

FOUNDED WITH Mail & Guardian

The Continent

كيف تعيش يا
مسكين والمعيشة
دارت جنحين

الكرامة والحريه
لا مخزن لا رعية

**Hungry,
angry,
broke**

*And it's not
just Morocco*

Photo: Abu Adem Muhammed/
Anadolu Agency via Getty Images



COVER: It's not just you: life is more expensive, wages are worth less and many leaders either can't or won't do what it takes to improve the situation. In Nigeria, a workers' strike for better wages plunged the country into darkness and closed major airports but the government has not offered them acceptable solutions yet (p10). Those workers are not unique. New and exclusive data analysis by our team shows that across Africa, protests about the cost of living have doubled since the pandemic. Increasingly frustrated people have staged more than 5,000 of them in the past five years! (p11)

Inside:

- **Harambee:** What to do when the government is indifferent (p14)
- **Benin:** Disturbing yet deeply entrenched child labour (p16)
- **Photos:** Fishing for survival in the dark shadow of Big Oil (p19)
- **Uganda:** Cricket's spectacular recovery from Idi Amin's blow (p23)
- **Film:** Kenya's Mau Mau rebellion – from the fighters' perspective (p26)
- **Quiz:** Where are the thousand-year-old Loropéni ruins? (p28)



SUBSCRIBE

Get the latest edition of *The Continent*, plus every back issue (all 164 of them) by visiting thecontinent.org. To subscribe (for free!), save *The Continent's* number to your phone (+27 73 805 6068) and send us a message on WhatsApp/Signal/Telegram. Or email us: read@thecontinent.org



Roll up: A delivery worker transports traditional Baladi bread from a bakery to a market in Al-Azhar, Cairo.

Photo: Roger Anis/Getty Images

EGYPT

Cairo does the unthinkable

The subsidised price of Egypt's most widely eaten bread, baladi, went from four piasters to 20 this week. The open market price is 115 piasters. Technically, this week's price increase for subsidy cardholders – the poorest households – is just 25 US cents but bread prices are politically sensitive in Egypt. The 2011 protests that ousted Hosni Mubarak started after the price of bread rose because of wheat shortages. Riots erupted in 1977 when the government tried to fiddle with bread subsidies.

KOREA

Trash talk, money rain and boom boxes

Seoul has suspended a military pact with North Korea after Pyongyang sent 3,500 balloons of rubbish over the border. The North says these “gifts of sincerity” were in response to South Korean activists sending balloons with anti-Pyongyang fliers. Seoul also reinstalled blaring loudspeakers along the border but held off broadcasting propaganda to North Koreans when Pyongyang said it would not send more trash balloons unless South Korean activists sent their own. A North Korean defector in the south sent balloons with leaflets and \$1 notes up north on Thursday. All bets are now off.

SOUTH AFRICA

Shell takes another L in seismic ruling

South Africa's Supreme Court of Appeal dismissed Shell's appeal against an earlier ruling that halted its oil and gas exploration off the Wild Coast in the Eastern Cape. Two years ago, a lower court found the UK petrogiant's permit to explore for oil and gas in that area had been given without fully consulting the local communities. Cape communities, especially fisherfolk and marine-life protectors, oppose Shell's plans for seismic surveys, saying they will disrupt and harm marine life.

PALESTINE

Spain applies to join genocide case against Israel

Following in the footsteps of Colombia, Libya, Mexico and Nicaragua and Palestinians, on Thursday, Spain applied to join the genocide case brought by South Africa against Israel's war in Gaza, at the International Court of Justice. It's the first European country to apply. Spain's decision comes just days after it joined Ireland and Norway to recognise the State of Palestine on 28 May. Slovenia recognised the Palestinian state this week. Nearly three quarters of UN member states recognise the Palestinian state.

BASKETBALL

North African hoop dominance disrupted

The new basketball kings of Africa are Angola's Petro de Luanda. They are the first team to win the Basketball Africa League that is not north African. The fourth season of the continent's most elite league concluded on Saturday in Kigali with the finals pitting Petro de Luanda against Egypt's Al Ahly Ly and ending 107-94 for the Angolans. The third-place game resulted in a dominant showing by Nigeria's Rivers Hoopers, who beat South Africa's Cape Town Tigers 80-57.



Spaniard in the works: Emilio Nsue, captain of Equatorial Guinea's men's football side. Photo: Franck Fife/AFP

EQUATORIAL GUINEA

Chaos ensues after Nsue fails to ensure his eligibility

The national men's football team captain, Emilio Nsue, was not eligible for the Equatorial Guinea national team throughout the 11 years he has played for it. A Fifa ruling on Monday said Nsue holds both Spanish and Equatoguinean nationality but only got the latter in 2013, after he had represented Spain in 19 friendly and 26 official matches between 2005 and 2011, which made him a Spanish international. Fifa has now stripped Equatorial Guinea of two wins in the 2026 World Cup qualifiers and suspended Nsue from national team games for six months.

ETHIOPIA

Credible evidence of genocide in Tigray

There is a “reasonable basis to believe” that Ethiopian government forces and their allies committed crimes against humanity between 2020 and 2022 in Tigray, according to The New Lines Institute, a US-based think-tank. It said in a report that the military of neighbouring Eritrea, which helped the Ethiopian federal government to fight Tigray rebels, had “the intent to destroy Tigrayans as an ethnic group” and calls for prosecution at the International Court of Justice. Ethiopia has repeatedly denied such accusations.



Blocked: A wrecked armoured vehicle in the path of a convoy taking food aid to Tigray. Photo: Eduardo Soteras/AFP

ECONOMY

Living on credit, dying in debt

Global public debt is \$97-trillion, according to a new report by the UN Trade and Development agency. More than 60% of the debt is held by the US (\$33-trillion), China (\$15-trillion) and Japan (\$10.4-trillion) alone. The US (population: 333-million) owes more than all developing countries put together (population: 3.3-billion). Collectively, developing countries owe \$29-trillion, a third of global public debt. Many of these countries are spending more on debt service than on essential services, as their loans are given at much higher interest rates.

UNITED NATIONS

Somalia on the Security Council

For the first time in decades the UN Security Council will be talking to Somalia – rather than about it. With 179 out of 193 votes in favour, Somalia has won one of the 10 rotating seats on the council. The country, which has not sat at that table since the 1970s, will be a non-permanent member of the Security Council in 2025 and 2026, in the seat allocated to the East Africa region. The win is a big nod to Somalia’s progress in restoring peace and security at home – this has been elusive since the fall of former president Mohamed Siad Barre in 1991.



Hard rock: Botswana is considering increasing its stake in De Beers now that Anglo-American is selling it off.

BOTSWANA

No love lost for Anglo-American

If and when London-listed Anglo American spins off its diamond operation, De Beers, Botswana will be open to increasing its De Beers stake beyond the current 15%. This is to keep out “bad guys” with “impatient capital”, President Mokgweetsi Masisi told a diamond industry news outlet. To avoid a takeover bid from a competitor, Anglo American said last month that it would demerge from De Beers and its South African platinum operation. Masisi says this could be good news for his country, which was already negotiating hard with Anglo-American for a fairer deal for Botswana in the De Beers partnership.

NIGERIA

Further collapse hinders rescue of trapped miners

Despite rescue efforts, as many as 44 people remained trapped in a gold mine in Shiroro district in Nigeria’s Niger state, four days after the pit collapsed. Rescue attempts have been fruitless: the first responders had to run for their own lives because the mine walls, softened by heavy rain earlier, kept collapsing. One person had been confirmed dead by Thursday but most others were unaccounted for.

CHAD

Totally legitimate president welcomes Russia’s Lavrov

Russia’s foreign minister, Sergey Lavrov, is the first top-level foreign official to visit Chad since President Mahamat Déby turned his military government into an elected one last month, albeit in a disputed poll. In addition to dropping in on Chad, Lavrov – on yet another Africa tour this week – visited Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Republic of Congo, and Guinea. In Burkina Faso, he discussed potential military deals and claimed that Russian relations with Africans “will never be colonial”.

Elections

Staying power

In South Africa, India and Mexico, incumbent parties retained power – though not without a few hiccups.

Three of the most influential countries in the so-called “Global South” declared election results in the past week.

First in Africa’s largest economy, South Africa, voters – those who bothered to pitch up, at least – delivered a stinging rebuke to the dominance of the African National Congress. Its share of the vote fell to just 40%, down from 57.5% in 2019.

On Thursday, party leader and incumbent President Cyril Ramaphosa said the ANC’s preferred option was to form a government of national unity with any willing opposition party. “The results show South Africans want all parties to work together,” said a party spokesperson.

Next up was India where the Bharatiya Janata Party – a Hindu nationalist party – received the most seats in Parliament. President Narendra Modi will almost certainly continue to govern over the country of 1.4-billion people. This victory was not as comprehensive as predicted: the BJP failed to secure a parliamentary majority, and the opposition alliance

performed better than predicted. “The election has shown democracy remains strong and cannot be easily overturned in a country as large and diverse as India,” concluded Chatham House, a think tank.

Finally, in Mexico, Claudia Sheinbaum made history as the first woman to be elected president. The climate scientist and former Mexico City mayor ran for the ruling Morena party, as the successor to incumbent Andrés Manuel López Obrador. She won in a landslide.

The polls, described as the most violent in modern history, left 38 candidates and two voters dead. When Sheinbaum, who is Jewish, won, she thanked Jesus – to much confusion. The Jesus in question is not of Nazareth but rather her husband, Jesús María Tarriba, Mexico’s incoming first gentleman. ■



Sombre rolé: Mexico's president-elect, Claudia Sheinbaum, was mayor of Mexico City. Photo: Carl De Souza/AFP

Sudan

Satellite images show hundreds of new graves

It's unclear whether civilians in El Fasher were caught in the crossfire, or deliberately targeted.

At least 209 people were buried over the past few months in El Fasher, the capital of North Darfur state, according to an analysis of satellite imagery by Yale University's Humanitarian Research Lab. This corresponds with the advance of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) paramilitary group, on the city.

"Some 209 recently created mounds consistent with civilian burial sites [were] observed in cemeteries across El-Fasher, consistent with reports of conflict-related civilian fatalities," said the Yale researchers. They added, however, that fatalities in the city almost certainly "far exceed those represented by activity observed at the cemeteries".

In addition, the researchers concluded that the RSF was "systematically destroying civilian dwellings in neighborhoods with

significant Zaghawa populations". The Zaghawa are an ethnic group.

About two-million people live in the city, though many people have fled as the violence intensified. Capturing North Darfur would represent a major breakthrough for the RSF, as it would give it uninterrupted supply lines to bring arms and equipment from Libya.

Accessing independent information from this area is difficult, which is why this analysis of satellite imagery is so important.

The Yale findings corroborate the little reporting that has emerged from the city in recent weeks which indicated that civilians were living through horror. A report in the *New Humanitarian* last month said: "Artillery shells are tearing through displacement camps and crashing through residential homes. Food and medical supplies are running out. People are fleeing communities without being able to bury the bodies of loved ones."

In a separate incident, local activists say that up to 100 civilians were killed in a recent massacre by RSF forces in the village of Wad al-Noura in Gezira, in central Sudan. According to the Wad Madani Resistance Committee, a mass grave was created in the village's public square.

It said that the Sudanese army, which is fighting RSF for control of the country, did not respond to pleas for help. ■

New to *The Continent*? Press the button.

Pressing this button on your phone will open a WhatsApp chat with *The Continent*. Send us a message to receive a brand new edition of Africa's most widely read newspaper every Saturday morning. Subscribing is totally free.

You can also subscribe via email, Signal or Telegram:
Read@thecontinent.org or +27738056068

Share real news.

The Continent

Nigeria

Four strikes in one year

Nigerian wages were already low. Thanks to inflation, they are now worth even less.

Pelumi Salako in Lagos

For nearly two days this week, Nigeria's national grid was offline — shutdown because workers were on strike. Travellers were left stranded as aviation workers stayed away and major airports closed. The co-ordinated wave of strikes is the fourth in one year of President Bola Tinubu.

“We demand a living wage,” the Nigeria Labour Congress posted on social media. The union proposes a minimum wage of 494,000 naira (\$333) a month. This would increase the public wage bill to 9.5-trillion naira (about \$6.46-billion), according to Information Minister Mohammed Idris.

Kolawole Damilola, a striking health worker in Lagos, said half of her income was now going to food and transport. “How do I meet up with other expenses if I don't agitate for a salary increment?”

Although the wage concerns predate the current president, in some ways the strikes *are* of Tinubu's making – his economic policies, including scrapping

fuel subsidies and floating the naira, have eroded workers' purchasing power.

On Tuesday, union representatives started negotiations with the government and relaxed the strike to give the government a “grace period” of one week to come back with a better proposal. The government had not improved its 60,000 naira (\$38) offer by the end of Thursday.

The benefit of any minimum wage increase may be short-lived, however, if inflation continues at its current rate. “We are still going to have workers under pressure because the daily cost of things is simply too much,” said Joachim MacEbong, an analyst at Stears, a Lagos-based market intelligence firm. ■



On strike: The Nigeria Labour Congress is demanding that the government raise the minimum wage. Photo: Olukayode Jaiyeola/NurPhoto via Getty Images

Broke, hungry and angry

Protests in African nations, over food, prices and pay, have more than doubled in the last five years.



Public rage: Nigerians rally against high living costs in Abuja. Struggling economies in Africa are leaving many unable to afford basic staples. Photo: Kola Sulaimon/AFP

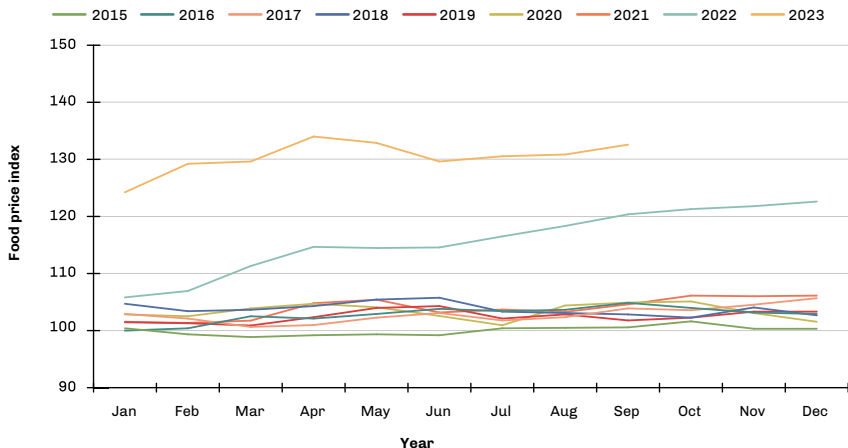
Lydia Namubiru

This year alone, Moroccans have held more than 100 protests over wages and the cost of living. From Agadir to Rabat, cleaners, engineers, health workers and retirees have staged sit-ins demanding better and more timely pay, and action on high consumer prices.

“Everything is expensive and wages have not changed much except for teachers,” says Moroccan journalist Mohamed Acheari. In April, after a four-month delay, the ministry of education started paying a portion of the \$140 monthly salary increase earlier agreed with Moroccan teachers’ unions.

The past six years have been akin to

Food prices in Morocco compared to a 2015 baseline



Source: UN Food and Agricultural Organisation

an extended bread protest in Morocco because food price inflation there has been brutal. It peaked at 32% in February 2023. Concerns about food, prices and pay have triggered at least 916 protests since 2019 – an average of 15 a month. That is very unusual for the country – there were only seven such protests in the three years before this period. This, Acheari says, is the new “normal”, given the economy.

A wider concern

At least 12 other African governments have come under increased citizen pressure in recent years because of the cost of living crisis. In Kenya, these protests doubled in 2020 from what had been in the two years prior. Authorities in South Africa, Tunisia, Nigeria, DR Congo, Algeria, Sudan and Uganda have come under similar pressure.

The Continent reviewed nearly 59,000 reports on protests in Africa collated by the

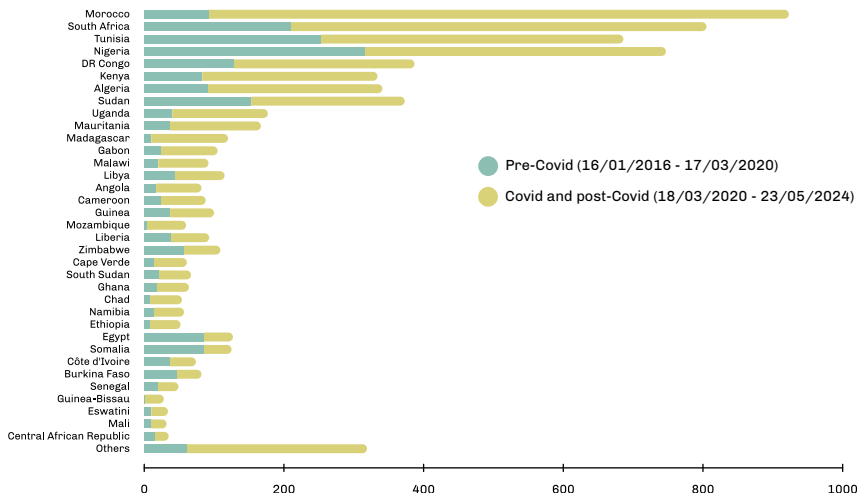
Armed Conflict Location and Data Project between 16 January 2016 and 23 May 2024. From these, we tagged and isolated 7,164 protests whose description indicated that they were driven by food, pay (wages and salaries) and price concerns.

Most were peaceful protests, like sit-ins called by trade unions. But 13% escalated into riots, with protesters blocking roads, burning tires, looting food from government warehouses or attacking food and produce middlemen.

The pandemic and other shocks

Most of these protests took place after the Covid pandemic: 5,039 protests since 18 March 2020, when a global pandemic was officially declared, compared to 2,125 in an equal period before then. Across the continent, cost-of-living protests have more than doubled since the pandemic. But there is more to it than just Covid.

Cost of living protests and riots (16 Jan - 23 May 2024)



Morocco's crunch came with a shift in its agricultural policy. The country had grown its agricultural production to \$12-billion a year under an ambitious policy called the Green Morocco Plan. But as its agricultural success grew, authorities started pushing farmers towards export crops, especially vegetables. Eventually, traders were selling fresh produce in Morocco for nearly as much as it would fetch if they sent it to Europe. Yet the minimum wage in Morocco is just 275 euros, compared with 956 and 1,323 euros respectively in Portugal and Spain.

Protests across the country have been calling on the government to prioritise “food sovereignty”, instead of exports. As harvests diminish because of drought driven by climate change, those sentiments are likely to get even louder.

In Nigeria, where a strike shutdown the national grid earlier this week, the pressure

which has been on at least since 2016 has a lot to do with stagnant wages.

This has been exacerbated by record-breaking inflation – a 28-year high of 33%. The current minimum wage is 30,000 naira (\$19) a month, but trade unionists say that 494,000 naira (\$318) would be more reasonable. In ongoing negotiations with trade unions in Abuja, the government has offered 60,000 naira (\$40).

Stephen Onyeiwu, an economics professor, wrote in *The Conversation* that this is insufficient to lift workers out of poverty. “The number of poor people in Nigeria has been rising for the past eight years, and will continue to do so until the minimum wage reflects the cost of living and recognises the salience of social services like health, education and housing.” He says it would now be 265,000 naira (\$170) if it had kept up with foreign exchange rates alone. ■

Stuck with a 'lazy' government, Mathare is reclaiming the spirit of harambee

Jacqueline Kubania

The Kenyan government's reaction to recent deadly floods has been so ineffective that the Kenya Human Rights Commission, a watchdog NGO, sued several government agencies and officials for what it called "a lazy response".

A month after the deadly rains, bulldozers are pulling down the remaining buildings on the banks of the Mathare river. It was here, in the low-income settlement named for the river, where dozens of people were killed in April when the river burst its banks.

Onlookers watch the demolitions with resentment. It is quick work: most of the structures are little more than iron sheets held together by grit and gumption. A new directive says that nobody can build within 30 metres of the river – too late for those who died or lost their homes.

"The government has not offered people an alternative place to resettle," says Samuel Kiroo, a community organiser working with Ghetto Foundation in Mathare. "Where are the hundreds of families who have lost their homes to floods and demolitions going to go without support?"

Demonstrations to air such concerns



Injustice: Community organiser Samuel Kiroo says the government's indifference amounts to oppression.

have only resulted in arrests. Kiroo himself recently spent a day behind bars for protesting.

"This is how things have always happened in Mathare," he says. "Injustice after injustice. And if you speak up, you become a target for illegal arrests and police intimidation. The government has positioned itself as an oppressor of the

people, so we have learnt to organise and show up for ourselves.”

Among those who are showing up is Hanifa Adan, who has raised more than a million Kenyan shillings (about \$7,700) through social media to respond to requests for help from people in the worst-affected areas of the city, including Mathare.

“The government has been so underwhelming,” Adan says. “They visited affected areas afterwards for photo ops but they genuinely do not care and there are so many victims still helpless out there.”

Private initiatives have distributed cartons of food, clothes, mattresses, utensils, and school supplies for children in displaced families or direct cash transfers to affected people. It’s all in the spirit of harambee, the Kenyan philosophy of mutual and communal aid.

“The response I’ve received has been amazing,” says Adan. “We raised 100k in an hour – I’m truly in awe of how selfless and loving Kenyans are.”

“We raised 100k in an hour – I’m truly in awe of how selfless and loving Kenyans are.”

Historians and culture scholars credit first president Jomo Kenyatta for popularising harambee, a Swahili word meaning to “pull together”. It is the official motto of Kenya, and appears on its coat of arms. In an essay in *The Elephant*, cultural scholar Dr Joyce Nyairo says that “in Jomo Kenyatta’s day, development was understood as physical infrastructure and his new motto urged communities to join

hands in building schools, establishing a dispensary, a maternity ward, or providing staff housing”.

People would gather and contribute money for these projects, understanding that the responsibility of building the country was a shared one. But the spirit of harambee was later bastardised by politicians who would demonstrate their largesse and buy the approval of the people – giving money instead of doing the hard work of governance.

Kenya’s third president Mwai Kibaki banned officials from participating in harambees, which people celebrated as progress. Kibaki was famously modest, shunning vanities like putting his portrait on bank notes or naming roads and institutions after himself.

With current President William Ruto, however, state-sponsored harambees seem to be making a comeback. So too have mounting concerns over misappropriation of funds and government inefficiency.

Despite warnings by the meteorological department issued last year, the floods caught the government flat-footed, with no clear explanation for how billions set aside for flood mitigation and response have been spent.

In Mathare, many people displaced by the floods say they have not yet received the KSh10,000 (\$77) promised by the government to aid them.

Instead, they are relying on the remnant of the original harambee spirit: the generosity of their neighbours and well-wishers to feed their families and get back on their feet. ■



Uprooted: A child vendor sells sweet potatoes at a market in Cotonou. Photo: Abadjaye Justin Sodogandji/AFP

This is not child's play

Child labour is deeply entrenched in Benin – and the problem cannot just be legislated away

Issa Sikiti da Silva in Cotonou

A child carrying a big basin of tomatoes for sale in Cotonou's Dantokpa Market falls unexpectedly near one of the city's many polluted and stinking streams.

Torn between the pain in her leg and arm, and the sight of passing vehicles crushing her tomatoes, she burst into tears. "My mother is going to beat me hard for wasting her tomatoes," she tells the passers-by who stop to offer help.

"What kind of a mother sends her kid into such sweltering heat with a huge basin of tomatoes on her small head," an onlooker wonders aloud. Not a particularly unusual kind of mother, in Benin and its neighbouring countries.

Not far from where the nine-year-old girl fell, a 10-year-old boy is working as a mechanic's "intern". He struggles to carry the huge tyre the mechanic has ordered him to repair. "It is too hot and I am hungry and very tired," says the emaciated boy. "This tyre is too big to carry."

Elsewhere in the city, an 11-year-old orphaned girl explains the child labour system in the group home where she sleeps. She says she and the other children there often work from 6am to 3am the next day. “We start with house chores, then move to washing clothes and cooking,” she says. “In the afternoon we sell cooked food along the main road. We finish around 3am and go home to sleep for a few hours.”

Those aged 14 and above earn around 700 CFA francs (around \$1.15) per day. “The boss says I’m too young to get a salary,” the girl says. Instead, in return for her labour, the girl gets some food and a place to stay. But if she were to fail at it, “the lady will beat me up and could even send me away. Where would I go?”

Estimates of the prevalence of child labour in Benin range from 37%, according to the International Labour Organisation to 52.5%, according to Unicef, the United Nations Children’s Agency, which says 40% of working children are in dangerous work like cotton and crushed granite production.

“These figures date back to 2018. I’m afraid the situation might have worsened during the Covid-19 pandemic due to poverty,” says Alfred Amoussou, a schoolteacher. “It breaks my heart every time I see them suffer. Their place is at school, not in these homes, markets, shops or farms.”

“There is at least one child in every house or shop across Benin working in very difficult conditions, many without pay and experiencing abuse from their bosses,” says a community leader in

Cotonou – who requests anonymity because Beninese government workers are often punished for making public comments without permission. “They come from all corners of West Africa: Togo, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Niger, Côte d’Ivoire and even Mali,” she explains.

Good laws, little result

Technically, it is illegal to put children to work in Benin. The Constitution makes primary school education free and compulsory. The labour codes sets the minimum working age at 14 years for general tasks and 18 years for hazardous work, and prohibits forced labour. The child code prohibits child trafficking, a common precursor to child labour and exploitation.

There is at least one child in every house or shop across Benin working in very difficult conditions, many without pay and experiencing abuse from their bosses.

But, by and large, the government “is failing to enforce its own laws,” according to a government source who asks not to be named, fearing reprisal. They say the government is reluctant to address the issue because many well-off people have children working for them in their farms, shops, factories and homes.

The practice is also deeply entrenched in the country’s culture: in a traditional practice known as *vidomégon*, children are often sent to live with and work for relatives in exchange for



Ask not for whom this boy toils: A child labourer shapes metal bells at a rough smithy in Bohicon, Benin. Photo: Godong/Universal Images Group via Getty Images

things like school tuition. “It is not child labour. It is training for manhood and womanhood,” Elisabeth Dossou chuckles. She’s 70.

Dossou explains: “Unlike children coming from rich families, we prepare kids from poor families through hard work, to make them understand from a young age that they have to sweat in order to get something to eat or wear.”

As far as she is concerned, the practice also fosters discipline and an entrepreneurial spirit. “The government is well aware of this; that is why it’s going easy on the practice, mindful of the outcry it would cause if it pushes too hard.”

In this context, campaigns to end child labour – including the government’s Zero Tolerance campaign, launched one year


ago – have produced few results.

Not everyone is convinced that campaigners are doing enough.

“All the UN does is to publish figures,” the government source says. “The government only launches campaigns and ratifies all sorts of treaties that lead to nothing, and NGOs are underfunded and powerless to put the government under pressure to act.”

Unicef Benin did not respond to several requests for comment. Nor did Plan International Benin, which works to advance children’s rights and equality for girls.

The Beninese government, led by President Patrice Talon, was not approached for comment. It is in the habit of cracking down ruthlessly and relentlessly on criticism of its policies. ■

A photograph of a man standing on a grassy hillside, looking out over a valley with a river. The man is wearing a blue cap, a patterned shirt, and a dark jacket. He is holding a long, thin rod or staff. The background shows rolling hills and a river winding through the valley. The sky is clear and blue.

Shell-shocked:
Malibongwe
David Gongqose
looks over the
Mbashe River on
South Africa's
Wild Coast

PHOTO ESSAY

Troubled waters

Oil and gas exploration off South Africa's coast risks devastating the surrounding environment – and the communities who depend on it.

**Words and photos:
Barry Christianson**

Malibongwe David Gongqose reels in the fishing line he just cast where the beach meets the banks of the Mbashe River at Dwesa-Cwebe. “I don’t know why they don’t bite,” he says. Then, twisting his body, the orange drop-shot lure still visible in the low light as it hangs from the rod, he casts his line again.

Dwesa-Cwebe lies on South Africa’s

Eastern Cape coast, where the Mbashe River meets the ocean. The forefathers of many of the people living there now first settled at the river about 300 years ago.

In 2010, Gongqose was arrested for fishing within the Dwesa-Cwebe marine protected area. His arrest ultimately led to the South African Supreme Court of Appeal ruling that Gongqose and the communities of the seven villages making up Dwesa-Cwebe had customary rights to fish and harvest marine resources at



Above: 'Chuckie' fishermen scout in vain for yellowtail off Struisbaai. Seismic prospecting drives changes in the fish's migration patterns. Below: Martinus Newman comes from a long line of fisherfolk, but fears there will be nothing left to pass on.



Dwesa-Cwebe.

In 2021, Shell announced that it would begin a 3D seismic survey off the Wild Coast in the Eastern Cape in search of oil and gas. The Dwesa-Cwebe Communal Property Association was one of the applicants that approached the courts to put a stop to Shell's exploration. It worked.

In 2022, the high court in Makhanda ruled in favour of the community – and against both Shell and the government, which remains enamoured of fossil fuels.

Shell immediately appealed the ruling, but just this week the Supreme Court upheld the ruling. Mostly. There might be some wiggle room. And fossil fuel

enthusiasts know how to wiggle.

After hours with no bites, Gonggose, who has been fishing for 52 years, decides to call it a night. He straps a head torch to his brow, turns it on, packs his gear into his backpack, picks up his two fishing rods and begins the 7km walk home.

Gonggose is dead against the idea of Shell prospecting for oil and gas here. He makes all of his income from fishing, and worries that exploration and extraction will ruin the marine ecosystems he depends on. And what about the ancestors? According to the community's spiritual beliefs, the ocean is the ancestors' domain. They won't be happy.

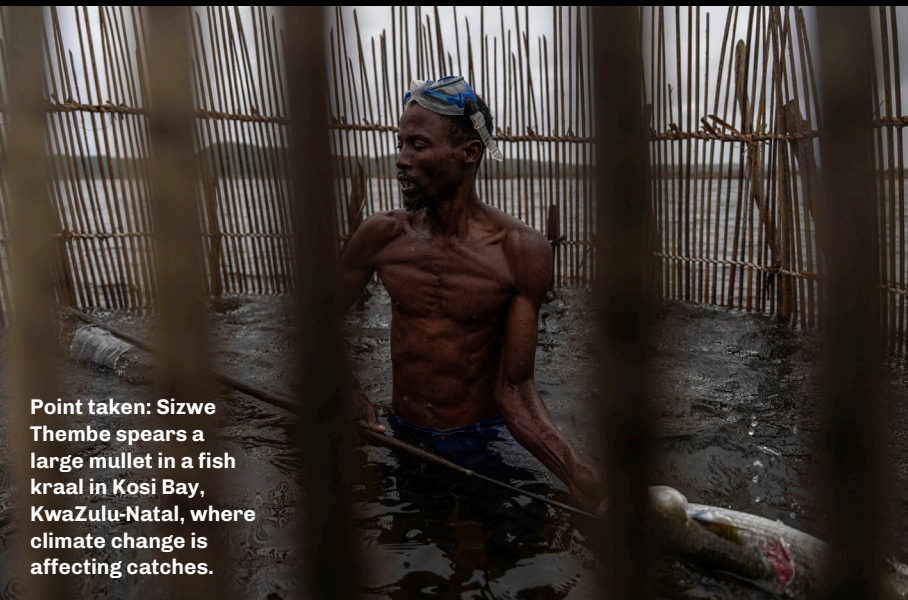
It's not just Shell. Total Energies, along with its partners, including Qatar Energy, holds exploration rights off South Africa's

South Coast, South West Coast and West Coast – all the way to the Namibian border, and many coastal communities and fishing families are finding their livelihoods at risk from prospecting and extraction activity in their waters.

In contrast to the natural beauty of the Eastern Cape Coast, Port Nolloth on the West Coast is surrounded by unrehabilitated diamond mining concession areas.

Walter Steenkamp, a fourth generation fisher and the chairperson of Aukatowa, a small-scale fishing cooperative in Port Nolloth, is acutely aware that profits for the extractive industry don't necessarily translate to development.

He also worries about the damage to the environment that oil and gas



Point taken: Sizwe Thembe spears a large mullet in a fish kraal in Kosi Bay, KwaZulu-Natal, where climate change is affecting catches.

extraction may bring, and how those damages will affect the lives of fisherfolk.

“We have a traditional life. All these years we’ve been working out of the ocean,” says Steenkamp. “Our fathers worked in the ocean and gave those traditions to us. We want to pass our traditions onto our children who are the next generation.”

With 98% of South Africa’s ocean territory leased for fossil fuel exploration or extraction, coastal communities are vulnerable not only to the impact of spills

and leaks associated with oil and gas extraction, but also the effects of climate change, which is accelerated by fossil fuel production.

Gongqose, weary from his fruitless labour, and wary about the future, asks: “What will happen to the fish? What will happen to the fishermen? What will happen to the ancestors?” ■

This story/series was produced in partnership with the Pulitzer Center



Above: Boys from Hondeklip Bay in the Northern Cape help carry snoek from the beach to a van.

Below: Spear fisher Sthembiso Biyela is showing his son the ropes, but worries that there won't be any fish in the boy's future.

Uganda cricket triumphs in spite of its sticky wicket

Kalungi Kabuye

On Wednesday afternoon in Guyana – it was the early hours of Thursday morning for fans who stayed awake in Kampala – the Ugandan men’s national cricket team earned their first win at their first-ever T20 World Cup, beating Papua New Guinea by three wickets. In a T20, teams have just 20 overs to bat – they get 50 overs in the longer format.

The team celebrated like they had won the trophy, and with good reason: this is an against-all-odds story that has its roots not just on the country’s handful of cricket pitches, but also in one of Uganda’s darkest chapters.

Although Uganda has never been in a cricket World Cup before, two Ugandan players have: the legendary John Nagenda and Sam Walusimbi appeared in the 1975 edition, as part of the East and Central Africa Combined team. This was the very first major tournament in the One Day International format of the game. Walusimbi (38 runs in three games) and Nagenda (one wicket for 50 runs in nine overs) acquitted themselves admirably.

There should have been more

Ugandans in that combined team. Just three years earlier, however, president Idi Amin had summarily expelled all residents of Indian origin, saying he was “giving Uganda back to ethnic Ugandans”. The expulsion order affected tens of thousands of people, who were given just 90 days to leave the country. Among them were most of the country’s cricketers.

“When Idi Amin expelled the Indians in 1972, we had to take it upon ourselves to not only revive the game, but keep it from collapsing completely,” Walusimbi said during a testimonial held in his honour two years ago. “Those were very difficult times, but we managed to not only form clubs and keep playing, but by 1975 John and I managed to make it to the World Cup. It was incredible.”

But the situation in Uganda continued to deteriorate, with many people fleeing the country into exile. Civil unrest meant organised cricket could not be played till the late 1980s and early 1990s.

It was not until 2001 that Uganda started competing internationally again, participating in the ICC Trophy in Toronto, Canada, a qualification event for the 2003 Cricket World Cup. Ranked 22nd, the Cricket Cranes ended up finishing in tenth place.

The Uganda Cricket Association then embarked on a development programme to take the game to the youth, including the Uganda Schools Development and the Mini Cricket Development programme. It developed mass-participation projects like Mini Cricket, National Leagues and



T-Time: Kenneth Waiswa celebrates Uganda's first ever T20 World Cup victory in Guyana on Wednesday. Photo: D Traynor/ICC via Getty Images

U-19 and U-23 programmes, which attracted players, partners and sponsors.

Since that first time in Toronto, the Cricket Cranes have tried three times to qualify for the World Cup, coming agonisingly close.

Qualification for the current T20 World Cup, being held in the United States and West Indies, was secured in November last year when the Cranes beat highly-fancied Zimbabwe – a “crowning moment” for Ugandan cricket, captain Brian Masaba said at the time.

Wednesday’s win against Papua New Guinea was another big moment. “Getting to the World Cup was special, but this is more,” Masaba said after the game.

Despite its steady growth and on-pitch success, Ugandan cricket still faces plenty of challenges, especially funding.

A hopelessly inadequate national budget for sports is not equitably divided, with football taking almost 50% – despite the national team not qualifying for an international tournament since 1978. By contrast national netball, rugby and now cricket teams have all played in a World Cup, but get less than 3% of the budget.

Just as concerning is the announcement by the government that a Turkish firm has been contracted to develop a new sports complex – on the site where the national cricket oval has stood for 80 years. So in their moment of greatest triumph, the cricketing Cranes are now homeless.

That, however, is a worry for another day. For now, the team must prepare for its remaining group games against the West Indies and New Zealand – and who can rule out another upset? ■

Digital divides are persistent – and growing

It's not exactly headline news that a growing number of people are getting their news from social media and the internet these days.

But if you thought this trend was reducing digital disadvantages for women and rural, poor, and older people, here's news: it's not. Afrobarometer surveys in 31 African countries show that while digital media use for news has increased across all demographic groups since 2014/2015, inequities in access persist, and in some cases have only grown larger.

Women have seen a 25-percentage-point gain in regular digital media use (at least a few times a week), from 18% to 43%. But men's 26-point jump (from 26% to 52%) leaves the digital divide on gender

lines virtually unchanged.

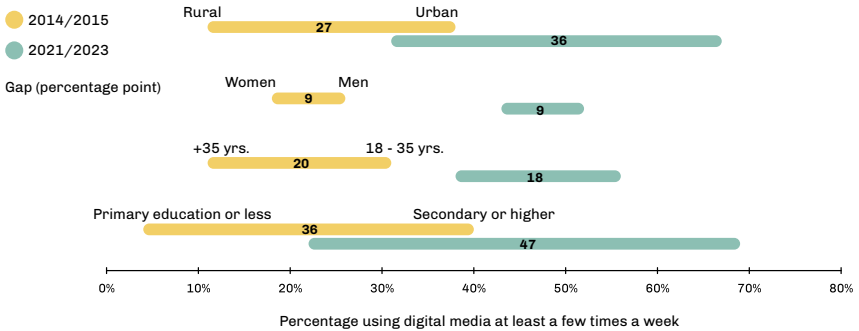
The same is true for the gap between 18- to 35-year-olds and their elders: 20 points in 2014/2015, 18 points in the most recent survey.

For rural residents, a 27-point deficit in 2014/2015 has grown to 36 points (67% versus 31%).

And a 36-point divide between those with primary education or less and those with secondary school or more has grown into a 47-point gap (22% versus 69%) in 2021/2023.

Levelling the playing field in access to information about health, security, politics, and economic opportunities will evidently require greater attention to persistent digital disadvantages. ■

Gaps in regular digital news consumption – by urban-rural location, gender, age, and education | 31 countries | 2014-2023



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



Digging up history's skeletons

In the search for the body of a revered Mau Mau leader executed by the British in 1957, a new film puts Kenyans at the centre of their own history.

Wilfred Okiche

Wanjugu Kimathi, daughter of Dedan Kimathi, goes on a transformative journey searching for her father's remains. Kimathi's death in 1957 was one of the biggest blows to Kenya's anti-colonial resistance movement. The

British executed him and disposed of his body. But where? Kimathi's late widow Mukami searched for his remains and passed down the decades-long struggle to her daughter Wanjugu.

To many Kenyans, the entire affair – the bitter hunt for and execution of the man who led the Kenya Land and Freedom Army, which waged the Mau Mau guerilla war of 1952 to 1960 – was as lost as Kimathi's remains.

"I come from a family that had embraced a culture of silence regarding this part of our history, but also because it was banned," film director Zippy Kimundu tells *The Continent*. "My family had people who were Mau Mau and people who were collaborators on the other side. But we didn't talk about it."

The Mau Mau were branded a terrorist group and remained banned until 2003, when president Mwai Kibaki's government lifted the ban.

To resurface this history, Kimundu teamed up Meena Nanji to make *Our Land, Our Freedom*.

Nanji, a Los Angeles-based filmmaker, was born in Kenya to parents of Indian origin. She fondly recalls her childhood, which was interrupted when her family moved to England when she was nine.

She remained fascinated by the independence movement and the political climate in Kenya. In 2012, she read Caroline Elkins' *Britain's Gulag: The Brutal End of Empire in Kenya*. The book's detailed evidence of British concentration camps in colonial Kenya horrified Nanji.



**Vista revisited:
Mau Mau veterans
reflect on their
revolutionary
history.** Photo:
Autentika Films

“I had sworn never to do documentaries again, and was working on fiction and experimental films, but I knew I had to do this somehow,” she says.

Nanji sought out Kimundu. They clicked instantly and Kimundu joined the project. The rest is history unearthed in *Our Land, Our Freedom*, whose world premiere was last November at the International Documentary Festival Amsterdam.

The filmmakers’ first meeting with Mukami “was supposed to be a research interview” but was so powerful it ended up in the film. Initially, Wanjugu’s role on the project was to make introductions to the freedom fighters she knew, and serve as a translator, but when she conducted one interview herself, the filmmakers realised she was carrying the conversation better than they ever could without her background or knowledge.

Her role shifted to protagonist.

When the search for Kimathi’s remains stalls, Wanjugu starts down another pressing path: advocating for land reparations and resettlement for the surviving freedom fighters and their families, uniting feuding factions with the broader common goal. The airport customer service representative becomes an influential social justice activist with a growing list of political enemies among those who still benefit from Britain’s theft of the lands that the Mau Mau movement fought to take back.

Nanji and Kimundu want to work with education officials to have *Our Land, Our Freedom* added to both Kenyan and British curricula. They also want to advocate for a revision of the materials assigned for studying history in schools.

Nanji stresses: “We must foreground the Kenyan version.” ■

THE QUIZ

0-3

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

4-7

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

8-10

"If you borrow a penny in Loropéni, is repayment due in Ouagadougou?"



Photo: Rik Schuiling

- 1_** The Ruins of Loropéni (pictured), which date back 1,000 years, are found in which country?
- 2_** True or false: the Guinean franc is Guinea's currency.
- 3_** True or false: the Equatoguinean franc is Equatorial Guinea's currency?
- 4_** From which country was the first African woman to win an Olympic gold medal?
- 5_** From which country was the first African man to win an Olympic gold medal?
- 6_** Algeria is Africa's largest country by land area. What is the second largest?
- 7_** Who is the president of The Gambia?
- 8_** What is the world's largest artificial lake?
- 9_** Abdelaziz Bouteflika was which country's president until 2019?
- 10_** Victoria is which country's capital city?

HOW DID I DO? WhatsApp 'ANSWERS' to **+27 73 805 6068** and we'll send the answers to you!

We had finally mastered the art of not binge-watching TV shows, reader. But we take no pride in admitting that when Netflix brought together three of our favourite things – South Africans, chaos and toxicity – we fell hook, line and sinker for *The Ultimatum South Africa*.

Hours were promptly spent shouting at the TV, telling our increasingly disconsolate bae that “all men are trash” as he stood in the kitchen making us dinner.

Along the way we even managed to pick up a few South African phrases – by the end of the series we were yelling “Haibo” like a pro.

All the drama, the backstabbing, the vitriol and the, uh, cuddling on the show must surely have resonated with the powers that be, too.

Our leaders are prime fodder for a reality show, after all. Even the ones who aren’t already starring in *Keeping up with the Coupdashians*. Should we put them all in a *Big Brother* house and watch them try to live together? Would the juntas mix well with the geriatrics? Another option is getting them on *Young, Famous and African*, though the “young” part might be stretching things too far.

It might be worth considering the

America’s Next Top Model model, but as head judge we’d worry about the consequences we’d face as soon as one of them gets voted off. So right now we’re leaning towards a *Survivor*-type show where everyone just gets left on an island.

Of course some of them could just do a reality travel show, considering how much they love their jet-setting. In fact, a number of them were in South Korea this week attending the imaginatively named Korea-Africa Summit.

While it seems conversations were had and deals were struck, we wonder why this can’t all just be done on Zoom.

Among those attending was Kenya’s President William Ruto, who has had a few appearances in *Drift*

these past few weeks, largely because he’s telling everyone else to tighten their belts but is seemingly wandering around beltless himself.

Of course he’s welcome to travel as he pleases, but it is worth noting that the same William Ruto once upon a time criticised the notion of individual African leaders going to “sit before one president from another country for a summit” and arguing the African Union should represent African countries instead.

Your reality bites – and it shows



CONTINENTAL DRIFT
Samira Sawlani



Get in: Cyril Ramaphosa has to convince others parties to join the government.

Photo: Michele Spatari/AFP

Many would argue that elections are a reality show – the camera’s are always on you as you meet the public, participate in dances (and every so often someone throws a milkshake in your face, right, Nige?) as you try to look your best while making lofty promises. And election results are akin to those shows where the public votes for which contestant they want to keep in.

Just ask South Africa’s President Cyril Ramaphosa and the governing ANC party, they’ll tell you. Results from the 29 May elections saw the ANC lose its parliamentary majority for the first time since it came to power 30 years ago, meaning that it has to enter talks with other parties to form either a coalition or a government of national unity.

Following the announcement of the results, Cyril took to the stage and said: “Our people have spoken – whether we like it or not, they have spoken.”

While he was gracious in his speech,

the election outcome has provided as many questions as it has answers – as the ANC plots its next move, one wonders, come the 16 June deadline for forming a government, will Cyril still be president?

The irony about reality TV shows is they offer us an escape from reality, which right now, is feeling pretty difficult to bear.

Every week news reports and statistics from Sudan get more and more horrifying, yet as journalist Hiba Morgan told *Al Jazeera*: “I’ve never seen the international community turn a blind eye to any catastrophe the way they’ve been doing it to the Sudanese catastrophe.”

The International Organisation for Migration says the number of people displaced by the conflict is set to hit 10-million. And with famine looming, the situation is bound to deteriorate further.

This week media reports quoted activists as saying that as many as 100 people in Gezira State had been killed in an attack by the paramilitary RSF.

Meanwhile the Norwegian Refugee Council released a report on the world’s most neglected displacement crisis in 2023, with Burkina Faso topping the list for a second year in a row.

Considering the criteria used to compile the list – lack of funding, lack of media attention and a lack of international political and diplomatic initiatives – we can see why Burkina Faso, Cameroon, and the Democratic Republic of Congo are the top three.

It just leaves us wondering when our leaders and the international community as a whole bother facing up to reality? ■

Corruption in and out of office

Nigerians are up in arms as opposition senators engage in their own malfeasance.

Toheeb Babalola

Nigerians are becoming increasingly frustrated about the lack of scrutiny over policymakers' self-enriching behaviour, despite the strong presence of opposition legislators in Parliament.

Nigeria features a bicameral legislature, and the 2023 elections led to a diverse Senate. While the ruling All Progressive Congress (APC) has a majority with 59 out of 109 seats, opposition parties are well represented including the People's Democratic Party (PDP) (36), Labour Party (8) and a number of smaller parties. Despite this, the last year has seen no shortage of self-serving behaviour – and attempts to cover up corruption.

Recently, Senator Abdul Ningi, a PDP representative for Bauchi Central, blew the whistle on the way that the 2024 Fiscal Budget was “padded” – inflated for personal gain – by the Senate leadership. According to Ningi, an initial budget of 25-trillion naira (\$15.72-billion) was passed by the Senate following due process, but was then secretly increased to 28.7-trillion naira following hidden talks between the presidency and the Senate leadership. Ningi went further to suggest that 17-billion naira had been clandestinely split among 34 senior

senators. This is striking, as senior senators are members who have served two terms, which means these individuals came from across party lines.

Ningi's account was backed by ruling party representative Opemeyi Bamidele, who said senior senators were allocated 500-million naira (\$310,343) for “constituency projects” – a fact hidden until Ningi's revelations. Yet instead of investigating the claims, senators closed ranks against him. Following a motion by an APC senator, Olamilekan Adeola, Ningi was suspended for three months.

Although the PDP secretariat issued a press release urging the Senate president and APC leaders to step aside to facilitate an independent probe, the opposition failed to question its own senators about their part in the scandal, and remained mute in the debate on Ningi's suspension.

While Nigerians ponder the point of opposition parties that facilitate government corruption, Ningi must be thinking “with friends like these, who needs enemies?” ■

Toheeb Babalola is a freelance journalist and good governance advocate from Nigeria.

This analysis was produced in collaboration with Democracy in Africa



THE BIG PICTURE

Boarding call: South African surfer Jordy Smith catches a curl in the Shiseido Tahiti Pro surfing contest in Teahupo'o, Tahiti. Teahupo'o will host the surfing event of the Paris 2024 Olympic Games.

Photo: Jerome Brouillet/AFP



The Continent is a member of the Press Council of South Africa. This means we adhere to its Code of Ethics. It also means that there's an independent body you can reach out to with a complaint about our reporting. That process is on their website — www.presscouncil.org.za.

all protocol observed.

publisher of **The Continent**

The Continent is published by All Protocol Observed, a not-for-profit based in South Africa. Our new home is dedicated to creating a space for African journalists to do quality journalism, which we then get to you wherever you are. For queries and complaints, or to make a donation, please contact us at read@thecontinent.org