around \$4.2 billion annually, with a growth rate outpacing other sectors on the continent, as per investment advisory and asset management firm CrossBoundary Group. This is evident as more artists in the music industry continue to scale global heights—something that Ghanaian R&B and Afro-fusion singer Jackline Acheampong, known professionally as ‘Gyakie’, says she is so proud to see. “It’s not just about me, but everybody else, my colleagues, my seniors, my juniors, taking the continent and the countries to another level,” she attests.

It’s the 11th instalment of the FORBES AFRICA 30 Under 30 list, and over the past decade, Africa’s youth have proven that they are more than ready for the challenges—willing to do whatever it takes for their communities, countries, and continent. 

Editor’s note: The list on these pages follows no particular order

METHODOLOGY

The nomination process began in October 2024, as thousands of hopefuls applied for the FORBES AFRICA 30 Under 30 Class of 2025. Shortlisted candidates submitted supporting documents that were then vetted, yet again, by South African accounting and advisory firm SNG Grant Thornton, our official verification and vetting partner for the list. The extensive review process included auditing financial statements or confirming proof of significant earnings, verifying business registration (supported by tax clearance certificates), and ensuring candidates submitted police clearance certificates and letters of good standing from their financial institutions. **“SNG Grant Thornton is honored to be part of the overall FORBES AFRICA 30 under 30 list, as it focuses on acknowledging and promoting young African talent within the continent. We take pride in providing independent verification of the [list] process, which forms an integral part of confirming that a fair and consistent process was applied,” says Omar Hassan, Director and the Head of Business Consulting at SNG Grant Thornton in Johannesburg.** Additionally, the editorial team also sifted through social media profiles and testimonials from the colleagues, collaborators, business partners or employees of short-listed nominees. Documentation was also reviewed, as was possible, to ensure there were no criminal records, troubling lawsuits/bankruptcies, and/or allegations of crime, misconduct, sexual harassment/abuse or fraud against any of the list-makers. Evaluations were made to ensure that the founders, executives and leaders on the list were fostering workplace cultures rooted in respect, dignity, and integrity. One-on-one interviews with the list’s curator followed. Besides the editorial team, FORBES AFRICA also relied on a panel of high-profile judges and independent subject-matter experts from the Business, Technology, Health/Science, Creatives and Sports sectors to ensure that only Africa’s most merit-worthy made the final cut. This list is only but a small indication of the wealth of young talent that exists on the continent and if merit-worthy, they will no doubt be unraveled on these pages in the months and years to come.

EXTERNAL JUDGES

THE CATEGORY EXPERTS WHO TOOK ON THE ROLE TO SURVEY ALL THE FINALISTS OF THE 2025 30 UNDER 30 LIST AND PROVIDE COMMENTARY WHERE NECESSARY ON EACH CANDIDATE:

BUSINESS AND TECHNOLOGY



THEO BALOYI

Baloyi is the South African founder-Group CEO of Africa's sneaker brand, Bathu. The son of strong and hard-working parents from a small town on the outskirts of Pretoria named Phake, he graduated from the University of South Africa with a BCom Accounting Sciences degree and was employed at PwC South Africa in asset management, strategy and financial management. A stint in Dubai and Saudi Arabia followed. In 2015, he became the full-time founder of Bathu, providing jobs to South Africa's youth.



DR FARANA BOODHRAM

Dr Boodhram is the Founder and CEO of MiDesk Global, an organization dedicated to enhancing educational opportunities for underprivileged children through innovative solutions like the MiDesk—a portable school desk designed to improve learning conditions in underserved areas. Dr Boodhram has received numerous accolades, including being on the *Forbes* 50 Over 50 Global List in 2025. Under her guidance, MiDesk Global received accolades at the 2025 CSI Legacy Awards for its contributions to social impact and education. She is committed to social entrepreneurship and innovation driving positive change in communities across Africa.

CREATIVE



ZAKES BANTWINI

Bantwini an award-winning South African musician, record producer, and entrepreneur known for blending house music with rich African sounds. With a career spanning over two decades, he has played a pivotal role in shaping the country's music landscape. Beyond the stage, Bantwini is also a cultural innovator and founder of Mayonie Productions, using his platform to mentor emerging artists and promote African excellence globally.



YVETTE GAYLE

Gayle serves as the COO and Head of Communications & Engagement for Africa Creative Agency, a pan-African talent management firm with offices in Los Angeles, Kenya and South Africa. Gayle successfully bridges the continental gap between creatives and corporates wanting to align and do business in new territories. Her roster of clients includes Nasty C, Pearl Thusi, Amanda Black, Sauti Sol, and Celeste Ntuli, to name a few. Gayle's noticeable successes also include launching the Jam Africa Stage at the 2019 Essence Music Festival in New Orleans whereby showcasing Africa's biggest music clientele.

SPORT



SUE DESTOMBES

Destombes, General Secretary of the Council of Southern Africa Football Associations (COSAFA), has played a pivotal role in shaping football in southern Africa. After a career in insurance (1976–1994), she moved into international football, focusing on marketing and events from 1994. She has worked with CAF since 2006 on AFCON and CHAN tournaments and organized high-profile events like the Simba 4 Nations and the Nelson Mandela Challenge, featuring teams such as Brazil and Argentina. Having joined COSAFA officially in 2009, she became Secretary General in 2014. Sue has also served on FIFA's Development and Organising Committees, contributing to the FIFA Women's World Cups in 2019 and 2023. Deeply invested in development within the COSAFA region, her work champions inclusion and provides career pathways for youth through football. With decades of experience, she brings a seasoned and passionate perspective to sport development.

HEALTH AND SCIENCE



PUSELETSO MANYAKA LESOFE

Manyaka-Lesofe is an award-winning, HPCSA-registered Medical Scientist and visionary entrepreneur driving the future of science, innovation, and leadership in Africa. She is the Co-founder of the African Institute for Medical Scientists (AIMS) and Executive Director of Chapters at Shadow A Scientist, two platforms dedicated to advancing access, mentorship, and visibility for scientists across the continent. Her work has earned her notable recognition, including being named a 2025 FORBES AFRICA Over 30 Under 50 list-maker.



DR YEMISI ADEYEYE

Dr Adeyeye is a medical doctor and Co-founder and Managing Director, Lifefount Hospital, in Nigeria. Her innovative approach to combining technology and healthcare makes her well-positioned to evaluate young leaders at the intersection of science, innovation, and impact.

25, GHANA
Afro-Soul and Afro-Fusion singer
Sector • Entertainment, Music

JACKLINE
'GYAKIE'
ACHEAMPONG



“

I WANTED TO FEEL LIKE I'M WORKING TO MAKE MY OWN MONEY, AND I WANTED TO SEE THE STEPS YOU MUST TAKE TO GET TO THIS POINT. I'M GLAD I TOOK THIS ROUTE, BECAUSE I'VE LEARNED SO MUCH."

Forbes
AFRICA
30
UNDER
30

It was in 2020 that the world was truly introduced to the soulful sound of Jackline Acheampong, known professionally as 'Gyachie'. It was at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic and people were more digitally tuned-in than they had ever been.

"When my song *Forever* started charting outside Ghana, it started charting outside [of] Africa; that was when I was like, 'girl, it's time for you to do what you've always dreamed of doing'. From that moment, I just knew there was no stopping me," Acheampong says.

The track resonated globally and made Billboard's Top Triller Global and Shazam's Top 200.

Demure and confident, even after a long journey from Ghana to Johannesburg for a photoshoot with FORBES AFRICA, the singer brightens up when talking music.

Acheampong attributes much of her success to the admiration and respect that she has for her country and continent, further evidenced by her collaborations with artists such as Nigeria's Omah Lay and Khaid, and South African

artists, the late Kiernan Forbes (AKA) and FORBES AFRICA 30 Under 30 alum, Musa Keys.

"Collaboration is one thing that I have always said is key when it comes to making music," Acheampong says.

"As much as you are merging cultures from different places, you are also bringing the unity. It's about holding hands. When we're holding hands and we're doing this collaboration, we are able to merge our markets together and then grow our audiences. So, I'm always rooting for collaboration."

That said, the question on everyone's mind is when will she be releasing her highly-anticipated 2025 album, *After Midnight*? FORBES AFRICA can exclusively confirm that she will be releasing it in August. It is an album she describes as having a lot of her soul and heart.

"It is my first baby. So, being my debut album, I didn't want to play with it at all. It took three years to make—three solid years—and I wanted to make sure that whatever is coming out as my debut project... is iconic."

Forbes
30
UNDER
30

SACHA
FEINBERG
MNGOMEZULU



23, SOUTH AFRICA

Flyhalf, Western Cape's DHL Stormers and the Springboks Sector • Sport

"I'M A BIG BELIEVER IN SPEAKING THINGS INTO EXISTENCE, DREAMING BIG, WORKING HARD, AND ACHIEVING THOSE THINGS. THAT'S MY PURPOSE: TO SHOW THE YOUNG GUYS THAT EVEN AT A YOUNG AGE, YOU CAN ACHIEVE WHAT YOU PUT YOUR MIND TO, YOU CAN MANIFEST WHAT YOU WANT, AND YOU CAN, ULTIMATELY, JUST LIVE THE LIFE YOU WORK HARD FOR."

It's difficult to pinpoint the exact moments when sports stars deliver their breakout performances. But they tend to stick. For some, it is Sacha Feinberg-Mngomezulu's 2023 display during a Toyota Challenge match, playing an under-19 fly-half for South Africa's Western Cape province.

As Feinberg-Mngomezulu walks into the SunshineCo studio in Johannesburg for a photoshoot, ready for his close-up shots, the rugby player opens up about the fact that he was actually keen on becoming a professional footballer at first, but it was not to be.

"My love for rugby was probably sparked by my environment," he explains, smiling. "I grew up in a rugby environment in the southern suburbs [in South Africa]—no football, no cricket. My brother was a foreign rugby player. My dad was a sportsman. Rugby was the first thing I put my hands on, and I loved it ever since."

Feinberg-Mngomezulu made his debut with the national team, the Springboks, in June 2024. When asked how he handles the cheers from enthusiastic fans as he takes the field, he answers: "It is a nice

feeling... I just have good memories associated with it, that is why I'm smiling. That's why you play the sport. You play to have reach and to have influence, and to kind of kick down a couple of doors and shape South Africa. It's about putting your best foot forward on the rugby field [because it] is a way to keep people happy."

On his playing career within the Springboks, Feinberg-Mngomezulu says: "I've come into a place where they've definitely helped shape everything before me and make it much easier for me to thrive... [That's why I feel like I am the] furthest thing from self-made. Yes, I did the visioning and imagining and dreaming. But when you talk about upbringing and family and friends, [they contributed a lot]."



**DARLINGTON
AHIALE
AKOGO**



29, GHANA
Founder and Chief Executive Officer, minoHealth AI Labs
Sector • Healthcare, Technology

“I’VE HAD SEVERAL HORRIBLE THINGS HAPPEN [TO ME] ON THIS ENTREPRENEURIAL JOURNEY, BUT ALL THOSE THINGS TEACH YOU BECAUSE, AT THE END OF THE DAY, THERE’S NO BOOK THAT YOU CAN READ THAT CAN PREPARE YOU FOR WHAT IT TAKES TO ACTUALLY START A STARTUP AND GROW IT. YOU MUST JUST DO IT.”

Described as ‘Ghana’s AI genius’ by some, Darlington Ahiale Akogo cuts a relaxed figure when he requests that Kendrick Lamar’s *tv off* and *Not Like Us* songs play in the background during his photoshoot with FORBES AFRICA in Johannesburg in May. The music puts a smile on the face of a CEO changing the high-decibel and demanding healthcare game in Africa.

“Mostly, when people start companies, it’s out of passion, and it’s usually because of something positive,” Akogo says. “In my case, it was actually out of frustration. I didn’t start because I was passionate about this, I was frustrated by the state of healthcare.”

On a soon-to-be significant day in 2013, Akogo woke at 4AM with plans to see a specialist. Certain that there would be long queues, he chose this time with the hope that he would be one of the first to be seen. Despite arriving at the hospital just before 6AM, he was only seen by the specialist well after 1PM that day.

“At that point, I said, ‘well, there should be a better version of healthcare’. It took years of thinking about it.”

In 2016, it became clear to him that AI could be a solution, recalling his experience in 2013 that occurred only because of a shortage of health workers—a problem rife in many parts of the African continent.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), Africa is on the verge of a dilemma, with an expected deficit of 6.1 million health workers by 2030, putting the continent’s goal for universal healthcare coverage at risk. “In my own country, back then, it was

one doctor for every 10,000 people, and that is not the worst. In Malawi, it is one doctor for every 60,000 people,” Akogo exclaims.

“As much as we want to do something about it, realistically, training doctors or healthcare workers is not how you close the gap. It made sense that if we could create digital doctors and make them good enough, then they could support the existing doctors to close this gap and make sure healthcare is available to everyone.”

And that is what he did.

Using minoHealth AI Labs, Akogo has built multiple AIs for healthcare advancement, one being an AI radiology platform, which is used in over 50 countries and exemplifies scalable technology that addresses diagnostic shortages.

This led to Akogo contributing towards talks on AI in radiology through the WHO and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU).

One of his inventions, Moremi AI is a tool that functions as a medical assistant with knowledge across various specialties, offering services such as differential diagnosis and medical image interpretation. It received pilot funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, which supported the development of the tool. This also led Akogo to a memorable experience—dining with Bill Gates at his home.

From being a kid inspired by science fiction movies such as *The Matrix* and *Star Trek* and who found films nurturing his dream of an utopia where technology could solve humanity’s problems, to becoming the adult he is today, Akogo has managed to keep his curiosity alive.

“Throughout this journey, that is what has driven me to this point. Anything that draws my attention, I embrace it fully, and try to learn. And then there are human connections. It is the people you meet on the way; you make the best of those connections, and you try to live in the moment!”



DR BRADLEY

28, SOUTH AFRICA
Co-Founder and
Chief Technology
Officer, Engage Mx
Sector • Technology

“Have you ever watched *The Big Bang Theory*?” Dr. Bradley Segal asks during his interview with FORBES AFRICA. “When you picture a nerd, you picture that, and you can picture me.”

He did not initially set out to work in the geeky world of technology. He began his career in healthcare, driven by determination. This path led him to examine the systemic issues plaguing the sector—challenges he realized could be addressed through technology.

“What shocks most people is how old some of the processes are in healthcare,” Segal says.

“Things are still faxed. Most things are still done on paper. My initial goal was to just try and make healthcare a little bit more efficient, and that’s spiraled quite heavily into working across health digitalization, digital health tooling, and more recently, with the boom in AI, trying to see how we can automate and make these things easier.”

In 2020, with four others, he co-founded Engage Mx, a patient analytics platform that has grown to track over 1.5 million patients. According to Segal, the platform’s impact became clear the moment they launched their first automated patient engagement system.

“With a single command, we reached more patients than



**AFRICA’S
POPULATIONS
ARE YOUNG,
ADAPTABLE, AND
READY TO TACKLE
THIS BRAVE NEW
WORLD... OUR
CHALLENGE
ISN’T TO SIMPLY
ATTRACT
MORE GLOBAL
ATTENTION,
BUT TO SHAPE
THAT ATTENTION
TOWARDS
BUILDING
GENUINE
TECHNOLOGICAL
SOVEREIGNTY...”**

MAX SEGAL

I had seen in my entire clinical career. To date, we’ve tracked over seven million consultations, monitored 250,000 chronic diseases, and successfully returned more than 20,000 non-adherent patients to active care.”

Segal understands why there is cynicism when it comes to AI but believes the big picture is that healthcare needs active solutions that will help close the gap.

“As a clinician, I’ve worked at the coalface of the public healthcare sector, contributing to individual patient care across multiple departments, gaining firsthand experience of healthcare delivery challenges. Later, as the sole doctor at a large provincial clinic in Soweto (township in Johannesburg), I managed the care of hundreds of patients daily while supervising nursing staff and optimizing service delivery. This direct engagement with patient care and health system challenges has been invaluable in understanding how to develop solutions that truly serve both healthcare workers and their patients.

“The next decade will be crucial for healthcare in Africa, particularly as we face growing challenges from non-communicable diseases and chronic conditions.”

Segal adds: “My work, combining clinical practice, technological innovation, and systems thinking, positions me to contribute meaningfully to this transformation.”

MAS'OODA VARACHIA

28, SOUTH AFRICA

Founder and Chief Executive Officer, USS Raven
(also known as Raven Technologies)
Sector • Technology

A chat with most of Mas'ooda Varachia's colleagues, past and present, will reveal that she is dedicated to her profession and to serving others. It doesn't come as a surprise then that Varachia started her career with a major in Psychology from the University of Pretoria in South Africa, followed by an honors degree in Psychological Counseling.

"My idea, from the time I was young, was to just help people and impact people, and to be that someone that I needed when I was [myself] younger," she says. "In my head, the only way you could help people was in the medical field.

"Then, I was introduced to the world of technology, where I got to learn about robotics, coding [and the] Internet of Things (IoT), and I instantly fell in love with it."

In 2021, she founded Raven Technologies, an agritech startup focused on transforming the agricultural sector through innovative technology. The company's flagship initiative is a beekeeping program that distributes IoT-enabled beehives made from recycled materials.

According to Varachia, the hives are monitored through a custom-built IoT platform, providing real-time data on temperature, humidity, rainfall, and GPS-tracking.

As per the South African Bee Industry Organization,



I AIMED TO BUILD A MOVEMENT GROUNDED IN PURPOSE, POWERED BY TECHNOLOGY, AND DRIVEN BY THE BELIEF THAT IMPACT BELONGS IN THE HANDS OF ORDINARY PEOPLE DOING EXTRAORDINARY THINGS; PEOPLE OF COLOR SHOWING WHY WE STAND PROUD IN OUR POWER. MY MISSION HAS ALWAYS BEEN CLEAR: TO BRIDGE THE GAP BETWEEN INNOVATION AND INCLUSION."

South Africa had about 100 commercial beekeepers in 2013, with approximately 80,000 bee-colonies. These beekeepers were responsible for 98% of all the pollination services in South Africa and 60% of the country's honey harvest. Varachia is now a big part of this buzzing ecosystem.

"What I realized was that the beekeeping space is where we need to be. Bees pollinate 70% of the world's crops, and that's our basic livelihood—not just in Africa, but globally. We realized we don't have enough African beekeepers on the continent, and that's where it all started. We said, 'let's try something different; let's go into the beekeeping space.'"

In partnership with the Mineworkers Development Agency, Raven Technologies has distributed over 7,000 beehives across South Africa, supporting more than 800 beneficiaries annually.

"Initially, it didn't have a tech spin on it, because the tech solution came afterwards. So, we went into rural communities and started a beekeeping program where we try to close the entire value chain. We go from manufacturing the beehives to actually distributing them. We've taken over the logistics space as well, and we've equipped beekeepers by providing hands-on training and the necessary equipment."



In 2024, when digital music service provider Spotify released its annual 'Wrapped' list, which collates the biggest songs, genres, and artists from around the world, Stanley Omah Didia, popularly known as 'Omah Lay', once again appeared on it for his contribution to the leading genre on the continent, Afrobeats. His album *Boy Alone* was ranked number eight on the most-streamed list the same year.

Didia became a household name with songs like *Soso* and *Holy Ghost*. However, his breakout moment came in 2020 with the release of his EP, *Get Layd*. The EP garnered notable attention with featured single, *Bad Influence*, becoming the most-streamed Nigerian song on Apple music by the end of the year.

"My music is always inspired by my life experiences," Didia told *The Hype Magazine* in 2022. "I don't know how to make music any other way. My experiences shape the lyrics and sounds I put into the song. I need people to feel where I'm coming from and I won't stop until I've achieved that."

STANLEY OMAH DIDIA 'OMAH LAY'

28, NIGERIA

Singer, Songwriter and Record Producer
Sector • Entertainment, Music



MAAMBELE KHOSA

29, SOUTH AFRICA

Founder and CEO, SheCab; Head of Science Research Communication at Stellenbosch University's Centre for Epidemic Response and Innovation (CERI)

Sector • Transportation, Mobility

Gender-based violence (GBV) in South Africa remains a systemic and prevalent issue in the country, and one that has been highlighted as a significant concern, especially at the tertiary education level.

"At the end of 2020, there was a high rise in GBV in South Africa, mostly with women who were traveling. People were disappearing, just like that. This also challenged me, because I was someone who had to travel [from] one province to another every now and then."

In response to her own fears around the issue and realizing that other women on campus would be feeling the same, Khosa

founded SheCab to create a safe space for women on the move.

Now with 23 female drivers operating in the country's Western Cape province, Khosa emphasizes that it's not just about hiring women and putting them behind the wheel, it's about education and empowerment.

"It's such a challenging industry to be in. Even before thinking about operations, the real challenge is finding the right people to do the work and empowering them. I see SheCab not just as a transportation business, but as a platform that allows me and my team to empower and connect women."

"AFRICA SHOULD PRIORITIZE EMPOWERING YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS, ESPECIALLY THOSE LEADING SOCIAL ENTERPRISES THAT ADDRESS OUR COMMUNITIES' REAL CHALLENGES"



TABITHA CHAWINGA

28, MALAWI

Forward for Lyon and the Malawi National Team
Sector • Sport

“I BELIEVE I AM SELF-MADE BECAUSE AT THE BEGINNING OF MY JOURNEY, I DID THIS FOR MYSELF. WHERE I CAME FROM, MANY DID NOT UNDERSTAND WOMEN PLAYING FOOTBALL, BUT I ALSO BELIEVE THAT THERE HAVE BEEN THOSE WHO HAVE SUPPORTED ME ON MY JOURNEY; FROM COACHES TO PEOPLE AND GOD.”

Tabitha Chawinga has emerged as one of the continent’s most-prolific female footballers. This is despite the fact that the start of her journey was met with many questions, one of which was why her family was allowing her to play football with men in the first place.

“I came from a village where only the men were playing football; I used to play with them,” Chawinga tells FORBES AFRICA.

“My parents also did not actually allow me to play because they believed school was more important, but people also laughed at me and questioned my parents on how they could let their daughter play football.”

A concern for Chawinga, especially since she has had the opportunity to travel to Europe, is that there are processes and structures in place that allow girls as young as five to play football. But in Africa, that is almost non-existent.

An award-winning sportswoman recognized as the top player in France’s premier women’s league during her tenure with Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) in 2023–24, and honored as the Serie A Female Footballer of the Year for 2022–23, Chawinga hopes that when people see her, they’ll see and know what’s possible.

She also understands that people on the continent want to break the poverty cycle, but when it comes to success, she says: “Be patient. Of course, money is important. In my journey, it was never about the money. It was about looking to the future and what I wanted for myself as a football player.”



PABALLO 'PABI COOPER' MOTHAPO

24, SOUTH AFRICA

Amapiano Artist
Sector • Entertainment,
Music



“[IT’S] JUST TAKING RISKS IN THIS GENRE [AMAPIANO], ESPECIALLY IN SEPITORI (PRETORIA SOTHO/ LANGUAGE), AND I JUST HOPE TO INSPIRE MY FELLOW ARTISTS TO TAKE RISKS AND NOT HOLD BACK. JUST DO IT. NO MATTER WHAT—IF YOU FEEL IT INSIDE YOU, THAT ‘HEY, THIS THING MIGHT WORK’—JUST DO IT. FOR THE PEOPLE THAT LISTEN TO MY MUSIC, MY SUPPORTERS, WHEN I MAKE MUSIC, I REALLY WANT TO TELL MY STORY.”

For several years now, the South African-originated genre, Amapiano, has dominated pop culture and taken over global charts.

The FORBES AFRICA 30 Under 30 list has mirrored this with multiple such artists honored on these pages. Female Amapiano artist, Paballo Basetsana Mthapo, known as ‘Pabi Cooper’, makes the list this year and speaks about how she has contributed to, what she feels, is the ‘Amapiano movement’.

“When I got to know Amapiano—and when the rest of South Africa first heard the sound, which was around 2018 or 2019—I came in immediately after,” Mthapo tells FORBES AFRICA.

“The first group of Amapiano artists wasn’t very big, but in those early days of [the genre], I was there. I was already making music and already a part of the culture. It’s such a personal journey for me because I feel like I was also part of the contribution to Amapiano going global.”

Originally from Soshanguve in Pretoria, Mthapo’s career began as a dancer. This was before she became one of the most captivating performers in South Africa as well as overseas, having made appearances at festivals like Afro Nation. Her rise in the music industry came about in 2021 when her first breakthrough single, *Isiphithiphi*, went platinum.

“I feel like this was such a unique journey because everything happened step by step. I was just moving in faith, pushing, and being consistent. I would tell my story because I knew where I started, I knew when things went up, and I knew when things went down. It’s a journey—everything has its own moment.”

FATOU JENG

28, THE GAMBIA

Founder, Clean Earth Gambia
Sector • Sustainability

“I REPRESENT A NEW GENERATION OF AFRICAN CLIMATE LEADERSHIP THAT BRIDGES GRASSROOTS ACTIVISM WITH GLOBAL POLICY INFLUENCE. MY WORK DEMONSTRATES THAT YOUNG AFRICANS CAN CREATE MEANINGFUL CHANGE THROUGH STRATEGIC ACTION, EVEN WITH LIMITED RESOURCES.”

It was Fatou Jeng’s environment that laid the ground for her passion and future profession. As the daughter of a farmer and native of Banjul, a city in The Gambia at risk of rising sea-levels, from a very young age, she was concerned about climate change and how it could impact vulnerable communities.

“I live in a country which is one of the least-developed countries in the world, experiencing the impacts of climate change,” she tells FORBES AFRICA.

“The Gambia actually emits less than 0.01% of greenhouse gas, yet, it is one of the countries really being disproportionately impacted by climate change.”

Through her work as Founder of Clean Earth Gambia, Jeng has trained over 10,000 children, youth, women and local communities and impacted over 30,000 people across the country. They have planted over 35,000 trees nationwide.

She has contributed to United Nations initiatives, particularly in climate action and youth engagement, speaking at universities, and international forums, as well as through curating and leading climate events.

She has also been appointed a Climate Advisor to the United Nations Secretary-General (2023–2025), awarded the Geneva Centre for Human Rights Advancement and Global Dialogue Women Championing Environmental Rights and served as an expert contributor on Gender and Youth to the African Union’s Climate Change and Resilient Development Strategy (2022–2032).

“The advocacy for climate justice is not just my work, it is my mission and passion,” she concludes.



DAMILOLA HAMID BALOGUN

28, NIGERIA

Co-Founder & Chief Executive Officer, Youth Sustainable Development Network (YSDN)
Sector • Social Impact



“REMEMBER: MEANINGFUL IMPACT ISN’T ABOUT HOW LOUD YOUR VOICE IS, BUT HOW CONSISTENT YOUR ACTIONS ARE.”

The Generation Zs, or iGens, use every opportunity to showcase their awareness about social, political, and economic issues.

According to a report by the Africa Policy Research Institute, their involvement in climate change activism is largely motivated by existential threats to their livelihoods.

The report goes on to state that 60% of Africa’s population is under the age of 25, yet the median age of political leaders in Africa is 62.

One of the Gen Zs actively trying to impact change is Damilola Hamid Balogun, whose journey started as an undergraduate of Law at the University of Lagos in Nigeria with the \$150 that he borrowed from a friend.

“My ‘why’ stems from growing up in an environment where socioeconomic imbalances deny many young people the opportunity to dream, let alone succeed,” he tells FORBES AFRICA. “Witnessing the untapped potential in my community, I realized that access to opportunities—not a lack of talent—held people back. I knew that if we could equip youth with the right tools, they could not only improve their lives but also create transformative change in their communities.”

This is why he founded YSDN, to equip young people with tools, mentorship, and opportunities to empower them to tackle critical issues like climate change, energy security, and social equity.

By 2021, Balogun’s work at YSDN had taken him to over 25 countries, to the United Nations General Assembly to COP climate conferences and the Africa Energy Forum. This work has reportedly actively shaped policy, with Balogun’s contributions featured in the Africa Youth Climate Action Plan 2022 (AYCAP) and the Lagos State Climate Change Consultation Program 2023.

“I began this journey with nothing but conviction and a desire to empower young people like me to lead Africa’s transition to clean energy and sustainable development.”



LETSILE TEBOGO

21, BOTSWANA
Sprinter
Sector • Sport

“I WANTED TO MAKE A BREAKTHROUGH FOR AFRICAN ATHLETES. I ASPIRED TO BE THE ONE TO MAKE IT HAPPEN AND THEN TAKE IN THE WORLD’S RESPONSE. AND THAT REACTION HAS BEEN HEARTWARMING.”

— AS SPOKEN TO AL JAZEERA

At the 2024 Summer Olympics in Paris, Tebogo made history for Botswana, and Africa, when he won gold for the 200-meter sprint, though his list of accomplishments includes more than just this accolade.

In December, Tebogo was also the first African to be awarded the World Athletics’ Male Athlete of the Year. As an Olympic champion, he also took home the Association of National Olympic Committees (ANOC) award for best male athlete for 2024.

American track and field athlete and triple world champion, Noah Lyles, who raced against Tebogo in the men’s 200m final at the Paris Olympics in 2024, told *Time Magazine*: “He’s definitely a once-in-a-generation talent.”

Redefining Luxury Beauty In Africa



Today’s skincare goes beyond glowing results—it’s about aligning with your values. As Africa’s clean beauty movement takes center stage, Laud Beauty leads the way with an exclusive portfolio of globally acclaimed skincare brands rooted in science, love, and ethics. From the anti-aging precision of Swiss biotech, the luminous purity of Korean botanicals, the gentle care of sensitive-skin solutions, or the clean innovation of plant-based formulations, LAUD Beauty is your gateway to radiant skin with purpose. Bringing the world’s finest, safest, cleanest, and clinically proven skincare innovations to your doorstep—each intentionally selected and esthetician-approved.

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According to the 2024 *Venture Capital Activity in Africa* report, the number of investments last year in Africa dropped by 22% causing the total value of deals to fall by 28%. It is no secret that tech startups in Africa struggle to get funding on the continent, and that often leaves entrepreneurs in a place where they need to seek resources from outside the borders of their country.

This is when Noel Abebe Daniel realized, on his return to Ethiopia, his home country, that to build a strong tech ecosystem, he would need to create something that is not just focused on capital.

“We are the first private venture hub in Ethiopia. When we first moved back here, I realized that there was a lack of that, hence why we didn’t have a thriving tech ecosystem. Initially, we had started a fund, but we understood that we had to take a step back and work on the infrastructure first,” he says.

“The capabilities and capacity-building were important. Unlike many investors who focus solely on financial returns, we understood that for startups to succeed, they need more than just capital.”

Under his leadership, the hub secured partnerships with prominent organizations such as the big, privately-owned Dashen Bank in Ethiopia, and Alibaba,

NOEL ABEBE DANIEL

29, ETHIOPIA
Co-Founder & Managing Partner,
weVenture Holdings PLC
Sector • Venture Capital

one of the largest online marketplaces in the world.

Having spearheaded the training, incubation, and evaluation of over 950 startups from 11 Ethiopian cities through Dashen Bank’s flagship program, Dashen Kefita, Daniel’s work has not only created opportunities for Ethiopian entrepreneurs but also helped position the country as an emerging hub for African innovation.



“WE CAN LEAPFROG AND CATCH UP TO MORE DEVELOPED COUNTRIES BY USING NEW TECHNOLOGIES SUCH AS AI/ML [MACHINE LEARNING], GIVEN OUR YOUTHFUL POPULATION. I’M HAPPY TO SEE AFRICA GETTING MORE RECOGNITION—I JUST HOPE WE ARE STARTING TO BE LOOKED AT AS PARTNERS AND NOT CHARITY CASES.”

DR KHADIJA OWUSU

28, GHANA
Founder and Chief Executive Officer, AKAYA Foundation, Medical Doctor
and International Speaker
Sector • Nonprofit,
Philanthropy

Through the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals’ (SDGs) fundamentals of education, health and empowerment, Dr Khadija Osusu built her organization, AKAYA, with the core focus of developing the “next generation of African female leaders by building their confidence, centering their voices and ensuring they reach their full potential”.

“Pursuing medicine was not for my personal satisfaction. It became bigger than that personal dream I had as a young girl. It became [a means for] tackling systemic inequities,” Owusu says. From piloting an engagement program with 100 high school girls in Ghana to

founding AKAYA, Owusu, who constantly shuttles between the United Kingdom and Ghana, says she is always inspired by the resilience of young African women and their potential to lead despite the systemic barriers that exist in the world. “As a young Black woman pursuing medicine, I faced systemic barriers. All of which could have deterred me from pursuing my goals, but instead, I made it my mission to succeed in overcoming those barriers, ensuring that those behind me will not experience the same.”

30 Under 30 judge Puseletso Manyaka-Lesofe says: “Dr Owusu is building a generation of confident, purpose-driven young women.”

“IT’S NOT JUST A LEGACY I’M TRYING TO BUILD, BUT A SPACE FOR OTHERS TO ALSO RISE. IF THIS PLATFORM IS TO AMPLIFY ONE VOICE, LET IT ECHO THE VOICES OF THOUSANDS OF YOUNG AFRICAN GIRLS WHO HAVE BEEN TOLD THEY COULDN’T.”



Mauritius is an East African country renowned for its stunning, natural beauty, vibrant cultural diversity, and thriving tourism industry. An often-overlooked element is the market for its rich night life, an opportunity Oceanne Preaudet seized when she co-founded The Partyapp Ltd.

Preaudet tells FORBES AFRICA that she felt she needed to take the leap of faith.

“The idea of Partyapp consumed my thoughts,” she says.

Working tirelessly on her business plan with no revenue no safety net, “but an unshakable belief in the vision”, Preaudet and her husband (who is also her co-founder) decided to take the leap of faith and go full time with The Partyapp Ltd after winning the “Coup de Coeur”, an award that recognizes people and businesses that stood out.

The Partyapp is an event marketplace that promotes events and parties in Mauritius. Launched during the Covid-19 pandemic, Preaudet says that this immediately forced them to pivot creatively.

After refining their app and website as well as crafting a marketing strategy, they officially launched after the restrictions were lifted and now “we dominate 80% of the event market in Mauritius. We held on. We believed. And we made it happen,” Preaudet says.

OCEANNE PREAUDET

28, MAURITIUS

Co-Founder, The Partyapp Ltd

Sector • E-commerce Services, Marketing



When asked who she would dedicate her place on the 30 Under 30 list to, Preaudet tells FORBES AFRICA it would be her co-founder, Cedric Cunsamy.

“He was not my husband yet when we met and created Partyapp, but I remember the one time he told me—‘if one day you see what everyone sees in you, you’ll achieve great things’. This was the moment I decided to get things done, believe in myself and grow. This moment led me to where I am today.”

“I BELIEVE AFRICA MUST TURN INWARD AND RECOGNIZE THE RICHNESS IT HOLDS—ITS RESOURCES, ITS PEOPLE, ITS CULTURE. INSTEAD OF ALLOWING OTHERS TO EXTRACT OUR WEALTH AND DICTATE OUR FUTURE, WE MUST EXPLORE AND HARNESS OUR OWN POTENTIAL.”

NDIVHUWO ELAINE MUKHELI

26, SOUTH AFRICA

Singer-songwriter

Sector • Entertainment, Music

“I started singing when I was six years old,” Ndivhuwo Elaine Mukheli tells FORBES AFRICA. “I would take part in all the concerts and talent shows. I was blessed to have supportive parents as well who helped me [with] my passion.”

Known to the world as ‘Elaine’, her career began as a law student at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. Even as a student, she couldn’t shake off her dream of becoming a singer but wanted to have “a strong foundation in law” to protect herself. After hosting recording sessions in dorm rooms with her friends and producers, she released an EP online. The next day, when walking

to class, she realized that people were staring at her. When she opened her phone, to her surprise, the EP had debuted at number one in South Africa.

“I had unknowingly become the first independent artist in South Africa to achieve this milestone.”

Since then, Mukheli has been nominated for Best New International Act at the 2021 BET Awards and nominated for Best Breakthrough Act at the MTV Africa Music Awards. In 2024, Mukheli released her debut album Stone Cold Heart, which HYPE Magazine called a “well-crafted masterpiece that highlights Elaine’s growth as an artist and solidifies her place as one of the brightest stars in R&B”.

“MY JOURNEY HAS BEEN A BLESSED [ONE]. IT REPRESENTS RESILIENCE, INNOVATION AND REAL-LIFE IMPACT. I HAVE LEARNED THAT SUCCESS IS A STATE OF MIND WHICH ONE MUST CONSTANTLY INSTILL AND PRACTICE [USING] A CLEAR VISION, AND BY REMAINING PERSISTENT AND CONSISTENT...”





DR COMFORT PEACE AYIKORU

27, UGANDA

Founder and Chief Executive Officer, BuriCare Limited
Sector • Healthcare, Science

“I’M NOT HERE TO FIT INTO BROKEN SYSTEMS; I’M HERE TO BUILD BETTER ONES... I DON’T JUST BELIEVE IN AFRICA’S FUTURE; I’M BUILDING IT, ONE NEWBORN LIFE AT A TIME. UNTIL EVERY MOTHER AND CHILD RECEIVES THE CARE THEY DESERVE, I’M NOT DONE.”

As a third-year student during the Covid-19 pandemic, Dr Comfort Peace Ayikoru experienced profound personal tragedy. Her cousin had a baby delivered prematurely in her village in Arua District, but the facility she used lacked a Neonatal Intensive Care Unit. While trying to transfer the newborn to a regional referral hospital, the infant developed hypothermia, unnoticed by anyone.

“By the time we arrived, the baby had unfortunately passed away,” she says.

In that same year, as a medical student, Ayikoru witnessed several neonatal deaths in the pediatric unit due to inadequate infrastructure. Starting with an initial investment of about \$100, she developed a prototype of the KangaCare Baby Carriers—locally knitted, double-layered carriers fitted with sensors that track temperature, pulse rate, and oxygen saturation for the newborn.

According to Ayikoru, the color-coded screen alerts the mother if there’s any abnormality, and the accompanying mobile app also allows remote monitoring. This approach aims to reduce the need for overcrowded neonatal ICUs, especially in underserved areas.

When Total Energies Uganda recognized the potential of this, they gave her an additional \$8,000 which enabled Ayikoru to refine the prototype, register the company, and officially launch operations.

“I believe my journey encapsulates the spirit of resilience, innovation, and community-driven impact,” she adds.

“From losing my niece to a preventable neonatal complication to transforming that heartbreak into a life-saving innovation, I’ve consistently sought pragmatic solutions for pressing healthcare challenges.”



CHAE FRANCIS

29, SOUTH AFRICA

Co-Founder, Ace Labs
Sector • Media, Marketing

“THE GLOBAL ATTENTION ON THE CONTINENT EXISTS, BUT IT MUST TRANSLATE INTO MEANINGFUL INVESTMENT, COLLABORATION, AND EQUITY THAT SPEAKS TO OUR NEEDS AND NOT THOSE OF THE WEST. WE DON’T NEED SAVING.”

Chae Francis and his business partner started their venture because they wanted to disrupt the influencer marketing space and adopt methods that were a little more unconventional. At the time, social media platform TikTok was at its peak, as was the creative economy, and, to Francis, in comparison to other markets, he felt like there were “no real big players doing it correctly in South Africa”.

“In typical entrepreneurial fashion, we decided that the only way to make a change was to make a change and that’s where Ace Labs was born,” Francis says.

They built partnerships and relationships

with TikTok Global and secured their partnerships through the Creative Exchange (that recognizes emerging artists) with a plan to create content for TikTok and its clients while they built the business.

“This is how we made sure that we had a steady income so that we could reinvest into the business and build the creator economy the way we saw it—with added value to the creator, building sustainable businesses around them.” Since its launch in 2022, Ace Labs has made a significant impact by hosting masterclasses, providing training and guidance to emerging creators, curating opportunities, securing brand deals, and helping them elevate their careers to the next level. Considering the massive growth of the creative economy, Francis just wants to see South African creators at the forefront of this rise. “We should collectively focus on building systems that empower local talent and scale innovation sustainably. We have the creativity, the youth, and the entrepreneurial spirit, but we need better infrastructure, stronger digital ecosystems, and more collaborative platforms that connect African solutions to African problems, we can’t rely on our governments to spearhead this,” he says.

“We need partnerships that respect our potential and back our African brilliance.”

The Wealth of Fulfilment: Living Richly, Leaving A Legacy

BY SAGREN PATHER, HEAD OF MARKETING AT STANDARD BANK WEALTH AND INVESTMENT



On a recent flight from Zurich to Cape Town, my friend, a distinguished entrepreneur with global interests and generational influence, posed a question I couldn't ignore: "Do you ever feel you've conquered the game only to realize it's the wrong one?"

He wasn't speaking from scarcity. Quite the opposite. He had achieved what many can only dream of: financial freedom, influential networks and money-can't-buy experiences. He had scaled businesses, owned multiple homes globally, and held more prestigious cards than he could carry. Yet beneath it all, he was beginning to question what many at the apex eventually do: Is this it?

That conversation stayed with me. It was a reminder that once financial independence is achieved, the next challenge is one of intentional living. Of redefining wealth, not as accumulation, but as alignment. Not as success, but as significance. It compelled me to reconsider wealth, not merely as assets accumulated, but as a meaningful legacy shaped and shared across generations.

A search for the definition of true wealth led me to take a closer look at the mindsets and frameworks that are reshaping how the world's most accomplished live: richly and with purpose, depth and legacy.

The Art of Meaningful Wealth

In his book, *The Wealth Money Can't Buy*, Robin Sharma speaks of eight intangible yet profoundly valuable forms of wealth. His insights resonate deeply, not as abstract theories, but as lived experiences for shaping a richer life:

- **Growth:** True growth demands stepping beyond comfort. Learning continually, whether through investment mastery or new cultural experiences, is foundational to enduring relevance and generational leadership.
- **Wellness:** Wellness is an essential investment. Daily

rituals—morning meditation, dedicated fitness routines, strategic rest—became non-negotiable. True wealth begins with the vitality to enjoy it.

- **Family:** Wealth becomes meaningful only when shared with those we cherish most deeply.
- **Craft:** Craft, pursued for passion rather than profit alone, enriches identity and legacy.
- **Money:** The art of managing money lies not in endlessly seeking more, but in thoughtfully deploying it—enabling freedom, empowering impact, enriching lives.
- **Community:** Intimate gatherings, authentic relationships, and collective purpose elevate wealth from solitary success to shared fulfilment.
- **Adventure:** Genuine luxury often resides in unexpected, uncontrolled experiences. Adventure revitalizes the spirit and renews perspective, essential for personal and generational renewal.
- **Service:** Mentoring future leaders, funding scholarships, investing in community projects—these acts create legacies far surpassing financial returns.

Legacy: The Ultimate Return

Generational wealth extends beyond estates and assets; it is embedded in the values, traditions, and impacts we leave behind. It is about nurturing children who embrace kindness as power, integrity as wealth, and purpose as privilege.

Our most meaningful investments aren't merely financial, they're relational. The laughter shared around a family table, the wisdom passed quietly between generations, the community uplifted through strategic philanthropy—these represent the highest returns imaginable.

"WHEN FINANCIAL FREEDOM IS A GIVEN, THE TRUE PURSUIT BECOMES PERSONAL FULFILMENT."

A Call to Deeper Richness

At this level of accomplishment, wealth is not what you own, but how meaningfully you live. It's in curated experiences, moments savored, lessons shared, and impacts created. True luxury isn't accumulation, it's intentionality.

With an unbounded capacity to spend, you could collect the best furniture, crafted from the rarest of woods. However, having the means to intentionally save a rainforest altruistically is a way of preserving our world for multiple generations, leaving an unshakeable legacy.

As you reflect on your own journey, consider this: How can your wealth enrich not only your own life but the lives of those who will follow? The greatest fortune is found not in what we leave behind, but in how vividly, deeply, and meaningfully we live—and the legacy of purpose we pass forward.

Because ultimately, true wealth—the kind you cannot buy—is the profound fulfilment of living richly, loving deeply, and leaving an indelible mark on the world.



Standard Bank
Wealth & Investment

“AFRICA IS AT A TURNING POINT. FROM WHERE I STAND IN FASHION, CULTURE, AND YOUTH-DRIVEN MOVEMENTS, I BELIEVE OUR GREATEST FOCUS RIGHT NOW SHOULD BE ON OWNERSHIP AND INFRASTRUCTURE. WE’VE PROVEN OUR CREATIVITY TO THE WORLD; WHAT’S NEEDED NOW IS THE STRUCTURE TO SUSTAIN IT. THAT MEANS BUILDING PLATFORMS, NOT JUST TRENDS. IT MEANS INVESTING IN LOCAL TALENT, MANUFACTURING, TECH, AND EDUCATION SO WE’RE NOT JUST PART OF GLOBAL CONVERSATIONS BUT LEADING THEM. THE WORLD IS FINALLY PAYING ATTENTION, BUT THIS MOMENT MUST BE ABOUT MORE THAN VISIBILITY, IT MUST BE ABOUT VALUE,” SAYS JONATHAN COFFIE OF FREE THE YOUTH

This is the story of three young men with a vision to change the perception of the creative industry. And they did this with £100 (\$133) lent to them by a friend, and with the help of a t-shirt-printing press.

“Back in Junior High School, we were experimenting with screen-printing techniques, turning plain t-shirts into personal canvases of expression,” Kelly Foli begins to tell the tale to FORBES AFRICA.

“It wasn’t a business yet—it was just something we loved doing. After Senior High School, things began to take shape. We’d link up after school, take pictures that reflected our unique style and aesthetics, and post them on social media. People resonated with it.”

Foli, Coffie and Kweku decided to develop the brand “from the streets”, relying mostly on social media and their community to build FREE THE YOUTH organically. Coffie says their biggest challenge was trying to gain international recognition while staying true to their roots—but they “found strength in authenticity”.

FREE THE YOUTH has now expanded into three branches, the non-profit (which provides mentorship programs on youth empowerment and creative entrepreneurship), the agency (that was built to drive major brand collaborations and global partnerships.) and the actual streetwear brand. The company has also partnered with global brands like Nike, Jordan, Louis Vuitton, Meta, Sony Music and Apple Music, to name a few.

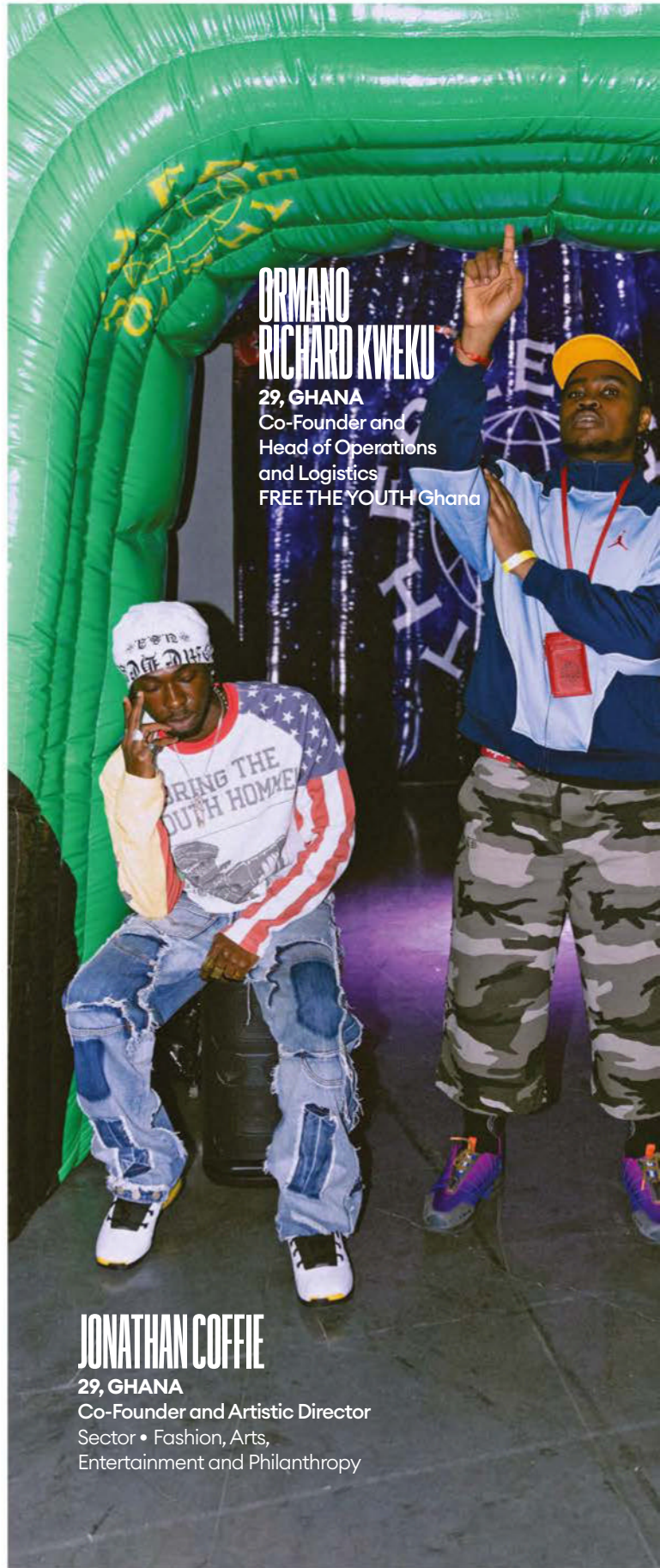
What started off as three lads who grew up together in Tema, located 25 kilometers east of Accra, the capital city of Ghana, grew into a brand that is passionate about taking Africa to the global stage.

“It’s not just about us,” Kweku says. “It’s about the kid in Tema, Lagos, Nairobi, or Soweto who’s dreaming but doesn’t see enough people who look like them on global platforms. Being in FORBES AFRICA means we now carry the weight of showing them that it’s possible—and maybe even help them get there faster.”

EMEA Jordan (Nike) SNKRS & NBHD Brand Marketing Senior Specialist, Antoine Beau tells FORBES AFRICA that despite all the time the trio spends together, he marvels at the fact that they “never run out of ideas to innovate”.

“They managed to create a unique take on fashion by bringing African iconology on streetwear staples, which makes them very recognizable beyond Africa, where it resonates with the diaspora,” he says.

“Consequently, their journey has been noticed as they’ve become one of the biggest African-based brands, acknowledged by leaders of the streetwear and fashion industry such as Tremone Emory (Denim Tears), Angelo Baque (Awake NY) or Pharrell Williams, to name only a few.”



**ORMANO
RICHARD KWEKU**
29, GHANA
Co-Founder and
Head of Operations
and Logistics
FREE THE YOUTH Ghana

JONATHAN COFFIE
29, GHANA
Co-Founder and Artistic Director
Sector • Fashion, Arts,
Entertainment and Philanthropy

Carving A Customized And Timeless Legacy

FROM ITALY TO SOUTH AFRICA, NOXOLO MSELEKU'S ELEGÂNTÉ IS REDEFINING CLASSICAL JEWELRY THROUGH ELEGANCE, CRAFTSMANSHIP, AND POWERFUL STORYTELLING.



Elegânté aims to transform the industry and generate employment

35

COVER STORY • 30 UNDER 30



KELLY FOLI

28, GHANA
Co-Founder and
Creative Director

There is an increasing demand for jewelry pieces that reflect beauty and precision, both of which can be found with Elegânté.

Led by Noxolo Mseleku, the brand offers customized handcrafted and classical pieces that celebrate and sophistication as well as purpose and precision.

was inspiring.”

Elegânté was officially launched upon Mseleku's return to South Africa and became a place for her to unleash her creativity. Though this newfound freedom did come with hurdles.

“Despite my qualifications, people would voice concerns about my age and knowledge about jewels. Yet, Elegânté has now been running smoothly for six years.”

Jewelry With Intention

Revenue in the luxury jewelry market in South Africa is expected to amount to \$6773 million in 2025, as per Statista.

Custom jewelry design, in particular, requires intrinsic attention to detail. Mseleku studied a Diploma in Jewelry Design and Manufacture from the University of Johannesburg, which she, admittedly, did not enjoy.

However, her perception changed following her participation in a design competition centered on HIV/AIDS awareness.

“I created this flower with a baby inside, and the petals were symbolic of how someone can still fall pregnant even if they have AIDS,” she explains.

Mseleku reveals that she won the competition, and this win ignited and cemented her passion for jewelry, but set her on the journey that would lead to Elegânté.

The Italian Spark

Her appreciation for her craft deepened once she began studying at the Tari Design School.

“Being in Italy gave me a new perspective on craftsmanship as how they handled and executed jewelry design with Italian influence.

A Philosophy of Craft

The brand isn't simply one of classic jewelry, but a philosophy for how the customized pieces can be created.

“I want Elegânté to be a presentation of what jewelry making should be—craftsmanship. I love making pieces that represent someone's journey,” says Mseleku.

“We create classical, aesthetic pieces—jewelry that honors what the earth has given us.”

This isn't the only way that Elegânté honors the Earth's natural resources, as the brand is also committed to ethical practices.

“All our metal is responsibly sourced, we recycle, and we're very conscious of how we dispose of toxic materials.”

Mseleku has utilized the brand to not only transform the industry but also to generate employment, adding: “I decided to be the change I wanted to see”.

Elegânté's next chapter is poised to include more physical stores, both locally and internationally, including Singapore, alongside the upcoming

release of a distinctive collection that fuses Mseleku's South African identity with Italian influence.

WISANI HLANGWANE

27, SOUTH AFRICA

Co-Founder & Chief Executive Officer, Funti3r Sector • Human Capital Technology (HRTech)

“AFRICA IS A YOUNG POPULATION WITH A NUMBER OF DIGITAL NOMADS. MOST PEOPLE IN AFRICA ARE SMART AND UNDER-RESOURCED, WHICH OPENS BIGGER OPPORTUNITIES. COUNTRIES ARE INVESTING A LOT OF MONEY IN LAYING THE CORRECT INFRASTRUCTURE, TOOLS AND OTHER RESOURCES TO BRING AFRICA TO THE MAIN STAGE. YET, IT’S THE AFRICAN THAT MUST BE ACTIVELY ENGAGED TO MAXIMIZE THESE OPPORTUNITIES.”

While pursuing a BCom degree in Investment Management at Milpark Education in South Africa, Wisani Hlangwane launched his first formal business, a property development and investment company, in 2017, with just R1,500 (\$83,56).

“I had exposure to business professionals and investors who visited my campus to give talks. I often took the initiative to visit their offices and learn more. As I progressed in my education and entrepreneurial journey, I recognized my strength in networking and communication,” he says.

“Despite my youth, I managed to build a robust network. Over time, things naturally fell into place.”

Even after the first venture failed, Hlangwane never gave up.

In June 2022, he finally found his stride and launched Funti3r with R10,000 (\$557), which he earned from his first Web3 consulting job on LinkedIn. This allowed Hlangwane to combine his interests in blockchain, emerging tech, and entrepreneurship.

Funti3r is a tech-driven platform that connects businesses with talent according to skill so that people can execute essential microtasks. They leverage blockchain for verified credentials, stablecoins for seamless global payments, and AI to empower workers to be more productive.

“I am in the sweet spot of being a market-maker, and we are just connecting the dots for the ecosystem,” he adds.



CANDICE CHIRWA

29, SOUTH AFRICA

Founder and Director of Qrate Sector • Education



“IF I HAD TO USE THREE WORDS TO DESCRIBE MYSELF, IT WOULD BE: PASSIONATE, PERSISTENT, PURPOSEFUL.”

The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) estimates that roughly one in 10 girls in Africa miss school because of their periods each year, though this statistic has been questioned. According to reports, in South Africa, 30% of girls miss school each month due to period poverty, which can be defined as a lack of access to menstrual hygiene products and sanitation. In Zimbabwe, that figure sits at 62%.

This is why Candice Chirwa started Qrate, a non-profit organization dedicated to tackling menstrual inequity and breaking the pervasive stigma surrounding periods.

“In many parts of the world, menstruation is still considered a taboo topic, and girls and women are often shamed, ostracized, and discriminated against during their periods. This, combined with the lack of access to affordable and quality menstrual products, makes it challenging for many girls and women to manage their periods with dignity and safety.”

Known affectionately by her followers as the ‘Minister of Menstruation’, Chirwa has reached thousands of women across South Africa, conducting workshops and fostering conversations that many had been too afraid to have.

Through its #PeriodPositiveTour, the business has traveled to South African provinces such as Limpopo, Mpumalanga, and the Western Cape, bringing education and menstrual products to those who need them the most.

“Along the way, we’ve seen young girls gain confidence, boys become allies, and communities embrace the idea that menstruation is not a burden but a shared human experience,” says Chirwa.

She has also taken these initiatives into corporate South Africa by partnering with brands like Engen, Nedbank, Salome-Range, Levi’s Africa, Ford South Africa, and Momentum.

“I started with nothing—borrowing my friend’s laptop and iPhone in high school just to create [content],” Johnny Malepa tells FORBES AFRICA.

“My first work trip was funded by a friend, and I’d use my dad’s old laptop, when he wasn’t around, to teach myself and experiment. I had no financial backing, but I had the support of my friends and my sister, which meant everything.”

Malepa went from making music in Limpopo to realizing that he had a knack for visuals, which led to his work with the late South African artist, Kiernan Forbes, also known as AKA.

He called it a dream come true.

He has also been able to create award-winning visuals for major global brands like Disney, Netflix, Amazon, Universal Music, BMW, Red Bull, Smirnoff, Coca-Cola, KFC, Comedy Central, WWE, and Samsung. Global campaigns include ones for MTV, MTV Base, BET, M-Net, TRACE, Marvel, Channel O, Mzansi Magic, and even music projects for artists like Burna Boy and Wizkid.

“I am not just a creative entrepreneur—I am a cultural architect, using storytelling, branding, and visual innovation to shape the future of music, entertainment, and marketing in Africa,” Malepa says.

“Africa’s creative economy is rising, and I am determined to be at the forefront, leading the charge for bold, innovative, and world-class storytelling.”



25,
SOUTH AFRICA
Founder
and Creative
Director, Malepa
Agency
Sector
• Media,
Entertainment

“SUCCESS
DOESN’T CARE
WHERE YOU
COME FROM,
IT CARES HOW
CONSISTENT,
OBSESSED,
AND
RELENTLESS
YOU ARE.”

JOHNNY
MALEPA

37

COVER STORY • 30 UNDER 30

GOGONTLE NCHEMELE BASIAMI

30, BOTSWANA

Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Bloom Sanitary Pads
Sector • Manufacturing, Industry

It may seem odd to find a male figure at the forefront of the eradication of pink tax—in other words, the practice of pricing products and services marketed to women higher than similar items targeting men. But Gogontle Nchemele Basiami realized how prohibitive this tax was in Botswana and decided to switch things up. It led him to leave his engineering job—his family was livid, he says—and use his severance package of P30,000 (\$2,225).

“I did a lot of research and realized that we could actually come up with a cost-effective solution that will solve unemployment and also create a sustain-

able business. I also realized that in Botswana, there’s nobody manufacturing sanitary pads.”

Eight years later, with a work force comprising of 64% women, Basiami’s pride lies in the fact that the company’s products are available within Botswana’s retail space and are affordable.

Another part of the work that he does is lead menstrual health conversations to break misconceptions around the conversation of menstrual cycles.

“A man doing sanitary pads,” he says. “That was unheard of! But here we are now; in major retailers and doing well; that is the story of the pads man!”

“I REMEMBER
WHEN I WAS
YOUNG AND HAD
A DREAM TO RUN
A BUSINESS, I
NEVER KNEW THE
CHALLENGES
THAT CAME
WITH IT. WHEN
I STARTED THIS
JOURNEY,
I HAD NO
CHEERLEADERS.
I HAD A DREAM;
I BLED, SWEATED
AND CRIED FOR
THIS DREAM!”



ANJALI BORKHATARIA

27, TANZANIA

Founder and Creative Director, Ekantik
Sector • Fashion and Beauty

“I’M NOT JUST BUILDING A BRAND—I’M BUILDING BELIEF. IF A YOUNG GIRL FROM TANZANIA CAN TURN CULTURE INTO COUTURE AND DREAMS INTO IMPACT, THEN THE WORLD BETTER BE READY—BECAUSE WE’RE NOT JUST NEXT, WE’RE NOW.”

After Tanzanian Anjali Borkhataria graduated studying fashion in Cape Town in 2018, her graduate collection was featured in the music video, *Waah*, by Tanzanian artist, Naseeb Abdul Juma Issack, also known as Diamond Platnumz, and Congolese singer-songwriter Antoine Christophe Agbepa Mumba (Koffi Olomidé). The latter loved the designs so much he purchased a few items and she made around \$1,500 from the sales.

“With this money, I began buying fabrics locally and started creating designs at home—specifically on my dining table,” says Borkhataria.

Now, years later, not only has she collaborated with Reebok South Africa, launching the ‘Love In Its Purest Form’ collection at South African Men’s Wear Week in Cape Town, she is also the first Tanzanian designer to have a pop-up at Galeries Lafayette in Paris.

She is also in the process of designing and creating a piece for Samia Suluhu Hassan, the President of Tanzania.

“After an interview on *Wasafi Media*, I expressed my dream of dressing President Samia Suluhu Hassan,” Borkhataria says. “When the President commented on my Instagram post, it was a proud and humbling moment. I am currently in the process of designing her outfit.”



THABANG SIZWE ZULU

28, SOUTH AFRICA

Founder, Lead Developer and Chief Executive Officer,
Glitch Portal
Sector • Gaming

“AFRICA HAS A LOT OF AMAZING STORIES THAT NEED TO BE EXPRESSED GLOBALLY, WHETHER THROUGH FILM, GAME DEVELOPMENT, MUSIC, DANCE, OR OTHER MEDIUMS. WE HAVE UNIQUE CULTURES THAT THE REST OF THE WORLD IS NOT FAMILIAR WITH, AND THAT CAN AND WILL MAKE US STAND OUT AS A CONTINENT.”

Statista reported in 2024 that globally, the gaming market generated almost \$455 billion, with mobile games generating \$98.7 billion in total. According to *CNBC Africa*, the African gaming industry generated \$1.8 billion in revenue in 2024. But it was not money that compelled Thabang Sizwe Zulu to become a game developer; it was representation.

“I wanted to make games—that’s the simplest answer,” he tells *FORBES AFRICA*. “But looking further into it, South Africa didn’t really have much recognition for game development. There are a couple of studios here and there, but just a handful. The one reason I wanted to start it was because of that, and another was to express and tell the stories of who we are as South Africans, culturally, on a global platform.”

Zulu founded Glitch Portal with an initial investment of R0 using social media to leverage and garner attention. He then started the gaming studio, established with a singular vision: “to revolutionize the industry by challenging cultural creativity”.

Glitch Portal developed a minimal viable product (MVP) called *Themba: The Last Hope*, and showcased it at major African gaming events, including Africa Games Week and rAge Expo 2023. Zulu then went on to showcase their second MVP, *Jozi Jam!*, at AVIJOZI, Zambia, Websummit Lisboa, AGW 2024, rAge 2024 and Playtopia 2024.

“All this was achieved by a group of South African individuals driven to stand out and tell our stories. This journey towards success began five years ago when I conceptualized the business idea one night on my mother’s kitchen table,” he says.

“Within a span of ten months, we’ve evolved from having no awards to becoming multi-award-winning, garnering international recognition, nominations, and showcasing our work on global platforms.”

DR JEREMIAH ROGITO

29, KENYA

Founder and Executive Director at Agripanda Limited and Soil Health, Climate and FOLU Specialist at AGRA
Sector • Agriculture

“GO OUT AND UNLOCK DOORS—YOU CAN YOURSELF. EMBRACE EVERY CHALLENGE AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN, GROW, AND INNOVATE.”

With two parents who were farmers, Dr Jeremiah Rogito grew up knowing that agriculture is the backbone of the Kenyan economy and many economies across the African continent.

According to the *Unlocking Africa's Agricultural Potential* report by the World Bank, the industry in Africa employs 65%–70% of the continent's labor force and typically accounts for 30%–40% of GDP.

More than 70% of the continent's poor live in rural areas, and agriculture is their most important economic activity.

“I decided to dedicate my life to transforming agriculture into a powerful engine for job creation and food security in Africa.”

Rogito's success ranges from being a Specialist for Soil Health, Climate and FOLU at AGRA (African-led institution focused on scaling agricultural innovations), which has allowed him to lead and implement sustainable food systems across Africa, focusing on regenerative agriculture, climate resilience, and youth empowerment.

Last year, the technical team of experts developed the Kigali Declaration on Youth, Food Systems and Climate that has become a key roadmap for youth driving policy initiatives in climate adaptation and food systems in Africa.

This was a result of more than 15 convening facilities with over 10,000 youth across 15 different African countries.

“In 2024, I was also appointed by the Cabinet Secretary Ministry of Agriculture into the National Task Force for Food Systems transformation to drive Food Systems Transformation in Kenya in line with United Nations Food Systems Summit 2021 (UNFSS) pathways and commitments. It is also the year I graduated with my PhD,” he says excitedly.



AYOBAMI AKINDIPE

27, NIGERIA

Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Ace Real Estate Development and ACE Academy
Sector • Real Estate



“I DIDN'T JUST BUILD A REAL ESTATE COMPANY, I BUILT HOPE. FROM SELLING ON THE STREETS TO CREATING BILLION-NAIRA ASSETS, I'VE EMPOWERED OVER 25,000 PEOPLE THROUGH FREE TRAINING VIA ACE ACADEMY, TURNING MANY INTO MILLIONAIRES. I'VE BUILT 100+ HOMES AND HELPED COUNTLESS FAMILIES OWN PROPERTIES AND BUILD WEALTH. THIS ISN'T JUST REAL ESTATE. IT'S IMPACT. IT'S A LEGACY. IT'S A MOVEMENT.”

Having grown up in an environment where financial struggles were the norm, Ayobami Akindipe always had a penchant for hustling. By 13, he was already a bricklayer as he was not “just working for money; [but] to survive”.

“Starting with nothing but faith and a relentless work ethic, I dived into real estate. No capital, no connections, just vision. I knocked on doors, convinced investors, and bootstrapped my way to acquiring my first property.”

Akindipe has developed and delivered over 100 homes in Lagos in Nigeria but is also establishing projects in Cape Town, South Africa, and has positioned his company's expansion into Rwanda, Kenya, the UAE and the United Kingdom.

But Akindipe's pride is his real estate academy, ACE Academy, which has provided free real estate training for over 25,000 young people to get into property ownership, become brokers or real estate entrepreneurs.

“My story is proof that success isn't about where you start but how far you're willing to go.”

Avian Bell, like many others, believes that education is one of the most powerful tools and dedicates much of his time as a CEO to educating South Africans about health and safety in sexual and reproductive health, particularly addressing historically underserved and neglected communities, such as the LG-BTQIA+ community, sex workers and other sectors of society.

But a big concern for Bell is the rising number of teenage pregnancies in South Africa.

According to the country's Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, teenage pregnancies have forced many girls to drop out of school and trapped others in a cycle of poverty, leaving most of them stigmatized by society for being teenage mothers or forced into early marriages.

The Department's former Minister, Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, stated last year that the country continues to show a high rate of teenage pregnancy globally, with nearly one in four girls falling pregnant before the age of 20 years.

South Africa, according to the minister, has recorded an estimated 150,000 girls between the age of 10 and 19, falling pregnant in the 2022/23 financial year.

"I have seen how this can directly impact someone's life," Bell says.

Part of his work is also increasing access to information on issues like acquired immunode-



29, SOUTH AFRICA
Chief Executive Officer,
Quantumed
Sector • Healthcare

"EDUCATION IS ONE OF THE MOST POWERFUL TOOLS OUT THERE. THROUGH THE WORK I DO, EDUCATION AND RAISING AWARENESS IS CRITICAL. I WANT TO EMPOWER SOUTH AFRICANS AND AFRICANS WITH THE KNOWLEDGE THEY NEED, TO MAKE A MEANINGFUL DIFFERENCE IN THEIR LIVES."

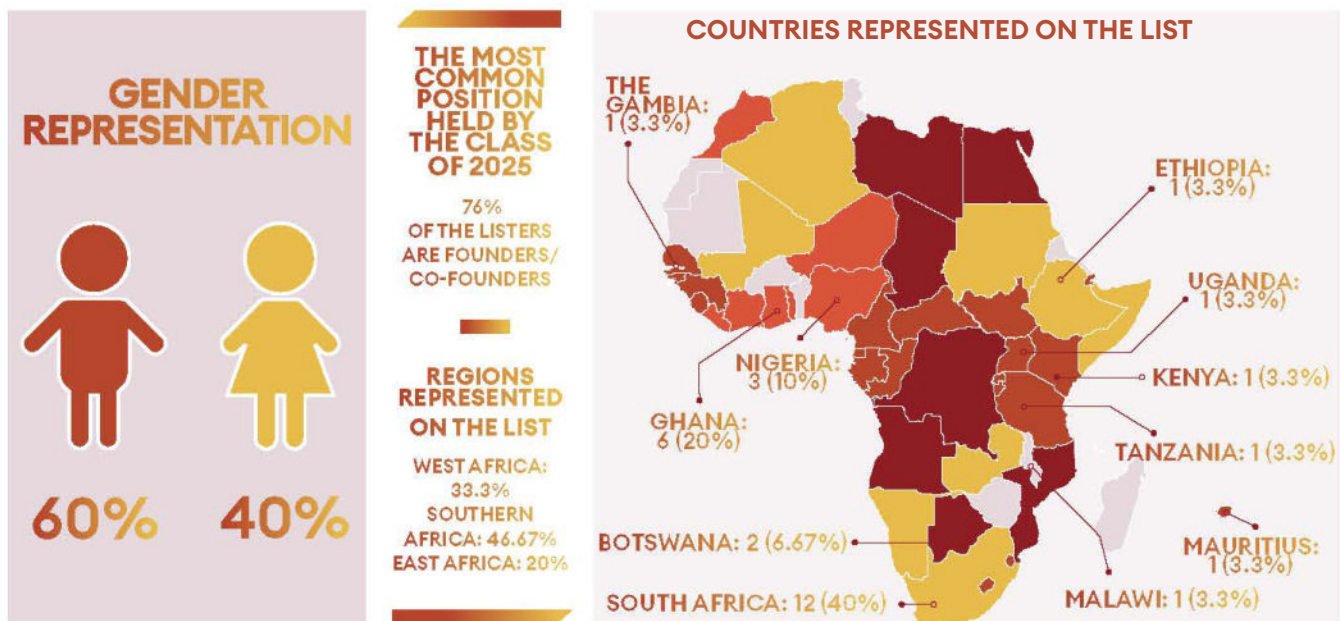
ciency syndrome (AIDS), human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

"What we're trying to do from our side is not only [make money], obviously, making a success of our company [is important], but also to educate people," Bell says. His company, Quantumed, manufactures and distributes high-quality personal healthcare products like condoms and personal lubricants. The company also specializes in alcohol breathalyzers, medical supplies (including first aid kits, finger cots and dental dams) as well as body bags and shrouds, and educational tools like condom demonstrators and dispensers designed for training and awareness programs. But Bell has worked hard to ensure that, at the core of the business, the topic of sex and sex safety becomes less of a taboo, especially in communities where it is still frowned upon to openly have these conversations.

"It's important for a young person to speak out about this—boldly and publicly—almost like shouting from the rooftops and saying, 'guys, let's get on board!' It's not something that should be taboo. It can be informative, even fun," Bell says.

"We're such strong advocates for inclusivity and all these progressive ideals, and I'm fully behind that. But I always ask—what about safety? Yes, be inclusive, but also be safe. And yet, so many people still shy away from that part of the conversation."

IN NUMBERS





JIŘÍ RUS,
AFRICAN SALES
DIRECTOR OF
NEUMAN & ESSER

Energizing Africa's Growth with Next-Generation Compression Systems

NEUMAN & ESSER specializes in advanced reciprocating compression technology and hydrogen solutions including electrolyzers, supporting Africa's oil, gas, and renewable sectors with localized engineering and technical expertise.



NEUMAN & ESSER (NEA), a family business with almost 200 years of history and over 100 years of experience in reciprocating compression technology, is revolutionizing the energy sector in Africa. NEA is est-

ablishing itself as a major force in the conventional oil and gas industry as well as the rapidly expanding renewable energy sector, led by Jiří Rus, African Sales Director.

"Africa represents the future," Rus says. "With its increasing population, rich natural resources, and growing demand for energy, the continent is poised for rapid development." His passion for Africa is evident, having transitioned from roles in Europe and the Middle East to focus entirely on the continent since 2021.

NEA's growth strategy is multifaceted. Traditionally known for its robust reciprocating compressors used in oil and gas, the company has embraced the energy transition by investing in green hydrogen technology. "We identified hydrogen as a key energy carrier for renewables," says Rus. This strategic shift led to the acquisition of among others HYTRON Energy & Gas in Brazil, expanding NEA's capabilities to include electrolyzer production alongside their core compression technologies.

More than 15 African nations, including Egypt, Libya, Nigeria, South Africa, Uganda, Tanzania, Angola, Algeria, Mozambique, Mauritania, Senegal, and Namibia, are home to NEA. As a sign of its dedication to regional expansion, NEA established a joint venture in Libya. Rus highlights NEA's efforts to certify field service professionals and create service centers in South Africa and Nigeria and others to come, saying, "Local content isn't just a concept for us; it's in our DNA." This strategy guarantees that NEA's services are affordable, easily available, and sensitive to local markets' cultural norms.

In South Africa, NEA has executed complex projects showcasing its technical prowess and dedication to local partnerships. "We surprised some of our partners with the level of sophistication we could achieve locally," Rus says, underlining the company's commitment to leveraging local talent and resources. Similarly, in Nigeria, NEA has made significant strides by opening an authorized service center for compression technology, enhancing the efficiency and reliability of its operations.

Namibia, although not initially a priority, has emerged as a key focus due to its renewable energy potential. "The stable wind, abundant

"Africa's vast natural resources and energy potential demand localized solutions, and that's exactly where NEA's expertise thrives."

sunshine, and vast space make Namibia ideal for green hydrogen projects," Rus says. NEA sees opportunities not only in hydrogen compression but also in value-added exports like ammonia and methanol, which are crucial for efficient energy transport. "What excites us about Namibia is the potential to create a value-added chain, not just exporting raw materials but processed products that bring more economic benefits to the country," he says.

Rus is optimistic about Namibia's investment climate, praising its political stability and forward-looking energy policies. "Namibia offers a rare combination of natural blessings and a stable environment, which is incredibly attractive for foreign investors," he says. His enthusiasm extends beyond business, reflecting on the vibrant culture and warmth of the Namibian people. "I was genuinely considering relocating to Windhoek because of the welcoming atmosphere and dynamic energy sector," he says.

NEA's commitment to Africa extends beyond commercial interests. The company actively supports local development through knowledge transfer and education initiatives. "We're not just here to do

business; we're here to contribute to the growth of local industries and technical expertise," says Rus. This philosophy is evident in NEA's partnerships with educational institutions, such as their collaboration with the University of Windhoek to support engineering programs and technical training.

Reflecting on NEA's mission, Rus concludes, "Our role isn't just business-to-business. We have a responsibility to support the development of local industries and technical expertise across Africa." He encourages potential investors to experience Africa firsthand. "Stop relying solely on reports and statistics. Visit, engage with the people, and see the opportunities for yourself. Africa is a continent of immense resources and even greater potential."

By combining the traditional and renewable energy sectors, NEUMAN & ESSER is poised to play a significant role in Africa's energy future and promote sustainable growth.





THE BILLIONAIRE BETTING

BIG

ON AFRICA'S HIV RESEARCH



by Nicole Pillay

WITH STRATEGIC COLLABORATIONS, TARGETED FUNDING, AND GROWING INVESTMENT IN SCIENCE, AFRICA HOLDS IMMENSE POTENTIAL IN SPEARHEADING THE FUTURE OF GLOBAL HEALTHCARE. AMONG THOSE TAKING THE LEAD TO DEVELOP A CURE FOR HIV, THROUGH THESE PARTNERSHIPS, AND WITH MILLIONS IN INVESTMENT, IS AN AMERICAN BILLIONAIRE NAMED

PHILLIP 'TERRY' RAGON

WHO WE GET A RARE AUDIENCE WITH. HE SPEAKS ABOUT HIS BELIEF IN AFRICAN-LED SCIENCE AND WHY A BREAKTHROUGH IS WITHIN REACH.

In a lab in the heart of South Africa's KwaZulu-Natal province, a quiet revolution in HIV research is underway. Over 8,000 miles away in Massachusetts in the United States (U.S.), philanthropist and billionaire-entrepreneur, Phillip "Terry" Ragon, is reflecting on why the work in Africa is so important, not just for him, but for the future of global health.

Through scientific coalitions and collaborations, Ragon is helping unlock answers in a region with the heaviest incidence of AIDS, while empowering local researchers to lead the charge toward a cure.

"If you achieve a vaccine for HIV, you'll be able to really transform lives, save millions of people. It would be pretty special if you could accomplish that," Ragon says simply, on a Zoom call with FORBES AFRICA in late April. "We were taking on the very hardest infectious disease by far; and I knew that we wouldn't just get lucky. We were going to have to develop new science, engineering, technologies and, if we were successful at finding a vaccine, then, most likely, we would be able to solve a range of other diseases at the same time."

Ragon has dedicated his life to healthcare. Not one to bask in the spotlight, he is candid about the respect he has for his team and business partners on the ground in Africa, all of whom have adopted a common goal to tackle one of the most debilitating viruses on earth. And this is why he is focused on the continent.

Health research in Africa is at a critical juncture. And while stakeholders weigh up the costs of cuts in funding, including the 'dismantling' of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)—which has already seen several projects grind to a halt—the continent's potential as well as its collaborative efforts must come to the fore.

One such collaboration is between the African Health Research Institute (AHRI) and Ragon's U.S.-based Ragon Institute, resulting in the first HIV cure trial in Africa.

Partnerships With A Purpose

It is estimated, by the World Health Organization, that there are 25.6 million people living with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), the virus that causes AIDS, in the African region.

The Ragon Institute, founded in 2009, with an early emphasis on HIV/AIDS research, is a partnership between Mass General Brigham—an integrated healthcare system, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and Harvard University.

Supported by the Phillip T. and Susan M. Ragon Foundation, it's the brainchild of Ragon, who is also the CEO of InterSystems, a data management solutions company based in Massachusetts. His net worth, according to *Forbes*, is an estimated \$3.5 billion.

However, collaborative efforts between Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH), a founding member of Mass General Brigham, and the continent precede this.

It was in 1998 that, through MGH, Dr Bruce Walker, Founding Director of the Ragon Institute—and whose particular focus includes HIV, virus-specific T-cells and elite controllers—and his team first formed partnerships with scientists in South Africa's KwaZulu-Natal province.

According to the Ragon Institute, this collaboration was

about more than research; the focus was on building local capacity and infrastructure. Five years later, the Doris Duke Medical Research Institute was established at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, serving as a training ground for scientists on the continent and providing them with the space they needed to conduct research autonomously.

Speaking to FORBES AFRICA, Dr Walker explains their goal was always to support African leadership and allow the facilities to have their own identities.

It was only in 2007 that he was introduced to Ragon, which was also the first time the latter visited South Africa.

"The reason I went, first of all, was Bruce was telling me what he was doing. Intellectually, I understood everything he was saying but I didn't quite understand why he was doing what he was doing," recalls Ragon.

"I got to sit in as [a physician] examined three patients. All three were young women—probably late teens, maybe early 20s—all three had HIV, and all three were dying. It was really quite intense."

Ragon initially felt as though there was enough investment in HIV research at the time and that it would be a waste to get involved.

"[Bruce's] exact words were, 'let's not be hasty'. We sat at the airport and he told me of a dream he had—to create this coalition of scientists all over the world that were the best in their fields, and have them all help work on this important problem. I said to him, 'that's really a harebrained idea but there's an aspect to it that's intriguing'.

"So, I agreed to fund a very small project that he was doing with somebody else, just to understand more about this whole field. Then,

over the course of a year, I really came to understand that there were opportunities to do things that would be transformative."

Ragon, who was born in Arizona in the U.S., acknowledges that he was fortunate growing up, and that he always felt a need to help people.

"I [got] to spend my senior year of high school in South America; in Bogotá, Columbia. What really struck me was that, at that time, there was really intense poverty... that really made an impression on me," he states.

"I went back and, initially, I helped build some schools for the kids in that community in Bogotá, and it just never felt like enough, which is why eventually I wound up finding myself with Bruce in Africa."

After completing his studies at MIT, and a stint in London in the U.K., in which he jokes he had dreams of being a rock star that didn't materialize, Ragon ended up working at a company that produced software for healthcare. This was his first foray into the industry and he has never looked back.

"To be honest, I never dreamed of being a billionaire. It was never a goal of mine. A few years back, somebody asked me, 'did you ever expect the company to get this big?' And the only thing I could think of saying was, 'I just never thought I'd be this old,'" says the unassuming billionaire with a laugh.

"My plan somehow went awry, because 30 came and went; 40 came and went; and now, I'm 75 and I'm still here. I didn't start 10 or 20 companies, but I've enjoyed building this one, and it's really interesting to grow along with it as it goes through each phase."

"WE SAT AT THE AIRPORT AND HE TOLD ME OF A DREAM HE HAD-TO CREATE THIS COALITION OF SCIENTISTS ALL OVER THE WORLD THAT WERE THE BEST IN THEIR FIELDS, AND HAVE THEM ALL HELP WORK ON THIS IMPORTANT PROBLEM."

— Terry Ragon

, MGH received \$200 million from philanthropists, including the Ragons, to endow the institute, MIT, and Harvard, to strengthen and secure the future for the institute's scientists. This was in addition to a \$100 million commitment, secured when the fund was established.

At the time of the second contribution, Dr Walker stated that solving difficult health problems demands creative thinking from top scientific minds and that different fields would need to come together to tackle the problem. He also said that this required flexible funding to enable innovative ideas to move forward quickly.

Dr Walker reiterates to FORBES AFRICA: “[HIV] is a very complicated disease, and many of the diseases that we study are very complicated... so approaching these in the traditional manner, where you have a scientist working alone in a lab with a few trainees, is not the way we're going to solve this problem. We're going to solve it through collaboration and through bringing all available knowledge to the problem.”

The institute has since expanded to include research on vaccines for other diseases of global importance, such as malaria, TB, the flu, Covid-19, as well as therapies for cancer and autoimmune disorders.

It is also part of the National Institutes of Health's (NIH) HIV Vaccine Trials Network and has working relationships on infectious disease studies with groups in Botswana, Zambia, India and China.

“We've spent 27 years building up collaborations, working with those collaborators to build capacity, identify sources of funding, and train people, with the goal of improving health. Africa is well-positioned now to contribute to that, and yet it's being jeopardized by the lack of funding,” Dr Walker says.

“Africa needs to be a leader in scientific discovery and in biomedical research; they have incredible resources in terms of people—outstanding people that we have been blessed to be able to be involved in training. That is not something that just involves health, but is an economic engine for the countries themselves.”

He adds that it's really about showcasing the opportunities available on the continent to make a difference in the lives of its people.

Taking The Lead

Reported data indicates that over eight million people in South Africa, in particular, are living with HIV. Further to this, in 2023/2024, there were an estimated 178,000 new HIV infections and 105,000 deaths among people with HIV.

However, efforts are underway to tackle this communicable disease. In March, the AHRI announced the findings of its HIV cure trial, indicating that 20% of trial participants remained off antiretroviral therapy (ART) and virally-suppressed after a year and a half.

The trial, and subsequent study, conducted in KwaZulu-Natal, utilized a combination immunotherapy approach in an effort to eliminate or reduce traces of HIV in the human body.

This would allow the immune system to keep the virus at bay without the need to take lifelong medication.

Further to this, 20 women were enrolled in the trial—a notable point considering that women are disproportionately affected by the virus in Africa.

According to AHRI, six of the participants, or 30%, stayed off HIV treatment for almost a year, while four of the women remained off treatment until the trial ended at 55 weeks. It also noted that these four women have continued without medication for an average of one and a half years, as they are still being monitored.

Professor Thumbi Ndung'u, the Director for Basic and Translational Science at AHRI and an HIV/AIDS researcher, explains to FORBES AFRICA that one of the next steps in this study is to understand why the trial worked for some of the women and not others, and to establish the right mechanisms.

“We are exploring other regimens that might actually work better. At the moment, we don't know which regimens are best for inducing new immune responses. It could be vaccines; it could be broadly neutralizing antibodies—which is what we used in our study—but also very powerful neutralizing antibodies have come up; it could be other products that boost the immune system.

“We are thinking of doing other studies in future that we hypothesize to be better, but obviously you never know until you actually test a product to see whether it works.”

Research related to HIV requires a multipronged approach as those who are immunosuppressed are often susceptible to other infections such as tuberculosis (TB), as an example.



Dr Bruce Walker

Professor Ndung'u emphasizes that research on this communicable disease really is a global effort—alluding to the fact that many other groups are also working on products that can be used in human studies—and the importance of investment and collaboration.

“Africa has immense potential because it has a young population, so the potential for productivity, growth and impact is much bigger in Africa than anywhere else. In order for that potential to be fully realized, what we need, in my view, is investment,” he explains.

“There is room for investment from outside the continent in order to catalyze growth and innovation—that's absolutely needed—but we also need homegrown investment and homegrown solutions. What we need is to be able to convince our own governments and philanthropists to step forward and be counted in terms of real investment in African science, African innovation and in Africa's future. It is possible.”

Trials such as these further emphasize that research can be done in resource-limited settings, while showcasing the potential of health-care development on the continent.

As the experiments in KwaZulu-Natal herald a new turning point in HIV research, what's needed is the scientific will to keep going, and the conviction, as Ragon attests, that a cure may be closer than ever.

THE REALITY ON THE GROUND

As per *WebMD*, the first cases of severe immunodeficiencies were reported to the Center for Disease Control (CDC) in 1981. Then, in 1987, the first antiretroviral drug—FDA-approved, Zidovudine (AZT)—was used to treat HIV.

Fast forward to the present day, where African research in health is moving forward in leaps and bounds, aided by innovation and technology. And long-term funding is a key part of this.

According to reports, South Africa received \$453 million, in 2024 alone, in direct funding from the U.S. under the country's President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR).

And yet, following several developments in the sector, HIV and TB-related research in the country seems to be at risk. This is as per a joint analysis, published in May, from Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) and Treatment Action Group (TAG).

It indicates that 39 South African clinical research sites related to the two diseases are under threat due to potential NIH funding cuts, placing at least 24 HIV trials and 20 TB trials at risk. The NIH is the largest public funder of biomedical research in the world, and reportedly invests more than \$32 billion a year.

The MSF and TAG analysis further explains that, regarding HIV in particular, “trials at risk include cure-related protocols involving broadly neutralizing antibodies (bNAbs) and analytical interruptions of antiretroviral therapy—for both adults and infants, studies to promote treatment adherence for youth, and trials of innovative preventive vaccine modalities designed to induce bNab production”.

Commenting on the analysis, Dr Tom Ellman, director of MSF's Southern Africa Medical Unit said in a statement: “For years, South Africa has spearheaded the research and development of critical innovative medical tools for the prevention, diagnosis, treatment, and care of HIV and TB, which have saved lives not just within South Africa's borders, but also in communities worldwide”.

“If the research work of tackling these two infectious diseases—including for the most vulnerable—is stalled, we risk losing hard-won progress. These cuts are especially devastating since they come at a time when funding for TB and HIV programming has also been reduced.”

Dr Githinji Gitahi, Group CEO at Amref Health Africa, a Kenya-based health NGO, explains that there has been progress due to investment in treatment and prevention but education is still necessary, especially among the younger generation on the continent.

“Mobility on HIV has reduced. Death from HIV/AIDS has reduced. We still have the same number; we have a new problem that's arising and that is the adolescent problem, where we are seeing more and more new infections in younger people,” he tells FORBES AFRICA.

“I would say that more than 40% of new infections, in most of the countries, would be from people between 19- and 24-years [old]—that's a new problem that we have to deal with, because the education and security, education and prevention message got lost.”

HIV research is especially critical, Dr Gitahi emphasizes, as it's classified as a treatable chronic disease yet treatment costs are high, with estimates that development assistance provides about \$2,000 per person per year for treatment and care. This becomes especially costly in a country like South Africa with an estimated eight million people with HIV.

While the importance of research funding cannot be over-emphasized, he believes it cannot come from government alone as biomedical research for products is usually driven by

economic incentives.

“[These] incentives are only afforded by those who have an interest in the success of their research in terms of economic viability and return on investment. Now, governments in Africa cannot afford to fund their own pharmaceuticals—[it's] billions of dollars to finance the areas of the interest.”

South African epidemiologist, Professor Quarraisha Abdool Karim agrees that research is a big investment but emphasizes to FORBES AFRICA that there are ways for governments to invest and get involved, perhaps through education and ensuring that the correct infrastructure is in place.

“Skilled personnel not only benefit industry and the private sector, [they] also benefit the world. We export talent and don't talk about how our skilled personnel from the Global South, from Africa, are actually staffing hospitals, clinics and schools outside [the country],” says Karim, who is also a co-founder and Associate Scientific Director at CAPRISA.

“It's an asset that we don't get credit for; that we're training people who go to other countries. We should be getting returns and reinvesting in that. This perception that Africa is a big begging bowl is absolutely not true. It may have been true at some point, but that perception and the perpetuation of that myth needs to be fixed.”

Professor Ndung'u believes that the socio-economic development of Africa is something that has been well articulated at various bodies and the continent needs to encourage science-based economic development.

“We, at the African Health Research Institute, are doing cutting edge research that could lead to new products, could lead to new drugs, as we have demonstrated in our HIV cure work. The future belongs to young people, and if we don't train [them] with the skills that they need for the future, we'll be failing in our efforts to combat diseases and improved health will not be sustainable.”

He adds that the best approach would be to do cutting edge science to innovate and develop new products on the one hand, and to develop a critical mass of investigators who are highly skilled, and who can take the continent into the future, on the other.


“...new technologies, including, for example, computational biology as well as artificial intelligence; all these are skills that are needed on the African continent in order for us to become not just consumers of products, but actually to become people who can come up with innovations,” he says.

This would also push the continent to take charge of its future, while minimizing a heavy reliance on external funding and an ever-changing political landscape.

It was in January, just after U.S. President Donald Trump took office that the global health sphere began to shift. He initiated the process to withdraw the country from the WHO and issued a stop-order, pending a 90-day review, of all USAID programs.

Professor Karim notes that co-operation and relations between countries take a fair amount of time to establish; therefore, the suddenness of the cuts in funding and subsequent termination of several programs, will have an impact on reestablishing those relationships.

In terms of mitigation plans for the funding cuts, she adds that they have to come from within the continent rather than from outside it: “We can't be bullied into making decisions that will cost us many generations. This is where science [is of] importance, and how governments recognize it, how the private sector recognizes it, how society recognizes it”.

“We all need to be working together in terms of supporting the decisions that need to be made.” 

“SEEING MORE AND MORE NEW INFECTIONS IN YOUNGER PEOPLE”

Transforming Global Markets And Shaping A Legacy

DESPITE MARKET VOLATILITY AND CHANGES IN THE DIGITAL FINANCIAL SPHERE, ATFX CONTINUES TO DELIVER BY LEADING A GLOBAL TRADING REVOLUTION AND SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES.



ATFX Management and the representative of The Duke of Edinburgh Cup celebrate the hosting of the tournament's 2025 South Africa Qualifier

A TFX has cemented itself as a global powerhouse within the broker industry. Since its launch in 2017, the company has worked to lead the fintech revolution, globally, and ignite a financial transformation across the African continent.

Global Operations

ATFX holds regulatory licenses in major financial centers, including the U.K., South Africa, Australia, the United Arab Emirates, and Hong Kong.

These licenses have positioned ATFX as a globally trusted fintech broker, and it also demonstrates the company's commitment to compliance and client protection.

"Similar to our vision, 'Illuminate the Future Spectrum', of which the color spectrum is made up of distinct wavelengths working in harmony, our expanding licenses are unified by one clear goal: to shape the future of trading," explains Joe Li, Chairman of ATFX Group.

Worldwide Footprint

As a world-renowned trading institution, ATFX has prioritized expansion into several regions.

"In Latin America, changing economies drive interest in forex and CFDs [Contracts For Difference]. Southeast Asia's youth-led digital evolution presents incredible potential, while South Africa and broader African markets offer unmatched opportunity due to dynamic economic development," says Li.

Adapting Global Frameworks to African Realities

Meanwhile, ATFX Africa has emerged as a standout force, and was recognized as Africa's best and most trusted broker.

"If we add up the entirety of 2024, we were probably over \$2 trillion in trade volume, and ranked in the top five globally in terms of volume traded," shares Linton White, Regional Head of ATFX Africa.

Regarding the mechanisms behind the institutional growth and expansion across the continent, ATFX Connect, the institutional arm of ATFX, a licensed Over-the-Counter Derivative Provider (ODP) in South Africa, is bridging the gap between local institutions and global markets.

Speaking on the company's plans for expansion, White highlights that successful expansion requires local insight.

He adds that before expanding into new regions, ATFX conducts extensive needs analyses, ensuring that every move is tailored to local demands and regulatory conditions.

Now, ATFX Africa features a wide spectrum of trading instruments that include foreign exchange, indices, commodities, shares, Exchange Traded Funds (ETFs), CFDs, and most recently, cryptocurrencies.

Digital Evolution

Technology is at the core of ATFX's growth strategy, with Li acknowledging the pivotal role that it plays in shaping and enhancing the client experience at ATFX.

"In a digital-first world, we understand that our clients expect speed, security, and seamless access to financial markets."

Supporting The Youth

While ATFX is redefining the world of prestigious trading, it's also committed to community growth and education.

ATFX Africa's growth strategy now includes a soon-to-be rolled out fully-accredited platform offering beginner to advanced trading courses.

"This will be a trusted, supportive environment where people can really learn how to trade," says Li.

Also, as the main global sponsor of The Duke of Edinburgh Cup for the past eight years, ATFX has worked to bring the prestigious event back to South Africa, after a hiatus.

"Through this partnership, and with the President's Award, we're uplifting students, particularly from disadvantaged communities" says White.

The Core Principles Shaping ATFX's Future and Legacy

ATFX is not just focused on transforming how people trade, but the importance of building and cementing legacies beyond cheques and balances.

At the heart of this journey, especially in 2025, are core principles that define ATFX's culture: Stay Hungry (for continuous growth and innovation), Stay Humble (learn, adapt and collaborate with purpose), and Stay Full-Hearted (hold an unwavering passion for excellence and positive impact).

"We don't just aim to follow the future—we aim to shape it, illuminate it, and leave a meaningful footprint across every market we serve," says Li.

With a clear vision, a global footprint, a regulated reputation, dedicated community engagement and advancements in technology, ATFX is illuminating the path forward, both on the African continent and beyond.

GAME ON

By
Oluwatomisin Amokeoja



luwole

Oside was barely 10 when he spent the night at a friend's house for the first time.

The plan was simple: play a little **PlayStation**, then sleep. The game was *Winning Eleven*, the football classic that once ruled African living rooms. They never slept.

"I stayed up all night," Oside recalls to FORBES AFRICA. "That was the night I became a gamer."

Two decades later, the Nigerian car dealer, now popularly known as Khoded, would break the Guinness World Record for the longest video game marathon on a football game: 75 hours on the mobile game *Dream League Soccer 2023*.

But beyond the record, his journey mirrors a larger narrative—Nigeria's emergence as the beating heart of mobile gaming in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA).

For most of his childhood, Oside didn't have access to consoles or smartphones. Gaming was a luxury. He only played when he visited friends. It wasn't until 2015, when he was admitted to Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU) in southwestern Nigeria, that he got his first Android phone. Low-end, underpowered, but to him, it was freedom.

"I downloaded everything I could," he says. "*Call of Duty*, *FIFA*, whatever. But my phone couldn't handle it, so I stuck with lighter games."

That taught him patience. By 2021, while studying Biochemistry at Federal University Oye Ekiti (FUOYE), also in southwestern Nigeria, he began to see gaming differently.

"I realized I could sit for hours playing games without getting tired. I mean three, four, five days straight. And I was still okay. That's when I started thinking of gaming as more than just fun. It felt like a gift."

The more he played, the more he saw gaming as something profound. A form of resilience. A coping mechanism. A career path.

He started networking with fellow gamers. Gaming lounges, WhatsApp groups, X (formerly Twitter) threads. He discovered that what he once considered a personal obsession was shared by millions of Nigerians.

Then came the idea: What if he made history with it? In late 2021, Oside applied to the Guinness World Re-

WITH \$300 MILLION IN REVENUE AND A GENERATION PLAYING TO WIN, NIGERIA IS LEADING SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA'S MOBILE GAMING REVOLUTION—POWERED BY SMARTPHONES, STORIES, AND AMBITION.



cards. The proposal: break the longest video game marathon playing a football game. It was rejected.

“It didn’t stop me,” he says. “If anything, it made me more determined.”

He returned to *Dream League Soccer*, a game he’d first played in 2016 before losing access due to a broken phone. It had evolved. Better graphics. More immersive gameplay. And something in him clicked.

When he reapplied in 2023, he came with a mission: raise funds for a local hospital in his Ijebu Ode community of Ogun State close to the commercial capital Lagos, through his marathon gaming. He played over 500 matches, connecting his iPhone to a TV screen, and clocked in 75 hours.

He didn’t just break the record. He shattered it doing something different from all seven previous record holders who played either



“THE MOBILE GAMES STARTED TRENDING ABOUT TWO, THREE YEARS AGO, COMPARED TO THE TIMES OF PLAYING GAMES FROM THE CONSOLES.”

—Oluwole Oside



the console games. That is the truth about it, but the prices of these consoles are kind of exorbitant as of now. So not everybody can afford console games. Even myself, I can’t afford console games at this time. I can’t because the prices are way outrageous for me. So that’s why I stick to my mobile games.”

FIFA or *Pro Evolution Soccer* during their attempts.

The previous mark was 50 hours, set by Englishman David Whitefoot in 2022. Oside surpassed it by 25 full hours. No one had ever gone that far beyond the record.

It wasn’t just a feat. It was a signal: Nigeria had arrived on the global gaming map.

Market Moves

In 2024, Nigeria’s gaming industry generated \$300 million, according to games publisher Carry1st—driven almost entirely by mobile games. South Africa followed closely with \$278 million. The figures are significant, not just because of their size, but because of what they represent: a massive shift in digital consumption.

“I’m not surprised,” says Oside. “Smartphones are easier to get than consoles. And mobile internet is improving. Another factor to consider is the popularity of mobile games. The mobile games started trending about two, three years ago, compared to the times of playing games from the consoles. People would have preferred playing

Mobile gaming, according to Carry1st, made up 89% of all gaming revenue in Africa last year. The continent recorded \$1.8 billion in 2024 alone, outpacing global gaming growth sixfold.

“*Call of Duty Mobile*, *PUBG*, and *Delta Force* are very popular here,” Umar Imran, a veteran gamer in Lagos with over two decades of experience, says to FORBES AFRICA. “These games are favored for their combination of relaxation, competitive gameplay, and engaging mechanics. Generally, Nigerian gamers tend to prefer online multiplayer games due to the opportunity to interact and connect with new people on a daily basis.”

These games offer not just entertainment but community. Online clans, leaderboards, and real-time competitions have created virtual societies that transcend geography.

You can be in Lagos and play against someone in Cape Town or Karachi. That’s the thrill for gamers like Imran.

In 2023 alone, 14.7 million mobile gamers in Nigeria spent \$229.7 million, according to games data platform Newzoo. That number is expected to grow exponentially with the rollout of 5G across the West African nation’s major cities like Lagos, Abuja, and Port Harcourt.

The access is key for many young Nigerians. Data is cheaper. Phones are smarter. Games are lighter. It all adds up.

The rise of budget-friendly smartphones and localized data plans has opened the floodgates to a new generation of gamers who are digitally native and socially connected.

Culture, Creators, And The Next Afrobeats

Yet, there’s an irony to this booming scene: most of the games Nigerians love are made elsewhere.

“Local preferences, like Nigerians’ love for football, inspire some tailored content, but global trends and limited local development resources mean most games follow international styles, with few incorporating Nigerian culture or themes,” Tobias Obioma, another Nigerian gamer, explains to FORBES AFRICA.

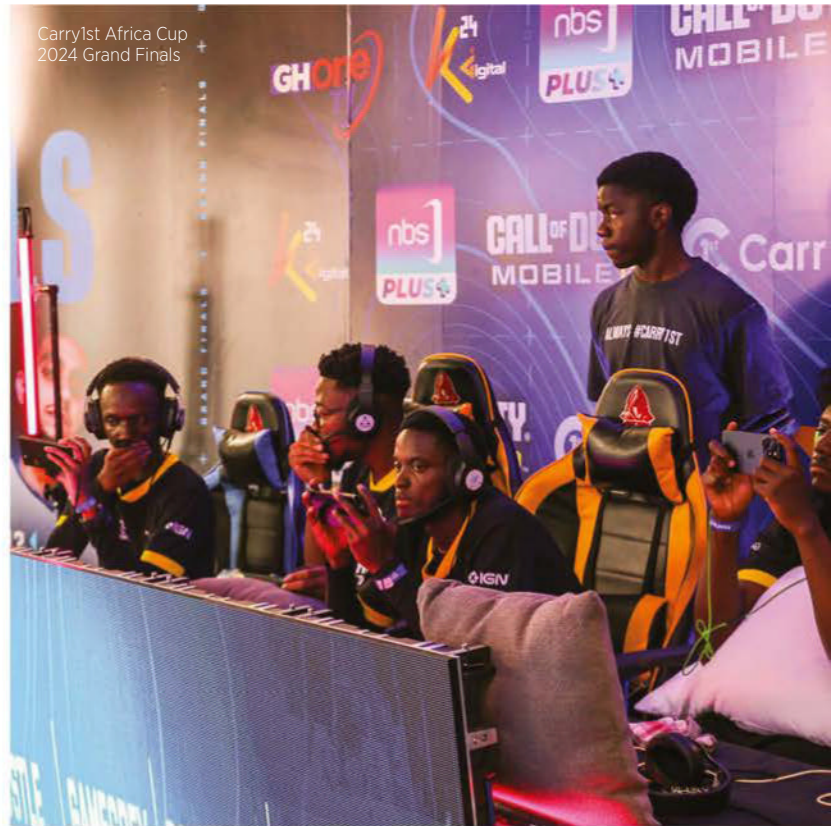
Obioma was part of the generation that transitioned from offline to online gaming in the early 2010s. Games like *Clash of Clans* and *Brawl Stars* introduced real-time global interaction. For him, it was thrilling—and transformative.

He typically discovers new mobile games by browsing the game sections of app stores like Google Play or the App Store, or through social media hype on platforms like X (formerly Twitter), where trending games gain attention.

“My decision to download and play is influenced by my preference for genres like FPS or football games, the game’s stability (minimal bugs), and its uniqueness in gameplay or story. I’m also more likely to try games developed by Nigerian companies, even if they’re outside my usual preference, to support local talent,” he says.

Enter Maliyo Games, founded by Hugo Obi. Known for titles like *Whot King*, *Safari City*, and *Crazy Ludo*, the studio is redefining what it means to be African and a gamer.

“We are optimizing our games to monetize local players and monetize players wherever they are, whether they



“THE GAMES INDUSTRY IS THE NEXT AFROBEATS.”

—Hugo Obi

are local or international,” Obi tells FORBES AFRICA. “We definitely have a good cohort of players who are abroad. But our focus is to really optimize and monetize players who are local.”

Maliyo Games has already attracted over 300,000 users, with ambitions to cross one million by 2025. Their focus is not just on Nigeria but the entire continent—and beyond.

Obi thinks “the games industry is the next Afrobeats”, a cultural export the world can’t ignore.

“We have a diverse range of players. *Whot King* for instance, a significant percent of the players are Nigerians. Our game, *Crazy Ludo*, majority of the players are from India, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia. And our games, *Safari City*, is mixed between Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, and South Africa,” says Obi.

Their upcoming App Store feature will include all three of their flagship titles. If successful, it could open doors for dozens of other African developers.

Niger, from Nigeria’s neck of the woods, is one of the fastest-growing countries in gaming revenue, based on 2024 forecasts by Carry1st.

“As long as the population continues to grow, as long as more people come into the digital space, there is huge growth opportunities in the future. More gamers, more engagement, more content,” Obi submits.

Pan-African platform Carry1st helps gamers buy in-app items using local bank cards. Studios like Dash thrive on ad revenue and freemium models.

Cultivating A Culture Of Reliability In East Africa's Insurance Industry

Ashok Shah, Group CEO of Apollo Investments Limited, the parent company of APA Insurance, speaks on the group's ESG frameworks, the role of technology in the industry and key advice for future generations.



Ashok Shah,
Group CEO
of Apollo
Investments
Limited

Q. Which of the company's products are especially notable in terms of wealth management and family offices?

A. At Apollo Asset Management, we recognize that UHNWI [ultra-high net worth individuals] need more than standard investment options, they require personalized, strategic solutions to protect, grow, and seamlessly transfer wealth across generations.

For this discerning segment, we offer tailored wealth management services including discretionary portfolio management, bespoke investment advisory, and structured products aligned with each client's unique risk profile, long-term objectives, and global outlook. Many of our clients entrust us with managing multi-asset portfolios spanning local and international markets.

We create further value through our wealth builder solutions and help secure a dignified retirement through expertly-designed income drawdown plans.

Q. Your journey in the insurance industry spans over 40 years of transformative leadership. Briefly take us through why APA has now become one of the most respected companies in East Africa.

A. Over the past four decades, my journey in the insurance industry has been guided by a simple principle: put people first, and the rest will follow.

APA Apollo, is one of the most respected financial services Group in East Africa, as the result of trailblazer leadership, strong ethical foundation, and commitment to innovation and customer-centricity.

Insurance is not just about policies; it is about people. By investing in our teams, building trust with our clients, and leading industry conversations, we have created a culture of reliability and responsiveness. We have embraced digital transformation, expanded our product offerings, and built strategic partnerships across the region.

Most importantly, we listen. We have worked closely with our clients, regulators, and partners to co-create solutions that address real needs, whether in health, life, micro insurance and investments. This spirit of collaboration, combined with our unwavering commitment to insuring happiness, is what makes the group stand out.

Q. What market share does APA control in Kenya and East Africa, to the best of your knowledge?

A. In Kenya, it's 8.07% as per the AKI Report from December 31, 2023.

Q. What is Apollo Group's market capitalization?

A. Apollo Investments net asset value of KES 16.5 billion [\$127.6 million] as at December 31, 2024.

Q. What advice would you give to the emerging group of millionaires?

A. To the rising millionaires, you represent a powerful new wave of leadership and entrepreneurship in Africa. As you grow your wealth and influence, three values will define your legacy: commitment, integrity, and innovation.

At APA, we recognize your potential and are ready to walk the journey with you, offering strategic financial solutions to protect and grow your wealth and protect your treasured family and assets by providing adequate cover to keep you safe from the vagaries of life.

The choices you make today will shape industries and inspire the next generation.

Q. Have you adopted an ESG framework for the group?

A. We strongly believe that responsible, sustainable development that balances environmental, social, and economic (ESG) considerations generates beneficial, long-lasting benefits for communities, minimizes the impact on the environment and adds value for all of our stakeholders.

Across the group, ESG plays a crucial role in how we make decisions, manage risk and create value.

Q. Has tech had any impact in the insurance business?

A. Technology, especially AI, healthcare tech, and business automation, has had a significant impact on the insurance industry. At APA Apollo, we have embraced these advancements to enhance how we serve our clients.

AI is helping us better understand customer behavior, streamline underwriting, and detect fraud more efficiently. In healthcare, tech integrations with hospitals and digital health platforms allow for faster claims processing and improved customer experience. Business automation has enabled us to reduce turnaround times, cut down on paperwork, and offer seamless self-service options through apps and portals.





THE WEST PAYS FOR GAMES. WE PAY WITH TIME AND ATTENTION.”

—John Ikpeme



“The West pays for games. We pay with time and attention,” says John Ikpeme, Dash Studio’s co-founder, to FORBES AFRICA.

Ikpeme explains there’s not a lot of funding opportunities for the industry except grants and angel investors. Gamers in the U.S. and Canada tend to engage in paid games while ads come from Africa and for Africans.

Yet the freemium model has its downsides. Obtrusive ads. Crashes. Frustration.

“There are some games that even before downloading, you will be discouraged by the reviews which are usually accurate. You try downloading a game and you see ‘please don’t download’ in the review section because it runs ads that can crash your phone as there are too many popping up one after the other, ruining the gaming experience,” Oside notes. “Although this is one of the reasons why the gaming community in Nigeria and in Africa basically has now developed a lot and is generating much revenue. So, I’m glad that this is even yielding better results. The revenue shows it’s working.”

For gamers like Imran, the portability of mobile gaming is the game-changer.

It’s about the power of a game in your pocket. You don’t need a TV, a console, or even a power supply all the time. You can play on the go, even in a *danfo*—the popular Lagos yellow bus.

“I have also engaged in in-game purchases, motivated by the desire to acquire exclusive skins or rewards that enhance my gaming experience. I usually find new mobile games through platforms such as TikTok and YouTube, where gameplay videos and reviews serve as important factors in my decision to download and engage with a game. High-quality graphics, favorable reviews, and compelling gameplay demonstrations heavily influence my choices,” Imran says.

Next Levels

The ecosystem is maturing. Dozens of game development studios have emerged. Public gaming lounges are opening in major cities. Government attention is increasing, with discussions of a Central Gaming Bill underway.

But challenges remain.

“There’s still a disconnect between Francophone and Anglophone Africa,” Safurat Balogun, Head of Information and Library at Goethe-Institut, says to FORBES AFRICA. “The French-speaking African countries could do better at connecting with each other.”

Goethe-Institut is, through its initiative, GamesConnect AFRICA, supporting festivals, events and Game Jams all over the continent this year, according to Balogun.

“We will be at Lagos Games Week in June for example. Together with Spiel-Fabrique, a trusted expert in the gaming industry, we have invited gaming studios to apply for a mentorship program. These are all the ways we are trying to close the existing gap,” she explains.



The industry, she notes, must look beyond just eSports and casual mobile players. However, she sees opportunities rising with governments noticing and beginning investing in the industry.

While Eritrea joined Niger as the fastest-growing country in gaming revenue, Equatorial Guinea and Seychelles were the slowest-growing last year.

Still, much more is needed.

“We need gaming professionals to lead gaming discussions,” says Oside. “Not Nollywood directors at gaming summits.”

“We need funding. Training. Exposure. But we also need a mindset shift. Gaming isn’t just a hobby. It’s an industry.”

The competition is intensifying. So are the stakes.

The gamers now consider a competition with global giants, and to survive, African stories must be told, building African systems, and scaling globally.

And there is an appetite for it.

“We see huge opportunity within the mobile gaming space. And we are preparing ourselves to tap into that opportunity, whether that is making the games or supporting the next generation of people who can make these games through our training initiatives, our talent incubation, and our community events. We are also leveraging AI to accelerate the process of creating content for the games that we make,” says Obi.

When Oside picks up his phone today, it’s no longer about passing time. It’s purpose.

“I might not have a console,” he says. “But I have a mission.”

And as Nigeria leads SSA’s mobile gaming boom, that mission might just inspire the next global wave of digital entertainment—one download at a time.

Because this isn’t just about games.

It’s about a generation redefining what’s possible. 🎮

Breaking Barriers: The Journey Of An African Entrepreneur In Luxury Real Estate



Charles Quao
is the CEO of
Quao Realty

From the gardens of his childhood home to commanding the skyline of Accra, Charles Quao has built more than just a business. He has cultivated a legacy of ambition, perseverance, and transformation within Ghana's luxury real estate sector.

Born and raised in Ghana, Quao's entrepreneurial roots trace back to a family steeped in horticulture. His father, a landscaper, and his mother, a florist, nurtured his love for craftsmanship and business from an early age. This formative experience introduced him to the value of hard work and ignited his desire to build something of his own. After running Ghana's largest landscaping company for over a decade, Quao saw an opportunity to think bigger. "I wanted to show that Africans could create world-class developments. We didn't have to wait for foreign investment to do something great," he says.

In 2017, Quao Realty was founded with a simple but bold mission: deliver high-quality, investment-worthy, and globally competitive properties rooted in Ghanaian identity. The company's portfolio now spans several prime locations across Accra, with projects like The Essence, One Elm, and Manora Residence in Airport Residential, 233 Boulevard and The Autograph in Cantonments, Legacy Square in East Legon and Pristine Gardens in Sakumono, Community 14. The firm has expanded its footprint by 70% in eight years, targeting clients in Ghana and the diaspora looking for solid returns and top-tier living experiences.

For Quao, luxury is about more than polished surfaces and upscale materials. It's about delivering a seamless, end-to-end experience — from exceptional customer service to comprehensive property management — while ensuring high-quality fittings and strong returns on investment for our buyers," he explains. By drawing inspiration from global developments and merging them with local context, Quao Realty delivers properties that meet international standards while remaining uniquely Ghanaian.

But Quao's rise hasn't been without challenges. From navigating a financial environment plagued by high interest rates and limited funding options to overcoming skepticism from local institutions, he has had to push through societal and systemic barriers. "We had respected professionals tell us no one was buying real estate, but we sold out 20, then 41, 51, 94, then 200 units and the momentum keeps building up. If I had listened, none of this would have happened," he says.

Location has also played a central role in Quao Realty's strategy. "We choose sites that offer long-term value—close to hospitals, airports, business districts," he says. This attention to strategic placement maximizes both lifestyle benefits and investment returns for clients, especially those in the diaspora.

Looking ahead, Quao sees his firm developing across the continent. "In 10 years, we want to be building from Africa, for the world. We believe in African excellence—and we want the world to see it through our work."

With a foundation in family, a passion for quality, and a mindset that refuses to settle, Quao is not only building homes—he's building a new narrative for African entrepreneurship.

– By Nelly Sarpong



A CGI rendering of the upcoming Manora Residence in Airport Residential



MAMMOTH

MOGUL

Photographs John Davidson

By Amy Feldman

IT'S AN UTTERLY MAD IDEA: REVIVE THE WOOLLY MAMMOTH, THE FURRY PACHYDERM WITH THE TWISTY TUSKS THAT WENT EXTINCT 4,000 YEARS AGO. BUT IT'S ALSO BRILLIANT, WITH WIDE-RANGING IMPLICATIONS FOR CLIMATE CHANGE AND HEALTH CARE—AND IT HAS ALREADY BROUGHT TO LIFE THE WORLD'S FIRST DE-EXTINCTION BILLIONAIRE, BEN LAMM.

A

At first glance, the pair of cute rodents look a little like hamsters who have shaken their golden-hued fur up, like a wet dog, into a puffy ball. But then you notice the distinctive ears and tail and realize that this isn't an animal you've ever seen before. In fact, it's not an animal *anyone* has ever seen before. These are woolly mice, genetically engineered creatures created in the Dallas labs of Colossal Biosciences that were designed to display some of the key characteristics of another animal no human in thousands of years has seen: the woolly mammoth.

Colossal was started in 2021 by serial entrepreneur Ben Lamm, a 43-year-old Texan who has dabbled in a variety of industries including video games and e-learning, and the legendary Harvard geneticist George Church. The company describes itself as being in the “de-extinction” business. That means using ancient DNA and Crispr gene editing techniques to try to bring back extinct fauna like the woolly mammoth, the dodo and the Tasmanian tiger. But those efforts are mostly about exciting investors and grabbing headlines. More immediate to Colossal's business model is using similar techniques to save some of the thousands of species, many with potential environmental or conservation value, that could be wiped out by humanity. More than 46,000 species are currently listed as critically endangered.

In January, Colossal closed a \$200 million fundraiser at a \$10.2 billion valuation. That brings its total raised to \$435 million from bluechip investors including Breyer Capital, Draper Associates and TWG Global. While Colossal does not yet have revenue, it has already spun out two additional startups: computational biology platform Form Bio (in 2022) and biological recycling company Breaking (2024). The most recent round makes Lamm,

who is CEO, worth an estimated \$3.7 billion. Church, 70, does not have an equity stake in Colossal. “The fact that I’m not a billionaire is almost as interesting as Ben being one,” says Church, adding, “If I had a billion dollars, I would just spend it on this.”

For Church, who is best known for developing the first genomic sequencing method in 1984 but who also has cofounded some 50 biotech companies, the woolly mouse is a proof of concept that has been a long time coming. He’s been working on sequencing the mammoth’s genome for nearly two decades, though his obsession started far earlier. “Like most kids I had an affection for big furry things,” he says. “I was part of the generation that read *Jurassic Park*.”

The work started with digging up the remains of woolly mammoths from the Arctic permafrost. Church and his researchers then compared their DNA with that of a close living relative, the Asian elephant, with the goal of bringing a mammoth-elephant hybrid to life. They’re hoping for a calf by 2028. The woolly mice were created to help Colossal’s scientists test the connections between certain DNA sequences and specific mammoth traits like size, shaggy fur and an accelerated metabolism good for very cold climates.

Lamm is filled with ideas for how the science the company is developing could underpin a thriving business, including income streams from governments that want either to reintroduce extinct species or prevent endangered ones from dying off. Governments have long paid for conservation efforts, but budgeting for this type of cutting-edge, controversial science is new. “If you would have told me at the beginning of 2024 that governments would pay me to do these things, I would’ve said, ‘probably not.’ Now we are seeing that change,” he says.

Colossal is currently “deep in conversations” with two governments, one of them an island nation, about such biodiversity contracts, Lamm says. It does not have any signed agreements yet. “For us, it’s pretty cool because the pursuit of de-extinction creates technology that we can monetize,” he adds. “The reintroduction of animals back into their habitats creates the potential for annuities in carbon credits, nature credits and tourism taxes.”

Biodiversity credits are novel financial instruments designed to incentivize the protection and restoration of natural environments, in similar fashion to how carbon credits are supposed to reduce pollution. Colossal could potentially make money off these nascent markets and perhaps even snag a cut of tourism taxes from the countries it works with.

One of the governments Colossal is talking with (which Lamm declined to identify because of the sensitive nature of the discussions) is focused on saving a creature that’s on the brink of extinction, with the potential to throw an entire ecosystem out of whack. Lamm says a shortage of females and problems with the tim-

Extinction Extinguisher

“The problem we face is habitats around the planet are changing at a rate faster than evolution can keep up,” says Colossal chief science officer Beth Shapiro.



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**THE
REINTRODUCTION
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TAXES.”**

ing of the seasonal breeding cycle have created a bottleneck. The government’s efforts to breed traditionally could take 25 years and cost \$350 million, and the species might still die off.

Colossal is instead proposing to genetically engineer the females to induce them to breed continuously instead of seasonally, short-circuiting the process. “Even if we were to charge them \$100 million for that, the results would be that they’re saving the species, guaranteed, and we’re shaving 20 years off their plan and saving them hundreds of millions of dollars,” Lamm says.

That’s an unconventional approach that raises ethical questions. “Releasing genetically modified organisms into the environment—what could go wrong?” says Karl Flessa, a professor of geosciences at the University of Arizona. He’s deeply skeptical of Colossal’s mammoth moonshot, calling it “ill-advised, ill-thought-through and a stunt to attract investments in their company,” adding, “Releasing what is ostensibly a cold-adapted species in the face of climate change, where the habitat they are releasing it into is vanishing, there’s an ethical question there.”

Beth Shapiro, Colossal’s chief science officer, acknowledges the risks, but points out that enormous problems sometimes require radical solutions: “This is new money, new people and new ideas into a space that desperately needs it.” 🐘

McDonald's South Africa On Powering Youth Potential Through Opportunity



Daniel Padiachy,
Chief Marketing and
Supply Chain Officer
at McDonald's South
Africa

As McDonald's South Africa celebrates its 30th anniversary, one of the most defining aspects of its legacy shines through clearly, its unwavering commitment to youth empowerment. With 72% of its workforce made up of young South Africans, McDonald's continues to serve not just meals, but meaningful career paths, skills development, and life-changing opportunities.

This commitment is deeply embedded in the company's DNA. Through robust graduate programs, bursaries, and its longstanding partnership with CATHSSETA (Culture, Arts, Tourism, Hospitality and Sport Sector Education and Training Authority), McDonald's has helped thousands of young people across the country gain valuable qualifications, workplace experience, and mentorship.

"At McDonald's, we don't just talk about youth development—we live it," says Daniel Padiachy, Chief Marketing and Supply Chain Officer at McDonald's South Africa. "We believe in building a business that grows people. Every crew member, intern, and graduate that walks through our doors is a future leader in the making."

These words ring true in the stories of employees like Collen Masina, who joined McDonald's as a part-time crew member while studying hospitality. With support from the company's bursary program, Masina has now risen through the ranks. Today, he manages one of the busiest McDonald's regions in the Eastern Cape as the area manager. "McDonald's believed in me when I was just a student looking for a job. They saw potential in me before I did and that changed my life," he reflects.

Then there's Frans Mahlaba, who entered the business through the CATHSSETA Youth Employment Service initiative. Initially hired as a front counter assistant, Mahlaba quickly distinguished himself as a quick learner with leadership potential. Thanks to ongoing mentorship and McDonald's structured training programs. "They didn't just give me a job; they

gave me a roadmap to a future I never imagined possible," says Mahlaba.

Over the years, McDonald's South Africa has awarded a number of bursaries, supported hundreds of internships, and helped countless young people gain accredited training that aligns with the national drive to combat youth unemployment.

Another shining example is Lerato Masalesa who joined the corporate internship program straight out of university. She worked alongside the marketing and communications team and now holds a permanent role in the Corporate Brand Impact and Reputation management department.

"McDonald's gave me a seat at the table from day one. They allowed me to share ideas, learn on the job, and grow with confidence," Masalesa explains.

For many, the journey with McDonald's starts on the floor, but it doesn't stop there. The business is structured to recognize talent early and offer career pathways, not just paycheques. Owner-Operators like Saheed and Sayeeda Nasir, who themselves started as crew, have championed internal development and created environments where growth is possible for every young person.

"When we hire youth, we're not just filling shifts, we're building futures," says Padiachy. "We've seen time and again how that first role at McDonald's becomes the foundation for something bigger, whether that's management, entrepreneurship, or leadership in another sector."

As McDonald's South Africa marks this 30-year milestone, its focus remains on people—especially the young people who carry the future of the country on their shoulders. With continued investment in education, training, and leadership development, McDonald's is proud to be more than just a first job—it's a place where dreams take root.

"Our youth majority workforce is not a statistic—it's our purpose in action," concludes Padiachy. "We're not just making burgers; we're making an impact that will last another 30 years and beyond."



With continued investment in education, training, and leadership development, McDonald's is proud to be more than just a first job for its people—it's a place where dreams take root.

RESOURCES

RICH

FROM COPPER TO COBALT, THE CONTINENT IS RICH IN THE RAW MATERIALS THE WORLD NEEDS FOR CLEAN ENERGY AND TECHNOLOGY. BUT CAN IT STOP EXPORTING VALUE AND START OWNING THE FUTURE?



By Tiana Cline

W

What do fireworks, medical implants and solar panels have in common? It might sound like the start of a joke, but the answer is actually copper, a critical mineral globally that's quietly essential to everything from surgical-grade wiring and electric circuits to renewable energy infrastructure and explosive pyrotechnics. And, more importantly, a great deal of it comes from Africa.

From Zambia's copper belts to the Democratic Republic of the Congo's (DRC) cobalt reserves, from Mozambique's graphite to Zimbabwe's lithium, Africa holds the building blocks of the clean energy transition. "Almost each and every country in Africa does have some endowment that is quite significant," says Professor Glen Nwaila, the Director of the African Research Centre for Ore Systems Science at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa. Nwaila works within the discipline of geomaterials—a combination of geology, metallurgy and machine learning (ML). But having minerals doesn't mean holding power. Africa might be a significant producer, but it is not yet a strategic player. The continent is largely boxed into the upstream: digging, drilling, exporting. The downstream—refining, processing and value creation—happens elsewhere.

POOR RETURNS

RETURNS



A mine in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Steel balls and circular logic

And then there are the steel balls. Used in every mineral processing plant, these heavy-duty spheres are vital for crushing and milling ore. Across the continent, from Mali to South Africa, mining operations rely on them daily. And even though South Africa is the continent's largest and most industrialized iron ore producer, most steel balls are imported from India. "We don't even buy them from South Africa," says Nwaila. "We buy them in bulk from India because it's cheaper. But what are we losing in the process? Skills. Jobs. A side-stream economy?"

But it's not just steel balls. It's also roof bolts, the support systems used to stabilize mine shafts. Once manufactured in countries like South Africa and Botswana, they're now imported from China. And then there is copper wiring. Nwaila says that even though there is a major Ghanaian company that manufactures electrical cable, it buys its raw copper from Belgium... but Belgium sources its copper from Zambia and the DRC. "Same continent. Same commodity. But the infrastructure doesn't support cross-border trade. We're buying back our own resources at a premium." But as the global demand for clean energy intensifies, these contradictions are becoming harder to ignore. The urgency to decarbonize—something the World Economic Forum has suggested is the main solution for climate stabilization—has turned lithium, cobalt, graphite, nickel and rare earth elements into critical enablers of green technology. They're essential for batteries, solar panels, electric vehicles and the broader clean energy transition. But for many African countries, the rush risks repeating history. The critical minerals may leave the continent, but the real value (the processing, the profits, the power) stays behind.

Local ambitions, global barriers

Later this year, South Africa will host the G20 for the first time and green minerals will be high on the agenda. One of the country's big diplomatic talking points is local processing. Not just exporting raw materials but refining them, capturing more value and building industries around them. On paper, it sounds like a shift. In reality, the barriers haven't budged and Nwaila has seen it all before. "It's not just about digging minerals out of the ground. It's about what happens after," he explains. "Right now, the value chain moves away from us. The benefits move away from us. That's what we need to change." For that to happen, political will isn't enough. The continent needs infrastructure, coordination and investment—but not the kind that just drills deeper or extracts faster. "The biggest benefit for countries in terms of sustainability is within the context of Africa," says Nwaila. "We need to start realizing side-stream economies."

But building supporting industries is only part of the story. The other question, Nwaila asks, is how much countries actually earn from what is already being mined. "Royalties for critical minerals are often set at five to eight percent," he explains. "But ask anyone, where did that number come from? And where does the money go?"

For many host communities, the answer is nowhere. Mines close and towns collapse. The so-called green revolution passes them by. But Nwaila says it does not have to be this way. Royalties can be structured to fund education, health and future-focused industries like battery manufacturing, clean tech logistics or agricultural innovation. That takes governance, transparency and a long view, three things often in short supply.

The side-stream solution

The term Nwaila uses again and again is ‘side-stream economies’. Not downstream or full-scale manufacturing but the pieces in between like steel balls, bolts, wires and sensors. These are things Africa already has the capacity to produce or could, with the right support. “We keep talking about refining and value addition,” he says, “but there is also a huge opportunity in the industries that feed mining. And those industries can outlast the mines themselves.” This, he argues, is what Africa has rarely done. Use a resource boom to build something more permanent, with training programs, stable employment and technical skills that continue to serve communities long after the minerals are gone. “This is our moment to negotiate long-term contracts,” adds Nwaila. “To think about what else we can build, what else we can sell. If we do not, we will be left with the hole in the ground. Again.”

The paradox is glaring. The world wants to go green, and Africa has the critical minerals to make that happen. But without a shift in how the continent participates, the clean energy boom could end up looking a lot like the fossil fuel one: extractive, externally driven and short-lived. “What has happened in the last hundred years is that whenever a commodity runs out, the mine shuts down, and the community becomes a ghost town,” says Nwaila. “The only way to change that is to build industries that outlast the mine itself.” Africa holds more than 40% of the world’s cobalt, manganese and platinum—minerals used in everything from batteries to solar panels, according to the United Nations Environment Programme. So Nwaila’s overarching question is this: will the continent just supply the transition, or will it shape it? “Almost every industry depends on mining,” says Nwaila. “It contributes less than five percent to GDP in most countries, but its products drive over 90 percent of the economy. The value is there. We just have to decide who benefits from it.” 📌



“ALMOST EACH AND EVERY COUNTRY IN AFRICA HAS SOME ENDOWMENT THAT IS QUITE SIGNIFICANT.”

— Prof. Glen Nwaila



Graphite ore

THE CONTINENTAL INVENTORY

Africa is not short on critical minerals. Countries like Mozambique and Tanzania are among the world’s leading producers of graphite, second only to China. Zimbabwe, long overlooked, is now considered a key player in the global lithium supply chain. Nigeria, Angola and Namibia hold deposits of tin, tantalum and rare earths—minerals that make up electronics and clean energy applications.

Eritrea is ramping up investment in zinc, from which the lesser-known germanium is extracted as a by-product. Copper, the cornerstone of electrification, continues to define Zambia and the DRC, but is also seeing a resurgence in Botswana. “For years, people ignored places like Mozambique because graphite wasn’t seen as valuable,” says Nwaila. “Now it’s second only to China in terms of production.” Demand shifted. The market came calling. And yet many of these mines are run by international companies, which means the profit margins often leave with them.

Zimbabwe’s lithium is a prime example. A 2022 ban on the export of unprocessed lithium was meant to change the equation, keeping more of the value onshore. But in practice, enforcement is inconsistent and loopholes remain. “It’s not just about banning exports,” adds Nwaila. “You have to build the infrastructure and the ecosystem that supports processing. Otherwise, nothing changes.”

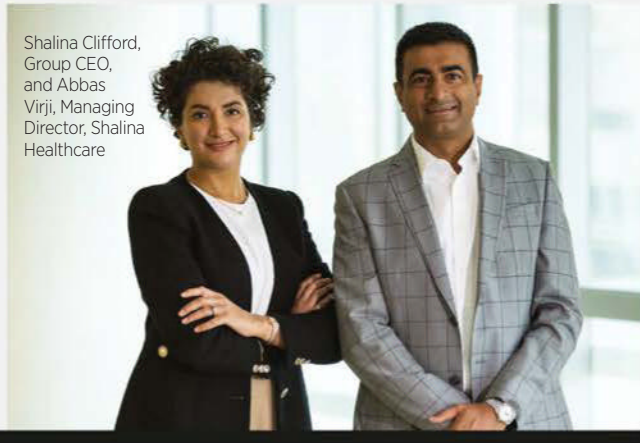
Ghana, traditionally known for its gold, is starting to draw interest for its manganese reserves—an important component in battery chemistry. “Ghana is diversifying,” Nwaila continues. “And it’s coming at the right time.”

Francistown in Botswana, once a bustling mining town, is now showing signs of recovery, with renewed exploration into copper and base metals. Meanwhile, in Eritrea, the strategic push into zinc is less about the metal itself and more about germanium (used in fiber optics and solar panels) which is extracted in small amounts during zinc refining. “We don’t mine germanium directly,” says Nwaila.

“We recover it from zinc. Eritrea is investing heavily.” And lastly, there’s South Africa, still the continent’s leader when it comes to mining research and development. It has vast reserves of platinum group metals, iron ore (the same base material used to make the steel balls imported from India) and manganese, and is finally beginning to explore its potential in rare earth elements.

Empowering Sustainable And Accessible Healthcare In Africa

For four decades, Shalina Healthcare has been dedicated to addressing gaps in the system, driven by its purpose to make quality healthcare a right for all Africans.



Shalina Clifford,
Group CEO,
and Abbas
Virji, Managing
Director, Shalina
Healthcare

By investing in training healthcare professionals, expanding local manufacturing, and combating counterfeit medicines, Shalina Healthcare continues to strengthen healthcare systems on the continent and enhance patient outcomes.

But despite significant progress, challenges remain. Sub-Saharan Africa faces a critical shortage of healthcare professionals, with only 0.2 physicians per 1,000 people—well below the global average. The migration of medical professionals to higher-income countries has further strained healthcare delivery, while counterfeit medicines pose a serious threat to patient safety.

Through strategic initiatives and deep-rooted partnerships, we remain committed to addressing these gaps. By fostering local expertise and expanding access to reliable treatments, the company is shaping a healthier future for Africa—one built on trust, innovation, and lasting impact.

A Legacy Built on Three Pillars

Our long-standing commitment to Africa's health is anchored in these fundamental principles:

- **Quality:** Delivering high-quality healthcare solutions begins with rigorous sourcing. Raw materials are procured exclusively from reputable manufacturers, while all production takes place in facilities compliant with World Health Organization—Good Manufacturing Practice (WHO-GMP).
- **Affordability:** Healthcare accessibility is often dictated by cost. By managing the entire supply chain—from manufacturing to last-mile distribution—we eliminate intermediaries, enabling direct cost savings for consumers.
- **Availability:** The impact of quality and affordability is only realized when products reach those who need it the most. We ensure widespread availability by operating a robust distribution network, including company-managed depots and partnerships with local distributors in key markets.

These principles continue to shape Shalina Healthcare's efforts to expand access, strengthen healthcare systems, and build a healthier future across Africa.

A Holistic Approach to Healthcare

Strengthening Africa's healthcare ecosystem requires an integrated, patient-centric approach. We address this challenge by aligning key healthcare verticals to deliver comprehensive, accessible solutions:

- **Pharma:** A trusted provider of essential medicines, focuses on critical healthcare needs, ensuring that high-quality, affordable treatments reach communities across Africa.
- **Shalina Diagnostics:** Timely and accurate diagnosis is key to effective treatment. By advancing diagnostic technologies, we empower healthcare professionals with the tools needed for informed decision-making and better health management.
- **Consumer Health:** Beyond treatment, preventive care plays a crucial role in long-term well-being. Through a diverse portfolio of nutritional supplements and personal care products, Shalina promotes everyday wellness.

This integrated model not only enhances healthcare access but also contributes to the broader goal of building more resilient communities across Africa.

Local Manufacturing: Driving Self-Sufficiency

A strong local manufacturing base is essential for sustainable healthcare development in Africa. Recognizing this, Shalina Healthcare has expanded its production capabilities across the continent to reduce supply chain disruptions and improve access to essential medicines.

Key facilities—such as the Nigeria Manufacturing Plant and the Angola Soap Factory—are central to this effort. Through these, Shalina not only strengthens healthcare delivery but also creates jobs, develops local expertise, and stimulates economic growth.

Beyond the Pill Initiatives

Sustainable healthcare progress depends on education, innovation, and responsible medical practices. We actively drive these efforts through targeted initiatives that empower healthcare professionals and enhance patient outcomes.

- **Shalina Medspace** provides a digital platform for continuous medical education, equipping practitioners with the latest advancements to improve patient care.
- **Shalina Rising Star & Shalina Young Talent Awards (SYTA)** nurture emerging healthcare leaders, fostering innovation and excellence in the medical and pharmacy sector.
- **Antibiotic Stewardship Program** promotes responsible antibiotic use, combating antimicrobial resistance to preserve the efficacy of essential treatments for future generations.

Leaving A Legacy: A Commitment to Africa's Health

As Shalina Healthcare marks 40 years of impact, it stands as a true African multinational—operating in 25 countries, with 70 sales depots, and serving millions across the continent.

Looking ahead, we remain dedicated to shaping the future of African healthcare. By strengthening local partnerships, investing in innovation, and ensuring quality healthcare remains a fundamental right for all.

THIS IS FUR REAL

By Tiana Cline



PHOTOS SUPPLIED

PET-PARENTS CAN REST EASY: THANKS TO ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE, PET TECHNOLOGY IS BEING REWIRED WITH SMART WEARABLE TOOLS AND SERVICES TAILORED TO EACH ANIMAL'S NEEDS TO UNDERSTAND AND CARE FOR THEM BETTER.

Petcube Play



D



Dottie, a well-loved Boston Terrier, was losing weight. She looked healthy, had no prior medical conditions, ate regularly and was an active dog. Her caregivers were as confused as the vet who couldn't figure out why Dottie was slowly diminishing in size. Boarding at an animal hospital, the vet decided to fit her with a smart collar. What they discovered was surprising—Dottie's vital signs were great but at night, when all the staff went home, she was incredibly active, burning a lot of calories. Her activity score was 17.2, which is high when you consider that 11 is average for a healthy dog. Luckily, the fix was easy. Dottie simply needed more food to match her boundless energy yet without a smart collar, no one would have caught the problem.

Using smart devices, we're constantly monitoring our own metrics but when it comes to our pets, it's a little different. One of the main frustrations of veterinarians (and pet owners) is that when a medical condition is picked up, it's often too late.

“TO IDENTIFY THINGS AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE—IT WILL NOT ONLY PREVENT PAIN AND SUFFERING FOR THE PET, IT’S GOING TO MAKE A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE WHEN TRYING TO TREAT THEM.”

— Dr Asaf Dagan

“You come in for an annual check-up to get shots for your dog and in the exam, something comes up. It could be cancer that's already spread or chronic kidney disease that's already destroyed half of your dog's kidney capacity... in other words, by the time we identify what is wrong with our pets, it's already very advanced,” says Dr Asaf Dagan, the Co-Founder and Chief Veterinary Scientist at PetPace, a smart collar company

with head offices in Burlington, Massachusetts, in the United States. Pets cannot tell us how they feel. In fact, their natural survival instinct is to hide pain, discomfort and weakness. But for Dagan, this wasn't enough. He wanted a way to monitor pets continuously, like they could in a hospital setting. “To identify things as early as possible—it will not only prevent pain and suffering for the pet, it's going to make a world of difference when trying to treat them,” adds Dagan. “You'll have more options and a better chance of turning things around.”

Early detection

Creating a wearable for dogs wasn't straightforward. In a vet setting, fur is shaved off and a sensor is attached. “We had to develop everything from scratch,” says Dagan. Today, PetPace's patented collar is lined with sensors that measure temperature, heart rate, respiratory rate and—like with Dottie—activity levels. “We also measure a very interesting feature

called HRV (heart rate variability) which is a measurement of pain and stress,” he says. All of these metrics are taken every two to five minutes which means PetPace is collecting an extraordinary amount of data. There is so much data that they’re using artificial intelligence to collate the information, identifying disease patterns and predicting outcomes. “It’s not just about telling you that your dog has a pulse of 72 and two minutes ago, it was 74. That would be meaningless to the average user,” continues Dagan. The idea is to analyze the data in two ways. First, to compare it to your dog’s historical and baseline levels. “Over time, we use machine learning to create a biometric profile of your pet. We know the numbers in each metric so as soon as they deviate from this, we can raise a flag that something’s not right,” he explains. The second way PetPace is using this data is by comparing your dog’s data with those of other dogs of the same age, weight and breed. Dog breeds have varying physiological characteristics. A toy poodle, for example, will have a different heart rate to a German Shepherd. Brachycephalic breeds like pugs, French bulldogs and Boston Terriers are prone to eye, skin and breathing issues.

Understanding pet behavior is something that Petcube, an American smart pet care company, has been looking into for nearly 14 years. “Back in 2012, pet tech was more of a novelty than a necessity,” says Andrey Klen, Petcube’s Co-Founder. “But things have changed. Pets aren’t just animals anymore; they are family. We want to understand pets better, care for them better, and yes, use smarter tools to do it.” What started as a way to peek in on your pet during work has grown into a holistic ecosystem of smart devices layered with intelligent algorithms. “And we use the data to power personalized tools and services tailored to each pet’s needs,” he adds. Once a simple nanny cam, Petcube now has AI-powered monitoring that is so advanced, it can pick on different behavior categories like running, chewing or crying. “These come in handy for raising alerts when something needs a pet parent’s attention,” says Klen. What’s really interesting is the data Petcube is collecting around demographics (or what Klen calls, ‘petrographics’). Looking at smart motion alerts, they’ve seen that 69% are triggered by dogs, 26% by cats, 1.8% by guinea pigs and 0.9% by rabbits. “Sure, this reflects our petrographics, distribution-wise, but it also shows that dogs tend to be more curious around the interactive cameras, especially when some of them toss treats.”

Rewriting vet tech

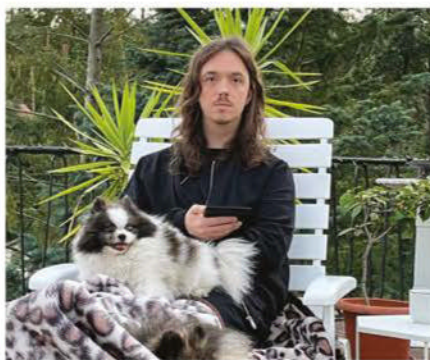
Like PetPace, Petcube too works with vets, offering services like telemedicine to access medical support when needed instead of resorting to answers on the internet. “They can start a vet chat, get a full video assessment and immedi-



ately know whether it’s an emergency or something that can be handled at home,” says Klen, who adds that quick, effective and reliable care is key when every second matters. For Klen, pet tech is a win-win because both pet parents and veterinarians can benefit from better data—data that previously impossible to obtain. PetPace, for example, is launching an epilepsy program because with their smart collar, they can identify seizures in dogs.

“It’s about getting a lot more data without having to bother the animal or your staff,” says Dagan. “And when a pet is home, you have objective, accurate data. After doing surgery and sending a pet home, instead of calling to ask how your dog is doing, I can see every moment of every day what is going on and I can set alerts if something is not right.”

But there’s another aspect of PetPace’s story that extends far beyond a smart collar and their next focus, felines—they’re actually rewriting medical textbooks. According to Dagan, the company now holds the largest biometric database in the world for pets. He tells the story of a meeting he attended with veterinary cardiologists where he shared that the pulse rate of a small dog is different from a medium and a large dog. “And they said, they had always suspected this but never had proof. They suspected it, but didn’t know it,” he continues. What these specialist vets were ultimately missing is long-term dog data, within a natural environment. They lacked the continuous, contextual insights that only come from tracking animals beyond the clinic walls. “And that’s our main effort now—to identify more and more disease patterns. There’s a lot to do, and it’s endless. We have enough work for the next 100 years!” 📌



“THESE COME IN HANDY FOR RAISING ALERTS WHEN SOMETHING NEEDS A PET PARENT’S ATTENTION!”

— Andrey Klen

Shaping the Future of Mining Through Inclusivity And Sustainability

Enaex Africa has demonstrated its commitment to driving innovation and technology, to build a future-proof African mining sector.



The Cape Town International Convention Centre played host to the 2025 Mining Indaba

Enaex Africa recently participated in the 2025 Mining Indaba, reaffirming its dedication to innovation, sustainability and efficiency in the African mining sector.

The event's theme, *Future-Proofing African Mining Today!*, highlighted the industry's crucial role in fostering a responsible and inclusive future.

A Shared Vision for Sustainability

Mining is essential for economic growth, but its long-term success depends on adopting sustainable practices. Future-proofing the sector requires innovation, resilience and ensuring Africa's growth doesn't harm its environment or communities.

Enaex Africa is driving transformation through mining practices that align with its core value of 'Humanizing Mining'. At Mining Indaba 2025, Enaex Africa showcased its leadership, driving conversations on responsible mining and promoting diversity and collaboration to shape the future of the industry.

Advancing the Mining Sector with Innovation

Enaex Africa's CEO, Francisco Baudrand, played a key role as both a panel speaker and moderator, reinforcing the company's growing influence across Africa. One notable panel, "Technology and Net-Zero: How Technology Can Enable Decarbonisation," explored the critical role that technological advancements, such as AI or IoT, will play in decarbonizing the mining industry.

Baudrand also engaged with the Minister of Mineral and Petroleum Resources, Gwede Mantashe, discussing Enaex Africa's key role in shaping the sector's future and advancing sustainable mining practices.

Driving Efficiency, Cost-Cutting and Profitability in Mining

Building on these high-level discussions, Enaex Africa, in collaboration with CNBC Africa, hosted a panel titled

"Efficiency, Cost Cutting and Profitability in the Mining Sector". The discussion, featuring leaders like Michael Jones, the Chief Financial Officer of Tharisa and Themba Mkhwanazi—Regional Director at Anglo American, covered mining safety, global trends and the role of innovation in optimizing costs and ensuring operational safety.

This was followed by a fireside chat on Innovation, AI and Automation in Mining with Dr Callen Fisher, Senior Lecturer in Mining Robotics at Stellenbosch University, which sparked lively discussions on the future of mining technology and its role in advancing safety, efficiency and sustainability.

Looking ahead, Enaex Africa remains steadfast in its commitment to advancing the mining sector. By pioneering innovative solutions and building strong industry partnerships, it continues to play a pivotal role in shaping the future of African mining and driving its transformation for a safer, more sustainable tomorrow.



Discussions covered mining safety, the role of innovation in the sector and more

TURN ON THE BATTERY

THE CONTINENT HAS GREAT POTENTIAL IN THE GLOBAL ELECTRIC VEHICLE (EV) BATTERY VALUE CHAIN. BUT IS ITS AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY READY TO LEAD A FUTURE WHERE AFRICAN-MADE BATTERIES POWER LOCALLY-ASSEMBLED EVS?

66

By Edward Moleke Makwana

ELECTRIC VEHICLES



A robotic arm assembling electric car battery components

For the first time in its 31-year history, the Investing in African Mining Indaba saw the automotive industry take center stage. Held early this year in Cape Town, the conference reflected a crucial shift—Africa is no longer just a supplier of minerals but a potential powerhouse for the global electric vehicle (EV) battery revolution.

The key question is: can Africa's mining and automotive industries drive downstream battery manufacturing instead of merely exporting raw minerals to global markets like China, the United States, and Europe? Or will the continent remain locked in the historical cycle of resource extraction, watching others reap the rewards of a trillion-dollar industry?

From Extraction to Empowerment

Picture a miner in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for example, extracting cobalt, a critical component of lithium-ion batteries, unaware that his work fuels EVs in California and Berlin—yet not a single battery is made in Africa. Now, contrast that with a future where an African-made battery powers a locally assembled EV, marking a fundamental shift in the continent's economic destiny.

Almost all of Africa's cobalt, manganese, lithium and graphite are exported, leaving the continent at the bottom of the value chain while other regions capitalize on high-value battery production.

Madelein Todd, Marketing Executive at Manganese Metal Co and a key advocate for the battery raw materials market, underscores this dilemma to FORBES AFRICA.

"Africa is incredibly rich in mineral resources, yet the continent faces an economic paradox—low GDP per capita results in weak domestic demand for raw materials. In a thriving economy, industrialization fuels demand, but in Africa's case, there's a missing economic pull, making strong government support essential."

The challenge lies in the vast quantities of raw minerals being exported with minimal local processing. Todd emphasizes that while domestic consumption may be low, beneficiation would create significant value.

"Beneficiation is impossible without strong policy support. In industrialized economies, market demand regulates production, competition controls costs and the most efficient producers thrive. However, in Africa, weak infrastructure—es-

PHOTO BY WITTHAYA PRASONGSIN/GETTYIMAGES

No Time To Waste: Pioneering A Cleaner, Greener Africa

Waste management service provider, Golden Swan G.E. S.L is turning Africa's biggest environmental threat into its most powerful and sustainable tool.



Golden Swan G.E. S.L

Waste generation in Africa is expected to increase substantially, with the African Union Development Agency projecting a rise to over 500 million tons per year by 2050 across the continent.

With only 4% of this waste being recycled, as reported in 2021, it poses significant dangers to the environment, health, and economy of the continent.

“The waste generated today must be treated today—responsibly, sustainably, and with care. If we delay, the cost to our health, environment, and future will only grow,” explains Rakesh H. Dudhat, the Managing Director of Golden Swan G.E. S.L.

Dudhat founded the company in 2010 upon recognizing that poor waste management was one of the greatest threats to the continent.

Based in Equatorial Guinea and backed by the Shree Hari Group (SHG) of India, the company has grown from a waste management firm into a symbol of innovation and environmental responsibility.

From Waste to Purpose

Environmentalism has been a lifelong passion for Dudhat, who has a background in farming and spent many days planting trees.

Thanks to this environmental stewardship, he quickly recognized the risks associated with poor waste disposal.

“Waste is becoming one of the most difficult environmental challenges of our generation, so if you want to protect the environment, the best place to start is waste management.”

As a result of this realization, Golden Swan was created and, throughout the years, has continued to provide end-to-end waste management services.

The company has the necessary Integrated Management Systems (IMS) certifications, ensuring it aligns with stringent European environmental and occupational safety standards, allowing it to tackle the most complex industrial waste challenges confidently.

Rakesh H. Dudhat



Cleaning and Scaling Up

Over the past decade, Golden Swan's work has been acknowledged, including by the President of Equatorial Guinea, who appreciated their contributions to the environment and their investment in the nation.

These efforts marked a significant milestone in the country's management of medical waste disposal.

“For the first time, Equatorial Guinea can say it's managing its hospital waste in an environmentally sound way,” shares Dudhat.

Now, having contributed to the transformation of the country's waste infrastructure, Golden Swan's ambitions also include establishing operations across the rest of the continent by 2040.

Having visited several nations in both West and Central Africa, the company noted how industrial and medical waste continues to end up in landfills or the ocean. As such, they are seeking to roll out sustainable waste solutions across these nations.

“We want to change poor waste management by offering reliable alternatives, including waste-to-energy technologies that not only manage waste but generate electricity.”

Golden Swan's visits across the continent have also highlighted the role that government and municipal support can play, with Dudhat emphasizing the importance of implementing stricter policies to stop waste from reaching landfills and oceans.

Waste Not For A Greener Future

The company's sustainable efforts aren't only limited to waste management, as it adopted its founder's afforestation efforts by planting thousands of trees within its waste management facility.

“Visitors, including the U.S. Ambassador to Equatorial Guinea, have been impressed by the greenery and environmental care we practice,” Dudhat notes.

Golden Swan's green values also extend into the community, with the company regularly organizing beach and river cleanups and collaborating with local and global organizations like the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to raise awareness about plastic pollution.

Moreover, Dudhat reveals the company's plans to launch animal protection programs and deepen the company's role in shaping sustainable futures for African communities.

“This is not just a business; it's a mission. We want to help shape a cleaner, greener Africa.”

Now, with its advancements in Equatorial Guinea and beyond, Golden Swan is no longer just a waste management company but also an important catalyst for economic growth and development on the continent.

“We're not just managing waste—we're reshaping the way Africa handles it.”

“CHINA’S SUCCESS WAS NO ACCIDENT. IT TOOK YEARS OF PATIENT INVESTMENT AND STRATEGIC GOVERNMENT BACKING TO BUILD AN INDUSTRY THAT NOW LEADS THE WORLD. THE KEY LESSON FOR AFRICA IS THAT SUCCESS IN ADVANCED MANUFACTURING DOESN’T HAPPEN OVERNIGHT.”

pecially unreliable power supply—limits our ability to scale up local processing. South Africa’s struggles with power costs have already made it uncompetitive in ferrochrome, ferromanganese and steel production,” adds Todd.

Strengthening power generation and industrial capacity must be a top priority, or Africa risks remaining a mere supplier rather than a key driver in the global battery supply chain.

The rise of EVs presents a rare window of opportunity. As the world transitions to electric mobility, Africa’s automotive industry can become a catalyst for local battery production. Countries like South Africa, Morocco, and Egypt—home to growing automotive assembly hubs—could integrate battery manufacturing into their supply chains.

Morocco has already demonstrated its ability to scale automotive production, positioning itself as a key player in vehicle assembly. Could this success extend into battery-making? Could South Africa’s automotive hubs in its provinces Gauteng (Rosslyn and Tshwane), the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal follow suit?

Todd believes South Africa’s structured export credits, which have made vehicle production competitive, offer a roadmap for industrial strategy.

“South Africa’s automotive industry thrives due to well-structured export incentives. Nearly 40%-50% of locally produced vehicles are exported, thanks to negotiated tariffs and strategic government support. If the same approach were applied to battery production, Africa could position itself as a global supplier.”

Lessons from Indonesia and China

Could Africa replicate the success stories of Indonesia and China? Indonesia made a bold move by banning raw nickel exports in 2014 and again in 2020, forcing global companies to invest in local battery manufacturing. Todd, however, warns that such policies require careful execution.

“Indonesia succeeded because it controls the largest nickel reserves, and competing producers face high costs. But in Africa, minerals like manganese are more widely distributed—South Africa may be the largest producer, but it faces competition from Gabon, Ghana, Australia and Brazil. A unilateral export ban could backfire by driving up prices and incentivizing competitors to scale up.”

China’s dominance in battery production, on the other hand, was built on decades of government incentives, research funding and long-term industrial policy. What can Africa learn from this model?

“China’s success was no accident. It took years of patient investment and strategic government backing to build an industry that now leads the world. The key lesson for Africa is that success in advanced manufacturing doesn’t happen

overnight. Governments must commit to sustained industrial support, including R&D incentives and infrastructure development.”

Who Will Fund the Shift?

A transition of this scale requires massive investment. Organizations like the Automotive Industry Transformation Fund have already committed R500 million (\$27.7 million) to strategic initiatives in South Africa, including mineral beneficiation, charging infrastructure and supply chain development.

But this is just the beginning.

Imagine what could be achieved if institutions like the African Development Bank, the Industrial Development Corporation, the European Development Fund, and private-sector investors aligned their resources to finance local battery plants.

The African Association of Automotive Manufacturers is working to lobby governments to industrialize the sector through the African Continental Free Trade Area.

What’s Holding Africa Back?

Infrastructure gaps—unreliable energy supply, limited logistics networks, and manufacturing constraints—remain major roadblocks. There’s also the question of geopolitics. In a world where resource security is becoming a central issue, will foreign powers resist Africa’s move up the value chain?


Todd stresses that long-term policy stability and global partnerships will be crucial.

“Battery manufacturing in Africa won’t succeed unless it’s tied to large, negotiated export agreements. A single battery plant needs a production capacity of at least 30 GWh to be viable. That scale requires partnerships with established players—Chinese, South Korean, or Japanese firms—who have the expertise and capital to navigate this complex industry. More importantly, investors need long-term policy certainty. Without clear government commitments spanning 15-20 years, the razor-thin margins in battery production make investment too risky.”

Africa at a Crossroads

The defining question of this decade is whether Africa will remain a supplier of raw materials or rise to become a global force in battery manufacturing.

“Europe produces over 70% of the battery cells used in its EVs, but its supply chain remains dependent on Asia for critical battery materials like cathodes and anodes. This creates a vulnerability—and an opportunity for Africa.

“By developing local capacity for battery materials, Africa could become a strategic alternative supplier, reducing global reliance on Asia and strengthening supply chain resilience,” Todd concludes. 

Diversification And Alternative Investments By Pension Funds In Africa

By Dr Leslie Ndawana, Principal Executive Officer,
National Fund for Municipal Workers

Historically, African pension funds have been viewed primarily as mechanisms for providing financial security in retirement, investing mainly in traditional asset classes such as government bonds, equities, and cash. However, this narrow approach overlooks the transformative potential of pension funds.



In recent years, the pension fund landscape has evolved to reflect a growing awareness by the fiduciaries and asset managers that financial markets can significantly influence social and environmental trends and vice versa.

Beyond simply providing retirement income by optimizing financial returns, pension funds are increasingly considering socio-economic imbalances and broader societal needs when assessing their purpose and creating suitable investment portfolios to achieve that purpose.

To unlock and embrace a multi-purpose model, pension funds need a reorientation of strategy—both from a business and investment perspective, blending traditional asset classes with alternative investments. These include private equity, private debt, mezzanine debt, unlisted property, commodity-trading strategies, hedge funds and other unlisted assets.

Each of these broad categories can have multiple underlying investment strategies to improve returns, diversify risk and positively impact society through the underlying investments.

In essence, pension funds can follow a triple-purpose strategic approach, where, one, financial goals are increasingly aligned with positive socio-economic outcomes and sustainable growth.

The take-up of alternative investment strategies by African pension funds remains low by global standards, as the complexity of these types of investments seems to be a limiting factor. It seems many African countries face significant challenges in pension fund governance and accountability, a lack of political certainty, and compromised institutional strength, such as the independence of courts.

This negatively impacts capital allocations to alternative assets which involve intricate long-term legal structures.

Looking ahead, African pension funds have a crucial role in Africa's sustainable development by investing in projects that align with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the African Union's Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA).

Capital allocations into alternative assets are expected to increase as pension funds look beyond earning a financial return, but also to directly and meaningfully impact the communities in which they operate.

Africa is on a distinct economic and social development path compared to the rest of the world, requiring tailored alternative solutions to address its unique challenges. African pension funds have the potential to become a key driver of sustainable economic development in Africa for decades to come.

As new challenges arise, they will need to adopt innovative thinking and flexible investment strategies to meet Africa's ever-evolving needs.

RUST TO RICHES

Paul Maree
with a classic

By PAULA SLIER

OPPORTUNITIES ABOUND IN SOUTH AFRICA'S VINTAGE CAR MARKET. IT'S LIKE A TREASURE HUNT, WITH SOME INCREDIBLY RARE CLASSIC VEHICLES SCATTERED ACROSS THE CONTINENT, SOMETIMES IN THE REMOTEST VILLAGES.

If you've ever driven past an old Mercedes-Benz rusting in a field, or spotted a forgotten VW Kombi parked behind a rural shack, chances are you were looking at a small fortune on wheels. For Paul Maree, a 25-year-old vintage car enthusiast based in Johannesburg, spotting and restoring these hidden treasures isn't just a hobby—it's a calling passed down through generations.

"My dad grew up poor in Pretoria, and working on cars was just what you did. He'd buy old Harley-Davidsons, restore them, and export them for big money," says Maree. "He once paid R30,000 (\$1,663) for a bike and sold it for over R115,000 (\$6,373) in Canada."

Maree inherited more than just a collection of 14 vintage vehicles when his father, Albert Maree, passed away in 2022. He also inherited a philosophy: the hobby must pay for itself.

And it does—just about. "I try to do everything myself," says Maree. "Unless it's a job like paintwork or one that needs massive pieces of machinery, I'm the one sanding, fixing, and assembling." He's currently restoring a rare 1965 VW split-window double cab, which he bought for R120,000 (\$6,650). When finished, he expects to sell it for around R750,000 (\$41,562). "I'll spend about R300,000 (\$16,630) on the restoration, but it's taken three years of hard work. People think it's quick money, but they don't see the hours."

There's an almost spiritual joy for Maree in reviving machines others have given up on. "There's a morbid fixation I have with fixing what no one else can—or wants to. I've always been that kid who took things apart just to see if I could put them back together."

The vintage car scene in South Africa is thriving beneath the surface. While Maree still holds down a day job in a 3D-printing and jewelry design business, he's not ruling out going full-time. "Plenty of guys do," he says. "Some only restore old VW buses and export them to Australia. They make millions."

South Africa's climate plays a surprising role in this boom. "You don't want a car from Cape Town—too much rust. But the Eastern Cape and Free State are goldmines.

The dry air preserves cars that would've rotted anywhere else."

And unlike many countries, South Africa actually built many of the classics that are now in high demand abroad. "I've got a 1977 Mercedes 450SL built in East London. That factory still makes Mercs for the U.S. today. There's a stockpile of vintage Mercs in this country just sitting under dust."

But the secret's getting out.

"Australians want those VW hippie vans. Brits are buying up old Beetles. Americans go mad for pre-war Auburns and Duesenbergs," Maree explains. "There are entire online forums where international collectors hunt these cars down. You post a good one and it's gone in two weeks."

Maree recounts tracking down his latest project through a Pretoria contact his dad knew for 20 years. "It took months of visits and friendly chats before the old man would sell. At first, he said, 'never!' Then, his wife phoned us one day and said, 'okay, let's do it.'"

The restoration process is meticulous. "Every nut and bolt has a specification. Some of these cars were designed to be fixed in the deserts of North Africa. So, if they could do it there, I can do it here in Sandton."

Still, there's a bittersweet undertone in the community about the rapid export of classics. "We're losing our history. There's almost no chance of someone my age finding—or affording—a 300SL Gullwing locally. They've all been sent overseas for insane money."

Even so, opportunities abound for newcomers. "The market is the opposite of saturated," says Maree. "If you do good work, you've got a two-year backlog in no time. Upholsterers who know what they're doing are fully-booked. And if someone's free next week—trust me—you don't want them."

Africa's role in this revival isn't limited to South Africa. "We've found an E-Type Jaguar in the Congo. And in Mozambique, we've tracked down incredibly rare pre-war Auburn Speedsters. It's like a treasure hunt. These vehicles are scattered across the continent, sometimes in the most remote villages."

Maree adds, "Anywhere that had cars in the 1960s or 1970s—Angola, Kenya, even the DRC—you'll find gems waiting to be discovered. A lot of these countries didn't have the infrastructure or tools to restore the cars, so they've just been sitting there."

Sometimes, a car finds you.

"There's this site, *Classic Cars In Rhodesia*. You'll see someone's grandmother in front of a now-insanely-valuable car. Some dude posts a 1970s' photo of a car his uncle left in Mozambique—and it turns out only ten of them were ever made."



A VW Kombi double-cab prior to restoration

"THERE'S A STOCKPILE OF VINTAGE MERCS IN THIS COUNTRY JUST SITTING UNDER DUST?"

Maree lights up as he speaks about these "pirate treasure hunts". For him, it's less about profit and more about purpose. "It's a lifestyle. You get your hands dirty. It's frustrating, exhausting—but there's nothing like bringing something back from the dead."

His advice for anyone who suspects they've got something valuable parked in a family garage?

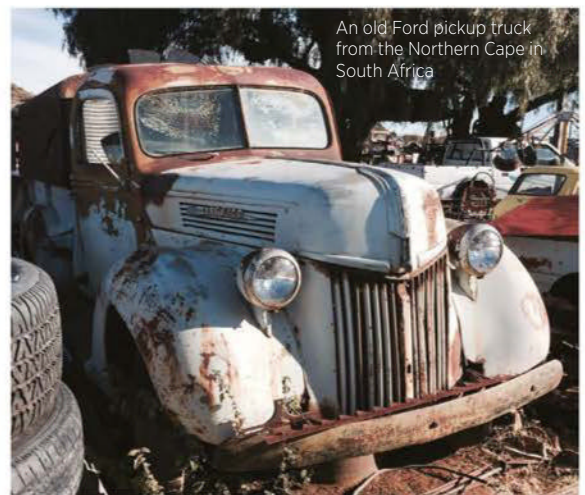
"Post a photo. Anywhere. Forums, Reddit—someone will know what it is. And don't assume it's junk. Two doors, convertible, iconic shape—those are the hallmarks of value. If you look at it and go, 'wow,' chances are someone else will too."

As the vintage car wave grows across Africa, Maree hopes more young Africans take the wheel. "If you're passionate, if you're willing to learn and work hard—there's room for you in this world. You don't need a degree. Just a spanner, a manual, and a bit of madness."

For now, Maree is just happy to keep tinkering.

"I'm not a professional. I'm an enthusiast. But when I drive a car that was once a pile of rust and watch someone else fall in love with it again—that's the real reward." 📌

"YOU DON'T NEED A DEGREE. JUST A SPANNER, A MANUAL, AND A BIT OF MADNESS."



An old Ford pickup truck from the Northern Cape in South Africa

SHEA

FROM WEST AFRICA,

SHEA BUTTER

IS POWERING A GLOBAL MARKET WORTH BILLIONS. AN INDUSTRY IN TRANSITION, WOMEN BUILT IT, AND NOW MEN ARE RACING TO SCALE IT. CAN THE SECTOR GROW WITHOUT LEAVING ITS ORIGINAL STAKEHOLDERS BEHIND?

POWER

By Oluwatomisin Amokeoja

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IN 2016

, **Richard Akanmode** was discussing new ways of investment with an associate. A businessman by nature but an adventurer at heart, he wasn't looking for a trend—he was looking for meaning. Then he came across shea butter. The thick, nutty paste he remembered seeing in market stalls. He went into research mode and began to read about it.

“I discovered that there are immense opportunities in this sector. And I also discovered that it is something that is available but underutilized and could be a good investment,”

Akanmode recalls to **FORBES AFRICA**.

He didn't know it then, but he was about to walk into a centuries-old world dominated by women, rooted in West African soil, and growing into a multibillion-dollar global industry. What began as a conversation would become Gamut Shea Products Ltd—a company now producing 60 tonnes of shea butter annually in Ayetoro Gbede, Kogi State, north central Nigeria, with plans to scale to 200 tonnes.

Akanmode is now one of the Vice Presidents of National Shea Products Association of Nigeria (NASPAN), a male face in what is traditionally a “women-led business”.

But that sobriquet for shea butter—“women's gold”—is slowly being redefined.

A Matter Of Scale

When Akanmode first entered the shea industry, he relied on third-party processors. It was a disaster. Inconsistent quality.

Missed deadlines. So, he took the risk and built his own small factory, pieced together with locally-fabricated equipment.

What started at 10 tonnes grew to 60. His team of 15? Mostly women. His market? National and international. And while others saw tradition, he saw opportunity.

“When it comes to shea,” he says, “what really matters is volume.” Artisanal producers—mostly women—cater to boutique cosmetic markets. But industrial buyers? They need consistency. They need tonnage. And they need it fast.

“The truth is,” he says, “this business only works if everyone is involved.”

And that includes acknowledging the hard truths. “We don’t have roads. We don’t have electricity. We don’t have water. Without these basics, you can’t build an industry that competes globally.”

But even without those, they persist.

That demand shift has brought in new players—and new tensions.

Gilles Adamon in Benin echoes this sentiment to *FORBES AFRICA*: the shea industry must modernize without losing its soul.

As founder of Natura soaps and cosmetics and president of Interprofession Karité Bénin (IKB), he sees firsthand how they are bringing investment, structure, and scale to the table. Industrial processing units. Export strategies. Product diversification.

But he is quick to add, “Women remain at the heart. Their knowledge, their resilience, it’s the foundation. What we need is complementarity.”

In Benin, that complementarity is becoming a reality. Women-led cooperatives are forming partnerships with male-run factories. Together, they’re reaching new markets, adding value to raw materials, and improving community livelihoods.

The shift isn’t without friction though. Roles are being renegotiated. But the result is a more inclusive and competitive industry.

“This isn’t about replacing,” Adamon says. “It’s about evolving.”



“...also now that large aspects of the shea butter production is machine-driven. People refer to it as ‘women’s gold’ because it started as handcrafted—women having to use their hands to mix the paste and all that. [Although] that has now changed a bit with the involvement of men,” Akanmode contributes.

A Female Legacy Rooted In Labor

For generations, rural women across West Africa have been the silent engines of the shea butter trade—picking the fruit, drying the nuts, grinding, roasting, kneading. It is brutal, back-breaking work done in blistering heat with little equipment and even less recognition. Yet, it’s their sweat that powers a global market, reportedly projected to reach \$5.8 billion by 2030, fueling cosmetics, food, and pharmaceutical empires.

The trucks, the machinery, the factories, the exporting licenses—those are often handled by men. And increasingly, the decisions too. This division is not merely cultural—it’s systemic. As Shalom Lloyd, the founder of U.K.-based Naturally Tribal Skincare Ltd (Naturally TIWA Skincare) and Director of Jean Edwards Oil (JE Oils) Nigeria in the capital Abuja, puts it to *FORBES AFRICA*: “Men are at the helm of leadership, making decisions, while women are still stuck in the narrative of empowerment.”

Lloyd, who is helping change that, remembers a pivotal pitch session. She and her brother, Edward Nnadi, CEO of JE Oils, stood before a potential client. Nnadi, according to her, spoke confidently about market potential, investment projections, and revenue. When it was her turn, she spoke from the

“WOMEN REMAIN AT THE HEART. THEIR KNOWLEDGE, THEIR RESILIENCE, IT’S THE FOUNDATION. WHAT WE NEED IS COMPLEMENTARITY.”

—Gilles Adamon

Workers at
Jean Edwards
Oil in Abuja,
Nigeria



ACCESS TO LARGE BUYERS CAN INCREASE THE REVENUE OF THE RURAL WOMAN. IF WE CAN JUST CONNECT THEM TO BUYERS, WE CAN CHANGE EVERYTHING.™

—James Kpenyog Dakora

heart: about the women who worked under the sun, about fairness, about building not just a business but a future.

It wasn't that one angle was better, but that only one of them was speaking the language the world expects to hear in a boardroom.

JE Oils now runs a factory capable of producing 100 metric tonnes of shea butter per month. And while the machinery is modern, the values are traditional—in the best sense. The factory manager is a woman. The operators of those massive machines? Women and men. In the lab too, they work side by side. The silent statement is clear: gender is not a job description. “Gender roles should not be compartmentalized,” Lloyd insists. “We can manage facilities. We can be decision-makers.”

The Land Beneath Their Feet

Across the border in Ghana, similar dynamics unfold. James Kpenyog Dakora, the coordinator of Shea Network Ghana (SNG), says to FORBES AFRICA that women manage 95% of the collection and production.

But holding it up doesn't mean owning it.

Men, Dakora notes, dominate the machinery and the financing. Even the land where shea trees grow is typically controlled by men.

The shea trees grow wild, scattered across family lands, and those families are led by men. Women can harvest—but they do so with permission. And when it comes to transporting the nuts, repairing the machines, or negotiating bulk sales? Men again.

That imbalance isn't without consequences. Rural women take all the risks—snakebites, scorpion stings, intense labor—but are paid the least. “The revenue they make is not something to talk about,” Dakora laments.

And that leads to another crisis: exploitation. The middlemen who scoop up the kernels from women often resell at enormous margins. Women lack storage, access to capital, and direct pathways to buyers.

And yet, Dakora doesn't cast blame. He sees possibilities.

“It will be of hope,” Dakora says, “that access to large buyers can increase the revenue of the rural woman. If we can just connect them to buyers, we can change everything.”

Intuition Meets Innovation

Also in Ghana, Violet Amoabeng, founder of Skin Gourmet, speaks of a different kind of power: the quiet synergy between men and women. “Men bring structure, logistics, performance. Women bring empathy, intuition, community,” Amoabeng explains to FORBES AFRICA. “It's not about who is better. It's about who is present.”

Her company is led by women, but supported by men. Behind every women's cooperative, she often sees a man negotiating transport, handling repairs, or lobbying local chiefs for access to land.

It's a balance Amoabeng has come to treasure. “As long as there is respect and recognition for each other's strengths, the collaboration is seamless. I've found that men are not just contributors to growth—they're stabilizers and protectors of it.”

Hearty And Full Of Heart: A Different Take On Quality Dining Experiences

With dishes rooted in comfort and flavor, Luyanda Mapaila's PseudoChef is turning private dining into perfectly-plated, passion-powered culinary experiences.



PseudoChef's Luyanda
"Lele" Mapaila

Over the last several years, South Africa has experienced significant growth in the private chef business, driven, mainly, by an increasing demand for more personalized, high-quality dining experiences.

Furthermore, the country's foodservice market is estimated to reach \$20.11 billion by 2030, per Mordor Intelligence.

With a cheeky name that pokes fun at her lack of official culinary credentials, Luyanda "Lele" Mapaila's PseudoChef offers a luxe private dining experience that brings a restaurant aesthetic and delectable eats into the comfort of your home.

'Not A Chef' – Real Flavor

Mapaila's journey with food goes beyond gourmet credentials. In 2021, she lost her grandmother—her idol, and the woman who shaped her love of food.

"She was always in the kitchen, and whether you were happy or sad, she'd never say no to making you something," says the 24-year-old, final-year BCom Accounting student.

Throughout her grieving process, cooking became a form of therapy, and after sharing her meals on social media in 2022, Mapaila was flooded with requests for them.

This momentum led to the creation of Lele's Sunday Roasts and, before long, PseudoChef was officially born, with Mapaila using the name to showcase her self-awareness and wit.

"My chef friends would say that I can't call myself a chef, so I decided that I'm a pseudo-chef—fake chef, but yes, I cook like an actual chef."

Despite the early criticism and resistance from trained chefs and skeptics, it wasn't long before Mapaila proved that her skills matched her fare, to the point where those same chefs were seeking out her take on luxurious eating.

Luxury At Your Table

Thanks to PseudoChef, culinary aficionados can enjoy a fine

private dining experience without leaving the comfort of their homes.

"I soon realized that I could set myself apart by entering the luxury market," Mapaila explains, "There are people who don't like cooking, especially when they host, so PseudoChef is meant to make your life easier."

While she is supported by a small team—two waiters and a driver—Mapaila does all the cooking by herself.

Granted, there are moments where she ropes in more hands for larger events, yet every dish remains her own, and this attention to detail allows for a more intimate food offering.

"I want to feed your soul. It's not just about feeding you; I want to take care of you the way my grandmother used to take care of me."

A Unique Experience

With PseudoChef, the indulgence begins before a fork is lifted, with each meal appealing to more than just one's taste.

"You eat with your eyes, so my meals need to look amazing," she says.

Yet, it's not only savory visuals that have gained recognition—her "Catch of the Day" fish with creamy mint sauce has become a signature dish, alongside her sought-after herby leg of lamb.

"With me, I bring you something different, something fresh."

Cooking With Heart And Precision

While her accounting degree did not cover kitchen skills, it's been instrumental in ensuring the success of the business.

"It helps me run PseudoChef properly and it's taught me discipline."

Now with plans to grow the PseudoChef name—cooking classes, a cookbook and, eventually, a restaurant—this discipline may be exactly what she needs to maintain her passion for the business, and commitment to her love language: food.

After all, every dish is designed to reflect the intimacy and passion of her grandmother's cooking style.

"Food is comfort. It's not just ingredients; it's love."



The business offers a luxe private dining experience

Her company, like many others, is navigating the gendered expectations of a sector in transition. While women lead cooperatives, men often manage the background operations—not out of dominance, but support. Amoabeng sees this synergy as essential.

And yet, beneath this synergy, lies a stark truth: scalability is gendered. Large-scale operations require land, capital, certification, and export licenses—resources women rarely access easily.

There are 16 million rural African women, half of them in West Africa, who rely on shea as a source of income.

“If you don’t want to hear women, women, women,” Lloyd quips, “then put women in decision-making roles.”

Black Gold Or Burned Future?

Yet the biggest threat to shea isn’t economic—it’s environmental.

Ironically, the very product empowering rural women is being destroyed by poverty. In Uganda, a black-market trade in shea charcoal—known locally as “black gold”—feeds urban demand for cooking fuel.

The cartel, former Ugandan biology teacher Mustafa Gerima explains, spans from rural Uganda to Nairobi to the Middle East.

Gerima, founder of Save The Shea Nut Foundation, returned home six years ago to find swaths of shea trees had disappeared, chopped into charcoal to feed a hungry population starved of alternatives. The tree, which takes over 15 years to mature, was being destroyed in minutes for short-term gain.

So Gerima started walking. Literally. In 2020, he trekked 664 kilometers from his country’s capital Kampala to Kenya’s capital Nairobi, to join forces with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to help save the shea trees.

“You can’t tell someone not to cut a tree without giving them another way to cook dinner,” Gerima says to FORBES AFRICA. He has helped plant over 7,000 trees. Fewer than 5,000 survive.

“Our energy demands in Africa are real,” he adds. “If governments subsidized cook stoves or provided electricity, charcoal usage would fall. But until then, shea trees are at risk.”

He is not alone. Across Ghana, the SNG is partnering with the Ghana Shea Landscape Emission Reductions Project (GSLERP) to establish shea nurseries and reforestation programs. Local policies now fine or imprison anyone caught cutting shea trees. In some communities, they are considered sacred.

“The government of Ghana came up with an authority called Tree Crops Development Authority (TCDA) and it was the SNG that championed for the inclusion of shea in that authority and out of that force, laws have been reserved for

“IF GOVERNMENTS SUBSIDIZED COOK STOVES OR PROVIDED ELECTRICITY, CHARCOAL USAGE WOULD FALL. BUT UNTIL THEN, SHEA TREES ARE AT RISK.”

—Mustafa Gerima



the shea sector players. Anyone found culpable is fined 1,500 cedis (\$142) and above or serve a jail term. That sensitization has gone on and it has made community members be aware that the shea trees should be protected. We are aware that in terms of infrastructural development, shea trees are being cut down but now the government is coming up with a policy that once you cut down a shea tree, you must replace it,” Dakora explains.

A Unique Industry

There’s something unique about the shea tree. It grows wild, unplanted, gifted by nature. It fruits once a year, during the rainy season. And if not harvested or processed within days, it germinates and is lost.

The urgency of harvest mirrors the urgency of now.

Nigeria holds more shea trees than any country in the world. Yet, it remains a minor player in the export of processed butter. Most of its yield is shipped out raw. The value is added elsewhere. The profits too.

That, Lloyd says, is the next frontier. “We can’t just focus on the season to find kernels and sell them; we also have to process to butter and sell. We must process, package, brand, export.”

And that requires partnership—between men and women, factories and cooperatives, governments and entrepreneurs.


So where does the shea industry go from here?

According to Lloyd, the roadmap is clear. “Protect the trees. Invest in machinery. Train women. Include men. And stop waiting. Act.”

For her, the most difficult work isn’t production. It’s cooperation. Building trust in rural communities. Forming cooperatives. Convincing people to think beyond today.

“When people are struggling to eat,” she says, “they can’t think of next year. But if we build systems that support them today, they’ll join us in planning for tomorrow.”

And scale is the future.

From industrial facilities to cooperatives, from wild harvests to plantations, the shea industry sits at a crossroads. If nurtured, it could transform communities and economies across West Africa. If ignored, it could collapse under the weight of exploitation, climate change, and imbalance. 

Kicking Off A Movement

MORE THAN SIMPLY A SNEAKER BRAND, YENZA SNEAKERS PROVIDES QUALITY FOOTWEAR THAT CARRIES A MESSAGE OF EMPOWERMENT, PURPOSE, AND AFRICAN PRIDE.



Proudly South African brand, YENZA Sneakers has developed and marketed itself as a company that provides quality sneaker wear and aims to inspire a movement rooted in African pride.

Alongside the growing interest in athleisure and fitness wear is the growth of the country's sneaker industry, which, per Grand View Research, generated a revenue of \$627.2 million in 2023 and is expected to reach \$788.6 million by 2030.

This growth also results in a highly saturated market, often dominated by legacy brands with loyal followings.

And yet, powered by a relentless, yet simple, call to action, YENZA Sneakers is working to make its mark.

"YENZA is a Zulu word that translates to 'getting started,'" explains Joe Ratema, Managing Director of the brand.

"We're here to inspire Africans and to let them know that the solutions for us as Africans lie in our hands, and we need to develop those solutions."

Getting Started and Getting Motivated

Launched in 2021, YENZA Sneakers is more than a fashion label; it embodies a mission founded on the belief that the continent's future depends on African initiatives.

This is most evident in the brand's chosen names for its sneakers, each of which reflects its core values.

Whether it's the Fearless Version 1—a lace-free, breathable sneaker built for movement and courage—or the Themba 909, which embodies 'hope' and was named, in part, after an enthusiastic team member, each design reflects the brand's foundational beliefs and drive. "We're not just selling sneakers; we're also selling motivation."

Standout Sneakers

With consumers more likely to resonate with homegrown brands with purpose-driven messaging, YENZA Sneakers' decision to focus on cultural and social impact allows it to stand-out from its counterparts who focus solely on aesthetics.

By leveraging e-commerce, including offering free nationwide delivery, and experiential pop-up stores, which work to both cater to digitally-savvy individuals and ensure accessibility, the brand has positioned itself as competitive, all without a fixed physical presence.

However, it does not operate in a vacuum and rather works to keep its finger on the pulse of global fashion.

"We keep [up] with the latest trends," Ratema explains, "But we also try to come up with something unique—something that has never been seen before."

For Ratema, striking this balance between maintaining cultural pride and understanding global relevance has been key to YENZA Sneakers' identity.

Also, accessibility and affordability may be at the forefront of YENZA Sneakers, but that doesn't take away from the quality of the shoes.

The team continues to deliver innovative products that meet the evolving needs of consumers, with a focus on comfort, durability, and eco-friendly materials.

"We don't compromise on fashion or quality. We have the resources and materials that will enable us to challenge big and well-known brands."

Walking with Purpose

Beyond retail sales, the brand's broader mission includes partnerships with community projects and investment in youth-led initiatives, including creating soccer tournaments and providing sponsorships.

Also, by prioritizing local manufacturing, YENZA Sneakers has developed a method to help address the unemployment rate in South Africa.

"With youth unemployment so high, producing locally will help close the gaps in terms of poverty and reduce food insecurity."

What's more, via collaborative efforts, the brand spotlights local brands, including Khoi, a brand specializing in smartwatches and earbuds, and The Great, which produces handbags, carry bags, and hiking bags.

Whether it's through fearless footwear or community collaborations, it's clear that YENZA Sneakers is all about making a change, one step at a time.



W GRAPE FUT



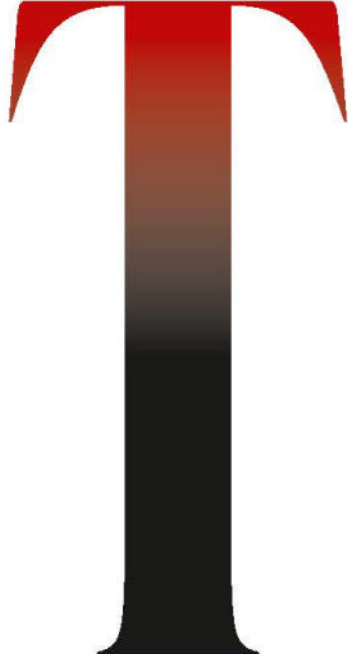
PHOTOS SUPPLIED

A CENTENARY OF PINOTAGE MARKS A UNIQUELY SOUTH AFRICAN MILESTONE IN THE WORLD OF WINE. THE COUNTRY'S ONLY NATIVE GRAPE HAS UNDERGONE QUITE THE EVOLUTION AND A NEW WAVE OF YOUNGER, INNOVATIVE WINEMAKERS ARE GIVING IT THEIR OWN INTERPRETATION.

URE

By JESSICA SPIRO

Beyers Truter of Beyerskloof Wines in Cape Town with son Anri



This year marks 100 years since the creation of the Pinotage grape, a uniquely South African varietal, by South African viticulturist and professor Abraham Perold, who blended Pinot Noir and Hermitage (otherwise known as Cinsaut). Celebrating a centenary is significant not simply because of the remarkable length of time but because of what this grape represents for the local winemaking industry.

“[Perold’s] vision was to combine the noble finesse of Pinot Noir with the resilience and reliability of Cinsaut,” says Johan Malan, Owner and Director of Simonsig Wines in Cape Town in South Africa’s Western Cape province.

“What emerged was Pinotage, a variety that, much like South Africa itself, has journeyed through moments of challenge, resilience, and remarkable growth.”

He continues by saying that celebrating a centenary of Pinotage marks a uniquely South African achievement in the world of wine. “This is a grape variety that was conceived, bred, and brought to life on South African soil.”

Matthew Freemantle, owner of Leo’s in Cape Town, a wine bar focused on minimal intervention wines, echoes this, adding how it cements South Africa’s place in the history of wine. “The significance of 100 years of Pinotage shows how long we’ve been around as a winemaking region,” he explains. “It goes much further back than that, but South Africa is perceived as ‘new world’, when in fact, we have a lot of old vineyards and history in winemaking.”

A hundred years on, however, Pinotage has undergone quite the evolution. Its earlier iteration was heavily oaked and peaty, and so unsurprisingly, it was not particularly well-received. “Some of the first commercial examples were associated with the bulk wine character of Cinsaut, and the grape struggled to gain the recognition its creator might have hoped for,” Malan explains.

**“THIS IS A GRAPE VARIETY
THAT WAS CONCEIVED, BRED,
AND BROUGHT TO LIFE ON
SOUTH AFRICAN SOIL.”**

– Johan Malan

It was only in 1994, when South Africa rejoined the global wine market, that Pinotage was positioned as a serious player in the wine landscape.

“International buyers were seeking wines with authenticity and a sense of origin—and Pinotage, with its deeply South African roots, became a natural ambassador,” Malan continues.

Today, Pinotage accounts for 7.2% of South Africa’s total vines, according to the Pinotage Association of South Africa.

Belinda Jacobs, Brand Manager for the association, says Pinotage’s innovation has been “multifaceted”, due in part to the work the organization has done throughout the entire growing, harvesting and production process. “We’ve refined vineyard practices, understanding the importance of site selection—granite versus shale soils, for instance—to enhance the grape’s expression.” She continues, “In the cellar, techniques have evolved to manage fermentation temperatures and extraction methods, ensuring we capture the varietal’s purity without over-extraction. The shift towards balanced oak integration has further allowed the fruit’s character to shine, moving away from the overly oaked styles of the past.”

Now, Pinotage stands in a league entirely of its own. “Advances in viticultural practices and winemaking techniques have greatly enhanced the quality of Pinotage, enabling it to compete confidently with the world’s top red wines,” says Beyers Truter, Chairman of the Pinotage Association and owner of Beyerskloof wines in Cape Town. “Pinotage is both age-worthy and versatile—capable of producing everything from elegant Rosés to bold, full-bodied reds that can mature beautifully over time.”

Most crucial, however, is that this evolution is noticeable in the glass. “It’s definitely evolved from something that was trying to be a low-cost, big-volume red alternative to French varieties, into something that is capable of being quite interesting as a fine wine,” says Freemantle, while reflecting on the ‘lighter touch’

he’s seeing in the Pinotages coming through Leo’s.

“Younger, newer winemakers are making wine truer to the parent grapes, Pinot and Cinsaut being light and juicy themselves,” he explains. “So it only makes sense that Pinotage should manifest as something light and juicy, not without savory character or heft or gravitas, but not something overcooked or oak-staved to death and ending up smelling like rubber boots, or heavily extracted.”

If 100 years of Pinotage is defined by anything, it’s the progression ushered in by the hard work of those who produce it. And there are a few key producers who have led this charge, helping further Pinotage’s quality and reception. “There are so many to list, the landscape of Pinotage is vibrant with innovation,” says Jacobs, who explains the association’s Grand Pinotage classification, developed to recognize the very best expressions of Pinotage in South Africa, similar to the systems established in France, which set benchmarks for quality such as Bordeaux’s ‘First Growth’ wines and Burgundy’s ‘Grand Cru’ and ‘Premier Cru’ classifications.

“The Grand Pinotages collection represents emblematic Pinotage wines from South Africa... and comprises the most celebrated producers over the past two decades: Beyerskloof, Kaapzicht, Kanonkop, L’Avenir, Rijk’s and Simonsig,” she says, adding that these producers remain very active in the promotion and advancement of Pinotage, and they appreciate the im-



portance of the celebration.

“The significance of this moment is profound for Beyerskloof,” says Andre Franzsen, its Marketing Director. “We regard ourselves as one of the custodians of Pinotage and remain committed to leading the category.” Similarly, Simonsig feels the weight of the role they’ve played. “At Simonsig, we’ve been part of this story from early on. In fact, our very first red wine release in 1970 was a Pinotage—even before our pioneering Kaapse Vonkel Méthode Cap Classique,” says Malan.

Beyerskloof harvest



A generational legacy prevails at Simonsig Family Vineyards with Johan Malan (right) and his son, Michael, involved as second and third generation winemakers and cellarmasters

“As I often say, ‘we didn’t pick Pinotage; it picked us.’”

Abrie Beeslaar, formerly of Kanonkop, who now has his own single vineyard, adds to this, reflecting on the growth Pinotage has seen in such a short space of time. “Pinotage is still a very young variety if you take that the first commercial one was made in 1959, and that sanctions lasted 30 years, it is only post 1991 that Pinotage has started to develop into a respected variety,” says Beeslaar. “It has developed from a misunderstood red grape to a world-class variety competing with the



IT HAS DEVELOPED FROM A MISUNDERSTOOD RED GRAPE TO A WORLD-CLASS VARIETY COMPETING WITH THE BEST IN THE WORLD.”

– Abrie Beeslaar

best in the world.”

But the progression and innovation doesn’t end there. In an organic handing of the baton, these stalwarts of Pinotage have also paved the way for younger winemakers.

“I know Pinotage has become important to some new wave winemakers, something they feel connected to as an endemic South African variety and something they’re putting a new interpretation on,” explains Freemantle. He says some of the favorite Pinotages being poured at Leo’s include Intellego, Olifantsberg, Scions of Sinai’s Atlantikas, many of which display the juicy, fresh qualities of the grape. “I’d also have to mention Beeslaar... His Pinotage is a bit heavier, more classic, but it’s extremely balanced and delicious and shows the many different ways of interpreting Pinotage.”

This versatility also contributes to Pinotage’s reception, which is encouragingly on the rise among a younger wine market. “Locally, it’s always held a place of affection, but we’ve witnessed a growing appreciation as quality has soared,” says Jacobs. “Globally, initial skepticism has given way to recognition, especially as more refined and elegant expressions have emerged and it’s gratifying to see international markets now embracing Pinotage.”

With such a storied past, the future can only be bright for Pinotage. As more young winemakers join the industry, the foundation is primed for even more innovation. “We are still growing with the variety, but we are focusing on making great wines first, rather than what we consider to be typical Pinotage,” says Beeslaar. As local reception continues to grow, the hope is that Pinotage will receive the global recognition it deserves and ultimately secure its place in the wine world, outside of South Africa. 

THE SURVIVAL BREW

By SASHA STAR

Wild flowers in a rooibos tea field near Clanwilliam, a town in South Africa's Western Cape

ONE OF SOUTH AFRICA'S MOST FAVORITE EXPORTS IS GROUNDED IN ITS ROOTS. THE REDDISH-BROWN ROOIBOS IS BEING SIPPED AROUND THE WORLD, AND COULD SOON HAVE A UNIQUE USE IN PETROL STATIONS.



T

There is an adage that claims a cup of tea can fix just about anything.

Rough day? Sip some chamomile.

Broken heart? Brew some chai.

Need to pull an all-nighter for that deadline? Green tea has your back.

One tea in particular, though, has acquired a reputation as somewhat of a superfood thanks to its long list of health benefits that is transforming wellness, one cup at a time.

Native to the mountainous plains of the Cederberg region in South Africa's Western Cape province, rooibos has steeped its way to global fame—all the while remaining grounded in its roots.

"Rooibos only grows in 60,000 hectares in the entire world, on the southwest coast of South Africa," reveals the Marketing Director of Carmién Tea, Lize du Preez.

The distinct location has led to rooibos joining the prestigious ranks of French champagne and Greek feta cheese by acquiring the status of Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) from the European Union, becoming the first African food to do so. Thus, if the leaves are not specifically from the Cederberg region of South Africa, well, it is just a herbal infusion with a scarlet hue.

Even rooibos' unique reddish-brown shade has garnered acclaim: it was named by New York Fashion Week as one of the top 10 colors for the 2024 spring season, complete with its own Pantone color card.

"There is also a video game called *Enshrouded* where rooibos is one of the resources that you harvest for energy," notes Marthane Swart, Secretariat of the South African Rooibos Council. "It just shows that there is an increasing awareness of rooibos all over the world and people are using it and thinking about it for a variety of functions."

One particular purpose is closer to home.

A recent study was conducted by the National Institute for Occupational Health (NIOH) to determine whether rooibos can protect petrol attendants from exposure to harmful chemicals.



Dry rooibos leaves

“ROOIBOS ONLY GROWS IN 60,000 HECTARES IN THE ENTIRE WORLD, ON THE SOUTHWEST COAST OF SOUTH AFRICA...”

— Lize du Preez

“Looking into the toxicology of petrol fumes, especially BTEX (benzene, toluene, ethylbenzene, and xylene), we found that consistent exposure leads to increased levels of oxidative stress,” explains Dr Kerry Wilson, an epidemiologist at the NIOH who is leading the study.

While all cells are prone to oxidation, high levels have been associated with acute symptoms like headaches and dizziness, and long-term exposure has been linked to nerve damage and elevated risks of cancers.

“Measuring oxidative stress is not that straightforward, but quite a bit of research has been done around the antioxidant levels of tea. Tea is also something that is fairly accessible for most people.”

The array of polyphenols found in rooibos reads like a who’s who of the antioxidant world: compounds that regulate blood sugar, neutralize carcinogens, combat inflammation, and reduce hypertension, amongst others. It is, essentially, tea’s version of *The Avengers* against free radicals.

Wilson’s study involved analyzing the levels of oxidative stress in the blood and urine samples of 100 petrol attendants from various stations in the Johannesburg city center. The volunteers were then given a six-month supply of rooibos and told to drink three cups a day.

“Most were excited to participate in the research. A few asked for more tea when we returned to take updated samples after the six-month period.”

The final laboratory analysis is currently underway, with the findings expected around the end of 2025.

“One might hope to see an improvement in other chronic diseases if oxidative stress is reduced or managed,” Wilson notes. “Drinking rooibos tea could then be something that individuals can do to look after their own health if they are worried about toxic exposures in daily life.”

The secret to rooibos’ resilience could well be found in how it grows. Enduring temperatures of below 0° Celsius in winter and upwards of 40° during the summer, it is a bush built for survival.

PHOTOS SUPPLIED

“Because it’s so cold at night in the Cederberg and hot during the day, the plant stores up enormous amounts of antioxidants to protect itself,” shares Sarah Hetherington, who is Director of brand communication at African Extracts, a skincare brand that uses rooibos as its key ingredient.

The company sells around three million products per year, with its Classic SPF 15-day cream regarded as South Africa’s best-selling essential care moisturizer.

“For skincare, we want to preserve the highest-possible level of antioxidants, so we use the extract from green, unfermented rooibos in our products.”

Whether it’s being shipped abroad or recommended by beauty bloggers, rooibos wouldn’t make it to shelves without the farmers who cultivate it. Yet, they are not necessarily getting to reap the rewards of the Rooibos Revolution.

“If you compare the shelf prices to what producers are getting at the farm gate level, there is a huge disconnect,” points out Vanrhynsdorp farmer, Werner Nieuwoudt.

With a background in the corporate world as a chartered accountant, he founded the Rooibos Tea Producers’ Association in 2023 as a platform for farmers to be more involved in industry strategies and processes.

“My vision is a premium growth, sustainable industry that adds benefit to every role player across the board, all the way up to farm worker level.”

In order for this to be achieved, Nieuwoudt believes that certain reforms need to be put in place.

“We need to have a standardized grading system as the tea is currently graded by the various buyers, and we need to have a solid marketing strategy approach as an industry to differentiate our tea in the market and sell our tea globally.”

Tea drinkers in Japan and Germany have already wrought a robust relationship with the red brew, while premium brands, like Du Preez’s boutique LMC Rooibos Collection, are gaining interest in international markets like Taiwan and Scandinavia.

“Rooibos is truly a South African treasure,” Du Preez states. “I wanted to create a product that almost gives the same exclusivity and sensory experience that one would get from a perfume box.”

Rooibos has positioned itself as a symbol of what’s possible when science, tradition and smart marketing come together. If every problem can be solved with a cup of tea, then rooibos might just be the smartest brew of them all. 🍵



“MY VISION IS A PREMIUM GROWTH, SUSTAINABLE INDUSTRY THAT ADDS BENEFIT TO EVERY ROLE PLAYER...”

— Werner Nieuwoudt

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COULD AI HELP UNCOVER THE NEXT FOOTBALL STARS IN SOUTH AFRICA?

THIS TECH FIRM MAY HAVE THE ANSWER.

by Nick Said

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is creeping into every walk of life these days and the world of sport is no different, with data and the use of science behind the numbers becoming more prevalent. But that is not just at the elite level.

Could AI help uncover the next superstars in South Africa's talent-rich Gauteng province by analyzing and exposing the most promising players in the region?

Swiss tech company Talnets AG have partnered with the Gauteng Development League (GDL) to implement their technology to provide young players with the opportunity not only to be seen by local clubs but also win a contract overseas.

It follows a successful one-year trial period where the technology features the youth teams of Mamelodi Sundowns, Kaizer Chiefs and Orlando Pirates, the three biggest clubs in South Africa.

Talnets AG's technology uses AI to analyze a match based on over 60 different data points from video of GDL matches and turn this into useable numbers to create a detailed profile for each player over time.

This 'player card' becomes a CV for the player which lives online and is publicly shareable to scouts, coaches and clubs around the world.

But numbers never tell the whole story and the platform also creates short video highlights of the player that is assigned to their card and gives scouts the opportunity to visually see their actions as well as read their numbers.

Fungai Mapondera, originally from Zimbabwe but now based in Switzerland as Chief Marketing Officer with Talnets AG, explains the concept to FORBES AFRICA.

"It is about extracting the data from the match video and assigning the different data points based on what the player is doing in the game," Mapondera says. "In essence, you end up having a digital player card with all your data from all your games, plus the highlights from all those games, in one place.

"It makes it easy for you as the player to share that profile with anybody that may be scouting you."

There have already been successes. One player was scouted using the system and has had trials in Spain. And there are many others who are set to have their talent exposed to the world through the platform.

Behind it all is a meeting between technology and sport, something that has been rapidly accelerating in recent years, and is set to develop even further into the future as the cost of such platforms come down and therefore become more widely available.

Pin-pointing exactly what makes for useable and readable data has been important.

"There are so many things you can analyze in a game," says Talnets' Chief Executive Officer Darko Stanoevski.


"Our focus is on individual performance analysis, which requires a bit more of a specific approach.

"That framework could be simple things like goals and goalkeeper saves, to more intricate detail like the different kinds of passes, passive passes, passes that break the (defensive) line and so on.

"Grounded on the FIFA Football Language Model and built with top football experts, we have developed our framework with over 60 different data points to help us spot and identify young talents in an efficient, transparent and scalable way. Analyzing a full game based on this framework would give us around 600 data points for one team, and then it will be, on average, around 15-20 data points per player."

This data collection used to be done manually by an analyst, taking days or even weeks. But that has been now cut down to a few hours.

"The AI is an enabler to lower time dramatically, to automate this entire analysis process and make it more scalable and more efficient," Stanoevski says.

"It gets players visibility and access to clubs, to scouts and coaches that have access to the platform, and even more importantly, enabling the players themselves to share their profiles with anyone, so they can build a 'CV' and pursue their dream." 

Innovation, Collaboration And A Celebration Of Women-Led Ventures

As a flagship for the international Gold Emotion brand on the continent, Gold Emotion Africa brings something rare and radiant.



hand-rolled gold Cuban cigars for connoisseurs. The brand's Comte de Mazeray Champagne selection is an ode to artistry. The Brut cuvée has aromas of red fruit and spice, shimmering with golden specks and the Rosé offers floral complexity with the freshness of citrus.

Gifting That Shines

Whether it's a wedding, celebration, or corporate milestone, a gift is not just a gift, but a statement. Gold Emotion Africa aims to offer recipients more than a product; it's about creating an experience and a legacy. Also, exclusivity remains at the heart of the brand's identity. Products are released in limited batches, with custom gifting experiences tailored for discerning clientele.

A fusion of African pride and European craftsmanship, the brand reflects a confident, modern luxury, rooted in heritage but unafraid to push boundaries. It caters to both traditional and evolving tastes, celebrating connoisseurs, collectors, and the culturally curious.

It represents a new kind of African luxury.

Gold Emotion Africa is more than a product house, it's an experience. The concept was brought to life by Naila Akounou, a connoisseur of travel, quality, and refined living. According to her, the brand is a love letter to beauty, culture, and modern celebration.

"I wanted Africa to experience the best of both worlds, bringing the magic of gold back home," says Gold Emotion.

Setting A New Standard

From its first steps in South Africa, taken along the richest square mile on the continent, to its growing footprint, Gold Emotion Africa aims to set a new standard—one that's rooted in storytelling and emotion.

Every offering is a multisensory journey, where heritage blends with innovation and in a market hungry for premium, story-driven experiences, Gold Emotion Africa seems to have found its rhythm.

The product portfolio is as diverse as it is refined. Gold Emotion Africa's sparkling juices in apple and raspberry are pure, natural, and elegantly bottled with edible gold, perfect for non-alcoholic celebrations.

The brand also offers 24K mini-mills for golden garnishes and a signature 24K perfume infused with blackcurrant and bergamot.

At the heart of the collection is the Comte de Mazeray range, offering fine XO Cognac, with notes of oak and dried fruit and

Honoring A Legacy

By reimagining golden experiences through the lens of contemporary ideas, every product tells a story.

As the brand expands its presence across the continent, it remains committed to intentional luxury, where beauty meets sustainability, and exclusivity is never compromised.

Its emergence couldn't be any more timely as African consumers increasingly seek homegrown luxury that rivals the best in the world. Gold Emotion Africa positions itself as both a pioneer and a reflection of that evolution.

The purpose of the brand signals a broader shift in how the continent defines and consumes premium experiences through meaning. With a focus on innovation, collaboration, and elevating women-led ventures, Gold Emotion Africa isn't just crafting a brand; it's shaping a movement.

Behind the shimmer lies a quietly powerful story of vision and resilience, one that mirrors the journeys of Africa's next-generation leaders. This is a journey worth celebrating.

"Gold has always been precious. But with us, it becomes personal," says Gold Emotion.



GOLD EMOTION

THE HOT TREND LEAVING BUSINESS LEADERS OUT IN THE COLD—ARE YOU WILLING TO TAKE THE PLUNGE?

As winter approaches and the mercury dips, business leaders are bracing for the usual seasonal discomfort—cold mornings, foggy windscreens, and the annual return of thermal underwear.

But while many seek warmth and shelter, a growing number are doing quite the opposite.

They're flinging themselves into tubs of freezing water—on purpose.

Cold plunging—otherwise known as ice bathing—is winning over wellness circles with founders, entrepreneurs, and business leaders willingly swapping the warmth for water that could make even a penguin wince.

Once a recovery tool reserved for athletes nursing sore muscles, the humble ice bath has rebranded itself as a staple of the self-care scene.

Fill a tub—or wheelie-bin, bath, barrel, or purpose-built plunge pod—with ice and water, then jump in, breathe through the shock, and sit still while your limbs freeze over.

All it takes, they say, is a few minutes of spine-tingling submersion, a deep breath or two, and the mental fortitude not to leap out screaming.

Some plunge first thing in the morning to start the day with a jolt, while others incorporate it into workout recovery routines.

But behind the brave faces and blue lips lies a frosty question: why are so many in the business community throwing themselves into the deep freeze in the name of health?

Part of the answer lies in the changing nature of wellness itself.

Health and wellness were once about a balanced diet and gentle exercise.

Fast forward to today, and it seems caring for your body is not enough—you have to show you're punishing it and testing your own personal physical and mental limits.

And you get bonus points if it's filmed and uploaded to social media, preferably with inspirational music and a caption about mental strength.

Supporters of this frosty phenomenon also point to a range of alleged benefits, including sharper focus, improved mood, better sleep, reduced inflammation, and boosted resilience—all qualities prized in today's high-performance business environment.



By
Gary Martin

But not everyone's convinced.

While some research does support the release of feel-good chemicals after cold exposure, much of the broader hype is, well, on thin ice.

Besides, to those who have never taken the plunge, the trend can appear less like a path to enlightenment and more like an elaborate form of torture.

The fact is, plunging into an icy bath is a wintertime ritual that seems, quite literally, out of touch with reality.

After all, most of us spend winter avoiding cold at all costs—layering up, lingering in hot showers, and cranking the heater at the

The writer and professor is CEO of the Australian Institute of Management Western Australia and a workplace and social affairs expert.

first hint of a chill.

Strangely enough, while most of us are dodging draughts and chasing heat, others are splashing out on backyard plunge pools just to freeze themselves on purpose.

None of this is to say that cold plunges are inherently bad.

For some, they offer a genuine boost.

But surely, it's possible to care for one's health without turning it into a test of endurance?

In the rush to fine-tune every habit, we can forget that self-care is meant to comfort, not toughen us.

That aside, for those still keen to take the plunge, some basic advice is available.

Start small, don't stay in too long, and don't let the trend mask your own instincts.

If it feels more punishing than serving any particular purpose, it's worth paying attention.

And here's a thought.

In a world that increasingly treats discomfort as a badge of honor, real resilience might just be about picking what's right for you—even if that means giving an ice bath the flick.

So, this winter, while others are busy tipping ice into tubs and timing their plunges, it might be wiser to think about what wellbeing really looks like for you.

After all, wellness doesn't have to come with a frost warning. ❄️

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AI IS CHANGING THE PRICE YOU PAY—BUT WHO'S KEEPING IT HONEST, AND WHAT'S THE PARTICULAR SIGNIFICANCE FOR AFRICA?

Artificial intelligence (AI) is no longer a futuristic concept in today's hyper-connected and fiercely competitive global landscape. It is overhauling even the bedrock of business operations. Pricing, once the carefully-guarded territory of economists, marketing experts, and strategists, is now increasingly orchestrated by algorithms that learn, predict, and adapt with remarkable precision. AI's growing influence on pricing strategies, particularly through individualized and dynamic pricing, unlocks new opportunities for businesses to optimize revenue, personalize customer experiences, and react swiftly to market changes. Yet, this powerful transformation casts a long shadow of ethical, regulatory, and transparency challenges that demand urgent attention.

The engine driving AI's impact on pricing is its ability to handle and dissect colossal datasets at speeds and depths far beyond human capability. AI systems can continuously refine pricing strategies by interpreting real-time variables, from consumer behavior and inventory fluctuations to market demand, competitive pressures, and broader economic indicators. This empowers businesses to transcend static models and embrace fluid pricing systems that adjust dynamically to changing circumstances.

One of the consequential facets of AI-driven pricing is its ability to implement true personalization. AI can segment customers into ever-finer groups or even tailor individual offers by analyzing digital footprints, purchasing histories, geographic contexts, and demographic profiles. This can lead to individualized pricing, an issue identified in the 2017 book I co-authored with Evan Hurwitz titled *Artificial Intelligence and Economic Theory*. Individualized pricing results in two shoppers browsing the same online store but being shown different prices for the same item, based on their predicted willingness to pay.

Dynamic and individualized pricing powered by AI also offers considerable advantages in industries with volatile demand, like airlines, hospitality, e-commerce, and entertainment. Airlines have long used dynamic pricing to adjust fares based on booking patterns and competitor activity. Now, AI amplifies this capacity across sectors. A hotel chain, for example, might adjust room rates not only seasonally but minute-by-minute based on local events, real-time competitor pricing, and the urgency detected in a user's browsing behavior. These capabilities empower businesses to forecast demand more accurately, manage inventories more efficiently, and maximize revenue in near real-time.

However, the rise of AI-driven pricing is not without ethical peril. Individualized pricing raises fundamental concerns about fairness, consent, and transparency. When algorithms levy different prices based on personal data, often without customers' explicit awareness, issues of discrimination and

manipulation quickly emerge. Critics argue that, without safeguards, AI could exploit vulnerable consumers, charging higher prices to those less likely to comparison shop or negotiate.

Moreover, the opacity of many AI systems compounds the problem. Consumers often have little understanding of why they receive certain prices, and even companies deploying these algorithms may not fully grasp how intricate models arrive at pricing decisions. This lack of transparency threatens to erode consumer trust, expose companies to reputational risks, and attract increased regulatory scrutiny. The risks are particularly acute in critical sectors like healthcare, housing, and financial services, where pricing affects access to essential goods and services.

Addressing these challenges requires a multi-stakeholder approach. Businesses must embed ethical considerations into designing and deploying AI pricing systems, ensuring that training data is representative and free from bias, informing consumers about how data affects pricing, and subjecting pricing algorithms to regular audits for fairness and compliance. Explainable AI (XAI) techniques, which aim to make algorithmic decisions more transparent, will be indispensable in restoring



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By
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ing consumer trust and enabling meaningful oversight.

Researchers, too, have a critical role. Traditional economic theories on price discrimination, value-based pricing, and demand elasticity must be integrated with cutting-edge AI innovations to forge new models that are both economically sound and socially responsible. Cross-disciplinary collaboration among economists, computer scientists, ethicists, and legal scholars will be vital to construct frameworks that balance innovation with the protection of consumer rights.

Policymakers must also act decisively. Existing consumer protection and competition laws need updating to address the unique risks AI-mediated individualized pricing poses. Transparency mandates, robust data protection regulations, and enforceable fair pricing standards can ensure that AI-driven markets remain competitive and equitable. Because AI pricing systems often operate globally, fostering international cooperation will be essential to develop coherent regulatory approaches across borders.

Globally, these shifts have particular significance for Africa. With its rapid digital growth alongside socioeconomic challenges, African markets stand to both gain and face hurdles with AI-driven pricing. Ensuring transparent and equitable deployment is crucial where affordable access is key. AI offers great potential for inclusive growth, fair resource access, and locally tailored innovation. By prioritizing ethical AI and strong regulation, Africa can turn these challenges into opportunities, creating pricing models that boost revenue and foster sustainable economic development across the continent. **F**

RICHES OR CURSES: AFRICA'S CRITICAL MINERALS DILEMMA

In 2024, a group of Australian researchers (Boafo et al.) asked a pertinent question: “The race for critical minerals in Africa: A blessing or another resource curse?” The continent is abundant with natural resources, but this has often been to our detriment. As the African Development Bank (AfDB) referred to it, Africa is faced with the paradox of plenty. In other words, despite an abundance of natural resources, countries often contend with little to no economic growth, low GDP and worrying developmental metrics. Now, we are seeing greater demand for critical or rare minerals, particularly through the lens of the fourth industrial revolution (4IR) and the just transition, and this paradox emerges once again. Studies suggest that there is a clear boom.

For example, the *Critical Minerals Market Review 2023* by the International Energy Agency (IEA) found that between 2017 and 2022, demand for lithium had tripled, cobalt had risen 70%, and nickel had increased 40%. In 2022, the market size of critical minerals had reached \$320 billion, with expectations that this figure would double by 2030 and quadruple by 2050. This demand has seen a sharp increase in investment, and Africa is called to respond accordingly.

This demand and investment, however, present vast economic and socio-ecological challenges for the continent. Perhaps, it is necessary to begin by understanding why these minerals are critical or rare. The very challenge of extracting these minerals is one point. Another point is that they are needed for technologies and economies to function, and there are no viable substitutes. Then, there is also the ever-present concern that these supply chains could be disrupted. For example, 47% of the world’s cobalt reserves, which are used to power lithium-ion batteries and are a component in nearly all our devices, are found in Africa.

Given the wealth of our reserves, these critical minerals could be considered a blessing for Africa. However, we are quickly seeing that the current status quo poses a distinct challenge. Anyone familiar with cobalt extraction in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), for instance, will know that these practices have been reportedly referred to as modern-day slavery. Much of the conflict in this region is also defined by this critical mineral. When we consider the history of Africa, we know all too well that this could be a repetition. Ongoing conflict, instability and war



By
Letlhokwa Mpedi

have categorized much of our journey with natural resources. Mining for precious jewels, for instance, has been associated with the term ‘conflict or *blood diamonds*’. In the movie, *Blood Diamonds*, the term ‘T.I.A. or This is Africa’ is used as a sign of resignation towards this reality.

With critical minerals, these worries arise once again but are compounded. There are also concerns of environmental degradation, which has emerged as a distinct worry, particularly in areas without regulation. In Ghana, for instance, informal gold miners, who practice ‘galamsey’ (small-scale illegal mining), have reportedly triggered

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degradation, water pollution and deforestation on an unprecedented scale. This begs the question: how do we address these challenges?

If we consider the potential for growth, development, job creation and government revenue, critical minerals could be Africa’s trump card. However, if critical minerals are going to contribute to Africa’s sustainable development, these perennial challenges require solutions. Boafo et al., for instance, advocate for a cohesive regional response. They call for the African Union (AU) to finalize the Africa Critical Minerals Strategy as a guide for negotiating mining contracts and agreements, drawing from global good mining practices. They further call for individual African countries to revisit their national policies and regulations to tip in favor of the opportunities embedded in the increased demand. Finally, they outline that an incentive scheme could enable the local private sector to emerge as a key player. These are well-thought-out solutions that should be considered, but I would add that more needs to be done.

In driving sustainability, legal and policy regulatory frameworks are required, but within these frameworks, there also needs to be a distinct focus on challenging poor governance, addressing the lack of transparency in mining practices and supply chains and including monitoring and enforcement mechanisms. In this shift, the worry of a curse might be reframed as a blessing. **B**

WHAT IF UNEMPLOYMENT COULD BE A GOOD THING?

Min-soo and Ji-young Kim are 67 and 65 years old respectively. They live in Incheon, South Korea. They don't have children. They never felt like they could afford them.

Both were lucky enough to work through the AI revolution of the 2030s, Min-soo as a logistics coordinator and Ji-young as a care provider.

But for these zoomers (people born between 1997 and 2012), the future looks grim.

For one thing, they won't be retiring anytime soon. South Korea raised the statutory retirement age to 75 back in 2048 to ease pressure on the collapsing pension system. Even so, their payouts will be minimal.

The National Pension Fund, once one of the largest in the world, was depleted a decade ago. Their private savings were never enough, squeezed by rising costs and a lifetime of economic anxiety.

Their neighborhood is quieter now. Most of their peers moved to the megacities or passed away. Schools nearby are shuttered. Buses run less frequently. What used to be a bustling urban hub is slowly turning into a ghost town.

And they are the lucky ones.

The Kims' story is a glimpse into South Korea's future—and possibly the future of much of the world.

What's the cause?

Global warming? War? Artificial Intelligence?

Actually, it's far simpler. We are just not having enough children.

For a population to remain stable, you need 2.1 children per woman.

But South Korea's fertility rate stands at just 0.75. By 2060, the country's population is projected to shrink by 30% and half of that population will be over 65.

Without interventions, the working-age population will collapse. The tax base will erode. Economic growth will reverse. Culture will stagnate.

And this isn't just a Korean issue. China, Japan, Italy, Spain, and even the U.S. are all trending in the same direction. Demographic winter is arriving faster than most policymakers are willing to admit.

So how do we circumvent this ageing armageddon?

The most obvious is for governments to incentivize their populations to have more kids. But it turns out people are complicated and the various incentives governments have offered in the past, such as direct payouts, tax reductions, education and housing benefits, haven't made a difference.

So, if we can't find ways to increase the production of humans, which has been the historical path to growth, what are the alternatives?

Well, one is to remove the numbers of those that are dependent. And as unthinkable as this is, it will likely happen naturally if we cannot solve this supply and demand problem.

But there is a third option. And that is to increase production without humans. Or put another way, to do the things that we used to do with machines.

And the technology that is opening this possibility is obviously artificial intelligence.

The theory is simple.

AI will eventually go beyond human-level intelligence.

Digital agents won't simply write code. They will make decisions and carry out tasks that humans used to be paid to do. And if we can do this in a world where clean energy becomes abundant, then production costs start trending towards zero.

In this more utopian future, Min-soo still works in logistics, but he's no longer stuck juggling spreadsheets or calling drivers. His main agent, FreightBot, tracks shipments in real time, automatically reroutes deliveries when there's traffic or weather delays, and negotiates the cheapest delivery rates with different couriers. It even sends alerts to customers and reschedules deliveries when no one is home.

And Ji-young is supported by MediAgent, a virtual assistant that checks in with patients



By
Colin Iles

The writer curates thought leadership events that inspire teams and amplify brands; visit coliniles.com.


daily via chat, tracks their vitals through wearable devices, and flags potential issues before they become emergencies. It also books appointments, fills prescriptions, and updates medical records—all while staying fully compliant with regulations.

They don't have to micromanage these agents. They train them once, set guardrails, and the agents take it from there.

In this future, Min-Soo and Ji-Young only work a few hours a week. Which gave them the time and financial security to have a family and spend time with both their children and grandchildren.

If we want a world where family and community really do come first, then governments have a difficult road ahead of them.

They'll need to help whole populations navigate a world where technology doesn't just change how we work—it changes whether we work at all.

Because we're heading towards a future where unemployment may rise not from collapse, but from success. And for the first time in history, we may need to ask: what if fewer jobs could be a good thing? 

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THE REAL CASE FOR DEGLOBALIZATION WITH INTERDEPENDENCE, ON ONE'S OWN TERMS

It was 1849. European power at its zenith. French writer Jean-Baptiste wrote, “The more things change, the more they stay the same.”

Deglobalization, as a term, has gained much currency lately. The mythical era of solidarity and peace has apparently ground to a rude halt. Xanadu has disappeared, we are reliably informed. As if it ever existed.

Life imitates art.

The subconscious aim of Life is to find expression, and it is Art that offers forms through which one realizes that inner energy. So it is with influencers and role models.

‘We the living’ follow that shape and the promise it holds... Toward that ethereal concept of happiness that only exists in dreams.

Today, 2025 is no different to the world in 1925, 1825 or 1725.

A world being promised for long, but deliverance remains elusive.

Wherein large swaths of humanity remain deprived, might is right, the meek is yet to inherit the Earth.

We are now being told to be independent and self-reliant. The great Mahatma Gandhi’s battle-cry: Swadeshi, as in ‘own country’. To kick the marauding British manufacturing machinery out of their most prized market.

Ask the millions of Africans who always had to fend for themselves while the colonial machinery stomped to its own imperious tune on their culture, production and wealth.

Covid showed us the fallacy (read vaccine shortage) of relying on others.

The death of USAID just confirmed it.

We have known for some time that the world’s ‘greatest’ nation on Earth is merely a nation in the making. Where people come to live their dreams. An ideological utopia yet laced with challenges of homelessness, crime, racism, elitism and a shockingly high Gini coefficient. The U.S. ranks below Iran in this respect; just to put some context.

Every country deserves the government it gets. A country that has been the beacon to so much innovation, wealth creation and peace-keeping, now halting to take stock, being dragged back by those that have been left behind and realizing that ‘charity does begin at home’, leaves a void for many. Intellectually, militarily, economically. Thus, clarion calls for resilience.

Promises and rhetoric aside, the truth is trade and globalization have never really embraced and supported any of the core human aspirations of brotherhood, equality and honesty.

Laws created by a few and rejected by the many. Politics prevailing over policy. Agreements celebrated yet flouted when it suited the stronger ones.

A veritable minefield of hubris and nepotism. A boulevard of broken dreams. Hence the pragmatist in me is

delighted.

Consumerism and conscious consumption were an export of the West. As it looks inwardly and seeks to assert its own brand of self-reliance, it can only have a positive impact on climate and people alike globally.

There is nothing more compelling than necessity.

The sheer necessity to shake themselves off a condition, that Uncle Sam is watching and protecting, is perhaps the greatest contribution the current U.S. administration has made to humankind.

Tough love never marred a strong man.

So, as the wheels of the 1944 Bretton Woods framework and the 1980s Washington Consensus fall apart, let there be a new order. One that focuses on jobs and prosperity domestically. By seeking new alliances, getting rid of colonial legacies and believing in one’s ability to process and manufacture at home.

Success is a function of confidence, which in turn is a function of understanding one’s comparative advantages.

Irish writer Oscar Wilde had said that “although there has been fog in London for centuries, one notices the beauty and wonder of the fog because poets and painters have taught the loveliness of such effects”.

So, it must be with ambitions. Learn what is possible from others and do it for yourself.

Because deep within the noise and saber-rattling of the mighty U.S., the real issue is the



By
Sanjeev Gupta

The writer has 30-plus years of experience in corporate finance, new markets strategy and C-suite roles in Africa, the GCC and India, and has done significant global fundraising in these markets.

‘sound’ of different music. The music a doomed man hears, when he realizes his absolute vulnerability.


Washing machines, air conditioners, brooms and mops aside; today the flagship of U.S. armed forces, the F-15 fighter jet, depends on China for key supplies.

Same goes for the poster child of American capitalism: Tesla.

If you can’t beat them, might as well join them?

So, if a great nation can change direction, not out of greed but out of cold fear; what’s stopping the rest of us? Therein lies, Ladies and Gentlemen, the real case for deglobalization with interdependence, on one’s own terms.

That will be the true test for resilience. Newton’s first law: an object at rest remains at rest, or if in motion, remains in motion at a constant velocity unless acted on by a net external force. So, believe in the fact that force is here now, pulling your doors open and shattering your windowpanes.

Are you listening? I see Africa is, albeit slowly. But surely making things happen locally. Go and see for yourself, the increasing number of industrial parks and manufacturing zones processing its own raw produce into finished form. Across the African Savannah. 



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The U17 team in action in December last year

By NICHOLAS GLEESON

HOW THE ISLAND OF MAURITIUS IS KICKING OFF CHANGE IN WOMEN'S FOOTBALL.

The tiny Indian Ocean Island of Mauritius is known for its beautiful beaches, sandy shores and tropical charm... but not yet for its football prowess.

Soccer remains hugely popular on the island, but with around 1.25-million people calling it home, it is the size of a modest city elsewhere on the continent.

That makes creating a competitive team on the international stage a challenge, but there are plans afoot to develop the game in Mauritius, especially for girls, to help the country punch above its weight.

Mauritius are among the lowest-ranked teams globally in the FIFA Women's World Rankings, but with a new generation of starlets coming through, Mauritius Football Association (MFA) women's football development officer and Under-17 national team coach Anielle Collet can see a brighter future.

She has worked in football for the last 23 years, having been drawn to the game as a young girl herself, and has seen many positive changes.

She believes football is not just a sport in Mauritius, but an important part of the social fabric of the island.

"It's part of our culture," Collet tells FORBES AFRICA.

"You can see everyone eager every weekend to watch the games. From where I come from, a small island, football is like a community base; everyone involved in the game is part of this community."

Collet has been at the forefront of football development in Mauritius for the past few years, and is proud of the progress made by the MFA with the professionalization and promotion of the

women's game.

"We can see that the level of competition is increasing more and more," she says. "Also, we now have players that are playing abroad in France, the United States and Canada. We can see there is improvement and at the football association, we are putting much effort into the promotion of women's football.

"To market it and commercialize it, we have a social platform where it is visible everywhere. We can see this change now.

"Before, it was stagnant. But now there is an increase because we have academies and a league that is running. We started to have female coaches and the game generally has become more visible."

The MFA has been following a strategic plan, starting at the youth and grassroots level, to develop a clear player pathway to the senior national side and the professional level, according to Collet. This involves the improvement of not only players, but staff as well.

The impact of these initiatives has been positive, with the impact measurable and easy to see in certain areas of development.

"We can see now that there are more girls that are keen to play football because there are special programs put in place by FIFA and football academies, and we can see that schools are starting to do inter-college matches (for girls)," Collet says.

"This will contribute to the development of a clear player pathway as they get the opportunity to showcase their talent at youth level on the COSAFA stage. This furthermore gives the players the opportunity to emerge at senior level."

Mauritius also competed in the COSAFA Under-17 Girls' Championship in Windhoek, Namibia, from May 10-17. 

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