

# BUSINESS

MONTHLY EAST AFRICA EDITION

DRIVING BUSINESS

**GOVERNANCE:** SOCIAL NORMS AND POOR SERVICES DRIVE PETTY CORRUPTION IN EAST AFRICA'S HEALTH SECTOR

**EPIDEMIC:** WILL CORONAVIRUS REALLY EVOLVE TO BECOME LESS DEADLY?

**MEDIA:** WE MUST MAKE MORAL CHOICES ABOUT HOW WE RELATE TO SOCIAL MEDIA APPS

**HEALTH:** COVID VACCINES: WHY WAIVING PATENTS WON'T FIX GLOBAL SHORTAGE

## TOP 25 MOST TRANSFORMATIVE LEADERS IMPACTING BUSINESS

2021 SURVEY

# #1 Dr. Fred Matiang'i

CABINET SECRETARY INTERIOR AND COORDINATION OF NATIONAL GOVERNMENT



ISSN 1991-0975



61611034500287

Issue Number 158 Volume 16





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## Selection criteria for Top 25 Most Transformative Leaders to Watch in 2021

The men and women in the public service have proven many times and in numerous work environments that they are inspired and fired by entirely different set of compulsions than is the norm, and in most cases, beyond what is expected of them in their call of duty. ■ 4



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- 10 Peter Ndegwa - CEO Safaricom Plc
- 16 Lady Justice Martha Koome - Chief Justice and President of the Supreme Court
- 20 Carole Kariuki-Karuga - CEO Kenya Private Sector Alliance (Kepsa)
- 24 Justin Bedan Muturi - Speaker of the National Assembly of Kenya
- 28 Allan Kilavuka - MD/CEO Kenya Airways Plc
- 32 Amb. Dr. Amina Mohamed - Cabinet Secretary Sports, Heritage and Culture
- 36 Joseph Mucheru - Cabinet Secretary Ministry of ICT, Innovation and Youth Affairs
- 40 Prof. George Magoha - Cabinet Secretary Education
- 44 Crispin Achola - BAT Kenya Managing Director & East Africa General Manager
- 48 Dr. Joseph Kinyua, EGH - Head of Public Service
- 52 Nzioka Waita - State House Chief of Staff
- 56 Farida Karoney - Cabinet Secretary Lands and Physical Planning



**Hon. Najib Balala - Cabinet Secretary Ministry for Tourism and Wildlife**

As he leads the team, CS Balala is the man the country has invested tremendous trust in to steer the sector towards a recovery path and then growth, after the devastating effect occasioned by the Covid-19 pandemic. ■ 60

**Matilda P. Sakwa - Director General & CEO National Youth Service**

Matilda Sakwa was appointed NYS acting Director General in mid-2018. A consummate career administrator and a team player, she was (betrayed) by her exceptional skills in management and coordination of public affairs. ■ 82



- 64 Paul Muthaura MBS - CEO ICEA Lion General Insurance
- 68 Githii Mburu CBS - Commissioner General Kenya Revenue Authority
- 72 Geoffrey Odundo - CEO Nairobi Securities Exchange (NSE)
- 74 Dr. Rakesh Rao - Group CEO Crown Paints Kenya Plc
- 78 Hussein Ibrahim - MD&CEO Inchcape Kenya

**Mary W. Kimonye, MBS - Principal Secretary State Department for Public Service**

Mary Kimonye possesses special competencies that include country marketing and branding, strategy development, public policy, project management, training and capacity building and organizational development (OD). ■ 100



- 86 Fiona Asonga - CEO Technology Service Providers of Kenya
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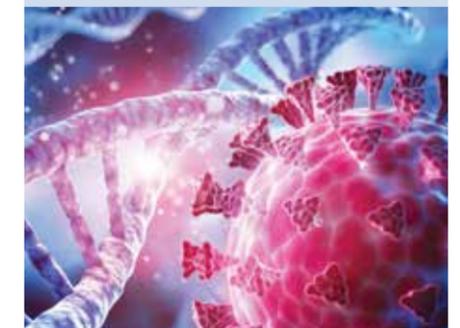
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# Selection criteria for Top 25 Most Transformative Leaders to Watch in 2021

From our analysis, these 25 men and women appear to share a common thread: they remain consistent in pursuing results in all the public spaces they occupy, they display hard work, patience, focus and diligence. And that in staying the course, these are the attributes of leadership needed to transform institutions, systems and processes.



**DR HANNINGTON GAYA**

CEO - The Knowledge Warehouse Kenya

This issue's TOP 25 Recognition and Nominations, is unique and rich in its diversity. We have men and women from mainstream public service, independent institutions, all the three arms of government, private sector, business lobby groups, Global ICT brands and the United Nations (UN).

First, is a number of men and women who have been selected more for their transformational leadership attributes that transcend more than one initiative or discipline that needed courage, clarity of purpose and personal focus, to achieve a turnaround. This criterion brings in the

Cabinet Secretaries (CSs) who are making a mark and leaving indelible foot prints on the state surfaces they are treading, leaving behind transformed services and systems that impact and improve the environment of doing business, building in efficiency and effectiveness of operations, hence, improving the life of Kenyans and growing the economy. Others are men and women who have turned around the destiny of the nation at critical moments of history.

The second are men and women thrust with the responsibility of transforming public services and turning around the institutional images of strategic national institutions and are actually succeeding in these mandates (Kenya Revenue Authority (KRA) and the National Youth Service (NYS).

The third are CEOs in the private sector, who have recently taken new jobs that require innovative strategies, new vision in leadership, not only in the organizations, but beyond, and are actually showing transformational results while breaking national boundaries and barriers to competition.

The fourth category are CEOs who have in a very short span of time, shown their teeth in transforming how things ought to be done in their respective industries, including in manufacturing, one of the Top 4 priority development agenda, including taking courage to introduce new processes, products and services, despite taking over their new assignments in this devastating environment fraught with negative effects arising from the Covid-19 Pandemic.



Fifth, are men and women leading beyond their call of duty, and acting as thought leaders, Policy interventionists and hands-on managers in their respective sectors to help the country manage the Covid-19 Pandemic.

Last, but not the least, men and women with their fingers on all the important touch points of the nation, influencing and

**The men and women in the public service have proven many times and in numerous work environments that they are inspired and fired by entirely different set of compulsions than is the norm, and in most cases, beyond what is expected of them in their call of duty**

impacting all the spheres of business to keep the country moving, while engaging the policy makers, government authorities and the country at large through presence and participation in influential mainstream public media, meetings and webinars.

In a nutshell, the achievements of these men and women, have lifetime positive effects on the economic recovery and sustainable growth of the country.

Unique, additionally, is that those shortlisted, were requested to tell their own stories. The final write ups were then slightly edited and recreated for house style and to ensure each story is served differently in narration and presentation.

Not being repetitive, but for emphasis, the contributions of these men and women that propels them to this honourable wall of recognition and appreciation, are rang from a wide spectrum and over a longer period of time, rather than or in addition to single contributions, although the recognitions have been prompted by the recency effect: the latest memorable achievement or performance or appointment to a new office or organization, and the display of trans-

formational leadership traits whose effects spill and permeate the entire spectrum of the country or industry or sector or field of operation.

The men and women in the public service have proven many times and in numerous work environments that they are inspired and fired by entirely different set of compulsions than is the norm, and in most cases, beyond what is expected of them in their call of duty. They singularly serve the country; not working for their livelihoods, wealth and fame.

From our analysis, these 25 men and women appear to share a common thread: they remain consistent in pursuing results in all the public spaces they occupy, they display hard work, patience, focus and diligence. And that in staying the course, these are the attributes of leadership needed to transform institutions, systems and processes.

Hence, our desire at Business Monthly East Africa, firmly remains in bringing to the public domain, acknowledgements of these successes and achievements and above all, promote the pursuit for excellence, as the keystone for transformative leadership.

In humility, we also note that for each of the 25 named in the Top 25 Most Transformative CEOs to Watch in 2021, there are hundreds deserving and not yet recognized. This is life and with patience, your turn will come.

To those who remain elusive and unreachable when approached, we respect your choice, style and reasons. Most probably, you are yet to meet the criteria to be on such an honourable list of publicly accountable leaders, or alternatively, you have good reasons to shy away from media and therefore public scrutiny. It is also your right to privacy. So, relax.

For those of you who willingly consented to be on this list, we thank you profusely for your humility in letting Kenya document some of you and celebrate you. Consider this recognition as a public endorsements and appreciation for your work and the time that you continue to give beyond your call of duty. ■



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**PUBLISHED BY:**

The Knowledge Warehouse  
0722 742 287  
0720 742 287

**DESIGN & LAYOUT:**

Fontana Creations

**MIS & ADMINISTRATION:**

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**DISTRIBUTED BY:**

All Times  
Ground Floor, Village Market  
0717 866 009  
alltimesvillage@gmail.com

**CONTENT:**

Produced under common licence from *The Conversation*  
BusinessMonthly  
www.theknowledgewarehouseke.com



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**#1**

# Dr. Fred Matiang'i, EGH

**CABINET SECRETARY INTERIOR AND COORDINATION OF NATIONAL GOVERNMENT**

Over the past eight years, Dr. Fred Matiang'i has built an enviable career in public service, earning a reputation as a daring, transformative and reformist leader. The Cabinet Secretary for Interior & Coordination of National Government is a man admired and envied in equal measure, depending on which side of the political spectrum one holds.

To the President and his colleagues in the cabinet, Dr. Matiang'i is a trusted advisor and industrious lieutenant who has not only streamlined service delivery in government, but also spearheaded transformative reforms in key sectors such as ICT, Lands, Education, Regional Administration, Immigration Services, Internal Security, and lately, co-ordination of the governments development agenda. To rogue elements within and outside the government, he is a feared operator who has dismantled cartels and brought to bear the full might of the government on the fight against inefficiency, ineffectiveness, service lethargy, crime and corruption.



For all the diverging views on Dr. Matiang'i, the common link is that he is unanimously viewed as the single most defining figure in President Kenyatta's administration. Westlands Member of Parliament, Tim Wanyonyi, summarized it aptly in a press article reviewed by Business Monthly: "Matiang'i is among, if not, the best performing Cabinet Secretaries (CSs). If you asked anyone on the streets out there to name for you the 22 members of the current Cabinet, the first one will be Matiang'i and maybe only one or two others."

CS Matiang'i's rise in the public sector started in 2013 when President Uhuru Kenyatta, keen on accelerating the digital transformation kick-started by former President Kibaki, tapped him from academia to head the ICT ministry. Unlike most cabinet appointees, the former literature lecturer at the University of Nairobi and Egerton University had not held prior roles in elective politics or the public service. This quickly worked to his advantage. He had no prior

baggage, constituents to please or political ambitions to protect, allowing him to give his undivided attention to the task at hand, which at the time was overseeing Kenya's switch from analogue to digital broadcasting and helping newly elected President Uhuru to start fulfilling his election pledges and the newly acquired political mandate.

### Digital dividends

The switch-over to digital broadcasting was anything but easy. Planning for digital migration started in 2006 with a deadline for 2015. The migration was a lengthy and costly process, requiring investments from the government, broadcasters, and consumers. It was also a complex process from policy, legal and regulatory perspectives. The new broadcasting licensing framework faced opposition from media stakeholders, who slugged it out all the way to the Supreme Court. While the apex court ruled in favour of the government, litigation had delayed the digital migration process by three years. >>

A lot of thriving internet-based businesses operating in Kenya today-whether in e-commerce, transport and delivery, media or entertainment-owe a great deal of their growth to the digital switch over and the man who laid the groundwork for its successful implementation, Dr. Matiang'i

>> In his now signature fashion, CS Matiang'i was able to successfully deliver on key components of this critical process despite the difficult circumstances. This made him a key contributor to the digital dividends we take for granted today, with those now reaping the most having been the biggest digital migration detractors.

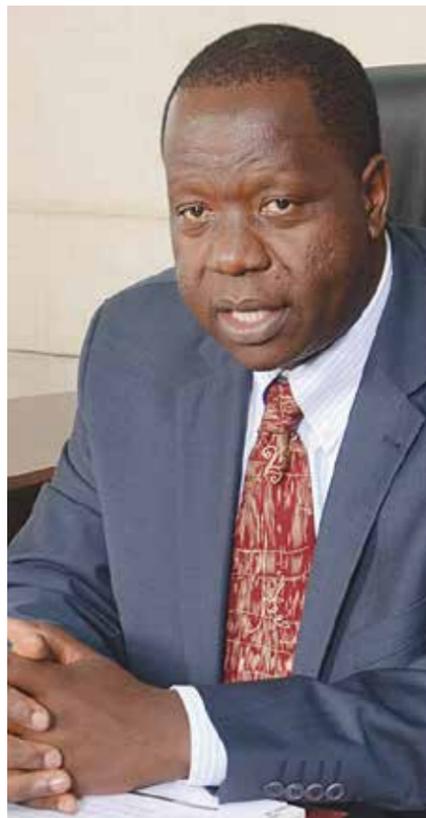
Digital migration opened a world of new opportunities in the digital economy. This is because digital broadcasting accommodates more television channels than analogue broadcasting while also using less spectrum bandwidth. The freed-up spectrum bandwidth is what allowed for the rapid deployment of 4G and 4G LTE across the country in recent years, making fast and affordable internet a reality and attracting big ticket investments in the technology startup ecosystem. Kenya today is the leading destination for startup investments in Africa. According to a report by Startup List Africa, Kenya led the way with \$266 million in startup investments in 2020, ahead of Nigeria (\$237 million), South Africa (\$198 million), Egypt (\$125 million) and Ghana (\$90 million). This underlines the impact of the digital switch over on the economy, and one of the economic benefits of the hands on and focused management style of delivering on public services by CS Dr. Fred Matiang'i.

A lot of thriving internet-based businesses operating in Kenya today—whether in e-commerce, transport and delivery, media or entertainment—owe a great deal of their growth to the digital switch over and the man who laid the groundwork for its successful implementation, Dr. Matiang'i.

#### **Dr. Fix it**

CS Matiang'i's accomplishments at the ICT Ministry quickly caught the eye of the President, who roped him in as acting CS for Lands in 2015 after the exit of Hon. Charity Ngilu (current Kitui Governor). This was one of the earliest signs that the overarching and overachieving CS was quickly transitioning into the President's "Dr. Fix it," mode, a somewhat first-among-equals in the cabinet.

CS Matiang'i's tenure at the Lands and Physical Planning Ministry was as



Before his appointment to the government in 2013, Dr. Matiang'i was the Regional Representative in East Africa for the Centre for International Development, Rockefeller College of Public Affairs and Policy, the State University of New York

brief as it was equally eventful. He immediately decimated notorious cartels that had entrenched themselves at Ardhi House and set in motion a slew of reforms. He is credited with championing for Kihui Mwiri settlers in Kakuzi to be issued with long-awaited title deeds and was instrumental in laying the groundwork for similar issuances at the Coastal Region and other disputed land cases in the former Central Province.

He also ended the power tiffs often pitting the Lands Ministry against the National Land Commission, ending in stabilizing the Lands ship that impacts so much of personal and corporate business activities.

The trailblazing CS Matiang'i was later appointed as the Cabinet Secretary for Education, Science and Technology in December 2015. His appointment came at a time the education sector was awash with massive leakages in National Examinations.

At the Ministry of Education, Matiang'i effectively dismantled examination cartels that had infiltrated the Kenya National Examinations Council and profited by leaking exam papers to schools and candidates and brought credibility, effectiveness and efficiency in the handling and administering of the National exams, leading to clean results for the first time in many years in 2016. Famously, results from the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education national examination are now released within a month of their being held.

#### **Tragedy strikes**

In June 2017, towards the end of President Kenyatta's first term, tragedy struck. Major General (Retired) Joseph Nkaissey, the then CS for Interior, passed on, just before the General Elections. The stakes couldn't have been any higher and, once again, the President turned to the man he trusts with the hardest of tasks. In a somber statement, he announced that, "I take this opportunity this morning to inform Kenyans that there shall be no vacuum in securing our country. I have taken the decision to appoint Dr Matiang'i the acting CS for Internal Security to ensure there is no vacuum".

Never one to back down from a challenge, CS Matiang'i accepted the appointment and took control of the national security apparatus at a very defining moment in the country's history. The 2017 elections were hotly contested with cases of months-long protests in opposition strongholds. However, calm and order eventually prevailed. At this point, it was clear in everyone's mind that CS Matiang'i was the man for the job. Shortly after the election, Dr. Fred Matiang'i was appointed substantively

as the CS for Interior and Co-ordination of National Government. The rest is history.

President Uhuru Kenyatta also demonstrated his trust on Dr Matiang'i when he appointed him the chairman of the National Development Implementation and Communication Cabinet Committee, arguably elevating him to a super CS status, a first among equals or as his detractors would want to say, unofficial prime minister.

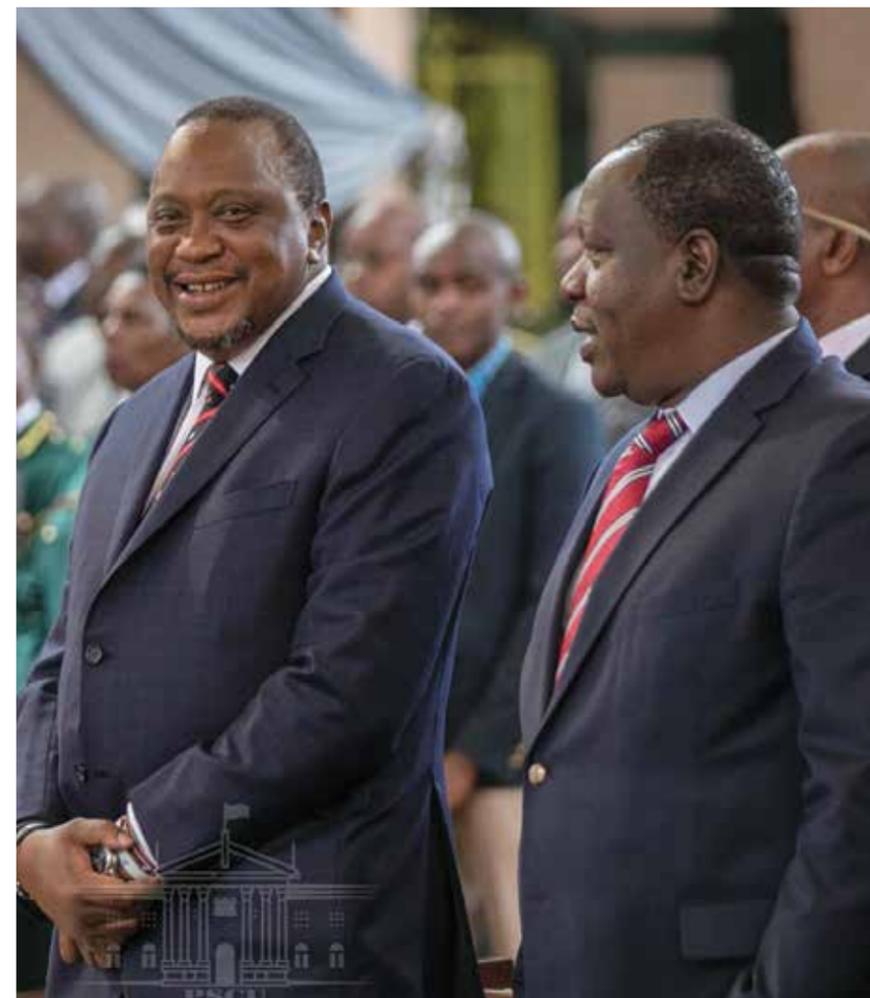
According to authenticated reports, HE President Uhuru and Dr. Fred Matiang'i first met and developed some rapport when Uhuru was then the leader of Opposition. Matiang'i was by then in charge of the Kenya Parliamentary Support Programme (KPSP) which was financing the parliamentary broadcasting service and digitizing the proceedings. Their friendship blossomed when Uhuru Kenyatta was the Deputy prime minister in the coalition Government.

In year 2013, President Uhuru Kenyatta having seen the potential in Matiang'i, poached him from the position of Eastern Africa Regional Representative for the Center for International Development in the State University of New York (SUNY) and brought him into the government as the CS in the ICT Ministry, where Dr. Matiang'i pushed the unwilling media to adopt the digital migration and ruled out turning back to analogue, as the deadline to digital migration loomed.

#### **A man of all seasons**

Before his appointment to the government in 2013, Dr. Matiang'i was the Regional Representative in East Africa for the Centre for International Development, Rockefeller College of Public Affairs and Policy, the State University of New York (SUNY/CID). He previously served as Chief of Party for Kenya's Parliamentary Strengthening Program where he spearheaded the creation of Parliament's media center.

Dr. Matiang'i held research and program implementation positions in various civil society organizations in Kenya and conducted research and training for the Commonwealth Parliamentary

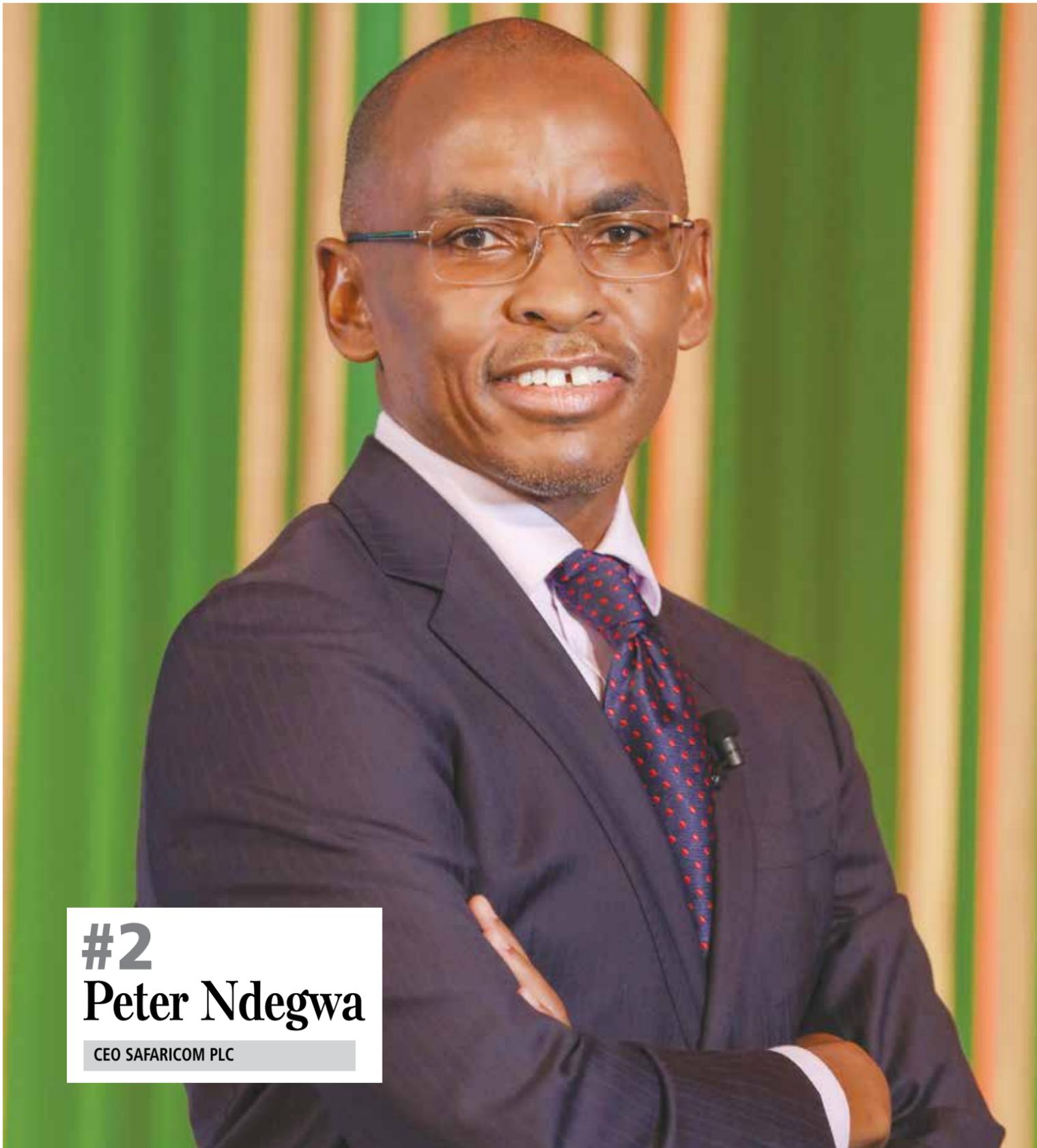


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Association, the World Bank Institute, and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) among others. This is besides lecturing at Egerton University and the University of Nairobi.

Dr. Matiang'i holds a PhD in Communication and Comparative Literature from the University of Nairobi, a Master of Arts degree in English from the University of Nairobi, and a Bachelor of Education degree from Kenyatta University.

All through his career, Dr. Matiang'i has proven to be a man of all seasons—adaptable, driven, agile. He also proven to be a pragmatist, favoring actions and results over talk. He's certainly a public servant worth watching and one who is not easily intimidated or influenced by politics. ■



**#2**  
**Peter Ndegwa**

CEO SAFARICOM PLC

Since joining Safaricom PLC as the first indigenous Kenyan CEO on April 1, 2020, Peter Ndegwa has introduced a new leadership style that is targeted to informing the stakeholders of his thoughts in building Safaricom into a customer obsessed firm. Towards this end, Peter has consistently published seminal articles in the authoritative Business Daily and the Daily Nation newspapers towards this end.

As one of the latest entrants into the top echelon of business leadership in Kenya, we share Peter's thoughts as captured in some of these articles.

Of most note and one of the latest that was published on April 1, 2021, Peter shares 10 Leadership Lessons Learned in Transition Amidst A Crisis, the exact title of the article. He wrote:

Today marks one year since I joined Safaricom PLC, and I can't help but be filled with a deep sense of gratitude both as a leader and as an individual. I am truly grateful for a smooth and successful transition back to Kenya and into the company, and I am happy to be part of this wonderful family. It has been a tough year for humanity and business, but I am thankful for good health and a good support system.

As I take stock of this past year, I would like to share 10 things I have learnt along the way:

1. Managing major transitions is a critical leader's job (both personal and professional). It needs careful thought, a clear vision and remarkable resilience.
2. In times of crisis, lead with purpose and follow your intuition when making decisions. Tap into your previous experiences and do not wait for all the facts to guide you as they will not always be there.
3. Teams can do anything when challenged positively. For people to deliver their best, you need to communicate clear goals and install a sense of mission in a purposeful way to ensure that everyone actively works towards achieving it.
4. Do not underestimate the power of partnerships. We worry too much about competition when there is so much more power when we collaborate. Covid-19 pandemic forced us to come together and collaborate on matters that benefit society as a whole, and I think we should definitely do this more often.
5. The customer is king, and is even more important in these uncertain times we are currently living in. Customers will remember how you made them feel in times of crisis, and it was important for us to stand with Kenyans and cushion them against the negative impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.
6. Covid-19 reminded us of the power of purpose and as a purpose-led organization, we are dedicated to transforming lives, ensuring we leave no one behind.
7. Deal with the crisis, but also continue to build the future. Despite the uncertainty we face, maintain a sense of mission and be devoted to achieving it. >>



We recently launched 5G and I must say there are immense opportunities ahead of us. Our inspiration to innovate continues to be our Brand purpose - Transforming Lives. It is with this in mind, that we have launched 5G- a truly transformational innovation in technology.



>> **8.** As we navigate through the Covid-19 pandemic, the role of leaders has changed in this new world of working from home and virtual meetings. Keeping connected while we are apart is an even bigger imperative as we ensure that business continues as usual. It is ok not to know everything but lead with empathy and have the courage to deal with situations as they occur.

**9.** We can adapt to any change never allow anyone to say you cannot. The situation may seem grim, but we must remain optimistic and work towards a better future.

**10.** In this social media age, listen for real feedback but learn to filter and depersonalise the “noise”.

On 5G, Peter wrote: We recently launched 5G and I must say there are immense opportunities ahead of us. Our inspiration to innovate continues to be our Brand purpose - Transforming Lives. It is with this in mind, that we have launched 5G- a truly transformational innovation in technology. 5G is the next generation of mobile internet connection and offers

**The digital divide-gaps in access to information and communication technology-has seen many left out of the digital landscape. The Covid-19 pandemic brought forth this reality given the need to work from home using platforms that ICT provides but, unfortunately were not available to everyone.**

much faster data download and upload speeds by allowing far more devices to access the internet at the same time. This is an investment that we anticipate all our 30+M customers with smart phones and a digital lifestyle will relish. A new era of the Internet of Things (IoT) in Kenya is about to kick off with aplomb.

With 5G, whatever we do now with our smartphones we'll be able to do faster and better, but what's really exciting is all the new services that will be built and the many opportunities that will arise especially for



consumers, MSMEs and large organisations alike.

Whatever our future holds, you can bet on one thing, Safaricom is committed to being your trusted companion as we ‘Go Beyond’ into the world of 5G.

Turning to ‘How businesses can become a powerful force for the SDGs’ to quote the title of the article, Peter penned the following: During the 2019 UN General Assembly, the UN Secretary General called on all sectors of the society to collaborate if we are to achieve the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030.

The year 2020 marked the beginning of the Decade of Action - a reaffirmation of the global commitment through accelerated efforts and sustainable solutions to the world's biggest challenges, ranging from eradicating poverty, reducing gender inequality to addressing climate change.

Before the onset of Covid-19, the world was already lagging behind in the achievement of critical milestones. This is evidenced by the rise in the number of people suffering from food insecurity. The number was at 690 million in 2019, which is an 8.7% increase compared to 2014.

Climate change is also occurring more rapidly than anticipated, with 2019 being the second warmest year in the decade. Eradication of extreme poverty has slowed in pace, with projections showing that 6 per cent of the global population will still live-in extreme poverty by 2030.

Kenya, just like many other developing countries, is lagging in the achievement of key SDGs. According to the 2020 country SDGs index rankings, Kenya emerged position 123 out of 193 members of the UN with notable progress on only 2 out of the 17 SDGs; Climate Action and Decent Work and Economic Growth.

At the current pace, Kenya risks missing out achieving its key aspirations by 2030 such as achieving food security, universal health coverage and reducing the unemployment levels among the youth.

To turn the table, we must harness the critical input of the private sector because in our aspiration to create a more sustainable society, we realize that we



**“ We must create a mindset of leading from purpose that will enable us to accelerate the delivery of sustainable businesses. We must borrow and share the best practices on how we can pool together and manage resources, be visionary and ethical.”**

cannot succeed in isolation. For business to effectively support the achievement of the SDGs, a shift in the leadership mindset and redefining of business models is also required.

We must create a mindset of leading from purpose that will enable us to accelerate the delivery of sustainable businesses. We must borrow and share the best practices on how we can pool together and manage resources, be visionary and ethical.

To achieve the SDGs, we must take collective action by consistently engaging like-minded business partners and spurring actions geared towards achievement of the goals. Hence, the launch of the ‘Sustainable Future Series’. Peter writes that:

To help us in driving this, we launched the Safaricom Sustainable Future series, which aims to bring together business

leaders to discuss how to tackle some of the most pressing challenges of this decade.

We recently held the second edition of the series and it was great listening to and participating in discussions with other local business leaders around how we can work together with other business leaders to achieve the SDGs.

The discussion also focused on leadership approaches needed in the private sector for business to meet the challenge of building more resilient and sustainable societies.

Each of us, whether as individuals or organisations, both small and large, can and should play a role in bringing sustainability to the forefront. We remain committed to collaborate with all stakeholders to help advance the SDGs.

When we commit to sustainable business, we create a virtuous circle – good >>

>> for customers, good for employees, good for business, good for the planet and good for the future.

As the private sector and as responsible corporate citizens, the best way to push the sustainability agenda forward is by incorporating the SDGs in how we run our businesses. After all, doing good is good for business.

When Ban Ki Moon, the former UN Secretary General officially launched the SDGs, he said: "This is the people's agenda. It is a plan of action for ending poverty in all its dimensions, irreversibly, everywhere, leaving no one behind." We remain committed to ensure that we leave no one behind and this Sustainable Future Series which we hold every 3 months is part of that commitment.

On market internet penetration, Peter wrote: Over two decades ago, the mobile phone in Kenya was a novel gadget for staying in touch on the go, through calls and short messages. Today, it does a lot more than just communication. It has emerged as an effective tool for tackling society's most pressing challenges, facilitating inclusive and sustainable development.

But not everyone has benefited. While the mobile industry in sub-Saharan Africa has largely risen to the challenge of keeping individuals and businesses connected – nearly 800 million people in the region are still not connected to the internet.

The digital divide-gaps in access to information and communication technology has seen many left out of the digital landscape. The Covid-19 pandemic brought forth this reality given the need to work from home using platforms that ICT provides but, unfortunately were not available to everyone.

In answering the question, 'How then do we ensure we leave no one behind?', the CEO of Safaricom stated in the article, 'Safaricom is working closely with Vodafone and Vodacom teams across Africa to close the digital divide through the recently launched Africa.Connected initiative. The continent-wide campaign seeks to accelerate economic recovery by driving digital inclusion, enabling access of



affordable devices and empowering Micro and Small business to use technology to grow their businesses. The initiative will help boost the continent to be more competitive, resilient, inclusive and sustainable.

**The digital divide-gaps in access to information and communication technology has seen many left out of the digital landscape. The Covid-19 pandemic brought forth this reality given the need to work from home using platforms that ICT provides but, unfortunately were not available to everyone**

Through the campaign, we invite governments, industry, business and civil society to collaborate with us to ensure we bring ICT products and services closer to the people without the access.

To this end, Safaricom is committed to continue working with Government, the industry and social sector institutions to expand and broaden digital offerings, foster an enabling environment for rapid digitalization and speed up infrastructure investments.

**Connectivity is an economic imperative**

This calls for proven innovative approaches such as mobile money for sustainable development. Mobile money has driven financial inclusion in Kenya, catapulting it from single digit at the turn of the century to over 80% now. Studies have demonstrated that mobile money has helped lift many individuals out of poverty and improve their quality of life.

In Kenya, the internet is mostly accessed via the mobile phone and has opened new revenue opportunities and enhanced the live-

lihoods of many. Businesses are also deriving huge benefits from digital technology, enabling them to grow, create jobs and enjoy more economic benefits.

**We must get more people online**

The last two decades have demonstrated that placing the mobile phone in the hands of as many people as possible, connected to fast and reliable internet, can be transformative. Currently, GSMA, the industry association that represents interests of mobile network operators globally, estimates that the industry contributes nine per cent of African economies' GDP, with the ecosystem supporting 650,000 individuals formally and another 1.4 million informally.

A firm infrastructural foundation has been laid and the benefits are there to be realized. Now is the time to quicken the pace of actualizing universal access to mobile technology.

On Public-private partnerships, Peter wrote that these are crucial to accelerate development. He says in the article that: Partnerships with government, business and organizations, both local and international, are an important cornerstone of continued success in digitalization. A collaborative approach is key for a future that is fair, inclusive and sustainable. Initiatives such as the African Union Commission's digital transformation strategy and the UN Digital Cooperation Roadmap provide frameworks for how this could progress.

Alliances and collaborations can help unlock greater benefit for all and accelerate economic progress. Take the ongoing strategic partnership between Safaricom and Google to make 4G devices affordable to low-income earners through daily payments, for instance. It targets almost 15 million customers who are still on 2G in the next couple of years. This seeks to address the upfront cost of devices, which hinders these customers from tapping into benefits of the high-speed internet currently available in many parts of the country.

Today, M-PESA is arguably the backbone of our digital economy, facilitating payments, transfers and micro-lending. As it evolves and finds applications in differ-



**A firm infrastructural foundation has been laid and the benefits are there to be realized. Now is the time to quicken the pace of actualizing universal access to mobile technology.**

ent industries and sectors beyond financial services, it remains a platform around which ecosystems can coalesce.

Over the last two decades, Safaricom has grown to be more than just a mobile service provider. We have morphed into a digital lifestyle enabler by leveraging on partnerships and collaborations to transform lives. Our next phase is geared towards being more customer obsessed by facilitating technology growth for our customers, driving greater experience and ensuring that we leave no one behind in the digital era.

The fourth industrial revolution is here. It is expected to ride on digital

technology and innovation, making the need for sustained efforts to close the digital divide more urgent. We have an opportunity-through the Africa.Connected campaign-to jointly rewrite the script and close the digital gap. We need to come together telcos, governments and social sector institutions, to expand and broaden digital offerings, foster an enabling environment for rapid digitisation and speed up infrastructure investments.

And crown it all, Peter has just led a consortium of multinational firms to win Ethiopia's licence bid on Ksh 91.8 bn offer, a historic Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) for Ethiopia. Safaricom Plc, under Peter Ndegwa, is venturing into new frontiers in telecommunication and financial services in this year of his leadership at Safaricom Plc, dubbed the year of Twende Tukiuke!

Ethiopia has hitherto been a very difficult market to break into, and this feat speaks volume of this soft spoken, visionary, highly intelligent, sharp and witty lead honcho in Kenya's corporate space, Peter Ndegwa. Peter is Kenya's first native to be appointed the CEO of Safaricom Plc, in the firm's 20 year-corporate history. ■



**#3**

## Lady Justice Martha Koome

**CHIEF JUSTICE AND PRESIDENT OF THE SUPREME COURT**

Lady Justice Martha Koome's historic appointment as Kenya's first female Chief Justice (CJ) and President of the Supreme Court is a giant step forward in the push for greater efficiency and reforms in the higher ranks of the Judiciary.

The accomplished court of appeal judge since her appointment on January 2012, who beat off stiff competition from nine other formidable candidates, including fellow judges, prominent lawyers in private practice and law scholars, has built an illustrious career in the legal profession spanning 33 years. Prior to her appointment to the Court of Appeal, Lady CJ served as Puisne Judge for over eight years.

In the same year she was appointed as Court of Appeal Judge, she was elected the Chairperson of the Kenya Magistrates and Judges Association.

In 2016, she was among the female candidates shortlisted by the JSC for the Deputy Chief Justice position.

From the look of things, the new CJ was calm and confident during her four-hour televised interview conducted by the Judicial Service Commission (JSC) on April 14, 2021, earning her the admiration of many Kenyans who followed the interviews live on national TV and online, leading to her unanimous nomination on April 27, 2021 by the JSC as the country's 15th CJ and the third under the 2010 Constitution.

Lady CJ Martha Koome's record on children and gender rights in particular and her role in drafting Kenya's 2010 Constitution, in particular the Bill of Rights, stood out. The Bill of Rights outlaws discrimination against women, allow children to derive citizenship from their mothers for the first time and limits discriminatory customary laws on women's property rights.

In addition, Lady CJ Martha Koome's exemplary track record in expediting the administration of justice and in particular, clearing of case backlogs, a perennial challenge, if not an excuse affecting the Judiciary,

works in her favour, as she takes the helm as the head of the third estate in Kenya.

### Career highlights

After studying law at the University of Nairobi and graduating from the Kenya School of Law, she was admitted to the Bar as an Advocate of the High Court of Kenya in 1986 and started her career as a legal associate before starting her own firm in 1993 where she was the managing partner until joining the bench in 2003.

The new Lady CJ cut her teeth in private practice representing very sensitive political detainees such as former Prime Minister Raila Odinga, when he was opposing repression under the late president Daniel Arap



The new Lady CJ cut her teeth in private practice representing very sensitive political detainees such as former Prime Minister Raila Odinga, when he was opposing repression under the late president Daniel Arap Moi in the 1980s and 90s, cases that the faint hearted of lawyers would not touch those days.

Moi in the 1980s and 90s, cases that the faint hearted of lawyers would not touch those days. Lady CJ Koome also had a test of judicial activism as one of the young and courageous lawyers involved in the clamour for multi-partism by campaigning for the repeal of Section 2A of the constitution which made the country a one-party state. She has consistently campaigned for the independence of the judiciary.

Keen on influencing the legal profession in Kenya more actively, she served as a council member of the Law Society of Kenya (LSK)

between 1993-1996 and as the inaugural treasurer of the East Africa Law Society between 1994-1996.

During her tenure at the Law Society of Kenya, she took a leading role in constitutional and legal reforms, and was part of the constitutional review process as a delegate at the Bomas of Kenya, where she co-chaired the thematic area on the Bill of Rights.

Lady CJ Martha Koome is a founding member and was Chair of the Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA), one of the leading human rights organizations in the country. She championed the establishment of the family division of the High Court, as well as the enactment of laws to protect the property rights of women in marriages

and family and the equal treatment and rights for all children. Lady CJ is an acclaimed expert in family law and takes a keen interest in the welfare of children. In 1995, for instance, Lady CJ was appointed by the African Union meeting of heads of state as a Commissioner to the African Committee on the Rights and Welfare of Children.

She has also served as the Chairperson of the National Council on the Administration of Justice special taskforce on children matters where she helped steer the review of the Children's Act. >>

>> After more than a decade in private practice, Lady CJ Koome joined the bench in 2003 following her appointment to the High Court by former President Mwai Kibaki. For the next eight years, she headed the land and environmental courts in Nairobi and was a resident judge in Nakuru and Kitale before serving in the commercial and family divisions of the High Court in Nairobi. While at Nakuru and Kitale she was able to clear massive backlogs of cases at a fast pace not witnessed before in courts Kenya and Africa as a whole.

Lady CJ led the Nakuru Law Court in starting a Court User Committee which is now a structure acknowledged in the administration of justice. She also ensured litigants in far-flung areas of Kakuma and Lokichar got justice as she operated mobile court stations to make it easier for witnesses who traversed many kilometers to come to court in Kitale.

“I used to go to Kakuma myself where witnesses were not able to come and I covered that entire bordering frontier that covered Uganda, South Sudan and Ethiopia. I was able to foster partnership with development partners and I am proud my efforts resulted in the construction of a Court station in Kakuma working closely with UNHCR,” said the soft-spoken Lady Justice during her nationally televised interview with the JSC panel.

Lady CJ Martha Koome obtained her Master’s in Public International Law from the University of London in 2010. Two years later, she was promoted to the Court of Appeal in 2012. Her first major decision on the appellate court saw her break ranks with her four colleagues on the bench hearing the appeal on the date of the first elections under the new Constitution.

One of her hallmarks at the Court of Appeal, is her sharp focus on expediting the administration of justice. Along with her fellow judges in the central town of Nyeri, she has been applauded for clearing a five-year backlog of cases.

Justice Koome’s achievements have won her supporters in Kenya and around the world. Last year, she was honoured as a UN Kenya Person of the Year runner-up in 2020 for her advocacy to improve the legal



Lady Justice Martha Koome during the interview. Photo | JSC

rights of women and children in the justice system. She has also been an active and long-standing member of the International Association of Women Judges – Kenya Chapter, which focuses on access to justice for women and children.

She is a certified trainer on human rights by the International Institute for Justice in Malta, the Commonwealth Secretariat, and the International Women Judges Association. In this role, she has trained many including as a visiting lecturer at the Judicial Training Institute and Strathmore University.

**Humble beginnings**

Interestingly, for someone with so many remarkable achievements, Lady CJ Koome has also had her fair share of disappointments. She applied twice for the deputy CJ position – the latest being in 2016 when Justice Philomena Mwilu clinched the position – and did not get it. Had she given up then, she would have today not been Kenya’s top jurist.

Obstacles and challenges, it appears, don’t dampen Lady CJ Koome’s spirits but rather embolden her to try again. A wife

and mother of three, Lady CJ Koome comes from very humble beginnings. She defied the circumstances and showed great promise in school, topping her class at Mugoiri Girls High School before proceeding to the University of Nairobi.

“I grew up in a humble peasant family. We were 18 children. My father was a polygamist and I was my mother’s eighth child. My leadership orientation started early, I started mimicking my mother to see how I could help reduce the burden. Because of her commitment, I was able to go to school and reach where I am today. That training grounded me well,” she told the JSC panel during her interview.

Justice Koome has been a role model and a keynote speaker in many forums mostly advancing the values of family and sharing her own experiences of how to balance career growth, work and family.

That is Lady CJ Martha Karambu Koome, a Chief Justice with the intellect, presence, gait and the walk expected of a Chief Justice. Her appointment is seen as a boon for reforming the business environment in Kenya that is currently weighed down by the slow wheels of justice. ■



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# #4

## Carole Kariuki-Karuga

CEO KENYA PRIVATE SECTOR ALLIANCE (KEPSA)

A ring-side member of a flamboyant coterie of witty, young and very learned women CEOs of multi-national corporations (MNCs), global brands, international institutions, civil societies and business lobby organisations in Kenya that includes Phyllis Wakiaga, Lina Githuka, Angela Ndambuki, Kendi Ntwiga, Agnes Gathaiya, and Caroline Mukiira, to name but a few, Carole Kariuki Karuga has organically grown into one of Kenyans most dependable leader in the business space.

Calm and withdrawn when she first took over the helm as CEO of the Kenya Private Sector Alliance (KEPSA), Carole has matured with time and exposure to become the most mature, dependent, informed and organised business leader in Kenya, objectively loyal to her country, to a fault.

She has transformed an initially elitist and ego-centric big business lobby group to one that is now attracting the likes of micro and start-up businesses, as misplaced as these businesses are. From an organization of business lobby associations, it is not uncommon to get individual members of KEPSA, both small and large.

Carole Karuga's frequent presence on NTV, KTN and Citizen TV early morning and late evening shows, have only served to endear her as an informed and most articulate panellist. Participation in local and global webinars deliberating on practically all aspects of policy formulation and project management and interventions help to



propel her for a steep national leadership ascent.

For the rest of 2021 and early 2022, Carole leads KEPSA with the mantra, 'Emerging economically stronger together: Living with Covid-19 and the new world order'.

The Kenya Private Sector Alliance (KEPSA) is the apex body of the private sector registered in 2003. It was formed to drive yearly economic development through facilitating improvements in the business sector, addressing cross-cutting business issues, driving investments, and addressing socio-economic issues with its partners. KEPSA brings together over 500,000 direct and indirect members organized through business associations, corporates, multinationals, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and start-ups to speak in one voice, working closely with Government and other stakeholders through structured Public-Private Dialogue (PPD) platforms and other engagement mechanisms.

Since the outbreak of Covid-19, KEPSA has worked closely with the government and other partners to cushion Kenyans and businesses particularly SMEs against the adverse effects of the global Covid-19 pandemic.

KEPSA developed priority interventions to be pursued under KEPSA Economic Management Framework for Covid-19 Response, which were tabled and adopted by the government to ensure business continuity. The framework led by KEPSA CEO Carole Kariuki Karuga was determined to cushion the private sector against the impact of Covid-19 on the Kenyan Economy. In addition, KEPSA developed protocols adopted by government to enable business continue with their operations amidst the pandemic and enable the reopening of the economy.

KEPSA also set up a free toll call center 1196 that provided information to the public and private sector on covid-19 response initiatives as well as providing a platform through the 'Wheels for Life' program for expectant mothers to access free transport to a health facility during curfew hours and lockdown period.

In support of the health sector, KEPSA through its Health Sector Board-Kenya Healthcare Federation donated Personal Protective Equipment worth millions of shillings to a number of counties including Kajiado, Mombasa and Machakos as it continues to seek ways of expanding this initiative to other counties.

In a bid to facilitate economic recovery in 2021 and sustain it in 2022, KEPSA has identified 5 key pillars in the implementation of the recovery strategy. These pillars and their key focus areas include:

- 1. Public-Private Dialogue (PPD) Pillar:**
  - Global Competitiveness Index
  - Doing Business Index
- 2. Sustainability Pillar:**
  - Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
  - Green Economy
  - Blue Economy
  - Climate Change
- 3. Governance Pillar:**
  - Corporate Governance
  - National Leadership
  - Corruption
- 4. Business Hub Pillar:**
  - SME Development
  - Economic Diplomacy
- 5. Social Pillar:**
  - Jobs and Enterprise Development for Youth and Women.

Since the outbreak of Covid-19, KEPSA has worked closely with the government and other partners to cushion Kenyans and businesses particularly SMEs against the adverse effects of the global Covid-19 pandemic

Trade Mark East Africa (TMEA) is one of the main partners working with KEPSA to drive the Public-Private Dialogue Pillar.

The first pillar aims to promote sustainable and inclusive economic growth, strengthen economic foundations locally, regionally and globally, support business-friendly policy laws at National and County Levels and strengthen firm-level productive capacities and value chains in growth centres: agriculture, light manufacturing and tourism. All these objectives are focused on improving Kenya's ranking in global competitiveness and ease of doing business indexes with their indicators incorporated and monitored in PPD engagement matrices.

So far, KEPSA has successfully partnered with EU-Africa RISE Program to launch a Business Competitiveness Centre and develop a national competitiveness strategy to guide the centre. The association also facilitated Tanzania-Kenya business forum to address trade barriers affecting business in the region which was led by the two Presidents; the 7th Tax Round Table with Kenya Revenue Authority Commissioner General aimed at resolving tax administrative challenges as well as holding five Ministerial Stakeholder Forums focusing on energy, petroleum and mining, public finance, health and transport and infrastructure.

The second pillar on Sustainability aims to: accelerate transition to a green economy by strengthening cooperation between private and public sectors, develop the capacity of the private sector to incorporate sustainability practices into their strategic plans and company initiatives, transition Sustainable Inclusive Business-K program into KEPSA's Knowledge Centre to champion for the adoption of green and blue economy principles, climate change and sustainability in the private sector, create linkages between academia and private sector on green growth, adaptation and mitigation to climate change and achievement of sustainable development goals, enhance financing of green projects, promote implementation and compliance to existing policies, action plans and laws on green economy, >>

>> SDGs and climate change and finally to promote trade and investments in the blue economy sector.

To implement this second pillar, KEPSA effected staff and members training on sustainability principles, circular economy and climate change adaptation and mitigation and partnered with Global Compact in adopting effective usage of Action Manager tool that tracks implementation of SDGs in organizations.

The Environment, Water and Natural Resources Sector Board and SIB-K team are working with the Ministry of Environment and Forestry to develop a communication plan for Extended Producer Responsibility Regulation (EPR) Sensitization project. KEPSA is the co-chair of Kenya Partnering for Green Growth and the Global Goals 2030 (P4G) platform wherein it has been instrumental in transformative change and innovation to deliver sustainable development.

Third, is the Governance Pillar whose objective is to influence Kenyans to aspire to a better future and to strive for a great Kenya, curb corruption in the private sector and change the country's narrative to a positive narrative focusing on the four key areas of leadership, public safety, global competitiveness, and blockchain integration into government systems. So far, KEPSA managed to secure a donation from Danish International Development Agency after the 2019 Anti-Corruption Conference.

KEPSA held a governance action meeting in April 2021 which provided an opportunity to engage other players and experts in the field of Governance in Kenya and beyond, for purposes of learning and borrowing from their best practices. KEPSA signed an MoU with the Blue Company that will see them use the association as a platform to create awareness around the fight against corruption and all its forms within the private sector.

The Business Hub Pillar focuses on enhancing resilience and growth of SMEs for wealth and job creation, enhance MSME business recovery from Covid-19 impacts, influence policies and laws focused on promoting trade and investment, increase



competitiveness and market access for SMEs business growth, increase exports regionally and globally and strengthen county economic blocs capacity to attract investments. KEPSA has financed MSME

**While overseeing all these activities, Carole Kariuki Karuga maintains a busy event calendar, as she champions all private sector engagements where her expertise and immense knowledge are often called upon to promote the association's agenda of private sector growth**

loans amounting to over Ksh40Million to 101 businesses within the past year.

Through a partnership with MasterCard Foundation Project, KEPSA provided virtual training and mentorship sessions to over 6,000 participants. These sessions are still ongoing; hence the number of participants keeps growing with each session.

KEPSA has partnered with Zydii Africa and Grassroots Business Fund to offer technical assistance through an online module to beneficiaries of the Mastercard Foundation Covid-19 Recovery and Resilience Loan Programme.

KEPSA also partnered with Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to provide support and training on issues regarding Gender-Based Violence (GBV).

The fifth and final pillar, the Social Pillar, has as its primary focus, jobs and enterprise development for Youth and Women. This pillar seeks to promote youth

employment and entrepreneurship for economic growth, champion women jobs enterprise development, promote gender inclusivity and its mainstreaming, and enhance access to finance and markets.

KEPSA is currently running several projects all aimed at providing the youth and women in Kenya with the skillset and funds to create their own business ventures. The Ajira Digital Project was started in 2016 by the Ministry of ICT, Innovations and Youth Affairs, which was funded by Rockefeller Foundation, with KEPSA as the implementing partner focusing on creating awareness and training on online work, with a component of SMEs and mentorship. Around 8000 young people benefitted from this intervention.

In 2019, the second phase of AJIRA was launched with funding from Mastercard Foundation under Young African Work Initiative with KEPSA and eMobilis as implementing partners with KEPSA focusing on job demand linkages both in private and public sectors. Since May 2020, the project under KEPSA has so far: linked about 20,000 youth to various jobs in the digital eco-system, over 2000 MSMEs have benefitted from the program enabling them to expand their markets and realigning their internal strategies through various digital solutions and also established over 30 partnerships with various digital platforms to promote outsourcing as core business strategy.

The project has also worked with the public sector in supporting its digitization efforts and is currently working with the Judiciary in its digital reforms providing opportunities to about 1000 youth while addressing the ease of doing business through improving judicial efficiency. Efforts are also underway to support the development of a blueprint of how government can outsource work to digital platforms and freelancers in the country propelling the program's vision of position Kenya as the leading Freelancing Hub in Africa.

The project has been implemented in various counties to promote youth employment and women enterprise development countrywide wherein 70% of the



**KEPSA has financed MSME loans amounting to over Ksh40Million to 101 businesses within the past year. Through a partnership with MasterCard Foundation Project, KEPSA provided virtual training and mentorship sessions to over 6,000 participants.**

beneficiaries of this project are expected to be women.

To bring reforms to board diversity and inclusivity, KEPSA partnered with the Kenya Institute of Management (KIM), Nairobi Securities Exchange (NSE), and New Faces New Voices (NFNV) to undertake the 2020/2021 Board Diversity and Inclusion Survey, aimed at uncovering how diversity influences decision making, productivity, innovation, and overall performance in the workplace. The research findings will inform policy reforms on diversity and inclusivity in private and public sectors in Kenya.

KEPSA remains very active on various social media platforms like Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn and Facebook, where its successes and calls to action are conveyed to those keen on the growth of the private sector and economic reform in Kenya.

While overseeing all these activities, Carole Kariuki Karuga maintains a busy event calendar, as she champions all private sector engagements where her exper-

tise and immense knowledge are often called upon to promote the association's agenda of private sector growth. Taking all this into account, KEPSA has taken a ring side seat in committees overseeing the distribution and management of the Covid-19 vaccines, to ensure that the process is onboarded and implemented as effectively and as efficiently as possible.

KEPSA serves as a federation of over 80 Associations and professional bodies-such as the Kenya Tourism Federation, Federation of Kenya Employers, Kenya Association of Manufacturers, National Federation of Jua Kali Associations, SME Founders Association, Micro and Small Enterprises Federation, Fintech, TESPOK, ASNET, Kenya Transporters Association, Kenya Security Industry Association, Kenya Media Association, Kenya Tea Growers Association, Kenya Flower Council, Kenya Bankers Association, Kenya Health Federation, American Chamber of Commerce, British Chamber of Commerce, Retail Traders Association, ICPAK, LSK among others, all with large and small business members across the country.

KEPSA also host the Kenya Chapter of the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) as a member. The Kenya National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KNCCI) is a member of the ICC.

KEPSA serves as the focal point of East Africa Business Council (EABC) whose board of directors is currently chaired by Nik Nesbitt. EABC is the apex body of businesses in EAC. ■

# #5

## Justin Bedan Muturi

**SPEAKER OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF KENYA**

**Reimagining Kenya's political and economic destiny one law at a time**

Justin Bedan (JB) Muturi is the conductor of Kenya's legislative orchestra. From his perch, he powerfully drives a business-friendly agenda, skillfully negotiating the contours of politics as the Parliament he leads makes laws and regulations to create a stable business environment and better livelihoods for Kenyans. Does he want to succeed President Kenyatta? He spoke to Business Monthly in May 2021.

That afternoon on March 28, 2013, Justin Bedan Muturi—fondly referred to by many as JB, nibbled on his lunch in one of the rooms at Parliament buildings, his eyes firmly fixed on the screen tallying the votes of Speaker. He had campaigned, lobbied, and prayed. Now it was up to the Members of the National Assembly to choose their Speaker. His challenger, the then Speaker Kenneth Marende, the umpire of the Tenth Parliament, was also in the race. The numbers trickled in, the computers whirred and when the final tally was announced, after two rounds of voting, Muturi was elected with 219 votes against Marende's 129. That day marked the beginning of his role at the helm of the National Assembly and as the chairman of the Parliamentary Service Commission (PSC).

But it is what he said next that defined his focus, his vision for the place of Parliament in building the nation, boosting investments, growing the economy and changing livelihoods. His priority, he said, was on passage of governance laws, laws to boost the economy and position Kenya competitively in the global market.

"In my view (what) is most crucial and urgent, is the passage of the laws that will set the pace for the sustained economic growth



and development of our beloved country," Muturi said then.

For a country known for having stellar economic plans, a progressive constitution and dozens of business-enabling laws, Muturi's sentiments could have sounded ambitious, even far-fetched.

"We were dealing with multiple administrative issues to settle the new MPs in an expanded House, nearly twice the size of the previous Parliament, and at the same time, we did not want to lose focus about the fact that we exist to serve the people, to improve their lives, and livelihoods. Boosting investments and growing the economy sustainably top that agenda," Muturi said in an interview with Business Monthly for this story.

He is a man who was aware of the new reality about the place of Parliament in Kenya's political architecture. The Constitution changed in 2010 giving Parliament immense sway in making the national budget, approving debt ceilings and in oversight of the Executive's roles. The system too has changed to a majoritarian presidential system, meaning that the party in power had a majority in Parliament, making it inevitable for the

Legislature and the Executive to work together in lockstep.

To understand Muturi's passion, one needs to look at his history. Born in a remote village in Kanyuambora, Mbeere, in Embu County on April 28, 1956, JB is the son of a policeman and a hardworking housewife. Muturi has defied all odds to get to where he is today, the head of the Legislature and the third-in-command in the constitutional pecking order.

His father died while Muturi was at Kangaru School in Embu, but he slogged on. With the goodwill villagers and his hardworking mother (who died in 2018), he made it to the University of Nairobi, where he studied law, and upon graduation, he was picked as a magistrate serving in different parts of the country, in Bungoma, Githunguri, Thika, Machakos, and Nairobi. He quit the Judiciary to try his hand at politics, and after losing in the 1997 general election, he won the Siakago parliamentary seat in 1999 by-election. In between, he was a businessman, in the space of clearing and forwarding, transport and dubbing with poultry farming.

JB was re-elected on the Kanu ticket in 2002, and became the party's >>





For the last nine years, Muturi has been engaging the media and the private sector on how Parliament can help them to do their job effectively. Every year, he invites journalists and the KEPSA to discuss different issues on governance, on business, on the economy, and how Parliament can help with that.

>> powerful chief whip and one of the most effective chairpersons of the Public Investments Committee (PIC) in the history of the house. During this period, JB distinguished himself as a gallant crusader in unmasking runaway corruption particularly in state owned enterprises (SOEs).

As a former magistrate, he had witnessed the suffering of the people first-hand, in land cases, unfair business practices, auctions which consigned many families to poverty and other predatory attacks perpetrated by the sharks in the

country. As a politician, long before the Constituency Development Fund was activated in 2005, he set up infrastructure in the constituency to help the needy, paying their school fees and medical bills, as he begged the government of the day to build roads, schools and hospitals.

Now as the Speaker, his vision was very clear about what the country needed to work on: education, health, the economy and good governance. "As Speaker, I don't have a vote in the House. But I try my best to explain to Members that we

need to fix the healthcare, the economy, the education and how we run the affairs of this country," Muturi told Business Monthly.

"It should not be acceptable that families get bankrupted while treating their sick, or that we are always scrambling with hospital bills. Covid-19 has disrupted our way of doing things, and we must take these lessons and recalibrate our thinking and priorities accordingly," he added.

As the first Speaker of the National Assembly in the new bicameral arrangement, Muturi was coming in from the cold after five years of being outside Parliament working in the civil society, rebuilding the country's democracy as the chairman of the Centre for Multiparty Democracy (CMD). Now, he is back in the ring, in a very important position, expected to address the bread-and-butter issues, directly affecting the 349 MPs in the National Assembly and the 67 MPs in the Senate, and indirectly, all the 48 million Kenyans.

The party in power had a manifesto, with policies and pledges to build a first-class logistics hub covering transport, roads, railways, waterways, pipelines, ports, storage and energy in Kenya. To modernise agriculture and end the perennial cyclic hunger. To boost manufacturing and diversify exports. To clean up and simplify the procurement bottlenecks. To make tax collection more efficient. To deepen relationships with Ethiopia, Tanzania, Uganda, Somalia, South Sudan, and other regional countries, who depend on Kenya for goods and services, and whose exports feed our country. And to create a business climate that encourages innovation, investment and growth. Overall, the goal was to make life affordable and improve the quality of life for the Kenyan citizen, by making food, housing, energy and transport easier to access.

So, when the Executive asks for money, including permission to borrow colossal amounts, to implement life-changing projects in food security, infrastructure, electricity distribution to build the foundation for a prosperous country, Parliament acquiesces. "It is a shame that some of the projects were not executed as envisaged due to corruption and other issues, but as Parliament, we continue to hold the Executive to account



on behalf of the people of Kenya," he said.

For the last nine years, Muturi has been engaging the media and the private sector on how Parliament can help them to do their job effectively. Every year, he invites journalists and the Kenya Private Sector Alliance (KEPSA) to discuss different issues on governance, on business, on the economy, and how Parliament can help with that. "We have to remember why we do our politics. We do not do it for ourselves. The people who elect us, expect us to come up with policies, laws and tangible results that improve the quality of their lives," said Muturi.

Auditing the performance of the 11th Parliament, between 2013 and 2017, the tally of laws that the House passed is impressive. For example, the Companies Act was revamped to a new law that made it easier for entities to efficiently set up and

As a former magistrate, he had witnessed the suffering of the people first-hand, in land cases, unfair business practices, auctions which consigned many families to poverty and other predatory attacks perpetrated by the sharks in the country



operate in Kenya. The overhaul of the law was done incorporating the changes in technology, procedure, and corporate governance principles, and partly in response to the Ease of Doing Business requirements which boosted Kenya's rankings. Dozens of laws that support business have been enacted during Muturi's tenure, including the Insolvency Act, the Mining Act, The Public Audit Act, the Public Procurement and Asset Disposal Act. In the last eight years, 220 laws were enacted under Hon. Muturi's leadership. As the first Speaker under the Constitution of Kenya 2010, he presided over the overhaul of the country's laws, including some, in the statute books since the colonial period.

What next for him? There have been reports that he is seeking the highest office in the land, which will make him the first Speaker to have the courage to do so in Kenya. You can see it in his demeanour, the events he attends, the people he meets, and his recent public pronouncements. Not too long ago, JB was crowned Mt Kenya East spokesperson. And newspaper headlines these days have him as a possible running mate, or president, in the 2022 government. On being prodded on his next political move, JB retorted, "Mwenye macho haambiwi tazama," as he chuckled away. He, however, promised to respond comprehensively to the question "when the time comes".

"Right now, I have a job to do and jointly, we have plenty of issues we are trying to do as the Legislature. The time for politics will come, and I assure you, that I am not one to shy away from challenges," he quipped, tongue in cheek.

That a lot more has been done under his stewardship of the National Assembly and even more is expected of him to influence the business environment, the jury is out. Watch this space. ■

# #6 Allan Kilavuka

MD/CEO KENYA AIRWAYS PLC



**O**n the 2nd of January 2020, his first day at Kenya Airways (KQ) as acting CEO, Allan Kilavuka took a tour of a few offices at the headquarters. Here, Allan got his first glimpse of the airline and hope for the future.

‘The many highly talented individuals worked tirelessly to ensure that the Airline’s future is sustainable and in good hands. This signalled hope. I also came across world-class facilities developed to meet the emerging market requirements and advancements in technology. These are to build business resilience and ensure that the Airline remains one of the most competitive in the region. I re-affirmed that KQ is one of the few long-standing African carriers that has pioneered key achievements in the African aviation industry,’ Allan says, remembering his first day at KQ, away from his previous seat as CEO of Jambojet.

Allan adds, ‘It was not lost on me that KQ’s financial performance and the brand had undergone some challenging times in recent years. One of the most notable concerns was that our previously enviable customer handling and retention skills, had deteriorated. As a result, numerous customer complaints were pouring in. This could only mean two things; one, our customers cared enough to tell us where we needed to improve. Secondly, we needed to ensure that we considered all their complaints, and ensure that their flying experiences are seamless, memorable and enjoyable’.

‘Customer centricity stands prominently as one of our fundamental values, but we were not living up to it. We were not delivering a consistently ‘delightful experience with a caring African touch.’

According to Allan, there was the concern about strengthening KQ’s efficiency and optimising the operating costs to ultimately move to a breakeven point.

‘We started our reform agenda in earnest with a lot of optimism and made significant strides. Then in February 2020, nine countries in our Africa network and the UAE and India announced travel restrictions following the continued spread of the SARs CoV 2 virus that was causing CovidD-19 disease. In effect, these travel



“With all that is going on, we must focus on our people. We are improving employee safety and wellbeing and aligning the post-Covid-19 pandemic network with the requisite human resources and skills.”

restrictions suddenly reduced our network by 65%. From thereon, the situation was deteriorating by the hour, and our passenger numbers were dropping and dwindling by the minute,’ he adds.

‘Eventually, the inevitable happened; for the first time in our history, we paused our international flights in April and parked 32 out of our 34-passenger aircraft fleet. This action is equivalent to stopping the sale of your top brand for a year. Our ‘top brand’ being flights during our peak season, ours runs from June to August. It is during this period that most airlines turn a profit. Consequently, the next 4 months were challenging for us because our engines were cold and quiet, eventually leading us to the difficult but necessary road of survival. The impact of this lull was a 90% hole in our revenue,’ Allan narrates.

‘We made every effort to conserve cash and ensure the Airline’s survival. This entailed instituting pay cuts, scaling down on any cash negative operations and negotiating discounts on aircraft loans and lease rentals. We looked for every opportunity to raise revenue, signed up the few charter flight oppor-

tunities we could find, and vigorously pursued opportunities in Cargo,’ the story continues.

Allan says that on the flip side, the pause in activities gave management time to reflect on the future of Kenya Airways and how to emerge even stronger, better, and more focused on the other side of the crisis.

In August 2020, international passenger flights resumed and KQ could breathe a collective sigh of relief. As anticipated, KQ’s return to the skies was bound to be gradual despite an early surge of pent-up demand. As such, KQ was operating at a reduced scale with an extremely lean network. This reality led to the rightsizing of the airline’s operations, a painful but necessary action.

According to Allan, the Covid-19 virus global outbreak in 2020 was beyond anyone’s prediction. Its impact on the aviation industry is expected to continue affecting air travel demand for the next 2 to 3 years. Approximately 70 per cent of total passengers carried in 2020 were flown during the first three months of the year, demonstrating the drop in demand as the global crisis deepened during the year. In >>



President Uhuru Kenyatta and his Congolese host Felix Tshisekedi witness the signing of a partnership deal between Kenya Airways and Congo Airways by KQ Chief Executive Allan Kilavuka and his Congo counterpart Desire Balazire Bantu. PHOTO | PSCU

>> 2019, KQ had celebrated the highest ever passenger haul that had now dropped by over 60% to 2.4 million. Like all airlines in the world, KQ reported record losses in 2020, a record forced on it by the raging effects of the Covid-19 pandemic.

‘Of necessity, things will never be the same again. There is no silver bullet, other than to focus on a few essential actions that we believe will put the Airline on the long road to recovery. We will continue to focus on our customers by ensuring that we understand them and align our products and services to suit their needs and address the end-to-end experience through the customer journey. To achieve this, we are revamping our digital platforms and re-training our employees. For instance, we have relaunched our Contact Centre and renamed it the Customer Excellence Centre,’ adds Allan.

‘We are diversifying our business to ensure that we build a resilient business that can stand the test of time. Over 85%

of our business is in the passenger segment. If 2020 is anything to go by, this poses a significant business risk to the Airline. Top on the diversification strategy is the growth of our cargo business. We want to grow and ensure that it contributes to 20% of the overall business. In December of 2020, we launched the world’s first B787 Preighter,

**According to Allan, the Covid-19 virus global outbreak in 2020 was beyond anyone’s prediction. Its impact on the aviation industry is expected to continue affecting air travel demand for the next 2 to 3 years**

which increased dedicated cargo capacity by 126 tonnes per week. We will also expand our maintenance offering to third parties and have so far signed 7 new customers. We will also get into the unmanned aircraft space (drones) by leveraging our heritage, legacy, and experience of over 44 years in manned aviation,” opines Allan on KQ’s recovery trajectory.

‘When we were grappling with how to survive and move forward, we challenged employees during an ideation process and got back no less than 700 ideas which we are working to implement. We are now working to entrench this culture of innovation by launching the Fahari Innovation Hub, a business innovation and incubation centre that allows for accelerated transformation of ideas into sustainable business opportunities. KQ is the only Airline that has developed such an aviation hub in Africa,’ Allan states.

‘Our initial predictions were that the Covid-19 pandemic would have eased by the end of 2020. Unfortunately, this is not the case. As we stepped into 2021, the realisation that customer service excellence and a diversified product portfolio would be the most critical factors for our survival informed our Financial Year (FY) 2021 themes. These themes will drive all our initiatives and activities under our 5 strategic objectives, which are vital to building a cost-efficient and resilient airline business.

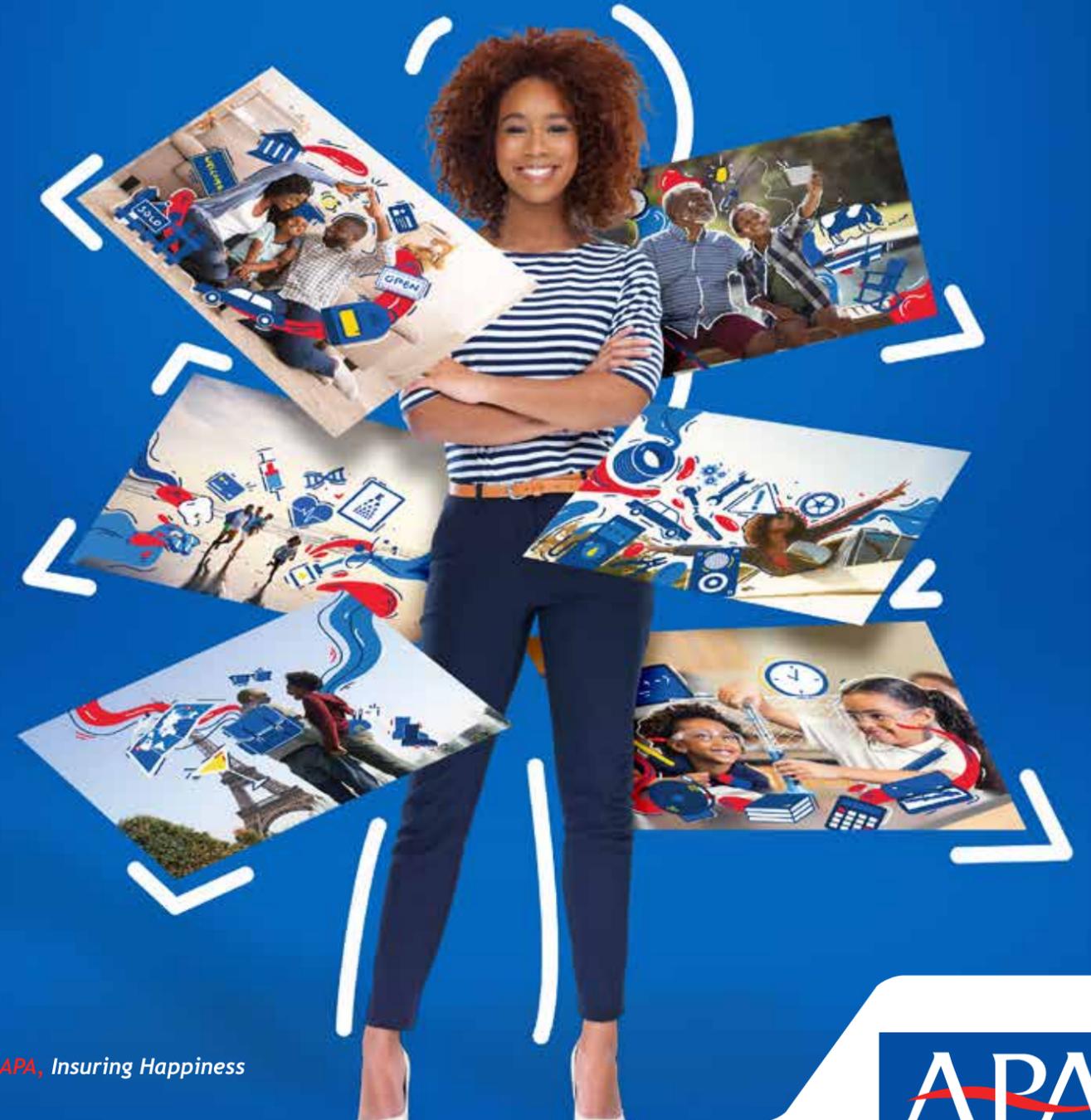
Financial Stability is critical – improving our revenue, containing costs, and conserving cash. We are also working towards securing funding to bridge the current shortfall.

With all that is going on, we must focus on our people. We are improving employee safety and wellbeing and aligning the post-Covid-19 pandemic network with the requisite human resources and skills.

‘At the moment, we acknowledge that there are many moving parts, and the situation is constantly evolving. Our aim is to keep the main thing the main thing. I remain cautiously optimistic about a brighter future. But first, we need to get over this hump,’ concludes Allan Kilavuka, who was confirmed as the Group CEO of Kenya Airways Plc on April 1, 2020. ■

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**#7**

**Amb. Dr. Amina Mohamed**

**CABINET SECRETARY SPORTS, HERITAGE AND CULTURE**

Over the past 30 years, Ambassador Dr. Amina Mohamed has built a long and distinguished career in the public sector. The seasoned lawyer turned diplomat, who currently heads the Sports, Heritage and Culture ministry, started her career in 1985 as a legal officer the Ministry of Local Government, where she assessed World Bank development projects. Her familiarity with the inner workings of multilateral institutions quickly earned her the trust of higher-ranking officials in the government, and in 1986, just one year into her debut in public service, she was tapped as a legal adviser to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

It is at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs—where she would eventually become CS at a later stage in her career—that Amina Mohamed honed her craft as a diplomat. Between 1986 and 1990, she was involved in negotiating and drafting various bilateral treaties, including the Bilateral Air Services Agreements with the United Arab Emirates, Oman, Iran, and the United Kingdom, as well as the African Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Dr. Amina Mohamed's rising star in the early years of her career opened new opportunities overseas, and in 1990, she was appointed as the legal advisor to Kenya's Mission at the United Nations (UN) Head Office in Geneva, Switzerland. This marked the beginning of a long and rewarding career advancing Kenya's diplomatic interests at various UN agencies and global fora. Over the next decade, she achieved milestone after milestone in both her professional and academic life; she ascended to the position of Legal Adviser to the Kenyan delegation at the UN Security Council (the apex organ of the UN) while at the same time, obtaining her Postgraduate Diploma in International Relations from the University of Oxford in the U.K.



**New millennium, new responsibilities**

By the turn of the new millennium, it was increasingly clear that Dr. Amina Mohamed was best placed to lead Kenya's diplomatic efforts at the UN. She had built an impressive track record in Geneva and had established deep ties with many influential contacts around the world. She was subsequently appointed as the Ambassador and Permanent Representative for the Kenya diplomatic mission in Geneva. She served in this role between 2000 and 2006, surviving the personnel reshuffling that typically comes when a new administration, Kibaki's Narc government took over from Moi's Kanu in 2002.

During her time as Kenya's foremost diplomat to the UN, Dr. Amina Mohamed also served in other important roles such as:

- Chairperson, Coordinator and Spokesperson for the African Group in the World Trade Organization's (WTO) Human Rights Commission.
- President of the Conference on Disarmament.
- First female chairperson of the International Organization for Migration.
- Chaired the Trade Policy Review Body in 2003 and served as the chairperson of the Dispute Settlement Body in 2004.
- In 2005, she became the first woman to chair the WTO's General Council.
- Between 2001 and 2005, she was a Member of the Executive Boards and Committees of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), International Labour Organization (ILO), World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS).
- Between 2006 and 2007, she acted as Director for both Europe and Commonwealth Countries as well as Diaspora matters desks.

**Detour to the Ministry of Justice**

After the 2007 General Elections, the then President, HE Mwai Kibaki, plucked Dr. Amina Mohamed from her UN role and



**Dr. Amina Mohamed's rising star in the early years of her career opened new opportunities overseas, and in 1990, she was appointed as the legal advisor to Kenya's Mission at the United Nations (UN) Head Office in Geneva, Switzerland**

appointed her to the Ministry of Justice, National Cohesion and Constitutional Affairs to serve as the Permanent Secretary.

She supervised the drafting, negotiation, national referendum, and promulgation of the new Constitution of Kenya 2010, including institutional reforms on elections, ethics and integrity, access to justice and the development of a national cohesion policy.

It must be remembered that this was a particularly tense time for the country following the unfortunate events of the 2007-2008 Post Election Violence (PEV). Renewed faith for the clamour for a new constitution and the electoral process was desperately needed, making Ambassador Mohamed's job at the Ministry of Justice highly critical. Although the orientation of the job was different—in that it was a locally focused role – the diplomatic skills required to succeed were no different from those that had helped her excel at the UN.

The process of drafting of the new constitution required strong and principled diplomacy owing to the different and sometimes competing needs of the stakeholders involved. It also required the leadership of a strong legal mind who understood the finer nuances of constitutional law. Amb. Mohamed was adept at this job, helping bestow on Kenyans the gift of a new constitution that has been widely acclaimed as being the most progressive in the world.

**Coming back home**

When President Uhuru Kenyatta took office in 2013, he assembled a team of 18 cabinet appointees—Amb. Amina Mohamed was among the first four of the appointees on the list. The president appointed her Cabinet Secretary (CS) for Foreign Affairs and International Trade. This was indeed, a homecoming for the CS in many ways, considering she was now heading the Ministry that she had dedicated most of her early years in public service to.

However, despite all the experience and contacts CS Mohamed had built at the Ministry of Foreign affairs, the job at the helm of the docket was anything but easy. Kenya's international image at the time had greatly been undermined by the cases against the President and his Deputy, at the International Criminal Court (ICC) in the Hague. To compound matters, Kenya's position on the case was clear: the ICC was not best suited to handle Africa's problems owing to its historical bias against the continent's leaders. It was on Amb. Dr. Amina Mohamed's shoulders that the country placed all its diplomatic tools and skills to navigate the legal and international image issues.

CS Mohamed did a stellar job advancing Kenya's position on the ICC issue and building alliances with likeminded countries and organizations across Africa. By the time the cases fell through, many African countries, including South Africa, Uganda, Gambia, and Burundi, had voiced their concerns about the bias the ICC held towards African leaders. Some had even threatened to quit. >>

>> After correcting the misperceptions around the ICC cases, CS Mohamed focused her attention to the image rebuilding front, breathing new life into bilateral and multilateral partnerships with old and new partners and allies. This was immediately successful. In 2015, Kenya hosted the first-ever World Trade Organization (WTO) Ministerial Conference on African soil. In the same year, Kenya also hosted former U.S. President Barack Obama and the leader of the Catholic Church, Pope Francis. These significant visits and meetings were followed in quick succession in 2016, with Kenya hosting UNCTAD's 14th session and the first Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) on African soil.



While at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, CS Amina Mohamed was able to turn the diplomatic and economic tide in five short years. In the first year alone, CS Amina Mohamed skills and diplomatic finesse contributed to raising the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) by 400%.

**Interesting turn**

During President Kenyatta's second term, CS Amina Mohamed's career took an interesting turn, when she was appointed the first woman CS in the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation in 2018, taking over from CS Matiang'i who had been moved to the Interior docket.

At the Ministry of Education, CS Mohamed was lauded for the administration of the 2018 national examinations. She also achieved a 93% transition of pupils finishing primary school to join high school - the highest in Kenyan history at the time. She also devised and implemented a Special Needs Education policy and restructured the Higher Education Loans Board which provides student loans in Kenya.

Her reforms in the Vocational Training Centers increased enrollment in vocational training by 100% as she also built institutes throughout the country, including the most expansive and in far flung counties of Kenya. CS Amina Mohamed negotiated lower college fees for students in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutes, broadening skills acquisition and access to tertiary education. For the first time since independence, TVET students can now access government loans to finance their training.

She also expanded TVET insti-

**While at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, CS Amina Mohamed was able to turn the diplomatic and economic tide in five short years. In the first year alone, CS Amina Mohamed skills and diplomatic finesse contributed to raising the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) by 400%**

Cabinet Secretary Amina Mohamed receives former US Secretary of State John Kerry at the Harambe House in Nairobi, Kenya on May 4 2015. Photo | State Department

tutions' establishment funding to construct 30 additional institutions in the 2018/2019 financial year in vast counties. This was part of a 5-year plan to skill five million young Kenyans with transferrable skills to support decent livelihoods.

CS Amina Mohamed recognized the value of research in higher education and negotiated a research grant of Ksh. 4 billion to this effect. Successfully rolled out the Competency Based Curriculum in January 2019 commencing an elaborate process of curriculum change to align Kenya's population to the demands of a changing world.

In 2019, after just a year in the Education Ministry, CS Amina Mohamed was moved once again. This time, she was appointed CS for Sports, Heritage and Culture.

This job, like the one she took at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, has not been easy. The sports ministry has historically been underfunded by the National Treasury.

"We have always budgeted for our programmes, but often times the Ministry of Sports gets less of what is captured in printed estimates. The question to pose at this

juncture is why the Ministry never gets resources allocated in printed estimates," CS Amina Mohamed said when speaking to the Committee on Sports in the National Assembly in 2019.

In addition to funding challenges, which have led to delays in construction of national stadiums and setback in implementation of various projects, CS Amina Mohamed has also had to deal with the fallout from the Covid-19 pandemic, which paralyzed sporting events around the whole world in 2020.

Despite these challenges, CS Mohamed has brought new momentum to the sports docket. After the rollout of the Covid-19 vaccination nationally, she moved with speed to ensure Kenyan athletes, coaches and sporting staff participating in international games got the jab. By April this year, 4,600 individuals from our national teams had been inoculated, allowing them to participate in important international games such as the Tokyo 2020 Olympics, which have been rescheduled due to the pandemic.

Following months of engagements with Federation' Internationale Automobile (FIA) and the World Rally Championship (WRC) Promoter, CS Mohamed was able to secure rights to host one round of the prestigious global competition in Kenya, through the WRC Safari Rally as it is popularly known is the highest level of global competition in motorsport. Safari Rally has not been hosted as part of the WRC in Kenya for 19 years, despite its heritage of having been one of the most challenging and grueling of the WRC events in the previous years. The Safari Rally was first held in 1953, to commemorate the first visit of the current reigning British Monarch's to Kenya.

Another notable milestone is the partnership CS Amina Mohamed has managed to establish with Moi University to institute the African Athletics Development Center in Eldoret. The center is more than just a facility for local and international athletes to train. It is expected to deploy the latest training technology, support research into sports and serve as a hub for sports tourism. Importantly, it will equip



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athletes with critical financial, entrepreneurial and life skills. This is timely in view of the many unfortunate stories of former star athletes wallowing in poverty and desperation despite earning millions of shillings in the peak of their careers.

**From Kakamega to the World**

It is hard to believe that someone who is fluent in English, Russian, Swahili and has a working knowledge of French had a very ordinary childhood in Kakamega County. CS Amina Mohamed attended the Township Primary School in Kakamega and later Butere Girls and Highlands Girls High School.

She is the eighth of nine siblings.

Her academic excellence in Kakamega opened the door to global opportunities and she secured a scholarship to study Law at Taras Shevchenko University in Kiev, Ukraine. Here, she pursued her undergraduate studies (LL.B) as well as her Master of Law (LL.M) in International Law.

During her career, she has received the

following national honours and awards, including:

- Elder of the Order of the Golden Heart of Kenya (EGH)
- Chief of the Order of the Burning Spear (CBS)
- Knight of the Order of the Star of Italian Solidarity (Cav.O.S.S.I.)
- Life Member of the Red Cross Society
- Member of the Life and Peace Institute International Advisory Council
- Honorary Doctorate from KCA University
- Member of the World Economic Forum's Global Agenda Council on the Arctic
- Grand Cordon of the Order of the Rising Sun

One of the most trusted of the CSs, HE the President of Kenya has nominated Amb. Dr. Amina Mohamed to global responsibilities, where she has flown the Kenya flag, including as a candidate for the powerful and prestigious Chair of the African Union (AU) and as Director General of the World Trade Organization (WTO). ■

# #8 Joseph Mucheru

CABINET SECRETARY ICT, INNOVATION AND YOUTH AFFAIRS

In 2015, Joseph Mucheru (mostly known as Joe Mucheru) was tapped from his job as the senior-most executive in sub-Saharan Africa at tech giant Google, where he was the Head of East Africa Google Office and the Regional Leader for Google sub-Saharan Africa based in Nairobi, to join HE President Uhuru Kenyatta's cabinet. The Cabinet Secretary for ICT, Innovation and Youth Affairs took charge of the ministry at a defining moment in Kenya's ICT sector's history.

The fusion of technology and finance, which birthed innovations such as Safaricom's M-PESA in 2007, had reached a tipping point. M-PESA was no longer the only game in town and more mobile money products, including numerous savings and lending apps, were going live. Increased smartphone availability and the emergence of the 'app economy' had also disrupted many sectors, including media, advertising, and retail.

Likewise, the digital migration process was drawing to a close, signaling the beginning of a new era of digital transformation marked by high-speed internet availability to most Kenyans. Unlike analogue broadcasting, digital broadcasting accommodates more channels while using significantly less spectrum bandwidth. Digital migration freed up spectrum in the 800 MHz and 700 MHz bands, allowing for network operators to roll out broadband 4G and long-term evolution (LTE) services that have since become synonymous with the high-speed internet that distinguishes Kenya as the region's dominant tech hub.

### Results speak for themselves

Managing growth and transformation in a fast-paced environment like ICT is arguably one of the most onerous tasks any leader can encounter in their career. However, CS Mucheru has gracefully and subtly managed this challenge, accelerating Kenya's digital transformation at a blistering pace.

Seven years into office, the results speak

for themselves: the value of mobile commerce transactions grew from Sh1.75 trillion in 2017 to Sh6.95 trillion in 2019, internet subscribers per 100 inhabitants grew from 55.2 in 2015 to 83.3 in 2019, and average daily online visitors to media websites grew from 1.5 million visitors in 2015 to 2.9 million in 2019 according to Economic Survey 2020.

Creating an enabling environment for industry players to operate, and regulating innovation without killing it, is the magic sauce behind CS Mucheru's success recipe. During his tenure, the government has worked more collaboratively with the private sector in driving Kenya's digital transformation. This has created multiple benefits, including the successful roll out of the e-citizen portal that has revolutionized how Kenyans access government services. The e-citizen portal, which is integrated with leading digital payment services, has allowed Kenyans to get services much faster while rooting out corruption and inefficiencies associated with manual systems.

The CS has also partnered with the private sector to oversee the successful roll out of the National Optic Fibre Backbone Infrastructure, which aims to enhance universal access to affordable ICT services countrywide, including to the far-flung parts of Kenya.

The ICT Ministry also spearheaded the successful rollout of the Digital Literacy Program (DLP), which aims to integrate digital technology into the learning environment by equipping teachers and learners with mobile gadgets and e-learning software. In many ways, this program set the stage for the widescale launch of e-learning programs in many schools following the Covid-19 pandemic.

### Conducive legal and regulatory environment

A key highlight of CS Mucheru's tenure has been his commitment to developing the right legal and regulatory environment for the ICT sector to thrive safely and without interferences. >>



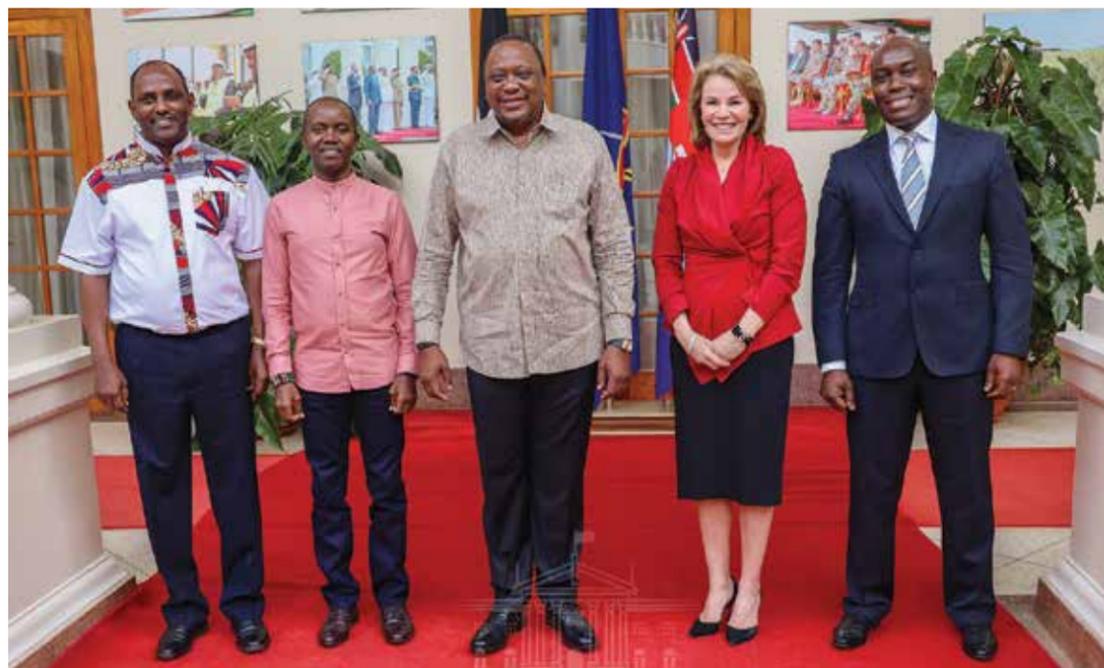


>> Two key pieces of legislation that have been passed under his watch, include the Computer Misuse and Cybercrime Act of 2018 and the Kenya Data Protection Act of 2019.

Cybercrime routinely ranks as one of the highest risks for public and private organizations in today's digital world. Data from the Communications Authority of Kenya (CA), the ICT industry regulator, indicates that cybercrime has been increasing at alarming rate in recent years. In 2016, around 7.7 million cases, including malware, web application attacks, and impersonation, were detected. This figure increased to 23.8 million in 2017, 51.9 million in 2018 and a staggering 110 million in 2019, underlining the timeliness of the Computer Misuse and Cybercrime Act of 2018.

Likewise, the Data Protection Act is another timely piece of legislation in view of the raging global debate about the use of personal data by tech giants such as Google and Facebook to sell targeted advertising and the implications this has on users' privacy. The Data Protection Act 2019 governs the use, processing, and archiving of personal data and establishes the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner—an office currently held by Immaculate Kassait. This law puts Kenya at par with other modern jurisdictions such as the U.K., and the European Union, which have passed similar laws to promote accountability in the digital economy.

CS Mucheru has also stepped-up efforts



From L to R: National Treasury & Planning Ministry CS Ukur Yatani, CS Joe Mucheru, President Uhuru Kenyatta and visiting executives of Amazon Web Services (AWS) pose for a photo after meeting at Statehouse on November 8, 2019. Photo | PSCU

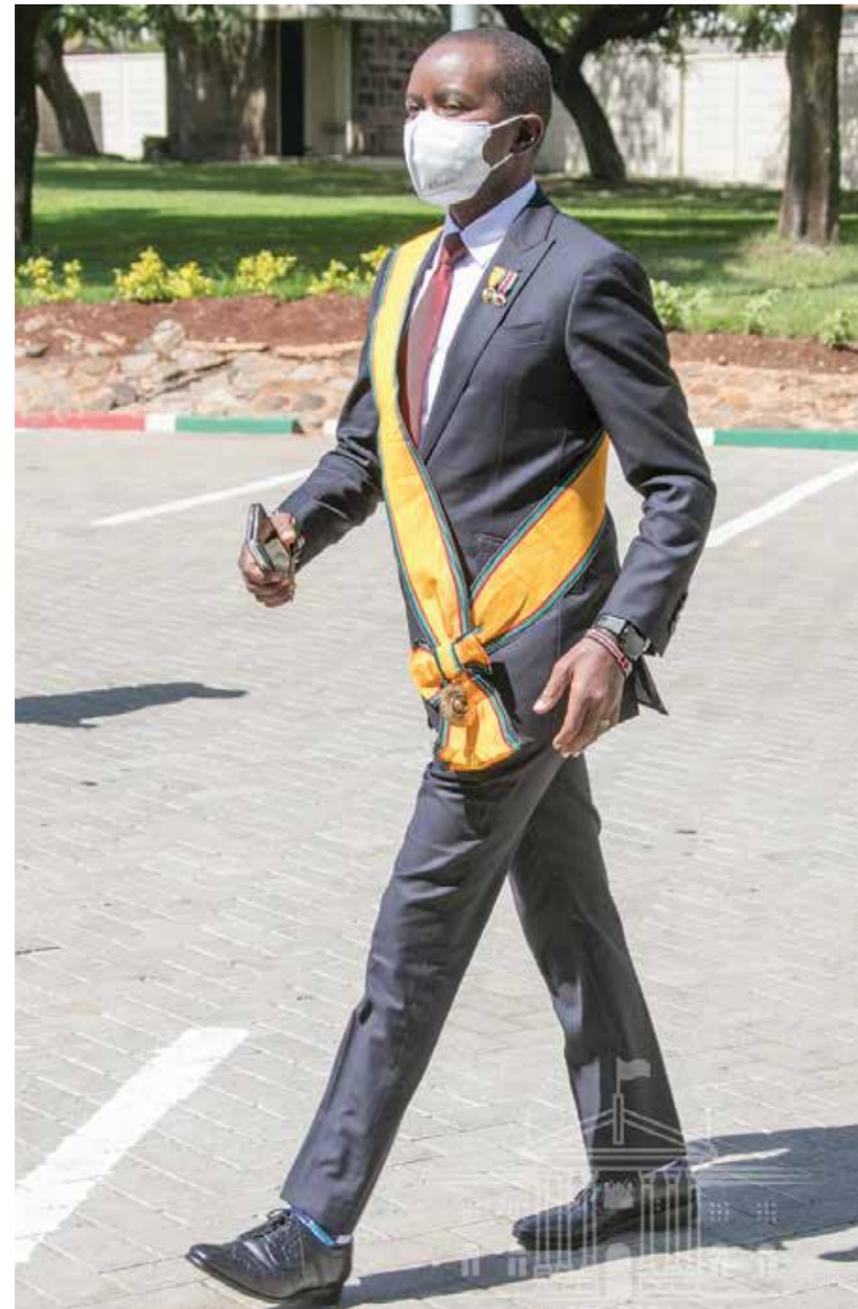
to get more Kenyan youth into e-working, an industry already thriving, going by the emergence of careers such as social media influencing which were unimaginable some five years or so ago. He has also tasked the CA to develop ways of lowering the cost of smartphones, which will ensure more Kenyans participate in the digital economy.

Budget estimates for the Financial Year 2021/22, which kicks off on July 1, indicate that CS Mucheru's focus over the next year will primarily be on Konza City – the Vision 2030 flagship project aimed at

transforming a 5000 acre piece of land 70 kilometers from Nairobi into a world-class IT hub. Sh17.8 billion—77% of the Sh23 billion allocated to the ICT Ministry—has been earmarked for Konza City. The funds are expected to go towards infrastructure development and will bring the project a step closer to completion.

**Successful private sector career**

CS Mucheru's success in public service mirrors similar feats in the private sector. He was Google's first sub-Saharan



Africa employee and was key to setting up of Google's presence in Africa from 2007. Before joining Google, he worked at Wananchi Online, a company he co-founded in 1999, where he held various senior roles at the company including Chief Technology Officer and Chief Executive Officer.

During his time at Wananchi Online, he concurrently served as Chairman of the Telecommunications Service Provider

Association of Kenya (TESPOK) - an association of Kenya's Communications Service Providers and Operators.

Between 2013 and 2014, CS Mucheru also served as a Director for UAP Investments, a subsidiary of insurance giant UAP Holdings Plc. Over the same period, he also served as a Director for Bitpesa, one of the pioneering firms in the bitcoin and cryptocurrency space in Africa.

An alumnus of Lenana School class of 1988 (joining in 1983), CS Mucheru was an avid hockey player who served as Captain of the team and won the distinct honour of being crowned "Sportsman of the Year."

He is currently the Chairman of the African Telecommunications Union (ATU) a specialized agency of the African Union (AU). He also serves as a Global Board Member of UNICEF – Generation Unlimited (Gen U).

An alumnus of Lenana School class of 1988 (joining in 1983), CS Mucheru was an avid hockey player who served as Captain of the team and won the distinct honour of being crowned "Sportsman of the Year."

He was also the school DJ. He enrolled for his undergraduate studies for a Joint Honours Economics and Computer Science Bachelor of Science (BSc) degree at City University, London, and graduated in 1993. In 2008, he obtained his executive education from Stanford University Graduate School of Business.

He was awarded The Moran of the Order of the Burning Spear (MBS) in December 2010 by the President of the Republic of Kenya, Mwai Kibaki, for his outstanding contributions towards technology. In 2017, CS Joe Mucheru was awarded The Elder of the Order of the Golden Heart of Kenya (EGH) by President Uhuru Kenyatta in recognition of outstanding and distinguished services rendered to the nation in various capacities and responsibilities.

CS Joe Mucheru is a member of the Africa Leadership Network (ALN) and The National Prayer Breakfast (NPB), a Director of GiveDirectly since 2015 and has been an Advisory Board Member at the M-PESA Foundation Academy. ■

# #9 Prof. George Magoha

CABINET SECRETARY EDUCATION

When Professor George Magoha, a renowned professor of urological and transplant surgery at the University of Nairobi, was appointed Cabinet Secretary for Education in 2019, there was no doubt in anyone's mind that he was the right man for the job.

The accomplished surgeon cum academic leader had served as the Chairman of the Kenya National Examination Council (KNEC) from 2016 after the then Education CS, Dr. Fred Matiang'i, sent the former KNEC leadership home in the wake of bungled national examinations. At KNEC, Professor Magoha quickly established a reputation for being a no-nonsense administrator, accelerating the reforms set into motion by the then Education CS Dr. Matiang'i. This involved dismantling the cartels that had propagated widespread exam cheating for years, a task that earned him many enemies but that also secured him the support and admiration of most Kenyans, thousands of whom had grown tired of the entrenched examination malpractices. Thanks to the enhanced measures his team adopted in curbing cheating in examinations, Kenya delivered clean results for the first time in many years in 2016—a trend that has been maintained since then.

### Not the first time

This was not the first time that Professor Magoha was successfully spearheading reforms in areas where so many had failed. At the University of Nairobi (UoN), where he served as Vice Chancellor (VC) between 2005 and 2015, he restored the prestige of the institution, which had been run down due to financial impropriety, academic malaise, student indiscipline concurrent with frequent



riots, and general lethargy and absenteeism among the staff. Prof. Magoha is the first VC of a public university to be recruited competitively in Kenya, by a public university council that equally boasted the first independently head-hunted chancellor who is not the seating President of the country.

With a concise and clinical approach that is typical of a top and globally respected surgeon, Prof. George Magoha led a team that drafted the university's first strategic plan in over 50 years, creating a renewed sense of accountability in the management and staffing of the institution. He also introduced an open-door policy for managing students' grievances, enabling him to engage aggrieved students directly and defuse tensions before they blew over into riots. For the entire decade that he served as the vice chancellor, the students never engaged in untoward violent actions.

Prof. Magoha is also credited with the implementation of a financial and management information system that revolutionized the management of the university, leading to efficiencies and effectiveness of processes. With the support of a professional university council appointed purely on merit and led by Dr. Joe Wanjui, Prof. Magoha reorganized the finance department, appointed new managers, introduced performance contracting, secured ISO certification, and instilled fiscal discipline. The results were undeniably positive:

Prof. Magoha's rise to the helm of the Education Ministry is the culmination of a distinguished career in academic administration. In his memoir, *George Magoha: Tower of Transformational Leadership*, the widely published scholar attributes his 'rising star' to the selfless nature of undertaking what most would see as 'lowly' duties

the university made significant savings, improved fees collection and enhanced efficiencies. In quantitative terms, the university's asset portfolio grew from Sh20 billion in 2004 to Sh102 billion in 2014 when his term was grinding to a halt, his legacy captured by the building of a modern multi-storey administrative block and modern lecture rooms.

While at the helm of the UoN, Prof. Magoha stepped up fundraising for the university, leveraging on his expansive local and international network, to raise the much-needed funds.

"I am an avid fund raiser with a direct individual track record of over 500 million shillings towards infrastructure development at the College of Health Sciences and the main campus, >>

>> and collectively several billions with other colleagues for research at the College of Health Sciences,” said the CS.

Prof. Magoha’s rise to the helm of the Education Ministry is the culmination of a distinguished career in academic administration. In his memoir, *George Magoha: Tower of Transformational Leadership*, the widely published scholar attributes his ‘rising star’ to the selfless nature of undertaking what most would see as ‘lowly’ duties. A press article reviewed by *Business Monthly* notes that at one point as VC of University of Nairobi, Prof. Magoha personally supervised the installation of a burglar proof grill at the Department of Surgery. This is not different from the Prof. Magoha we have come to know as CS for education—a man who makes impromptu visits to schools in far-flung regions to inspect on the quality-of-service delivery and conditions of the educational infrastructures in those remote parts of the country.

### Managing through crisis

It is often said that good leadership is seen in times of crisis. Prof. Magoha embodies this truism. Following the Covid-19 pandemic and the disruption of the school calendar, the CS has been a regular fixture in the national press where he has routinely offered guidance on the phased reopening of schools, re-configuration of class rooms to meet the Covid-19 protective protocols and re-scheduling of national examinations.

Thanks to his leadership, schools reopened successfully in January after nine months of closure, national exams have been done and credible examination results released on time, in keeping with the standards he set in 2016, with zero incidents of leakage and the very minimum cases of cheating.

Prof. Magoha’s visible leadership has been highly reassuring for many parents who feared that their children’s learning would stop amid the cloud of uncertainty brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic. He has been very emphatic on schools’ adherence to health guidelines aimed at curbing the spread of Covid-



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19 virus, SAR’s CoV 2. Away from the Covid-19 Pandemic, Prof. Magoha has also been managing another herculean task—implementing the Competency Based Curriculum (CBC).

Under the CBC model of education, children are expected to spend two years in pre-primary, six years in primary and six years in secondary school. Those who proceed to university study for three years while those who join certificate, diploma and technical courses study for varied periods depending on the programme. This is in contrast to the 8-4-4 system which prescribes eight years in primary, four in secondary and four in university. Importantly, CBC places more emphasis on the development of skills learning by

doing, as opposed to 8-4-4, which has earned the reputation of teaching learners to cram exam questions instead of applying the subject matter in real-life situations. The fruits of CBC will take years to mature and there will be many learnings along the way. That said, Prof. Magoha and his team are doing a critical job edging in sand the foot prints of its foundation today.

For all his admirers, CS Magoha also has his fair share of critics who disagree with his no-nonsense approach. He has had several run-ins with union officials and has also had to effect deep culture change within the Ministry—an exercise that was initially met with resistance. For instance, below is an excerpt from a public statement the CS made in relation to culture change at the Ministry:

“When I was sworn in as Cabinet Secretary for Education on March 26, 2019, my first engagement at the Ministry of Education was to physically confirm whether Ministry employees report to work at the expected time. I immediately realized that more than 60% of the offices were empty and unattended by 11am. I then sought to rally the staff and firmly impressed upon them the importance of reporting for duty on time. To monitor attendance of staff to their duties, I spearheaded the installation of CCTV and biometric devices in all entry and exit points for checking in and out all Ministry personnel. Though it was initially resisted, within a span of 6 months, cases of absenteeism had reduced to almost zero with nearly all top managers reporting for duty voluntarily by 6:30am, a situation which has remained the same to date.”—CS Magoha in a public statement issued in 2020 on the status of the education sector.

### Leadership bug

Right from the beginning of his



Prof George Magoha during his swearing in at State House. Photo | PCSU

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career, Prof. George Magoha has always had the leadership bug. Prior to his appointment to the Education Ministry, his chairmanship at KNEC, and even his role as VC at University of Nairobi, Prof. Magoha served as Chairman of the academic Department of Surgery, and Dean of the Faculty of Medicine.

Prof. Magoha served as President Association of Medical Councils of Africa for five years between 2013 and 2018. This is in addition to having served for an exceptionally long period of time as Chairman Kenya Medical Practitioners and Dentists Board.

An alumnus of Starehe Boys Centre and Strathmore College, where he completed his O and A-Level

education respectively, Prof. Magoha was awarded a scholarship to study human medicine at the University of Lagos, in Nigeria. His studies took him through the Lagos University Teaching Hospital, the University College Hospital, Ibadan, both in Nigeria and the Royal Postgraduate Medical School, in United Kingdom. He is trained as a specialized urologist (Royal College of Surgeons) and is a Fellow of the Royal College of Ireland. He also an alumnus of the Graduate School of Business at Stanford University, where he studied executive management.

Prof. George Magoha is a professor of Urology at the School of Medicine of the University of Nairobi. ■



# #10 Crispin Achola

**BAT KENYA MANAGING DIRECTOR & EAST AFRICA GENERAL MANAGER**

**“I am excited to be leading the transformation of BAT’s business in East Africa and building the enterprise of the future to deliver a better tomorrow.”**

**C**rispin Achola is a seasoned and versatile business leader who this year made history as BAT Kenya’s first Kenyan Managing Director. He is also an Executive Director on the BAT Kenya Board.

Crispin’s journey with BAT started in 1999 when he joined the Company from Unilever. He subsequently held various senior roles within BAT Kenya and the Group; including Managing Director Mozambique, Cluster General Manager- Mozambique, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Malawi, and Managing Director, Sudan. He left BAT in 2017 and joined the Kimberly-Clarke Corporation where he was General Manager, West, East & Central Africa (WECA) and Managing Director Nigeria, until his return to BAT Kenya in January 2021.



Crispin is responsible for driving overall business strategy for the NSE-listed company, BAT Kenya, which is one of BAT Group’s global manufacturing hubs. He also oversees BAT operations in the East African region, covering more than 13 markets including Uganda, Rwanda, Somaliland, Mauritius, La Reunion, Comoros, Madagascar, South Sudan and Tanzania.

“I am immensely proud to be taking over the leadership of a company that has a rich history and heritage in the region. BAT is living proof of the great strides that we are making in Kenya and the wider East Africa, with more and more global companies choosing their leaders from a diverse and talented pool of homegrown executives. This is a solid testimony to the maturity and high-quality local talent that we have always known existed within us.

“This is a time of immense change for BAT. And while this feels very much like a homecoming for me, I am absolutely delighted for the opportunity to lead the transformation of our business and industry, through an evolved strategy and purpose: to

build A Better Tomorrow for our stakeholders. Essentially, for our consumers, we want to offer a range of viable and responsibly marketed products in tobacco, nicotine and beyond; for society, we aim to reduce the health and environmental impacts of our business; for our employees, we want to create a dynamic, inspiring and purposeful place for them to work; and for our shareholders, we want to deliver superior and sustainable returns.”

Judging from his detailed account of his vision for BAT in East Africa, it is obvious that Crispin is glad to be back at BAT and has embraced his new role with vigour.

“BAT is becoming a business that defines itself not by the products it sells but by the consumer needs it meets. Anchored on our renewed purpose, we are accelerating the transformation of our business and industry through our ambi-

tion to reduce the health impact of our business, by offering a greater choice of viable and potentially less risky products for our consumers. At the same time, we understand our impact, the importance of high standards of integrity and our evolving societal responsibilities. We are therefore moving from a business where sustainability has always been important, to one where it is front and centre in all that we do. In this regard, we remain committed to addressing the environmental impact of our business, delivering a positive social impact and ensuring robust corporate governance across the business, through our robust Environment, Social and Governance (ESG) agenda.

“I am determined to see Kenya and the region, benefit from BAT’s evolved strategy and the possibilities it brings. Already, as part of a KSh 2.5 billion investment, we have injected KSh 0.6 billion in a new world class factory for the manufacture of tobacco-free oral nicotine products. We also completed a major Ksh 600 million refurbishment of our head office in Nairobi’s industrial area and Ushs 1.3 billion for our Uganda office, as well as overall >>

## 2017

The year Achola left BAT in 2017 and joined the Kimberly-Clarke Corporation where he was General Manager, West, East & Central Africa (WECA) and Managing Director Nigeria, until his return to BAT Kenya in January 2021.



>>

investment of over KSh 5 billion in our value chain over the last five years.

“Our unwavering commitment to Kenya and the region notwithstanding, we continue to face significant challenges within the operating environment. Most notable is the increasing incidence of illicit trade in tobacco products, which as at the end of 2020 was at 23% in Kenya, up from 11% in 2019. We also face a challenging regulatory environment for our new category products and an unsustainable fiscal regime for our tobacco products. To address these issues, we are engaging with the relevant authorities to contribute to a sustainable regulatory and fiscal environment which supports socio-economic growth and development.”

On the question of the future of business, Crispin asserts his belief that this is anchored on consumer centricity, driven by innovation and technology.

“As we work to build the enterprise of the future, my focus is on simplifying the business to fuel investment in our new category portfolio and sustain growth of our

combustibles business, which will be at the core of our business for some time to come. This will be achieved through accelerating innovation in our operations, on the back of data-driven insights and foresights as well as leveraging state of the art digital technologies.”



**Judging from his detailed account of his vision for BAT in East Africa, it is obvious that Crispin is glad to be back at BAT and has embraced his new role with vigour**

As a result of his immense Pan-African experience, expertise, and interaction with diverse groups of people and environments, Crispin has established himself as an authority within the realm of business and corporate leadership. Given this colourful track record, his people-oriented approach to delivering business success is no surprise.

“I am committed to building a great place to work for our people and I have a very able team walking alongside me to deliver this ambition. Significant progress has already been made in attracting and retaining an increasingly diverse workforce and providing a welcoming, inclusive, and modern working environment. This is a key driver for BAT’s transformation journey.

“Despite our global profile, we are a proudly Kenyan and East African business with a rich history and heritage, collectively spanning over 200 years in the region. As part of our People agenda, we are building a legacy of leaders with a major focus on next generation talent as well as diversity and inclusion. I am proud that today, around 40% of our total workforce is female and we are working hard towards our 50/50 ambition in gender representation. Our annual internship and Global Graduate programmes have also consistently registered a high intake of female talent. But it is not only about gender. We have a clear 3600 diversity strategy that covers a wide range of generational aspects, experience, cultural backgrounds, disabilities and pay equity, amongst others.”

When not engrossed in matters business, Crispin enjoys spending time in the outdoors, reading a good book, jamming to some rock music and spending time with his wife Mercy, son Sean and the family dogs. He is also currently undertaking a master’s degree in business administration at Strathmore University



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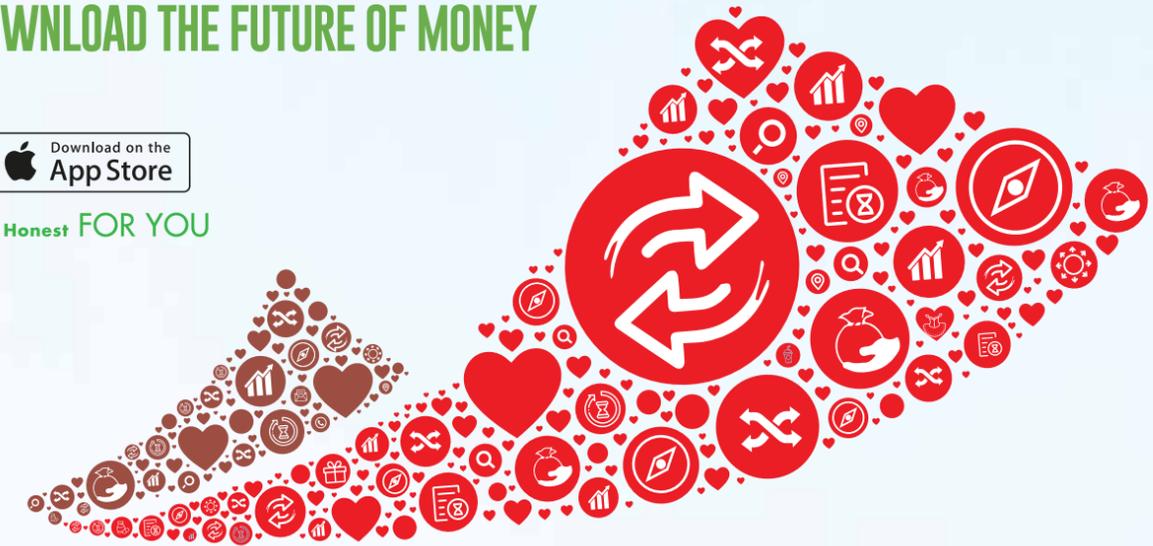
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# #11

## Dr. Joseph Kinyua, EGH

HEAD OF PUBLIC SERVICE

**D**r. Joseph Kinyua, the Head of Public Service, is a career economist who has built a long and distinguished career, spanning more than four decades in civil service. His knowledge of the government bureaucracy and influence over its inner workings is unrivalled. The long-serving civil servant, who has worked in senior roles in successive governments since 1980, heads an office that is charged with the effective and efficient running of the government machinery.

This means that Dr. Kinyua's influence extends far beyond the Executive Office of the President, where he serves as Permanent Secretary to the President. Administratively, he co-ordinates the intra-cabinet daily work-ins and chairs some critical national committees. The entire public service falls under his purview.

His decisions have heavy impact and weight, as he implements the directives of the President, including important instructions such as re-organization of the government, issuing circulars and reminding all of standing government policies across ministries, departments, government agencies and state corporations.

As Head of the Public Service, he chairs the national security committee that reports to the National Security Council in addition to handling the day-to-day administration and co-ordination of the affairs of this important national institution. Sensitive discussions involving national security and foreign relations are rarely held without his involvement and he acts as a trusted advisor and tough enforcer when critical decisions are made. It is a monumental responsibility that demands as much knowledge and mastery of statecraft as it does the observance and practice of the highest standards of integrity—given the immense power and influence that comes with the job and the potential to change millions of lives for the better or worse with one decision.



Interestingly, the public service that Dr. Kinyua heads today is nothing like the one he joined in the 80s working as an economist for the Central Bank of Kenya (CBK). Dr. Kinyua joined the public service at a time when the headcount for the public sector was considerably smaller. Historical data from government sources indicate that in 1980 the public sector workforce was between 350,000 and 400,000 workers. Today, the latest Economic Survey 2020 puts the headcount of the civil service at 842,900 as at 2019, which is more than double the number in 1980. The government is therefore larger and the subsequent national budgets today run in the trillions of shillings, making the job of the Head of Public Service more demanding than it has ever been. Dr. Joseph Kinyua is the safe pair of hands who has handled this responsibility since the exit of Francis Kimemia, current governor of Nyandarua, and before him, Amb. Dr. Francis Muthaura, another career civil servant and current chairman of the Kenya Revenue Authority (KRA).

### Thrives in challenges

However, if there is one thing that distinguishes Dr. Kinyua, is that he has served at top levels in three administrations but remains humble and with an extremely clean records on matters integrity and good national governance. Taking on the job as Head of Public Service in 2013 from the National Treasury was not necessarily an easy transition.

The relationship is one of immense trust that the President also appointed him the Chief of Staff at State House at the same time. However, the ever humble, if not aloof career civil servant exercised the trapping of powers from the two positions honourably and with humility. The soft-spoken Dr. Kinyua managed the overwhelming responsibilities of both offices commendably, helping the government deliver on key development projects while ensuring the affairs of State House were well run.

Under his day-to-day administrative direction, picking the cue from the President, government services have been brought closer to Kenyans through innovative models such as the globally acclaimed Huduma Centers. Many of the major development projects in transport and infrastructure that had the President's close attention—such as the construction of the Standard Gauge Railway (SGR), installation of fiber optic infrastructure, and completion of the Lamu Port, among others—have his invisible fingerprints given his role as the power behind the government bureaucracy, as well as continuity that he provided, having been the budget accounting officer as PS Treasury, when these projects were first mooted

under the Kibaki Administration. Prior to serving as the Head of Public Service, Dr. Kinyua was the Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Finance in former President Mwai Kibaki's administration, having been appointed in 2002.

He had a brief detour to Ministry of Agriculture for one year in 2003 but was reappointed to Finance to 2004. He served in this capacity throughout President Kibaki's first and second term. It was during the second term that he established a close rapport with current President Uhuru Kenyatta who was then Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance under the Grand Coalition Government.

Like President Uhuru Kenyatta, who ensured that he roped in Dr. Kinyua from the previous administration upon taking office in 2013, President Kibaki also did the same and tapped the skilled technocrat from the Kanu government. Before becoming PS at the Ministry of Finance in President Kibaki's administration, Dr. Kinyua was the Chief Economist at the CBK under late President Daniel Arap Moi, a position he was appointed to in 2000 after serving as the Director of Financial Markets at the apex lender for a year. He served as Financial Secretary to the Treasury between 1995 and 1999.

**As Head of the Public Service, he chairs the national security committee that reports to the National Security Council in addition to handling the day-to-day administration and co-ordination of the affairs of this important national institution**

Dr. Kinyua joined the CBK in 1980 as an economist and rose to the rank of Director of Research. Between 1985 and 1990, he worked as an economist with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) before returning back to the Central Bank of Kenya. He was a regular fixture in meetings between Kenya and international financial institutions such as the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in the 80s and 90s. It must be remembered that these were the years when privatization, economic liberalization and free markets took hold. It was also the years when Kenya made strong forays into international capital markets, thanks to interest from international lenders and >>

**Top 25 Most Transformative Leaders Impacting Business**

>> development finance institutions who offered low-interest loans. Dr. Kinyua greatly contributed towards building the instruments of sourcing development capital that have kept our economy a step ahead of regional peers for decades.

Dr Kinyua holds a Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts degrees in Economics from the University of Nairobi (UoN) and briefly lectured at the same institution from 1978 before joining the CBK in 1980.

**Humble and hardworking**

Past holders of Dr. Kinyua’s office include Hon. Francis Kimemia and Amb. Francis Muthaura, who both served under President Kibaki. The late Simeon Nyachae, Sally Kosgei and Jeremiah Kiereini served under President Moi while the Duncan Ndegwa and the late Godfrey Kariithi served under the nation’s Founding Father, Mzee Jomo Kenyatta.

All these individuals had different styles of leadership and different priorities, challenges, and successes. However, the common link is that, for the time in which they served, there was no doubt in anyone’s mind that these individuals literally held the levers of power in the government. The Head of Public Service is a powerful and influential position where one inevitably makes friends and enemies in equal measure.

However, for all the influence he wields, Dr. Kinyua prefers to take a below-the-radar approach and has kept a low profile for decades. He is also the longest serving Head of Public Service. Close sources quoted in media articles reviewed by Business Monthly describe him as a humble and hardworking public servant and a devote Roman Catholic who is more concerned about work and the ensuing results rather than public display of raw power. One source says that “even as his colleagues immerse themselves in flamboyance, he surrenders his government vehicles on Fridays and uses his private cars on weekends, including Pick-Ups.” For instance, he is famed with the effort to trim the fuel bill by having the government



If there is one thing that distinguishes Dr. Kinyua, is that he has served at top levels in three administrations but remains humble and with an extremely clean records on matters integrity and good national governance.



shift from Mercedes Benz to Volks Ws fleet some years back. Indeed, President Uhuru Kenyatta himself is on record describing Dr. Kinyua as “one of most honest and dedicated people,” he knows.

Perhaps it is this humility and commitment to serve the Kenyan Nation that has earned Dr. Kinyua a focused and well-grounded tenure through three successive administrations, all with different focus and approach to matters state.

None to be involved in petty politics or ethnicity, Dr. Joseph Kinyua has been able to take differing roles but with increasing levels of responsibility while earning deep respect from everybody who gets to know him well. ■



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# #12

## Nzioka Waita

STATE HOUSE CHIEF OF STAFF

**F**ew careers in civil service are more challenging than that of State House Chief of Staff, a role currently held by Nzioka Waita.

Mr. Waita leads the team of dedicated advisers who serve as the President's executive back office and whose remit is to work behind the scenes to shape policy, firefight, troubleshoot on key issues and provide viable solutions that assist the President in his decision making on a daily basis. It is a demanding job that comes with its fair share of intrigue.

Waita was appointed as Chief of Staff and Head of Delivery in 2018, earning a quick but well-deserved promotion after just two years serving as the Deputy Chief of Staff and Deputy Head of Public Service under the Head of Public Service, Dr. Joseph Kinya. Waita entered public service in 2015 as the Secretary for Delivery in the Executive Office of the President. His appointment as Deputy Chief of Staff a year later and subsequent promotion to the helm of the critical office in 2018 reinforced his place as one of the President's most trusted advisors and reliable fixers. In the same year that he took charge of personnel at State House, he was also appointed as Head of the Presidential Delivery Unit (PDU), which is tasked with tracking, reporting and publicizing the national government's flagship development projects.



### Defending the President's track record

Known within Government as a strategic thinker, Waita is one of the architects of President Kenyatta's Big 4 Agenda. The Big 4 is a subset of the country's Vision 2030 blueprint and the primary development focus of the President's second term in office.

Waita has done a commendable job publicly promoting the Big 4 Agenda and consistently defending President Uhuru Kenyatta's development track record. He has achieved this by actively shaping the public narrative around flagship development projects while simultaneously ensuring the teams behind these projects deliver on time and according to plan. During his tenure as Deputy Head of the Public Service, he is reported to have spearheaded the performance contracting process for Ministries, State Departments and semi-autonomous government agencies creating much needed alignment on the delivery of flagship development programs.

On social media, Waita created and popularized the #GoKdelivers hash tag, which is today the fastest way of finding all information related to government development projects on social media at the click of a button. The impact of #GoKDelivers was felt most in the hotly contested 2017 general elections, where for the first time ever the campaigns centered primarily on development politics. With the incumbent comfortably able to showcase his development record in a granular fashion hitherto unseen, the narrative around the President's scorecard was unassailable.

In early 2019, having identified the short comings of the delivery model used in President Kenyatta's first term in office, Waita worked closely with the Interior Ministry to reengineer the national government's delivery framework that led to the issuance of Executive Order No 1/ 2019. This directive from the President created the National Development Implementation Cabinet Committee known in Government circles as the NDICC. The new framework collocated National Government Administration and the Delivery Unit as its basic foundational structure allowing for better verification of project status at the grassroots by Government administrators, while at the same time creating a structured filtering processes that guaranteed better quality interventions at the top most policy organs of Government. Following the adoption of this new structure, the Government has been able to com-

plete myriad high priority development projects on time and cost effectively.

A skilled communicator and public relations guru, Waita has leveraged on his expansive reach and influence on social media – more than 200K Twitter followers – to engage Kenyans in meaningful conversations about national development and national values. It is a job that few can do well given the unpredictable and volatile nature of debates on social media. Social media debates can quickly turn into nasty arguments and public relations crises if not well managed.

Waita's ability to remain calm and think clearly in times of crisis has proven invaluable more than once when public opinion shifted against the government over misunderstood issues. When a section of Kenyan media promoted misguided narratives about the usefulness of the President's foreign trips in 2019, for instance, it was Waita's well-articulated response that restored reason to the debate.

**Waita has done a commendable job publicly promoting the Big 4 Agenda and consistently defending President Uhuru Kenyatta's development track record.**

"One of President Kenyatta's duties as Head of State is to position Kenya as a force for good and a thought leader in the community of Nations. A duty he has discharged extremely effectively. Foreign travel to advance Kenya's agenda and sphere of influence is simply part of the job," he tweeted.

Indeed, barely a year after these clarifications, the President's overtures in foreign capitals paid off. In addition to other diplomatic and trade accomplishments, Kenya was in 2020 elected as a non-permanent member of the United Nations (UN) Security Council, the highest decision-making organ in the UN.

### Successful corporate career

Waita is a regular fixture in national press and appears on TV and radio to discuss issues of national importance and promote national values. His comfort in front of the camera and >>



>> strong public communications skills stem from his time in the private sector, where he had a successful career in Corporate Affairs at leading communications service provider Safaricom PLC. For those who want to learn, Corporate Affairs is typically the function charged with shaping public reputation and engaging key external stakeholders in large organizations.

Nzioka Waita and his navigator Laban-Cliff Onserio pose for a photo. Photo | Courtesy

As the Director for Corporate Affairs at Safaricom PLC, a role he served in between 2011 and 2015, Waita was responsible for legal, public policy, corporate responsibility, Public Relations (PR) and Communication. Prior to that, Waita served as Head of Legal and Regulatory Affairs between 2007 and 2011.

He joined Safaricom in 2001 and worked his way up the ranks. Between 2003 and 2015, he served as founding trustee to Safaricom Foundation, which has deployed billions of shillings through the years into initiatives in education, health-care, and conservation.

Waita has held various other positions within the ICT sector including serving as the company

**A skilled communicator and public relations guru, Waita has leveraged on his expansive reach and influence on social media – more than 200K Twitter followers – to engage Kenyans in meaningful conversations about national development and national values**

secretary of Kenya's first sub-sea fiber optic cable company TEAMS Limited. Throughout his career, he has distinguished himself as having the uncanny ability to build strong relationships with powerful and influential stakeholders. Many were surprised when he was plucked from the private sector and parachuted into the inner sanctums of power at State House, underlining the solid network he built in the public sector while still working in the private sector.

Waita attended the University of Sheffield between the years 1996 – 1999 and graduated with a Bachelor

of Laws (LL. B). Later in his career, he enrolled in graduate school to further his education, graduating from Queen Mary University of London in 2015 with a Masters in Computer and Communications Law.

Raised in a devout Catholic family, Waita spent most of his formative years at renowned catholic school, Saint Mary's, in Lavington, which counts figures such as President Kenyatta, Baringo Senator Gideon Moi, award winning actress Lupita Nyong'o, and veteran television journalist Jeff Koinange, among other leading luminaries, as its alumni.

However, Waita's friends and associates credit his humility, street smarts and love for rugby to the high school years spent at The Nairobi School also known within those circles as 'Patch'. A married family man, Waita is an ardent fan of motor sports and occasionally takes part in the Kenya National Rally Championship Circuit and at the time of writing this article, was expected to participate in the long-awaited homecoming of the World Rally Championship (WRC) Safari Rally after a lull of about 19 years, as a WRC event. ■

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#13

## Farida Karoney

CABINET SECRETARY LANDS AND PHYSICAL PLANNING



Of all the Cabinet appointees in President Uhuru Kenyatta's second term as Head of State, none was a more surprising choice than Farida Karoney, the Cabinet Secretary for Lands and Physical Planning. With no prior experience in public office or electoral politics, she was in 2018 plucked from the private sector to lead a ministry known for its political undertones and long-running disputes, including everything that goes askew with political careers or businesses deal gone sour.

Less than five years later, the veteran broadcast journalist has successfully navigated the murky waters that is the Lands Ministry, including political intrigues and economic challenges that come with running this highly charged and emotive but equally very important and most sensitive docket. CS Farida Karoney has managed to delivered on key initiatives, including spearheading the digitization of land records, leading to the reissuance of new land titles and deeds, accompanied by important administrative and legislative reforms.

The switch to digitized lands records is expected to be completed in 2022, representing an important milestone considering initial plans for digitization were mooted in the sunset years of retired President Mwai Kibaki. The most notable and indeed historical, is the National Land Information System (NLIS) dubbed "Ardhisasa," which enables users to initiate transactions such as official searches, transfer of property and payment of annual land rates online without having to visit lands offices.

The Ministry of Lands and Physical Planning reports that 240,000 Nairobi County land parcels have already been uploaded in the first phase. Records for 20 other counties will be uploaded by December this year, and the rest by the end of 2022, a momentous task executed with precision, effectively, efficiently, behind the scenes and delivered on time by a first time Cabinet member.

Besides reducing transaction times and promoting efficiency, the new digital service is also expected to seal loopholes in



Through timely and personalized media engagements in print and broadcast mainstream platforms, CS Farida Karoney is moving with speed to ensure that all stakeholders are familiar with the new system, including the nuances and benefits accruing from these reforms dovetailed with new legal instruments

the land registration and transfer process, rooting out the endemic systemic fraud and corruption that have long dogged land transactions in independent Kenya. Likewise, the improved and fast-tracked land interface service will enhance revenue collection by sealing loopholes that have facilitated revenue leakages and outright theft. Landowners will have no room to dodge payment of due taxes as the system will be linked to external service providers including the Kenya Revenue Authority (KRA), the National Lands Commission, commercial banks, and other key institutions involved in land matters.

Through timely and personalized media engagements in print and broadcast mainstream platforms, CS Farida Karoney is moving with speed to ensure that all stakeholders are familiar with the new system, including the nuances and benefits accruing from these reforms dovetailed with new legal instruments.

As an example, the Ministry in April organized an online training session on navigating the Ardhisasa Platform for the membership of the Law Society of Kenya (LSK) in Nairobi. About 1000 lawyers joined the technical training session.

As at the end of April, 2021, more than 11,000 users had already registered on the platform, with the number expected to grow steadily as the rollout gains pace across the country and the minor bugs and teething problems are cleaned out.

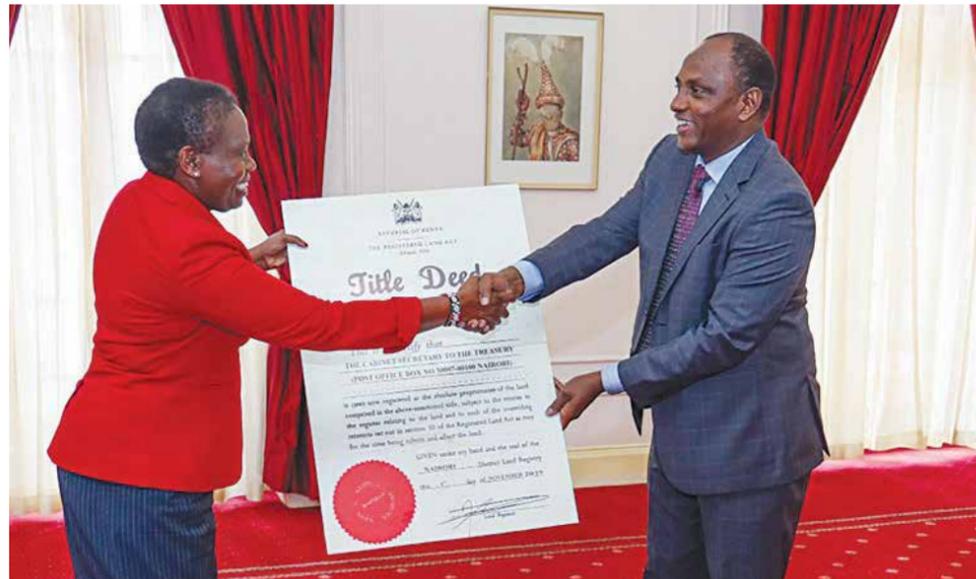
To be at the epicenter of this transformation—as is the case with CS Karoney—is no mean feat. Land transactions are not only politically sensitive, but they also have the potential to derail economic development of the country and hold of investments all together, if poorly managed. This has historically been the case in infrastructure development, where wheeler dealers have pushed the cost of land acquisition through the roof by unscrupu- >>



>> lously acquiring land in areas targeted for infrastructure development before reselling it to the government at obscenely high prices—sometimes more than ten-fold despite no meaningful improvement or development on the land to warrant such a steep increase in valuation. In a digitized era, this practice will be nipped in the bud, representing multiple benefits for the government and ordinary Kenyans, who can now easily get titles and monetize their land holdings by using them as collateral when accessing credit from the commercial banks. Achieving digitization of Land records is a fulfilment of CS Karoney's declaration of, 'commitment to enhancing the quality of human life by providing quality and humane service, as espoused in her LinkedIn profile.

**Successful media career**

Prior to her appointment to the Lands and Physical Planning Ministry, CS Karoney was the Chief Operating Officer of Royal Media Services (RMS), the leading media conglomerate in East and Central Africa, comprising over tens of radio and television stations traversing the entire fabric of the country between 2014 and 2018 and before then, was the Group Editorial Director from 2009 to 2014.



During her time with RMS, she was a key member of a management team that helped the broadcaster grow its market share to become the dominant player in radio and TV. For instance, Data from Kenya Audience Research Foundation shows that Citizen TV, the RMS flagship TV channel, commanded a market share of about 22% in 2019. All its closest competitors – including KTN, NTV, K24 and others—had a market share of less than 10% each in the same period, underlining

the brand leadership that Citizen TV has built over the years; thanks in no small part to the contributions of CS Karoney, working under the wings of Group CEO Wachira Waruru and under the umbrella of media mogul and human rights crusader, Dr. S.K. Macharia, who is the substantial shareholder of the RMS Group.

CS Farida Karoney has also held senior roles at the Standard Media Group-owned KTN, where she served in different roles as Assistant Director for Broadcasting and



Head of Editorial between 2007 and 2008. This is in addition to serving at the media house as Managing Editor between 2004 and 2006 and as a correspondent, reporter, senior reporter, and features editor. CS Farida Karoney also worked as a freelancer for Radio France Internationale and Aljazeera English as a Freelance Producer in 2007. She is, for all intents and purposes, a media insider, quality that endeared her to many leading politicians and technocrats in the government, who always sought her advise on strategies of handling media and framing news content.

It is often said that to know a leader, speak to their followers. Those who worked with CS Karoney have positive things to say about her. Popular Citizen TV journalist, Lilian Muli, is one example.

“Wide eyed...24 years old and I was given an opportunity to stand with media giants and report and anchor the news

with them at KTN, my first employer. The one person who believed in me was Lands CS Farida Karoney who was then the Managing Editor at KTN. To everyone else, I was too young or too this and that,” said Lilian Muli in an Instagram post celebrating the Lands and Physical Planning CS's cabinet appointment.

**Prepared for the job**

In many ways, CS Karoney's media career prepared her for the Lands and Physical Planning CS job. For, one, the media, too, is politically sensitive. This was particularly true in the 2007 and 2008 period when CS Karoney held senior roles in KTN. At the time, the media was under immense pressure to balance its mandate of informing Kenyans with the responsibility to safeguard national security following the devastating post electoral violence (PEV) that engulfed Kenya. It was not an easy time to

be a decision maker in the newsroom at that time and more so, in broadcast media, that showed real happenings, in real time.

Likewise, the media industry has undergone tremendous change in the years that CS Karoney has been in executive management. One key change was the migration from analogue to digital broadcast transmission, which compelled broadcasters to invest in new equipment, new and adequate content to keep up with new market demands as well as competition emanating from new entrants in the now expanded digital broadcast space. Another key change was the emergence of online journalism and the now pervasive social media, resulting in the massive fragmentation of the previous most privileged media pie. These changes called for decisive actions and prepared her for the fast-paced life of a Cabinet Secretary in a docket as crucial as Lands and Physical Planning.

CS Farida Karoney's pedigree in change management will once again be particularly instrumental as she pushes for the successful roll out of the Ardhisasa platform, which no doubt will face resistance from rogue elements who unjustly profited from the old order and largely the professions that have benefitted from a free for all land transaction juggernaut that has been the culture and norm at Ardhi House.

CS Farida Karoney attended Kenyatta University from 1989 to 1992, graduating with a Bachelor of Science Education degree in Botany and Zoology. She taught Biology briefly at Khamis High School in Mombasa before her entry into journalism in 1994. She obtained her Postgraduate Diploma in Mass Communication (1995-1996) from the University of Nairobi (UoN). After a decade in practice, she enrolled for her Master of Business Administration degree (MBA) specializing in Strategic Management at the UoN in 2005, graduating in 2008. Perhaps, it is from here that CS Farida Karoney became an efficient and effective strategist with analytical, design and problem-solving skills that is well documented in her LinkedIn profile. ■



**#14**  
**Hon. Najib Balala**

**CABINET SECRETARY  
TOURISM AND WILDLIFE**

**H**on. Najib Balala was appointed to his current position as the Cabinet Secretary for Tourism and Wildlife by President Uhuru Kenyatta in January 2018. However, many Kenyans might not be aware that Hon. Najib Balala has had a long and distinguished career in the public service since 1998 where it all began when he was elected the Mayor of Mombasa.

“This is the third time I was being entrusted with the tourism docket due to my vast knowledge and experience in this field. I was given the added responsibility of

taking care of Kenya’s national heritage of wildlife. I am always called upon to rescue the Ministry when trouble arises such as the Westgate Mall attack by Al Shabab in 2013 and now the devastating Covid-19 pandemic,” he says.

He is currently one of the longest-serving members of the Kenyan Cabinet, with an accumulation of sixteen years serving in different portfolios, eleven of those in the Tourism docket. History will remember him mainly as the specialized Minister for Tourism and Wildlife, the docket in which he has edged indelible footprints through a

management by walking around strategy.

As he leads the team, CS Balala is the man the country has invested tremendous trust in to steer the sector towards a recovery path and then growth, after the devastating effect occasioned by the Covid-19 pandemic. Together with travel and hospitality, tourism is one of the hardest-hit sectors. Many in these sectors have lost lives and livelihoods. However, with the expected availability of vaccines in adequate measure, there is hope that the industry will be cushioned somewhat from worse effects of both the disease and economic disasters.

On and off the tourism docket, CS Balala is the lead actor playing a major role in the Kenya Tourism movie, sustaining its growth and anchoring hope for the millions of Kenyans whose life and livelihood is hinged on the health of the sector.

Through his charm and amiable personality, CS Balala is able to work closely with private and institutional investors in the development and offering of world class tourism offerings. He has managed to earn the trust and participation of wildlife conservation and regional development agencies to ensure that the economic potential of this vital sector is prudently and sustainably exploited.

As an example, CS Balala’s performance is best exemplified by the record-setting tourism performance in 2018 when the country received over two million international arrivals. This improved performance was endorsed by the President and CEO of the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), Ms. Gloria Guevara, in Nairobi, when she symbolically released the WTTC Economic Impact Research 2019 for Africa.

In 2018, Travel and Tourism grew by 5.6% and contributed to the creation of 1.1 million quality jobs for Kenyans. This growth rate was faster than the global average of 3.9% and the sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) average of 3.3%, making Kenya then third largest tourism economy in Africa after South Africa and Nigeria.

This rare feat earned CS Balala the recognition, and was subsequently bestowed with the WTTC Global Champion Award



“It is important to note that most of Kenya’s wildlife is found outside protected areas. It is therefore, important to empower the local communities, which cohabit with this national heritage.”

at the 2019 Global Summit in Seville, Spain. On this occasion, CS Balala was cited for his work on Social Impact. The annual WTTC Global Champion Awards recognizes public officials or countries that, through their leadership, have made a difference through unique public policies and initiatives that have increased the competitiveness of the sector within their respective countries. The award also recognizes leadership in enabling gender equality, inclusion and diversity, engaging local communities, and making the sector more attractive for future generations.

CS Balala’s star continue to shine in global tourism fora, where he has been elected twice to chair the prestigious global United Nations World Tourism Organization’s (UNWTO) Executive Council. The Executive Council is the most powerful committee of the UNWTO that elects the Secretary-General and makes decisions on many critical and strategic issues of the organization. For now, CS Balala laments that it will take longer than expected for the global tourism and travel to re-bounce to the upward trajectories

witnessed in the period 2018-19 before Covid-19 pandemic shook the world.

CS Balala opines that the travel and tourism sectors have to change with the times to adapt to the dynamic expectations of the clients in order to offer the kind of products that are constantly in demand and which changes in real time. The new norm will have to emphasize on health, safety, technology and more so, value for money.

“As a country, we are diversifying the product offerings so that the country has a range of fresh and differing products on offer. In 2019, for instance, we launched 15 magical Kenya Signature Experiences, which are a cut above our normal offerings. The second phase of this has seen an additional 29 products enlisted, giving a wider choice of must-visit experiences for local and international travelers, totaling 44 signature experiences across the country,” the CS adds.

“Africa, through the African Union leadership, must also invest strategically in inter-connectivity of the whole continent by Air, Railways, Roads and >>

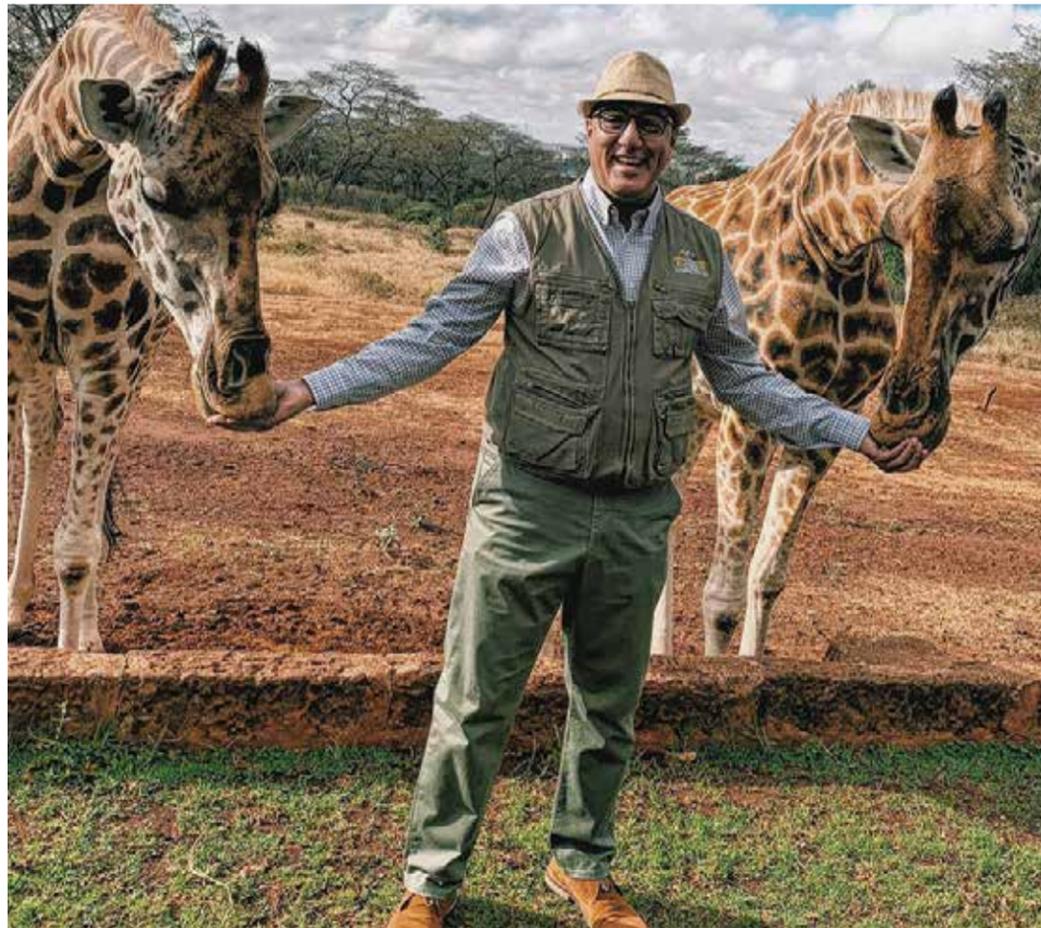
>> Waterways to spur tourism and travels among the 1.2 billion inhabitants of the continent. The same must be done by national governments at the local and regional levels. One big lesson from the Covid-19 pandemic, is the importance of domestic tourism even as we think globally," the CS opines.

In mitigating the effects of the Covid-19 in a bid to keep the sector open, CS Balala launched the Magical Kenya Tourism and Travel Health and Safety protocols on July 1, 2020. These were vital guidelines to inform the tourism industry on how to operate safely to ensure the safety of tourists and the workers in the sector.

"In April this year, the Ministry launched an initiative to vaccinate 5,000 frontline personnel in the tourism and hospitality sectors against Covid-19 disease. This exercise has been going on well across the country. The exercise is targeting returning the sector to normalcy as soon as possible while securing the health of the visitors and other stakeholders", CS Balala adds.

Recently, the CS came out to publicly support the waiver of patents on Covid-19 vaccines as championed by the US government. He disclosed in an interview with the local media that he came out to support this initiative because he believes that facilitating the production and distribution of 'Covid-19 vaccines, particularly in Africa, will make the world a safer place for everyone. No one is safe from this pandemic until everyone is vaccinated,' the CS cautions.

In the mid to long term strategies, CS Balala envisages an environment in which the government would invest heavily in the sector, as it did in the 70's in a bid to spur the growth in the sector in order to recover from the devastation unleashed by the Covid-19 pandemic. This could involve building



**“In April this year, the Ministry launched an initiative to vaccinate 5,000 frontline personnel in the tourism and hospitality sectors against Covid-19 disease. This exercise has been going on well across the country.”**  
- CS Balala

hotels, lodges and airstrips all over the country to unlock the potential and light up the country for a massive drive for domestic tourism. This kind of investment in tourism infrastructure has been done in the past when hotels like the Hilton, Intercontinental, lodges and airports all over the country.

Turning to the Wildlife, CS Balala's focus is to improve and modernize wildlife conservation as it directly impacts the tourism sector-of which 70% is wildlife. "It is important to note that most of Kenya's wildlife is found outside protected areas. It is therefore, important to empower the local communities, which cohabit with this national heritage, to be better custodians and stewards of wildlife conservation through community-driven conservancies. There is going to be major transformation

in the wildlife sector too through enactment of appropriate policy and legislative frameworks, which are already in various stages of formulation," CS Balala postulates.

CS Balala reports that in 2020, the country was excited to witness the increase of the wildlife corridor in and out of Nairobi National Park when the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) and Swara Plains Conservancy declared 32,000 and 15,000 acres of land, respectively, for that purpose. In this regard, a title deed was issued to the Nairobi National Park for the 2000 acres of Government land formerly known as Sheep and Goat Research Facility, which is adjacent to the Park, all this achievement was after years of intense lobbying by his team.

"The wildlife sector is very exciting. We have tamed poaching and



wildlife numbers which are increasing all over the country.

However, climate change is impacting negatively on animals such as Elephants who are not only growing thinner but exacerbating human-wildlife conflict by straying into private farms where they destroy crops while searching for food," the CS says.

In 2020, CS Balala initiated a rhino calf naming ceremony where the money from the historic event was used to establish a fund across the country for the welfare of park rangers who take care of rhinos. In 2020 alone, 31 rhino calves were named, raising a total of Ksh3.1 million. The initiative also aims at motivating individual parks to compete in facilitating increased reproduction because the more their rhinos reproduce, the more money they get into their respective fund.

2020 witnessed CS Balala establishing the Wildlife Research and Training Institute in Naivasha. The facility aims to coordinate and undertake academic and practical training in wildlife in the country.

In May, 2021, CS Balala launched the first-ever National Wildlife Census covering both land and aquatic wildlife, fully

funded by the government of Kenya and expected to take two months executed by the ministry, the Kenya Wildlife Service and the newly created Wildlife Research and Training Institute. The information generated during the census will support the implementation of the conservation and tourism policies and support tools for adaptive wildlife management.

The objectives of the census are to determine the country's wildlife population and distribution, wildlife population trends over time, identify threats to wildlife conservation and management in the country's landscape, and, suggest strategies for effective wildlife conservation and management across the country. "The World can learn a lot from Kenya because we are pioneers in wildlife conservation and environmental sustainability, which positively impacts sustainable tourism through promotion of green tourism activities," the CS adds.

Before his stint as CS Tourism and Wildlife, Hon. Balala was CS Mining. He has also served in the local government docket as minister in the Coalition government.

CS Balala has been Mayor of Mombasa, where he is credited with the transformation of the once sleepy town to its modern status as a City and the epicenter of tourism on the Coastal beaches of East Africa.

A gentle giant with a magician's touch, CS Balala was Member of Parliament (MP) for Mvita Constituency between December 2002 and March 2013, where he is credited with the most exemplary development record by an MP in the history of the country. Among his signature performances was the upgrading of all public primary schools in the constituency, reduced the perennial water problem within the area by drilling boreholes in all strategic points, building cabro roads throughout the constituency, among others.

CS Balala has sharpened his leadership and management skills by attending an executive program on International Urban Management at the University of Toronto and on Leadership and Governance at the Harvard University Kennedy School of Government. ■



# #15

## Paul Muthaura

### MBS

CEO ICEA LION GENERAL INSURANCE

**F**ew individuals have had a greater impact on the growth and development of Kenya's financial industry over the past decade than Paul Muthaura, the current CEO of ICEA LION General Insurance.

A lawyer by profession and an Advocate of the High Court, Paul was appointed to the CEO position by the Board of Directors in October 2020 following the retirement of Steven Oluoch, a long-serving CEO of the insurance firm.

Before his stint at the corner office of the ICEA LION Group owned general insurer, Paul is remembered as a long serving CEO of the Capital Markets Authority (CMA), where among other achievements, he earned the distinction of being an innovative, results-oriented leader who elevated the regional and international profile of the regulator while promoting ethics, good corporate governance practices, and investor protection in the capital markets.

#### Illustrious career

During his seven-year tenure, the CMA was ranked the most innovative capital markets regulator in Africa by the prestigious International Finance (IF) Magazine for five consecutive years (2015-2019). Likewise, the Investor Compensation Fund, which is aimed at compensating investors who suffer financial losses resulting from the failure of a licensed broker or dealer, grew more than tenfold from Sh210 million to over Sh3 billion at the time of his exit.

The CMA successfully cracked down on a number of financial misconduct at the Nairobi Securities Exchange (NSE), the most prominent of which was thwarting insider trading attempts on the Kenol Kobil counter ahead of the company's 2018 takeover by French oil marketer, Rubis Energy.

Another noteworthy milestone achieved by Paul at CMA was the conceptualization and development of the Authority's 2014 - 2023 Master Plan, which was adopted as the principal government policy document on securities market development. He was a key member of the multi-agency team that oversaw

the successful issuance of Kenya's debut \$2 billion (Sh211 billion) Eurobond in 2014 – the largest sovereign debut debt issue in sub-Saharan Africa to date and, earning the respected 2014 African Deal of the Year at the Global Capital Emerging Markets Bond Awards.

Overall, Paul Muthaura has more than two decades of experience in senior leadership positions in the capital markets and the public sector. He has served as Chairman of Africa and Middle East at the International Organization of Securities Commissions (IOSC) in Madrid, Spain. His time with IOSC was challenging and dynamic as the world was emerging out of the 2008 Global Finance Crisis and looking for sustainable solutions to strengthen markets. He was elected to the IOSC board committee responsible for developing solutions for financing infrastructure development through the capital markets.

Paul also served as Chairman of the East African Securities Regulatory Authorities (EASRA); Board Member at the Retirements Benefits Authority (RBA); Board Member at Vision 2030 Delivery Board; and Board Member at the Insurance Regulatory Authority (IRA). He served on the Advisory Committee of the East Africa Private Equity and Venture Capital Association and the Securities Advisory Board of the Toronto Centre for Leadership in Financial Supervision.

Paul's move to ICEA LION General Insurance undoubtedly represents the biggest shift in his illustrious career. Unlike his previous roles, which were predominantly in the public sector, this one is in the private sector. The private sector is profit-oriented, making leadership positions in the corporate world highly rewarding but at the same time very challenging due to factors such as competition, unpredictable market conditions and high and often restless shareholder expectations.

#### Leveraging on a strong brand

Fortunately for Paul Muthaura, he has taken over leadership at ICEA LION General Insurance at a time when the firm is arguably in its best form thanks to the strong brand equity built over the



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past century by its parent company, ICEA LION Group.

ICEA LION General Insurance handles all general insurance business for ICEA LION Group, a financial industry titan offering products and services in life and general insurance, pensions, investments, and trusts across Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania. Other subsidiaries within ICEA LION Group include ICEA LION Life Assurance, which handles all life insurance business; ICEA LION Asset Management, which handles all investment; and ITSL Trust Company Ltd, which handles scheme administration, corporate trusteeship, trusts and related financial solutions in Eastern Africa.

Through a series of mergers over the decades, ICEA LION Group has evolved into one of the most recognizable and dominant brands in the financial services industry. However, despite offering a wide range of products and services, insurance remains its bread and butter as well as the main touchpoint for majority of consum-

ers who interact with the brand. This is understandable considering ICEA then, was the first major locally owned insurance company in Kenya after foreign shareholders sold their interests to a group of pioneering local investors in 1976, opening a new chapter for the industry and the company, whose roots date back to 1895 at the very beginning of Kenya's insurance industry.

While ICEA LION Group's strong brand heritage works in favor of Paul, he is also leading the general insurance business at a time when ICEA LION Group has onboarded new global partners following the strategic partnership entered with global financial powerhouse Prudential Financial. Through Leapfrog Strategic Investments, Prudential Financial acquired a 24% stake in ICEA LION Group in mid-2020, allowing the group to tap into Prudential's global expertise. Prudential has more than 50 million customers in 40 countries around the world and has more >>



>> than \$1.5 trillion in assets under its prudential management.

It is expected that Paul's stewardship of the general insurance line of business puts him in the cockpit as far as steering the Group's long-term growth is concerned. General insurance is still the dominant line of insurance business in Kenya and no insurance company can build meaningful scale without dealing with it. For instance, industry data published by IRA, the insurance industry regulator, shows that in 2019 general insurance accounted for 57.6 per cent or Sh132.1 billion of the Sh229.5 billion gross premiums collected by insurance firms in the year – life insurance, sometimes also referred to as long-term insurance, accounted for the remainder.

The same Data from IRA also indicates that by the end of 2020, ICEA LION General Insurance had gross premiums of Sh6.05 billion, putting it in the top seven in terms of market share in a market with 38 licensed general insurance providers.

The outlook for the general insurance business in Kenya is improving following the Covid-19 Pandemic-induced slowdown in 2020, which resulted in gross premiums declining to Sh130.83 billion from Sh132.10 billion a year earlier, with motor and medical classes accounting for close to 70 per cent of general insurance business. With more people visiting health care

facilities following the easing of Covid-19 Pandemic restrictions and more cars coming back to the roads, general insurance is likely to grow at an accelerated pace in next few months. The outlook could not be more favorable than it is now, underlining the exciting opportunity for Paul and his team to capitalize on.

"My ambition for the business is clear and simple: we want to build on our legacy as a leading provider of insurance solutions while advancing our position as the industry's north star in customer experience excellence," Muthaura told Business Monthly in a write-up.

**Academic excellence**

Another remarkable quality in Paul's favor is his commitment to academic excellence. His achievements in boardrooms and the corporate sector mirror similar feats in the classroom. He holds a Bachelor's of

**Overall, Paul Muthaura has more than two decades of experience in senior leadership positions in the capital markets and the public sector**

Law (LL.B) degree from the University of Warwick (UK), (1996-1999); a Master's of Law degree (Banking and Finance Law) from the London School of Economics and Political Science, University of London (UK); a Master's degree in Philosophy from the Maastricht School of Management in the Netherlands (2011-2013); an Executive Post Graduate Diploma in Financial Management from Kenya College of Accountancy (KCA) University in Kenya (2006-2007); and a Post Graduate Diploma in Legislative Drafting from the School of Advanced Study, University of London (UK) (2007).

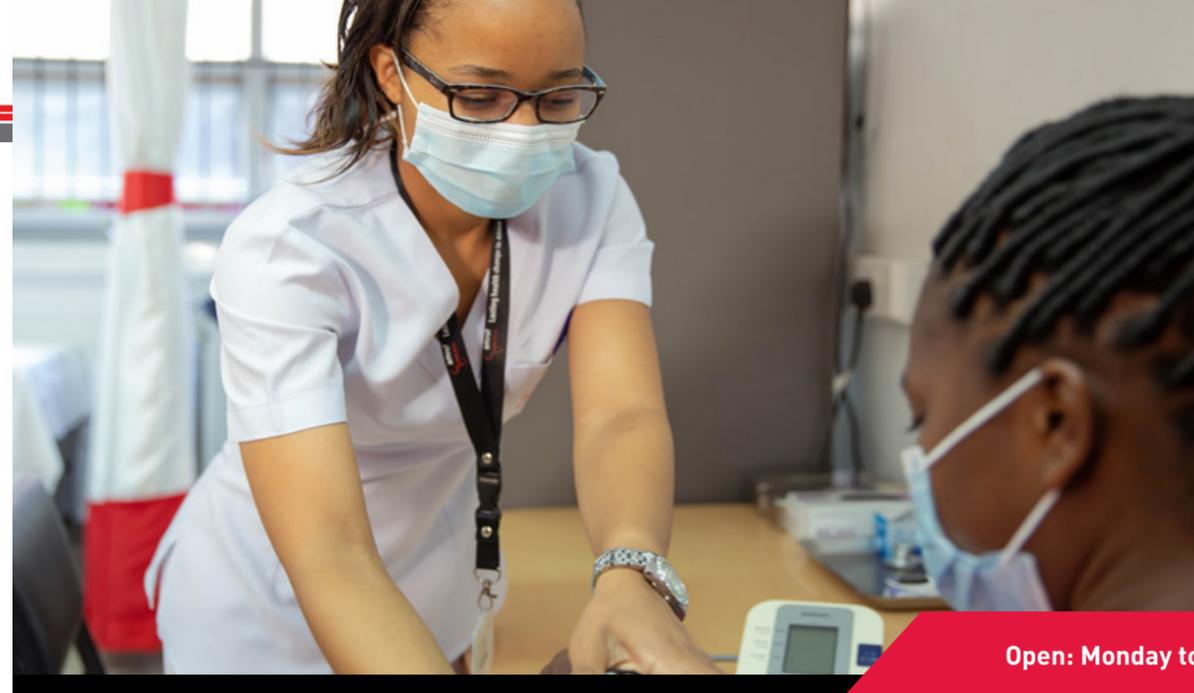
"I've always enjoyed learning and interacting with people from diverse backgrounds. Before enrolling for Law in the U.K., I had the privilege of studying in Belgium (EU) and New York (NY) US. I have also studied in Kenya. This exposure makes me comfortable interacting with people from diverse backgrounds and experiences," he adds.

After graduating with his Law degree, Paul worked briefly as an advocate of the High Court of Kenya with Daly and Figgis Advocates (now CMS Daly Inamdar Advocates) where he advised clients on issues involving corporate and commercial law.

Paul Muthaura is an Honorary Fellow of The Institute of Certified Secretaries (FCS) (2017) and a Certified Executive Coach from The Academy of Executive Coaching (AoEC) (2015), an accreditation he earned early on in his career following his realization that well mentored teams working together and not individual efforts held the key to transformative growth in organizations. "I pursued the qualification as an executive coach in order to advance and unlock the value of those working with me," the seasoned executive opines.

In recognition of his contributions to building Kenya's profile as a regional financial hub, Paul Muthaura was conferred the award of The Moran of the Order of the Burning Spear (MBS) by the President of Kenya.

Paul is viewed by those who know him closely, as a financial markets development and regulation thought leader. ■



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# #16

## Githii Mburu CBS

**COMMISSIONER GENERAL  
KENYA REVENUE AUTHORITY**

**The uncompromising soldier on war against tax evasion**

**H**e's famed for his strong and uncompromising stand against tax evasion and other tax crimes that are an affront to effective revenue collection efforts in the country.

Driven by a strong conviction of the great potential our country has in mobilisation of domestic resources, he has continued to implement key strategic measures to ensure that every eligible taxpayer remit what is rightfully payable. Actually, his mantra is, pay your fair share of tax, not a shilling more, not a shilling less.

That's the Kenya Revenue Authority (KRA) Commissioner General (CG) Githii Mburu. Even before his appointment to take over the corner office at the KRA, Mburu was a known figure in the public domain, best known for his unrelenting combat against the tax evasion monster. He was then the Commissioner for Intelligence and Strategic Operations (ISO), a department he headed from 2017 to 2019 when he was appointed Commissioner General, following an open, transparent and competitive recruitment process.

It was under his leadership as head of the Intelligence department that for the first time in Kenya, mega tax evasion scandals were unearthed and related schemes foiled. The perpetrators behind the scandals, who included holders of important public offices, were brought to book to answer to various charges related to tax evasion.



**Equipped with his vast wealth of experience spanning over 20 years in tax administration among other key strategic disciplines, Githii Mburu has demonstrated that the war against tax evasion and related crimes can and will be won.**

The tax evasion menace is not only a national but also a global setback that robs governments of billions of dollars in expected revenue annually. Experts hold that if the amount of revenue lost to tax evasion was to end up in the right coffers, no tax administration authority or service would ever miss its collection targets.

A 2020 article, 'Global Alliance for Tax Justice' estimates that countries are losing over \$427 billion in tax every year to international corporate tax abuse and private tax evasion. A breakdown of this amount of revenue and its worth in terms of the impact it could have had if it found its way to the revenue coffers explains why tax evasion needs to be dealt with head-on and better strategies implemented, especially on plugging the leakages that facilitate international corporate tax abuse.

It is against this backdrop that Githii Mburu has consistently been conspicuous on the frontline taking this bull by the horns. Equipped with his vast wealth of experience spanning over 20 years in tax administration among other key strategic disciplines, Githii Mburu has demonstrated that the war against tax evasion and related crimes can and will be won.

Among landmark tools that have been implemented under his leadership to bolster the war against tax evasion is the iWhistle platform. The iWhistle is an anonymous reporting channel for malpractices that undermine KRA's endeavours in revenue collection. The iWhistle is the hallmark of intelligence gathering mechanisms that KRA is leveraging on to tackle tax malpractices, tax crimes and professional misconduct, with a seamless guide to assist in reporting. Tax payer Education has also been improved and made a priority area, with opportunity also for any tax queries to be promptly handled.

Mburu's fight against tax malpractices has not only been felt in the country but also echoed beyond our borders. It must have been on this account, coupled with other competencies that Githii Mburu got appointed the first Chairperson of the Africa Initiative (AI), an institution of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Global Forum

on Transparency and Exchange of Information for Tax Purposes (TEITP) in December 2021. The initiative is a continental programme launched in 2014. TEITP aims at unpacking the benefits of tax transparency and exchange of information (EOI) to fight tax evasion and other illicit financial flows (IFFs) and serve African countries' development.

The KRA CG is a Member of the Governing Council of the Africa Tax Administration Forum (ATAF). He was voted during the ATAF General Assembly meeting in November 2021. The Governing Council is the organ responsible for guiding ATAF in achieving its vision, mission and objectives for African tax administrations institutions.

CG Mburu's leadership vision and style is anchored on four key pillars: integrity, performance, customer focus and staff motivation. Towards this, for instance, the tax malpractices that he has been burning the midnight oil on melt down to a poor score on the integrity scale. It is for this reason that he has demonstrated unmatched passion in promoting a 100 per cent integrity score in the tax administration process. And because it takes two to tango, he has committed to ensure that there is high integrity among the KRA employees and the taxpayers at large.

Borrowing from the words of Richard Branson, "...if you take care of the employees, they will take care of the clients", CG Githii Mburu has the welfare of the KRA employees at heart. Since his appointment to the position, hundreds of staff have been promoted, majority of whom had served at same positions for over ten years. It is also during his tenure that the terms of service for hundreds of employees who were previously on short term contracts were revised to permanent and pensionable basis. The terms of service for the few employees on short term contracts are set to change in the second phase. This action is an example of employee motivation, which also include improvement and enhancement of employee remuneration packages.

In addition to these employee motivation, CG Mburu is equally keen on employee performance as the only >>



>> way to realise the broader KRA goal. To this end, the CG has instituted measures for monitoring and evaluating employee performance in the dispensation of their respective mandates.

Given the critical role that KRA plays in the country, the CG is also keen on ensuring that KRA achieves its goal of fully transforming into a customer-centric organisation. This transformation journey kicked off a few years ago and aims to shed off the traditional enforcement approach as a primary tool for tax administration and adopting a more facilitative approach. Realignment with customer-centrism has become a global phenomenon for most tax administrations and jurisdictions.

**CG Mburu's leadership vision and style is anchored on four key pillars: integrity, performance, customer focus and staff motivation. Towards this, for instance, the tax malpractices that he has been burning the midnight oil on melt down to a poor score on the integrity scale.**

For instance, through initiatives like KRA Care, KRA now 'believes in second chances' where any tax payer who applies for Voluntary Tax Disclosure Programme (VTDP) between now and December 31,

2021 gets 100% remission on penalties and interest accrued. This is a major transformation from the KRA yester-years.

The primary indicator that anyone will look for in judging the performance of a taxman is the amount of revenue he/she collects at the end of the day vis-à-vis the set revenue targets. The fruits of the aforementioned leadership strategies that CG Mburu has been implementing are already an open book. Despite the economic hardships occasioned by the Covid-19 pandemic, KRA has managed to register impressive revenue collection especially in the second half of the 2020/2021 financial year. For instance, in April, 2021, KRA collected Ksh176.7 billion shillings against a target of Ksh170.2 billion. This translated to a 23.9 per cent increase in the revenue collected.

The stellar revenue collection points to a very resilient economy with unmatched potential to mobilise enough domestic resources that can comfortably finance our country's development agenda. This aligns to the vision the KRA CG Mburu has and will continue to be actualised when indeed, both corporates and individuals pay their fair share of taxes due, not a shilling more, not a shilling less. This is the mantra that fires under the belly of KRA CG Githii Mburu. ■



## Mission Statement

The leading association of choice in peering services & steering ICT development

## Vision Statement

Enabler of ICT growth and development

Summary of what we do as TESPOK:

**Peering | Networking | Research | Training | Policy |**

Join us

# #17 Geoffrey Odundo

CEO NAIROBI SECURITIES EXCHANGE (NSE)



**G**eoffrey Otieno Odundo is the Chief Executive of the Nairobi Securities Exchange PLC (NSE) the largest stock Exchange in East and Central Africa. Appointed CEO of NSE on March 3, 2015, Geoffrey is an accomplished Investment Banker and has been in the financial services sector for the last 27 years, 21 of which have been in the Capital Markets.

In his current role, Geoffrey has spearheaded the development of innovative financial solutions for both investors and issuers, making the NSE the second most product diverse market in Africa.

Through his leadership, the NSE is now a member of the World Federation of Exchanges (WFE), a leading member of the Morgan Stanley Composite Index (MSCI) - Frontier Markets, the second exchange in Africa with a Derivatives Market and a champion of Sustainability in the region. Thus, supporting Kenya's aspiration to become Africa's premium financial services hub by the year 2030 and well in line with our national development plan, Vision 2030.

His time has focused on widening the breath, depth and diversity of products at the exchange. The NSE now takes pride in offering seven asset classes among them listed equities, listed sovereign, corporate and green bonds; exchange traded funds, real estate investment trusts, the derivatives market and the world's first retail mobile government bonds.

Geoffrey has also spearheaded the establishment of the exchange incubation, an acceleration platform "Ibuka" which targets to prepare companies for accessing capital market opportunities within a regulatory environment designed specifically to meet their needs.

The NSE has during Odundo's tenure developed the Unquoted Securities Platform (USP) for trading of non-listed securities.

Since taking over as CEO, Geoffrey has seen the transformation of the NSE from a service to a commercial infrastructure. This has seen NSE formulate strategic interventions aimed at repositioning the organization as a venue of capital access and wealth creation, a champion of corporate governance even while enhancing diversity among its listed companies and improving on its operational efficiency.

On a Pan African standpoint, Geoffrey has been instrumental in strengthening the secretariat of the Africa Stock Exchanges Association; is among the pioneer CEOs of the African Exchange

Since taking over as CEO, Geoffrey has seen the transformation of the NSE from a service to a commercial infrastructure. This has seen NSE formulate strategic interventions aimed at repositioning the organization as a venue of capital access and wealth creation, a champion of corporate governance even while enhancing diversity among its listed companies and improving on its operational efficiency



Linkage Project (AELP), which is a market integration platform linking eight Security Exchanges in Africa with the objective of facilitating cross-border trading, further cementing trade and integration of Africa's economies.

With the NSE's renewed focus on sustaining business growth, strengthening partnerships and co-creation relationships, driving innovation, improving operational excellence and strengthening the people talent, Geoffrey has galvanized his team to deliver on this key strategic direction. He aspires to improve the uptake of the NSE products, grow the domestic pools of capital especially the retail market segment, increase the investment access channels and enhance financial literacy to all in Kenya.

With the growing interest from international and regional investors seeking market beating returns in Africa, Geoffrey has compounded this interest through improving corporate access to listed

companies, improved investor relations, enhanced bilateral and multilateral initiatives, and improving the listing environment to potential issuers to access the market.

Over the course of his career, Geoffrey has contributed immensely towards the growth of the Capital Markets in Kenya through current and former roles as a Director/Board Secretary, Kenya Association of Stock Brokers and Investment Banks, Chairman of the Financial Standards Committee - Kenya Bureau of Standards as well as being a Board Director of Nairobi Securities Exchange PLC.

Geoffrey has advised on a number of corporate finance mandates in both the public and private sectors; he has also managed key mandates in the asset management industry through leading in various senior roles in asset management, corporate finance and securities trading.

He is currently a Director of the

Central Depository and Settlement Corporation, a Director of the NSE Clear, and a trustee of the NSE Fidelity Funds. Geoffrey is a member of the Central Bank Consolidative Forum for Domestic Debt Market (CFDDM), a member of the working group of the World Federation of Exchanges and a Council Member of the Institute of Certified Investment Financial Analysts (ICIFA). He is also a Director of the Association of the Stock Exchanges of Africa (ASEA) and is a Member of the Thomson Reuters Africa Customer Advisory Network.

Geoffrey Odundo holds a Master's degree in Strategic Management from the United States International University (USIU)-Africa and an undergraduate degree in Mathematics and Economics from the Egerton University (EU). A practicing Roman Catholic, Geoffrey is also an Advanced Management Program (AMP) graduate from Strathmore and IESE Business Schools. ■

# #18

## Dr. Rakesh Rao

GROUP CEO CROWN PAINTS KENYA PLC

Wherever you meet him, Dr. Rakesh Rao talks endlessly and knowledgeably on technology and his transformation in the paint manufacturing and distribution industry.



For the longest time, paint in Kenya was just paint. Until one day a man bestrode the land and changed the way we see and interact with paint.

Dr. Rakesh Rao is his name, the current Group CEO of Crown Paints Kenya Plc.

According to those who know him, his moment of truth came the day he realized that paint in Kenya, is treated as an afterthought, coming at the tail end of projects and allocated only 1 per cent of the total costs! It is the day Dr. Rao knew something had to be done.

Looking around now, with all the development in the paint industry, it is clear that something has been done. Because, today thanks to his vision, building developers are taking a keener interest in the quality of paint, number of coats of paints to apply and the type of paint suitable according to the development soil site. Thanks to Dr. Rakesh Rao, the appearance of buildings, after the last coat of paint, including colour coding, is now of prime importance. You search for an industry transformative leader; Dr. Rakesh Rao is one in the building construction industry. For starter, he has changed the Nairobi's skyline. From monotonous blue and white and yellow, the site to behold is a rainbow of quality colors, textures and designs.

Who really is this man? This man is one of the 25 CEOs we are celebrating in this issue, the one our research indicated, was voted CEO of the year 2014 at the Company of the Year Awards (COYA), the man who was shortlisted as a notable Africa Business Leader by CNBC, the same man who led Crown Paints Kenya Plc to enjoy their name by being crowned overall winner Company of the Year Award (COYA) in 2016. We took time to talk to him for this recognition and this is his story.



Evidently, Dr. Rakesh Rao's success has much to do with his management style and acumen, with his commitment to the customer experience, another key attribute. He subscribes to the idea of 'the Customer is King' and that serving the customer is the only way to guaranteed success and corporate sustainability

Dr. Rakesh came to Kenya in 2005 to head Crown Paints Kenya Plc. He joined the company at a time when the company had been around for four decades and could do with some revamping. Turnover then was touching on Ksh 1.2billion, but with little or no regional presence. Employee morale was at its lowest.

Dr. Rakesh quickly settled down to work. First off, the grid, he laid down his vision, put together a vibrant and dedicated team to drive innovation and change, and set his eyes on changing a firm and an industry that had underperformed for decades. At the time of his

joining Crown Paints Kenya, the company was one of just a painted walls business. Dr. Rakesh had caught the paint bug, saw the potential and transformed the wall to a surfaces business, by expanding to areas like roof and floor paint, waterproofing solutions, adhesives and industrial and designer coatings to grow the business and introduce new revenue streams.

In addition to a focus on paints, he predicted that advanced paint technology was the future. He was quick to tap into this and spearheaded the introduction of quality products which offer longevity as being more cost effective and economical on the long term for the consumer. He not only thought of the bottom line for the company. He revelled at the bottom line as well, how he would unleash superior customer experience by offering quality, long life and value for money, that Crown Paints are now known for. He therefore introduces a number of new technology products, among them Crown Silicone, an additive from Germany which gives Crown paint products dust and water repellence and Crown Antibacterial paint that protects from infectious germs and perfect for high traffic areas.

Wherever you meet him, Dr. Rakesh Rao talks endlessly and knowledgeably on technology and his transformation in the paint manufacturing and distribution industry.

In management, Crown Paints was the first to leverage Enterprise Resource Planning >>



To become the number one brand in the market is easy, however; maintaining the position is so difficult, as a result we always focus on creating brand value through innovation, unrivalled customer service and staying customer centric in-service delivery.”

**ACHIEVEMENTS**

- Sales Revenue Growth - Increased annual sales from \$10m to \$100m since 2005 till date.
- Production Capacity – increased annual production capacity from 5m litres to 45m litres.
- Regional Expansion – Led Crown Paints (under the name Regal Paints) to establish plants in Uganda and as Crown Paints in Tanzania and Rwanda to expand opportunities in the East African Market for brand growth.
- Profitability – Improved profitability from \$0.3m to \$6m since 2005.
- Share Price – Increased share price from Ksh 7 to Ksh 45 and improved market cap by 8-fold.
- Market Share – Improved market share from 48% to 65% in Kenya for premium segment.
- New Products – Launched 17 new products to increase revenue significantly since 2005.
- Technology – First to launch digital platforms for home décor in East Africa i.e., Painters’ loyalty program and mobile applications such as the Crown Colour App.
- Operations – Successfully implemented Operational Excellence tools such as Six Sigma, Kaizen, ISO, BSC and UP Your Service for continuous improvement.

>> (ERP) solution SAP to drive operation efficiency and growth, giving the business data analytics to enhance decision making, efficiency of the operations to better serve customers through better supply to customers and fill rate. Probably this is how he caught the eyes of the Kenya Institute of Management (KIM).

In the home décor space, introduction of the Crown Colour App to give homeowners the power to pick paint colours and draw inspiration from our curated colour schemes is a novel in the country.

Today, Crown Paints has grown in leaps and bound; its premium segment has grown from 48% to 65%, turnover revenues have grown from the Ksh1.2 billion when Dr. Rakesh Rao ascended to the helm as CEO to Ksh. 9 billion. In addition, Crown Paints remains the leading paint and surface coating manufacturer in East Africa, with diverse products and with a regional presence

in Uganda, Tanzania and Rwanda. Dr. Rakesh Rao has so far spearheaded the launch of 17 new products which contribute to an additional 19% of revenue and growth.

Evidently, Dr. Rakesh Rao’s success has much to do with his management style and acumen, with his commitment to the customer experience, another key attribute. He subscribes to the idea of ‘the Customer is King’ and that serving the customer is the only way to guaranteed success and corporate sustainability. To this end, he says, quality is a way of life at Crown Paints and he has engrained this through Operational Excellence strategies implemented through Six Sigma, Kaizen, ISO and Up Your Service tools.

Focus on quality is meant that the business has had to invest in its people, through employee continued development and training and by instilling a high-performance culture. In his own words, Dr Rakesh Rao says, “to become



**OTHER AWARDS**

- 2016 – Overall Winner  
COYA Company of the Year Award
- 2014 - Winner  
COYA CEO of the Year Award
- 2013, 2014, 2015 – Finalist  
CNBC Businessman of the year Award
- 2013 – Winner  
COYA Innovation & Information Management Award
- 2012 –Winner  
COYA Financial Management Award
- 2011 – Shortlisted  
CNBC Businessman of the year Award

the number one brand in the market is easy, however; maintaining the position is so difficult, as a result we always focus on creating brand value through innovation, unrivalled customer service and staying customer centric in-service delivery”.

Another milestone for Kenya that Dr. Rakesh Rao has contributed is the rise of the employee compliment from 150 to over 1,000 to date, in quality full time employment.

Most of these additional employees are in ensuring customer-centric culture. “Our strategy around growth and expansion remains to take our products closer to customers and support our dealers to increase their sales in new innovative ways. This enhancement in customer experience has been through the introduction

of a call centre and a new world-class experiential showroom that boasts of a virtual color visualizer, a dedicated color consultant and a computerized tinting machines which can dispense a range of over 6,000 shades in minutes, thereby making the showrooms a one stop shop and experience to behold for all Crown Paints products,’ Dr Rakesh adds.

However, another striking attribute of Dr. Rakesh Rao, is his passion for the local community; first the community where Crown Paints works and operates and second, the greater community in which Crown Paints ultimately exists. He sees himself and Crown Paints as a product of the community and works to uplift the less fortunate, acknowledging that the society will not thrive without those who have giv-

ing back to the community around them. This social consciousness has seen the company spend millions of shillings annually to transform lives of the less fortunate.

Beyond this, his commitment to up-skill painters on technical and soft skills and his desire to empower painters through the first painter loyalty program in East Africa dubbed ‘Team Kubwa’, marks him out as a man committed to improving the lives of youth in East Africa.

“Painters remain significant partners in our value chain and therefore, when the Covid-19 Pandemic hit, we cushioned their financial burden by introducing redemption of Naivas e-vouchers and MPESA instantly anywhere, anytime to safeguard them during this tough economic period.” Along with this, Team Kubwa Sacco was also born to instill the saving culture in painters, most of whom would rather live hand to mouth.

Dr Rakesh has a passion for golf to wind down and earmarks quality time for family. This busy man, a captain of industry in effect, is able to do all this, by calmly mastering the art of work/life balance, a rare feat among his peers. Dr. Rakesh Rao summed up the interview with his mantra, ‘ being passionate, honest, humble and most of all, God fearing’.

# #19

## Hussein Ibrahim

MD&CEO INCHCAPE KENYA

Inchcape plc is an independent, multi-brand, most trusted automotive distributor with operations that span countries on five continents. It is also involved in the retail and services of top car brands. The company is headquartered in London, United Kingdom and has operations in 34 countries across Asia, Australia, Europe, Africa and South America.

In Kenya, Inchcape operates as the official distributor for Jaguar Land Rover and BMW, being a key strategic partner to the world's foremost premium and luxury car brands for whom Inchcape provides an effective, well-financed and customer focussed route to market for both sales and service for new and used cars and parts.

Looking after the operations of Inchcape Kenya is Hussein Ibrahim, one of the to-go-to contact person for anything premium cars in the country and indeed, the larger Eastern Africa region.

Known to many in the motor industry as one of the few honest and diligent in work ethics, Hussein started his journey of dealing with cars, at the University of Eastern Africa Baraton, where he pursued a Bachelor of Science (BSc) degree in Automotive Engineering between 2003 and 2005, a journey that would see him crossing the Atlantic Ocean to US, to complete his degree between in 2009 at the University of Central Missouri (UCM).

Upon completing studies in the US, Hussein returned to Kenya and joined Subaru Kenya in 2010 as a Car Diagnostic Specialist. He rose through the ranks in after sales focusing in service, parts, and into top management, being among the team that set up Subaru branches and assisting the dealerships across the country. He later was appointed as the General Manager (GM) for Subaru busi-



ness in Uganda to lead brand growth in that region.

In 2016, Hussein joined Toyotsu Automart, a Toyota Corporation subsidiary, as the vehicles procurement manager. Toyotsu is a top-end pre-owned car dealer in the country. His role involved sourcing of quality cars, a job that he did so well and put pre-owned cars at Toyotsu into the map as the go to place for certified used cars. Hussein was part of the team that set up standards for the trade-in process that involves car valuation, preparation and refurbishment, a process that Toyota uses to-date.

Hussein Ibrahim was so good at his job, understood the technical and commercial aspects of the job, leading to his appointment as the Sales and Marketing manager for this Toyota subsidiary, sustaining strong sales volumes until his departure in 2018.

Having gained experience in the technical and sales aspect of automotive, he left Toyotsu and returned

Subaru Kenya as the regional manager for Subaru operations in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania, with responsibilities for the entire group, and Oriol Ltd. – a leader and specialist in vehicle suspension systems.

Hussein was head hunted and joined Inchcape Kenya as the MD for Kenya and the Inchcape hub that comprises 7 other East African countries, in charge of Jaguar Land Rover, BMW and BMW Motorrad.



**Hussein was head hunted and joined Inchcape Kenya as the MD and CEO for Kenya and the Inchcape hub that comprises 7 other East African countries, in charge of Jaguar Land Rover, BMW and BMW Motorrad, taking over the franchise from RMA.**

Last year, amid the COVID-19 Pandemic, Inchcape Kenya successfully relaunched the Land Rover Defender, with his team winning the 'Best launch concept in SSA' award. The relaunched Land Rover Defender has also been voted as the 'Best Design' during the 2021 Car Design of the Year award.

Inchcape Kenya has also won an award for 'Best Customer Service' in the region by Jaguar Land Rover. According to Hussein, 'With premium products that we sell at Inchcape Kenya, customer service is of utmost importance, to ensure excellent experiences at the dealership and with their cars'.

Already under his leadership, Inchcape Kenya recorded the highest sales of accessories in sub-Saharan Africa region last year. Hussein oversaw the set-up of the BMW state of the art showroom at One Africa and state of the art service workshop at Delta Tower Annex in Westlands. As an additional business stream, Hussein also acquired the >>



>> BMW Motorrad brand from the previous retailer. Hussein's passion in the current job, is looking after some of the most luxurious brands in Kenya, featuring breakthrough technologies that are coming into the automotive space. Both Jaguar Land Rover and BMW have invested a lot in Research and Development (R&D) into electric cars. The Jaguar i-Pace and BMW i3 are already causing a stir of anticipation in the

Inchcape Kenya MD Hussein Ibrahim unveil the new Land Rover defender during a virtual launch. Photo | Courtesy

Kenya market.

Jaguar Land Rover recently announced that in 2025, they will transition into exclusively producing only full-electric cars. Some of the current JLR models are semi hybrid as the brand prepares to transition.

Asked if Kenya is prepared for this change, Hussein says that Inchcape Kenya is already exploring ways in which they will support the customers in the transition, with

a choice between car + charging equipment and convenient charging points in Westlands at the Inchcape premise.

Turning to the challenges, Hussein cites value perception for brand new cars in Kenya. He says, 'When customers discuss pricing, they are not comparing like for like. Some of the advantages of buying a brand-new car is that the car comes with a warranty. In this day and age where the technology in some of the cars is quite advanced, the customers should not go back to his/her pocket to pay for required periodic system upgrades and maintenance, which are only available at the official dealer'.

'The importance of servicing at the dealer is another major, safety and ultimate cost advantage. We cannot over-emphasize on the need to use only genuine parts on your car, in addition to the availability of highly trained technicians at the dealers, who are also up to date with their skills and emerging technology. Most customers who take shortcuts in maintaining their vehicles end

up coming to the dealer when the car has serious issues, this usually translates to rather large repair bills. On most occasions this will be the first interaction they have with the dealership and this subsequently creates the wrong perception. This is like coming for a heart surgery when all you needed was going for regular check-ups, which is definitely cheaper than the compulsory heart surgery at that point in time,' adds Hussein.

This wrong perception is however changing, as customers who prefer new cars are now more exposed, tech savvy, and with all information they need readily available on their smart phones, says Hussein.

For future and despite of the challenges posed by the COVID-19 Pandemic, Hussein sees a surge of more Land Rover Defenders on the road.

BMW Motorrad is also back on the Kenyan map as the luxury motorcycle of choice. Inchcape Kenya is the sales and aftersales support provider for this brand. Already, the roads are awash with the Motorrad F 750 GS and F 850 GS and the big bad boy of them all, the R 1250 GS/A. On the smaller side, Inchcape Kenya also stocks the G 310 R and the C 400 X.

Amongst the bikes available on special order is the heritage R 18 and R 18 Classic, with the high-grade Option 719 parts which bring a unique look to your motorcycle, offering increased customization, specialised seats, wheels, and cylinder head covers to striking paint options, perhaps for a most interesting finish.

Among the unique offering in the automotive segment in Kenya is Lease and Rental, where businesses especially hotels and tour companies can lease luxury brands for their clients. Organisations can also lease instead of buying vehicles as assets. Inchcape Kenya can also source and supply certified pre-owned Jaguar Land Rover and BMW cars.



**With premium products that we sell at Inchcape Kenya, customer service is of utmost importance, to ensure excellent experiences at the dealership and with their cars".**



NMG Group CEO Stephen Gitagama (left) receives keys to a Jaguar E-pace from Managing Director Inchcape Kenya Limited, Hussein Ibrahim during a partnership signing ceremony for the 2019 Nation Classic Golf Series Grand Finale. Photo | Inchcape

Customers out there are frustrated after buying these brands from unknown sources which ends costing them more eventually. Buying from Inchcape Kenya guarantees the customers top quality cars, with warranty and aftersales service at fair prices.

At the moment, Hussein is working on other unique automotive offerings that will be beneficial to all BMW and Jaguar Land Rover owners including the ones with pre-owned units.

The causes Hussein cares most about include empowering future engineers through education, poverty alleviation, science and technology. ■

**You can reach Hussein Ibrahim in the comfort of Jaguar Land Rover and BMW offices at the Oracle Tower in Westlands while you are in Nairobi, Kenya, on Tel: +254 719 320 520|+254 724 362 866. jaguar-kenya.com|landroverkenya.com|bmw.co.ke.**

# #20

## Matilda P. Sakwa

DIRECTOR GENERAL & CEO NATIONAL YOUTH SERVICE

**M**atilda Sakwa began her career in June, 1989 as a District Officer. She had just graduated with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Sociology from the University of Nairobi. Matilda recounts that she was only 25 and did not have the imposing body frame that her subjects expected of a District Officer then. It did not help matters that she was entering a male dominated segment of the civil service.

She nonetheless took her responsibilities with gusto and realizing that she was not physically endowed on account of her age, she summoned and solely relied on

her fledgling leadership and administrative skills to deliver on her targets.

To shore her mettle, Matilda then took time off to study and earned her Master's Degree in Development Studies from the Institute of Social Studies at The Hague, The Netherlands in 1999.

As a District officer, she chaired and participated in various committees whose membership was largely composed of people the age of her parents. She participated in developing the District Development Plan, held public barazas to propagate government policies and programmes, coordinated all government development activities in the Division and deputized the District Commissioner from time to time. She made far reaching decisions for and on behalf of the government.

After twelve years in field administration, and due to her impressive track record, she was elevated to the position of Under Secretary, where she headed the Aids Control Unit in the then Ministry of Provincial Administration and Internal Security. While there, she coordinated the implementation of the Kenya National HIV/AIDs Strategic Plan, developed plans for mainstreaming HIV/AIDs programmes in the ministry, conducted gender and HIV/AIDs advocacy, mobilized and planned utilization of resources from the World Bank funded HIV/AIDs programmes among other key undertakings.

Matilda was a key player in developing structures for the HIV/AIDs control programmes in the public sector in general and in the then larger Office of the President in Particular.

In 2011, she had a brief but fulfilling stint as the Director Social Pillar, Kenya Vision 2030 where she fondly remembers spearheading setting up of Project Delivery



I do not want NYS to be dragged back into the past and therefore imagining that there is going to be another corruption scandal merely because of the past is a misplaced fallacy I would not want to be associated with.

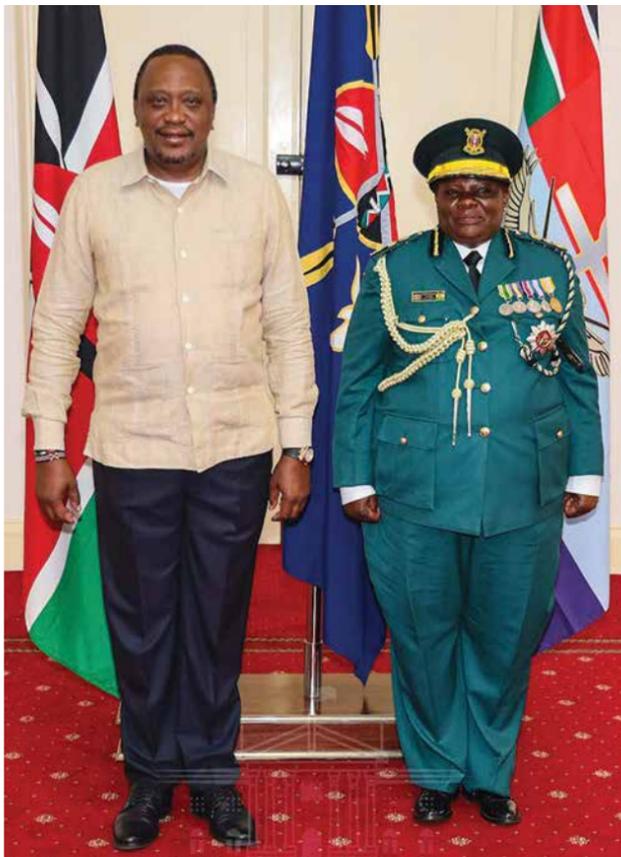
Teams in the line ministries that are now active in the delivery of the flagship projects at the National and County levels.

She was tellingly deployed back to the field as a District Commissioner in 2007 when her experience was needed to calm post-election upheavals ravaging the country then, following the disputed general elections. During this time, she was involved in peace building and conflict management, promotion of statehood and nationhood, coordinating different government security agencies to guarantee security of the people and their properties and dissemination of government policies.

Her stellar performance as a District Commissioner would later see her being appointed County Commissioner during the operationalization of counties as both political and administrative units in 2013. She served in this capacity for five years in Nandi, Elgeyo Marakwet and Machakos counties.

Then came 2018. Two episodes of alleged corruption scandals had hit and besmirched the reputation of the National Youth Service (NYS) in quick succession between 2015 and 2018. The Service was sinking fast under the weight of public reproach and disdain. The future of many destitute youths enlisted into the NYS was at stake. The once quiet institution had found its name in all imaginable media platforms for all the wrong reasons.

Something had to be done to rescue the NYS and to restore public trust and confidence in its operations. The government went on a treasure hunt to find the ideal person for the rescue. When the >>



>> hunting expedition was over and the time came to unveil the treasure, it was Ms. Matilda P. Sakwa.

Matilda was appointed NYS acting Director General in mid-2018. A consummate career administrator and a team player, she was (betrayed) by her exceptional skills in management and coordination of public affairs, public policy formulation, networking and resource mobilization honed during her tenure in field administration and central government. Matilda indeed revealed in one of her interviews when she appeared on KBC television in August, 2018 that the appointing authority had narrowed down to three names before she was picked. She was indisputably a cut above the rest of her peers.

Even with these skills, however, being thrust in the middle of the storm that had engulfed NYS required somebody with a rare mettle. This is where her calm but tough demeanour with a tinge of strictness comes in handy.

Matilda observes that, 'when I walked into NYS, one of the first things I grappled with was traumatized employees. I found a Service replete with apprehension, confusion and malaise. The senior management who had survived the turbulence remained timid and in shock. All hope had been lost and nothing seemed to be working'.

She hit the ground running. Reading from the script she had been given by the appointing authority and guided by the top leadership at the then Ministry of Public Service, Gender and Youth Affairs, Matilda focussed on introducing basic reforms in a bid to breathe fresh air into the NYS.

She did a quick research and realised that the problems with NYS were deeply rooted in 'lack of procedures, structures and systems in the procurement and accounts departments. I could not trust anybody because though I knew a majority of staff and stakeholders were good, I was sure there were bad elements who wanted to take advantage of the situation and push us deeper into the abyss. For a long time, I lost my sleep', she says.

When Matilda swung into action, that saw transfers, signing of new contracts with thoroughly vetted companies, intro-



duction of framework contracts, reshuffles, workshops and retreats, meetings, capacity building and training sessions to lay ground for the envisaged transformation of NYS from a state department to a state corporation. A few months at the apex of NYS and things started looking up. She has managed to convince the staff that the NYS will rise from the ashes. The NYS Act, 2018 was born.

**Looking back, Matilda opines that her journey to the top has been arduous and challenging yet fulfilling. She admits that being appointed the Director General of NYS had never been in her wildest dreams**

In February, 2019 she received members of the inaugural NYS Council who had been appointed to shepherd the transformation to a body corporate. The Council confirmed her as the substantive Director General/CEO a few months later, cementing her position as the first female Service commander in the history of Kenya. She had scored another first. In just under two years and despite a cut on the NYS budget and the disruptions occasioned by the effects of Covid-19 pandemic, Matilda has distinguished herself as one of the most dependable and transformative CEOs in Kenya today.

Since taking over, Matilda has overseen enlistment of over 35,000 deserving youths across the country into the NYS, constructed more barracks and classrooms in NYS schools and field units, restowed discipline and admitted 200 servicemen and women to undertake medical courses for the first time in the history of NYS.

More importantly, today NYS is a state corporation totally redeemed from its for-

mer tarnished image. Expenditures have been devolved, revenue collection has gone up considerably, there are more partnerships and collaborations like never before, new employees are being recruited, servicemen and women allowances are released on time, pending bills have been substantially reduced, all commanding officers across the 22 units have been facilitated with new vehicles, several capacity building and promotional courses have been mounted, members of staff have been motivated through accelerated promotions and complaints have reduced, through the establishment of an efficient complaints resolution process.

Looking back, Matilda opines that her journey to the top has been arduous and challenging yet fulfilling. She admits that being appointed the Director General of NYS had never been in her wildest dreams. Asked how she received the news of her appointment to lead the NYS, she notes that 'it was a shock to me. At first, I said no to the offer because I hardly knew what I was going into but after thorough consultations with family members and friends, I decided to take the plunge and at the deepest end of the pool.'

Reminded that she may be enjoying a lull before another storm at the NYS,

**Since taking over, Matilda has overseen enlistment of over 35,000 deserving youths across the country into the NYS, constructed more barracks and classrooms in NYS schools and field units and restowed discipline.**

the workaholic CEO retorts that, 'that is wishful thinking. I do not want NYS to be dragged back into the past and therefore imagining that there is going to be another corruption scandal merely because of the past is a misplaced fallacy I would not want to be associated with. Instead, what people should be concerned with is whether we are delivering on our core mandates of Paramilitary Training and Service Regimentation, National Service, Vocational Training and Commercialization. In my opinion, so far so good'.

A lover of knowledge, Matilda has globe-trotted to better her skills. She attended a Data Modelling workshop at the University of East Anglia, Great Britain, attained a Diploma in Community Based Prevention and Management of HIV/Aids in Israel, participated in a workshop on Integrating Good Governance in Education Curriculum in Africa at Makerere University, and attended a Public Administration and Public Service Reforms Seminar for Kenya officials at Peking University, China. Locally, she attained a Diploma in Public Administration, a Certificate in Senior Management and Strategic Leadership and Management Program from the Kenya School of Government.

Matilda Sakwa singles out Prof. Margaret Kobia, Cabinet Secretary (CS), Ministry of Public Service and Gender whom she fondly refers to as 'Madam CS' as her greatest mentor. When she dragged her feet and appeared reluctant to take up the appointment as NYS Director General, Prof. Kobia remained her forte. She constantly urges her on. ■





**#21**  
**Fiona Asonga**

**CEO TECHNOLOGY SERVICE PROVIDERS OF KENYA**

**M**s. Fiona Asonga is the Chief Executive Officer at the Technology Service Providers Association of Kenya (TESPOK).

TESPOK is a non-profit organization representing the interests of Technology Service providers in Kenya and also runs the Kenya Internet Exchange Point and Industry Computer Security and Incidence Response Team (I-CSIRT). The Kenya Internet Exchange Point is the facility which keeps internet traffic in Kenya and ensuring security of the cyberspace is important to the role TESPOK provides on the collaborative platform. The Industry Computer Security and Incidence Response Team (I-CSIRT) brings together cyber-security representatives of service providers and co-ordinates cyber security issues with relevant government entities through the National Computer Security and Incident Response Team (KE-CSIRT).

In addition, new developments like the Global Roaming Exchange at the Kenya Internet Exchange Point (KIXP), an international routing hub for the continent's mobile technology, have facilitated the entrenchment of mobile into consumer and commercial life, not least in the area of finance, banking and tax administration.

A major user is the Kenya Revenue Authority's Integrated Tax Management System, which is heavily dependent on KIXP for availability of its services to the public and at the various custom points," Asonga adds.

A second major use is the necessity for digital communications such as meetings and conferences as well as learning programs arising out of the closure of learning institutions following the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. This has seen learners continue to access learning material and keep them-



selves busy. E-learning in Kenya and all kinds of webinars have quickly become the norm rather than the exception, thanks to services provided by TESPOK and its member organizations. These needs have occasioned an increase in local internet traffic.

The service providers have had to contend with the need to upgrade their connections so as to maintain the required quality of service parameters for the end users, the CEO states. TESPOK also offered Kenya Institute for Curriculum Development (KICD) learning con-



**We are ensuring individuals can continue to work from home, households can call hotlines and receive the required assistance.**

Ms. Fiona Asonga

tent a free port at the KIXP for ease of access to educational materials by learners across the country.

"TESPOK is the partner behind the scenes making sure that communication continues uninterrupted," Asonga adds. "We are ensuring individuals can continue to work from home, households can call hotlines and receive the required assistance. The telecommunications network owners and the KIXP have adapted the unsung hero's role that is crucial in our country's efforts to combat the covid-19 disease outbreak and keep the economic and social activities live.

As members of both the European Internet Exchange Point Association (EIEPA) and Africa Internet Exchange Point Association (AIEPA) TESPOK is borrowing from the experiences of both on and off the continent to ensure they stay ahead of the industry needs and customer expectations.

During the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic, Ms. Asonga played a pivotal role in facilitating online access >>



**Fiona Asonga's role in policy and regulatory matters has had her acquire certificates in Policy Development and Advocacy from International Center for Parliamentary Studies, Training and Consulting Associates and Business Advocacy Fund**

>> to as much relevant content as was possible through the KIXP. This involved helping the ISPs increase capacity to ensure that they maintain the good reliable online services to their respective customers.

In addition, TESPOK has had to liaise with security agents for movement of teams across the country to provide much required support to keep communication up and undertake unplanned infrastructure upgrade. This resulting from the unforeseen traffic demand to areas that previously had low internet traffic throughput such as residential area and some academic institutions.

TESPOK is leading infrastructure owners to work together with the Expressway road contractor in ensuring that the critical communication services remain up for all sectors of the economy. The Expressway touches on critical communication backbone that not only serves Kenya but landlocked countries of Uganda, Rwanda and Southern Sudan.

The focus of the association is not only on protecting the investors in the sector but also ensuring the consumer can benefit from good quality uninterrupted communication regardless of how simple or complex the online activities may be.

Fiona Asonga has been in the ICT industry since 2005 and during this period, she has represented Africa from 2011 to 2018 as an elected representative of the Number Resource Organization where her role involved coordinating Internet Numbering Resource issues across the five Regional Internet Registries. During the same period, she also doubled as a member of the Internet Corporation of Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) Address Supporting Organization- Address Council where co-ordination of the development of Global Numbering Resource Policy Development takes place.

She has been a leadership trainer at the ICANN Leadership Academy from 2015 to 2017. In 2018, she was engaged by the

Internet Society to develop training material for the Collaborative Governance Project that saw her offer training globally and at USTTI on Multistakeholder engagement.

Fiona Asonga is part of the team of consultants currently engaged to assist the Ethiopian Communications Authority in their ICT sector liberalization efforts.

Fiona is currently pursuing a Master of Business Administration (MBA) - Strategic Management at USIU-Africa. She holds a Bachelor's degree in international business administration (IBA) also from the USIU-A.

She holds additional post graduate certificates in Information Communications Technology from Cisco; Cyber security - Forum of Incident Response and Security Teams trainings in Kampala, Nairobi and Los Angeles; ICT Assisted Development from London, UK; Telecoms Regulatory Training from London, UK.

Fiona Asonga's role in policy and regulatory matters has had her acquire certificates in Policy Development and Advocacy from International Center for Parliamentary Studies, Training and Consulting Associates and Business Advocacy Fund. She also holds a certificate of Competence in the European Union General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and Leadership certificates from the Collaborative Boston Institute and ICANN.

**Fiona other achievements include:**

- 2017 Recipient of the Africa Avante Garde Awards for support of the African domain and the African Union Commission's efforts
- 2018 As a consultant of the Internet Society developed a training program for Collaborative Governance that has been used to improve on stakeholder interaction during multi-stakeholder engagements
- 2018 – 2020 Member of the ICANN GNSO Expedited Policy Development Process seeking to align the domain name community to the European GDPR

In all these, Fiona Asonga has provided transformational leadership in the areas of ICT Industry leadership, lobbying and advocacy, data management, cyber space protection, policy formulation and advocacy. ■



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# #22

## Kendi Ntwiga

COUNTRY LEADER-KENYA MICROSOFT

As we ushered in what unknowingly was going to be one of the most unpredictable years globally, Kendi Ntwiga joined Microsoft as its Kenya Country Leader in January 2020. A role she soon realized would be critical in enabling remote productivity for various players of the economy and indeed the ordinary citizens of Kenya.

Under her leadership, Microsoft moved quickly to support key players and drive societal support. Some of the engagements included working with the Ministry of Information Communication and Technology (ICT) to build a health mobile application Chat robot (BOT) that would be used for citizen engagement. This BOT which was built and hosted on Microsoft Technology, integrated into the National Covid-19 communication plan with key digital Government connection channels and was accessible via all social media platforms and the mobile phone messaging.

Microsoft also deployed digital justice, where the organization provided Management Solution (MS) Teams to the Judiciary to facilitate Online Trials/Hearings/Meetings. The Court management solution modernized justice systems, moving courts away from legacy IT and paper-based procedures for criminal, civil, and traffic cases.

According to a survey done and reported by the World Bank (WB) (Kenya Economic Update by the World Bank) the special focus topic found that the pandemic increased poverty by 4 percentage points (or an additional 2 million poor) through serious impacts on livelihoods, by sharp decreases in incomes and general loss of employment. The unemployment rate increased sharply, approxi-



mately doubling to 10.4 percent in the second quarter of 2020 as measured by the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) Quarterly Labor Force Survey.

“With these statistics, it became apparent that Microsoft’s intervention and contribution was required to help individuals and organizations bounce back to contributing to the recovery of the country’s economy,” says Kendi.

To do this, Microsoft launched the global skilling initiative by partnering with the Stanbic Bank Foundation in Kenya—signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Ministry of Industrialization, Trade, and Enterprise Development to enhance the employability of citizens through digital upskilling to over 50,000 entrepreneurs. This was part of the Microsoft Global Skills Initiative aimed at bringing more digital skills to 25 million people worldwide. The initiative brings together every part of Microsoft, combining existing and new resources from LinkedIn, Git-Hub, and Microsoft, all grounded in three areas of activity:

- The use of data to identify in-demand jobs and the skills needed to fill them;
- Free access to learning paths and content to help people develop the skills these positions require; and
- Low-cost certifications and free job-seeking tools to help people who develop these skills pursue new jobs.

Currently and in addition to these interventions, Microsoft is working in Kenya with the likes of Tech4Dev and the Women Techsters Initiative to train 5 million girls and women across Africa in coding and deep tech skills by 2030.

Kendi who is the local custodian of Microsoft’s mission of empowering every person and every organization in the planet to achieve more—together with the education team, brought this mission to life in Kenya through Enabling Remote Learning. “Our support for both the public and private education sector has been pegged on fostering use of modern tools in the classroom, developing 21st century digital content and providing capacity building for teachers to enable hybrid learning,” Kendi adds.

To this effect, Microsoft has equipped over 200,000 teachers in Kenya with MS Office 365 tools to support hybrid learning and collaboration through MS Teams in partnership with the Ministry of Education, Teachers Service

Commission and Kenya Private School Alliance. This collaboration extends to the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development to enable all students in the country access digital learning content online through Kenya Education Cloud.

In addition, Microsoft is working with the Kenya Education Network (KENET) and several private and public Universities to provide anytime everywhere access to secure productivity and collaboration tools as well as the ability to cost effectively leverage efficient and reliable infrastructure from anywhere in the country. This has greatly boosted the accelerated transformation of our higher education programmes to ensure continuity of learning and improved learning experiences where face to face environment is interrupted.

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**Kendi who is the local custodian of Microsoft’s mission of empowering every person and every organization in the planet to achieve more—together with the education team, brought this mission to life in Kenya through Enabling Remote Learning**

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Microsoft is working closely with the Academic studies departments to provide for free Microsoft Learn (supports remote classroom) platform available to all institutions of higher learning as part of Microsoft’s contribution to ensure all the students are 21st Century ready at the completion of their academic studies. Microsoft’s goal is to continuously empower a minimum of 1 million higher education students each year.

From an early age, Kendi knew that she had an interest in pursuing a career in tech, influenced by watching her father pursue computer science in her preteen years. She took an interest in sciences and mathematics which helped her get accepted into computer studies and later pursue a degree in international business management as well as get entry into post graduate studies >>



>> in entrepreneurial leadership from the Babson College (US).

Kendi's first paid job was handing out marketing promotional fliers in the city, far from what she had studied but then critical for her sustenance.

Kendi Ntwiga's corporate break came when she got appointed as the assistant IT Manager at the Kahama Group of Hotels, a job she did for only a year. She soon realized that her passion was spending time in strategy and business discussions, as this

space would provide her with an opportunity to use her IT knowledge in adding value to business.

It is with this desire in mind that she moved to Paynet group which is now part of Interswitch as an Account manager and was instrumental in driving conversations about channel banking which was the boon of ATM's and POS terminals then. While going about her work at Paynet, her competitor recommended her for a role at HP, which is where she started her career in

Having grown up in the village, Kendi is passionate about creating systems that allow those with a background like hers access opportunities they wouldn't otherwise have.

high tech global multinationals.

Kendi has worked for 3 other American Global High-Tech multinationals and is known to consistently build the ecosystem and leverage partners to grow and turn-around businesses she has been given the opportunity to oversee.

Having grown up in the village, Kendi is passionate about creating systems that allow those with a background like hers access opportunities they wouldn't otherwise have. She sits on boards of organizations that are about grassroots empowerment and is actively involved in mentorships and coaching especially around access to Science Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) courses and careers.

Kendi Ntwiga strongly believes that, 'we must train and encourage our youth to be creators and not just consumers if we as Africans, are to build self-sufficiency'.

Separately but related, Kendi is the founder of She-Goes-Tech, an initiative she set up to help build the pipeline of girls and women getting into STEM courses and careers.

Away from technology and business, Kendi is a story telling coach, who expends considerable time and energy working with a variety of individuals and organizations across the globe, training on story telling as a tool for advocacy. In this capacity, she has been in various forums including the UN General Assembly (UNGA) in New York, New York (US) representing the African Woman on pertinent society issues. ■



### WHO WE ARE

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Maisha Silver	Kenya, Tanzania, Zanzibar	4,900
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Maisha Platinum	Kenya, Tanzania, Zanzibar, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, South Sudan & Ethiopia	11,000



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**280**  
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TRANSFERS SINCE MAY 2020

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**600**  
PERSONNEL TRAINED ON  
COVID-19 PREPAREDNESS

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# #23 Isis Nyong'o Madison

PRINCIPAL AT ASPHALT & INK

Now, more than ever, female career professionals and entrepreneurs are rising to leadership positions across Africa. Championing this shift are established business leaders like Isis Nyong'o Madison. As a Principal at Asphalt & Ink, Isis advises global and local clients including corporations, investors and foundations on their Africa strategies. The demand for this type of highly localized expertise is growing as trade and investment into and within the continent accelerates.

As a serial entrepreneur, Isis has leveraged her deep operating experience to start two companies that leverage technology to address pressing problems for African women. Founded in 2017, WomenWork is a digital network of ambitious women focused on reaching their potential through a unique mix of programming the platform provides. WomenWork not only provides a platform for networking, but also collaborates



with like-minded global and local partners to provide funding, professional and business skills training.

Founded in 2015, MumsVillage (now part of the Bliss Group led out of Nigeria) is a digital media and ecommerce platform that provides mothers with access to information and products.

Prior to this, the renowned technology and media leader held notable leadership positions on the founding Africa teams at Google, InMobi and MTV.

Through her partnership role at Google, she was instrumental in building the foundation of the digital economy in Africa focusing on structuring private sector partnerships that increased user access to and interest in the Internet while also advocating for public policy change. The widespread use of products such as Youtube and Google Maps across Africa today are a testament to the impact of her work.

In her general management role at InMobi she pioneered mobile advertising in South Africa, Nigeria and Kenya. And in her commercial role at MTV, she was instrumental in formulating long term sponsorship with advertisers and content distribution deals with TV networks which enabled African youth to gain exposure to music and youth culture from other parts of the continent before the Internet was as accessible as it is today.

With 10 years of board experience across academia, private and publicly traded companies, Isis currently serves on the boards of Southbridge Group (Pan-African investment bank), Nairobi Securities Exchange (NSE) where she chairs the Listings Committee, and Nourishing Africa ((digital platform for 1 million agri-food entrepreneurs).

Isis is an alumnus of Harvard Business School (MBA) and Stanford University (AB in Human Biology) and has been featured in the Top



**As a serial entrepreneur, Isis has leveraged her deep operating experience to start two companies that leverage technology to address pressing problems for African women**

40 women under 40 in Kenya named one of Africa's most successful women by Forbes as well as a Young Global Leader by the World Economic Forum.

Her formative years found her at the Greenhills School, one of a kind. As espoused in LinkedIn, 'Greenhills School is a student-centered community that helps young people realize their full intellectual, ethical, artistic and athletic potential in preparation for college-and beyond-as curious, creative, and responsible citizens who respect all individuals and their differences, and whose meaningful and balanced lives will better the world'.

Isis is a Pan-Africanist at heart, committed to the economic advancement of the continent in a manner

that ensures women are included. Various research studies indicate that it will take more than 100 years to reach gender equality. Isis believes that in addition to relevant policy changes, two critical areas to achieve gender equality where she can influence include increasing access to technology for women and putting capital in the hands of women.

Isis' personal mantras change but what drives her is the belief that life is a learning process and if you remind yourself of that frequently, it's easier to take on new challenges and advance new ideas. Her first name invites a wide range of questions on it's origin and pronunciation - she was named after the Egyptian goddess Isis which is pronounced "eye-sis". ■



**#24**

**Dr. Anastasia Nyalita**

**CEO, KENYA HEALTHCARE FEDERATION (KHF)**

**K**enya Healthcare Federation (KHF) is a Private Sector membership-based organization that serves as the Health Sector Board of the Kenya Private Sector Alliance (KEPSA). Founded in 2004, the Federation has a membership of over 160 organizations and growing, that can be divided in Health Institutions (NGOs, Social and Commercial Enterprises), Professional Associations and Institutional Associations, all active in the Kenyan Health Sector. The membership of KHF come from all the 6 building blocks of health systems as specified by the WHO: Service Delivery, Health Workforce, Information, Supply Chain, Health Financing and Governance.

KHF's goal is to have an enabling environment that supports quality affordable healthcare for all Kenyans. The Federation strives to achieve this by championing Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) for better healthcare by networking, engaging, representing and through win – win negotiations with the National Government of Kenya. Overseeing all these as the CEO, is Dr. Anastasia Nyalita.

Anastasia Nyalita is a dynamic and competent health specialist, a Pharmacist and an MBA graduate to boot, with an unquenchable passion for sharing her skills and knowledge through erudite communication via various engagement platforms. In deliberately doing this, Dr. Nyalita contributes to the growth and strategic direction of organizations in the healthcare sector and her involvement cuts across the entire spectrum of health sector.

Dr. Nyalita has held various senior leadership roles in several international health and FMCG organizations over the last 20 years, spanning across sub-Saharan Africa and South East Asian countries. She had has served in several Boards in both Public and

Private sectors, and is a member of the Pharmaceutical Society of Kenya and Institute of Directors—Kenya, Immediate Past President of the Kenya Association of the Pharmaceutical Industry (KAPI), served as a Council Member of the International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers and Associations (IFPMA) and presently, a member of Kenya Private Sector Alliance, KEPSA, Governing Council.

She is passionate about Leadership and Governance, assets that Dr. Nyalita is currently putting to good use at the forefront of managing and influencing policies and decisions at the highest level of the Covid-19 pandemic management in Kenya today.

Dr. Anastasia Nyalita is the 'must include' member of any Think Tank, Committee, Taskforce or Council where decisions are made regarding all matters Health, if the objective is to get results effectively and efficiently. Her vision is: A Transformational Health agenda that transcends boundaries and generations.



**The Covid-19 Pandemic presents huge challenges and opportunities, including an opportunity to further strengthen our Public Private Dialogue in Health and forge stronger partnerships beyond Health Sector."**

Among the global special projects Dr Nyalita has undertaken is leading and managing Bayer Healthcare's organizational set-up and build-up in Myanmar at a time when the country was re-opening up to foreign investment opportunities. Though not a ride in the park, was a very fulfilling assignment.

These experiences and capabilities have thrust Dr Nyalita at the forefront as a leading Thought Leader in the handling of the current COVID-19 Pandemic Response initiatives. She says, 'the Covid-19 Pandemic presents huge challenges and opportunities, including an opportunity to further strengthen our Public Private Dialogue in Health and forge stronger partnerships beyond Health Sector.'

Dr. Nyalita, when not engaging with various stakeholders, in addition to giving thoughtful opinion on various discourse on handling the Covid-19 pandemic and effective distribution of the vaccines, finds time for deep involvement in mentoring young professionals in their last years of university or early on in their careers after graduating from the University.

She quotes Coach George Raveling as a personal mantras and values that she cherishes, "If it's got to be, it's up to me." This explains Dr. Nyalita's active participation and engagement on matters Health, to help secure the country and mitigate the devastating effects of the Covid-19 Pandemic. She is not one to remain silent when issues are being discussed. And while at it, Dr. Nyalita is a confident communicator with excellent interpersonal skills and the ability to manage relationships across levels.

She has been bestowed with the Eli Lilly & Co Global Regulatory Affairs Award, for displaying the leadership behaviour 'Create External Focus' and the brand attribute 'Networking (Medical) Expertise'. ■

# #25 Sanda Ojiambo

CEO/ED UNITED NATIONS GLOBAL COMPACT

Sanda Ojiambo would describe herself as a business leader with a unique blend of sustainable business and sustainable development expertise, brought to life through experience garnered in the NGO sector, the private sector and the United Nations. She is the CEO and Executive Director of the United Nations Global Compact, a special initiative of the UN, which was founded in 2000 by the then Secretary General, Kofi Annan.

The United Nations Global Compact is the world's largest corporate sustainability initiative aimed at mobilizing business around the responsible business practice and principles, and contributions towards the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Sanda took up the role as CEO and Executive Director just over a year ago; and amidst the Covid-19 pandemic.

The announcement of the role, which came through the office of the Secretary General of the United Nations, necessitated Sanda's exit from Safaricom Plc, where she had worked for twelve years, leading the company's much lauded efforts in Sustainable Business, Technology for Development and Corporate Social Investment.

With a Master's degree in Public Policy, Sanda's first job with the UN in the very early stages of her career was with UNDP-Somalia, part of a four-year stint in Somalia which shaped Sanda's views on development, development policy and sustainability. It was the start of her career, but she knew then that she would go back to the UN at some point.

And so, amidst the work from home environment, Sanda took on the new role in early June, 2020 working from Nairobi while using technology to temporarily bridge the gap between her team in New York and other colleagues in duty stations. The new role posed extreme demands for time and across time zones with the boom in webinars and video conferencing because the Covid-19 Pandemic had arrived and people were actively convening online.



Her appointment meant that ultimately, she would have to shift base, leaving Nairobi to start a new phase of an illustrious career in New York, New York, US. The Covid-19 Pandemic meant that she had to get things going while grounded in Nairobi.

Sanda sees the process of making that transition during this difficult time as one of the biggest personal and professional challenges she has had to take on in her life. That, in her view, has replaced the hard climb up Mount Kilimanjaro that she had previously placed top of the list of toughest challenges she has had to tackle.

She had to tap deep into her mental strength, her deep sense of determination and optimism to make a smooth and successful transition. And when the Covid-19 Pandemic fog had lifted a little and restrictions on international travel lifted in September 2020, she got on the first available flight to NY, US.

Sanda reminisced in a recent LinkedIn post, "The trip from Nairobi to New York remains extremely vivid," she says. "There was a distinct sense of trepidation among the small group of travelers, and very little could have prepared me for the full realities of life with the Covid-19 Pandemic restrictions that were in place in New York City."

Sanda further elaborated on the importance of maintaining a healthy work-life balance when working from home as being key to personal and professional equilibrium, growth and successes during these unique times.

Although she landed successfully in her new home, an apartment, she still could not go to her new office, and so had to set up an office at home. With a seat at the window, she has watched as the New York seasons changed from fall to winter and then to spring.

One of Sanda's first achievements in office was to establish a new, forward looking strategy for the Global Compact, charting forward a new trajectory towards heightened accountability measures for companies, global growth, prioritized areas for action, and a new strategy to engage Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), which are a significant cog in the global economy. The strategy has been well received globally and with several stakeholders, setting the tone for the new chapter for the Global Compact under Sanda's leadership.

"SMEs drive 70 per cent of the world's

economy and are fundamental part of the supply chain of large businesses. You are only as strong as your weakest link. A company cannot be responsible if its supply chain is not sustainable," says Sanda.

While large businesses are good because of the agenda-setting role they play on a national or global scale, drive innovation and help in positioning, it is important to remember that they are supported by SMEs.

Looking forward to the future, Sanda sees the role of purpose and principle led business as one that more businesses can and should adopt, so that they continue to deliver both profits as well as benefits for societal transformation, using the business lens and the platforms of the UN Global Compact.

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Looking forward to the future, Sanda sees the role of purpose and principle led business as one that more businesses can and should adopt, so that they continue to deliver both profits as well as benefits for societal transformation, using the business lens and the platforms of the UN Global Compact

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Sanda's Masters of Science (MSc) degree in Public Policy and Development Economics, from the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities (US) has been complemented by various executive education courses between 2012 and 2016 that she took at the prestigious Strathmore Business School (SBS) and a Women in Leadership Forum from the Harvard Business School Executive Education in 2015.

Her foundation in Education was laid at McGill University between 1992 and 1995 where Sanda graduated with a Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree in Economics and International Development. Like most of the leaders being honoured here, Sanda Ojiambo attended the St. Mary's School, Nairobi for her International Baccalaureate between 1990 and 1991. ■

# Mary W. Kimonye, MBS

**PRINCIPAL SECRETARY STATE DEPARTMENT FOR PUBLIC SERVICE**



lent in networking both locally and internationally, with a passion, a positive attitude and good interpersonal skills that constitute her unique Mary Kimonye style.

As Principal Secretary for Public Service, Mary is driven on a daily basis to apply her extensive knowledge, skills and experience to bring positive and meaningful change to the socio-economic development of individuals, institutions, communities and the country and contribute to the achievement of Kenya's Development Agenda as expressed in Vision 2030, crystalized into The Big Four Agenda and other regional and international development frameworks to which Kenya is a signatory.

Mary talks of her journey, with an unparalleled passion, 'I started my professional life in the Banking Sector in 1986 after completing my Bachelor's Degree at University of Nairobi (UoN), School of Business. However, I soon realized banking was not for me, I felt underutilized and 8 months into the banking job I quit to pursue a Master's degree in Business Administration (MBA).

After graduating, I joined the UoN School of Business (SoB) as a Lecturer in 1991. The teaching job is one of the most gratifying jobs in the world. The wonder of imparting knowledge and transforming lives is truly amazing. Besides, the constant interaction with young minds does not only keep you agile, it teaches you to give people latitude to express themselves in their different ways for indeed human beings are different. It also teaches you to be sensitive and alert to the varied paces of learning in individual students, because, it's your responsibility as the teacher not to leave anyone behind. The highlights of my career as a Lecturer are the many times, I encountered students who were willing to be "taught".

Needless to say, teaching at the University was extremely satisfying for me, I enjoyed it, I thrived in it. It is an experience that is priceless! It is while here that I perfected my consultancy and human relations skills. The long hours of study as you prepare the lecture notes leaves one saturated with so much knowledge that the lecture room alone is not an adequate outlet or avenue for knowledge dissemination. I craved a bigger stage. So, teaching outside of the University, public speaking, volunteering and writing articles became part of my life.

In 1994, I registered my consultancy firm and went on to become a renowned researcher, trainer and consultant in marketing, branding and corporate strategies. Among the companies I worked for were Caltex Oil, Uchumi Supermarket, ADB, Britam, PostBank, and National Council of Women of Kenya.

While at the School of Business, I was also Faculty



Advisor for the Banking Students Association, the Marketing Students Association and the Students in Free Enterprise (SIFE). The latter is an International Students Body supported by the Walmart Company, USA. As a Faculty advisor I travelled to USA and France with my students for the SIFE global forums on numerous occasions. To say I was passionate about my job at the University is an understatement.

In 2006, I joined the then Public Sector Reforms Secretariat as a Technical Advisor. This was at the time when the country was embracing Results Based Management in the Public Service. It was most gratifying to be part of the team that implemented transformative management approaches among them Performance Contracting, RRI and Strategic Planning in Government. It is my involvement at the Secretariat that led me to my next major assignment – "Branding Kenya".

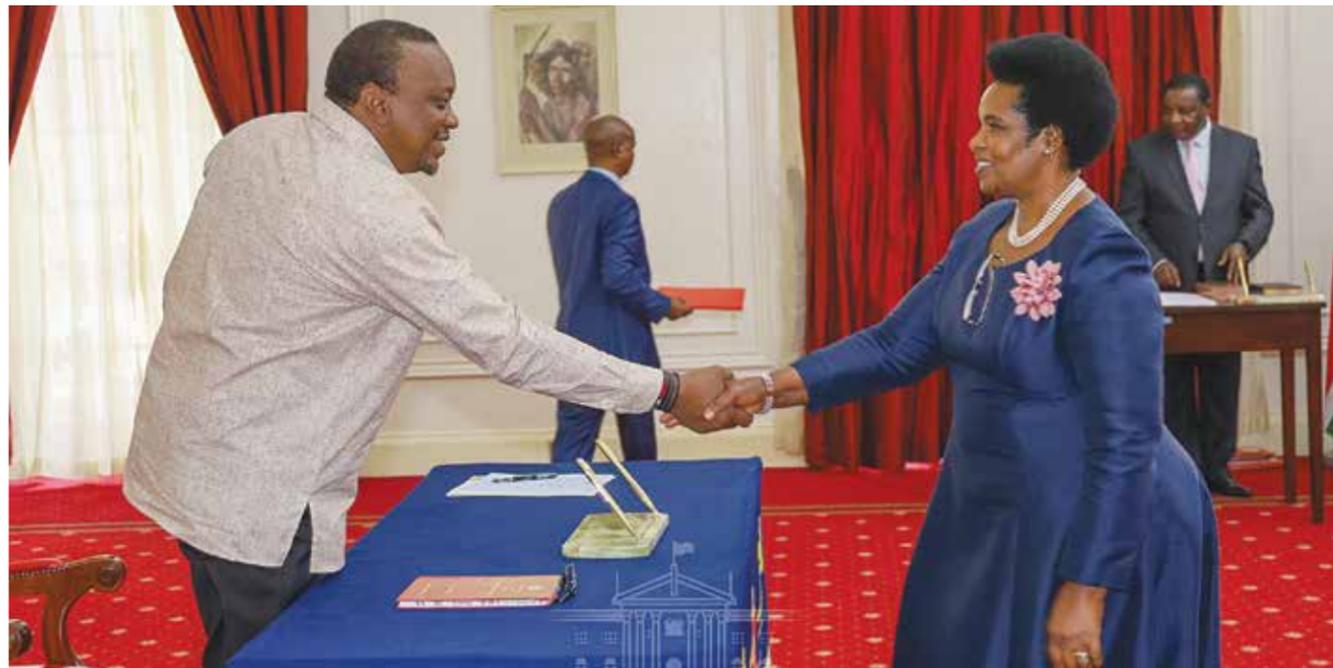


**In February, 2020, HE the President appointed me into my current position as Principal Secretary for State Department of Public Service. This is another extremely gratifying job. For me, any job aimed at serving the citizen is a blessing."**

In 2009, I became the founding CEO of the Brand Kenya Board. The Board was set up to develop and implement programmes aimed at enhancing Kenya's visibility and influence in the Continental and International Stage by managing and improving Kenya's image and identity. Brand Kenya remains a great success and we managed to develop a National Brand Master Plan with propositions for all the facets of Kenya's image and identity. These include:

- The Citizens
- The towns, cities and counties proposition





>>

- Export proposition
- Tourism proposition
- Diaspora proposition
- Trade and Investment proposition and
- The regional cooperation propositions

Under these propositions, the Brand Kenya implemented several high impact initiatives aimed at enhancing the inward flow of trade, tourism, multi-national corporate (MNCs) headquarters that we see today, foreign direct investments (FDI), global conferences and increased diaspora transfers in foreign exchange.

Some of the most successful marketing projects that I spearheaded were: -

- The first ever Investment Conference in the United States and several others in Germany, Netherlands, Italy, England, Scotland and Belgium, Uganda, Burundi and South Africa.
- The Kenya House Project during the London 2012 Olympics.
- Several National Campaigns to entrench pride and patriotism in the Citizens, the most notable being the Mimi Ni Kenya and Kenya ni Mimi

Campaign and the youth focused campaign. “Zinduka run in partnership with Citizen T.V.

In February, 2020, HE the President appointed me into my current position as Principal Secretary for State Department of Public Service. This is another extremely gratifying job. For me, any job aimed at serving the citizen is a blessing. As Principal Secretary for Public Service, I also oversee the operations of the Huduma Kenya Programme, the National Youth Service and the Public Service Performance Management and Monitoring Unit’.

**In 2009, I became the founding CEO of the Brand Kenya Board. The Board was set up to develop and implement programmes aimed at enhancing Kenya’s visibility and influence in the Continental and International Stage by managing and improving Kenya’s image and identity.**

says Mary.

In her role as PS, Mary’s specific responsibilities include rendering informed and impartial advice to the CS consistent with the functions and responsibilities of the CS. As an Accounting Officer, Mary ensures that the resources of the state department are utilized in a way that is lawful and authorized, effective, efficient, economical and transparent.

Mary adds, ‘Looking into the future, my role is to lead thought processes in the refocusing of the Public Service for continued performance with the current challenges of COVID-19 Pandemic, rapid changes in technology and the increasing numbers of youthful workers entering the Service. I wish to see a Public Service that is fit for purpose -well prepared to serve the needs of an increasing youthful nation and with the agility to respond to the highly dynamic globalized world.

In this regard, the Public Service Department is focusing on the digitization and automation of services, succession management, modernization of the Government Human

Resource Information System and expansion of the Huduma Kenya Programme.

Mary postulates, ‘In terms of the “Public Servant” entrenching “comprehensive” professionalism is something that keeps me awake at night. By this I mean that Public Servants must have an understanding that how they act outside of the office is as important as how they act in the office. Public Servants serve a critical mass referred to in the Constitution as “we the people”. We cannot be Citizen Centric Service if we do not have clarity on “who the people are”, their aspirations, fears, joys and their living conditions”. This is in recognition of the centrality of public service in the political, economic and social economic development of the Nation. Without a stable, non-partisan Public Service, development is not possible. So, entrenching the principles and values of Public Service and observing the Constitutional provisions in Chapter 6 and Chapter 13 remains an integral part of my work day. I hope to entrench Public Service that every Kenyan can be proud of’.

Mary lists key lessons that she has learnt over the years that have helped in her growth in private and professional life as:

- Academic qualifications are simply that and they are possessed by many people and therefore they are not a differentiator. To succeed, one must cultivate other skills and competencies that will enable them navigate real life human interactions.
- Humility, hard work, sensitivity to others and a positive attitude have never killed anyone. Indeed, her guiding mantra is to “Always walk on the sunny side of the street expecting and anticipating both successes and failure, facing them with hope and gratitude because in either of them lies great lessons in life”.
- People are the greatest resource at our disposal, however getting the

best out of them is an art that leaders must learn and cultivate – rules, policies and regulations are not adequate tools to help people experience their full potential. People working in a team need to be appreciated, encouraged, supported, counseled and defended. However, this does not mean complicity or tolerance of poor performance or indiscipline. It means finding a balance between reward and punishment and remaining firm, fair and objective.

➤ Anything that you cannot find within yourself, you must be prepared to live without. Without

peace within yourself, you cannot create a peaceful environment for others. Without hard work, you cannot demand hard work from others, without focus you cannot demand the same from others and so goes for other values in life.

As a leader you set the pace, tone, style and vision for your team.

Some special assignments Mary has undertaken include chairing the Selection Panel that recruited the Controller of Budget (2019) and the Chairperson of the Salaries and Remuneration Commission (2018). In 2015, during the US President



**Academic qualifications are simply that and they are possessed by many people and therefore they are not a differentiator. To succeed, one must cultivate other skills and competencies that will enable them navigate real life human interactions**

Barack Obama visit to Kenya, she chaired the Communication and Branding Sub Committee.

The Sacred Heart Girls High, Kyeni and Nyandarua High Schools alumnae holds a BCom and an MBA degree from the UoN. She is a Marketing Society of Kenya (MSK) Warrior and a Fellow of the Kenya Institute of Management. In 2010, she was conferred with the honour of the Moran of The Order of The Burning Spear (MBS) by the President of Kenya, for distinguished service to her country and building the image of Kenya.

Mary Kimonye is a two-time winner of the Trainer of the Year Award, whose hobbies include gardening and exotic cooking. ■



## At what age are people usually happiest? New research offers surprising clues

Trying to climb a ladder in a chosen career while also being increasingly expected to care for kids, tend to the needs of partners and perhaps care for aging parents can create a lot of stress and work.

CLARE MEHTA

Associate Professor of Psychology, Emmanuel College

If you could be one age for the rest of your life, what would it be?

Would you choose to be nine years old, absolved of life's most tedious responsibilities, and instead able to spend your days playing with friends and practicing your times tables?

Or would you choose your early 20s, when time feels endless and the world is your oyster – with friends, travel, pubs and clubs beckoning?

Western culture idealizes youth, so it may come as a surprise to learn that in a recent poll asking this question, the most popular answer wasn't 9 or 23, but 36.

Our mission is to share knowledge and inform decisions. Yet as a developmental psychologist, I thought that response made a lot of sense.

For the last four years, I've been studying

people's experiences of their 30s and early 40s, and my research has led me to believe that this stage of life – while full of challenges – is much more rewarding than most might think.

### The career and care crunch

When I was a researcher in my late 30s, I wanted to read more about the age period I was in. That was when I realized that no one was doing research on people in their 30s and early 40s, which puzzled me. So much often happens during this time: Buying homes, getting married or getting divorced; building careers, changing careers, having children or choosing not to have children.

To study something, it helps to name it. So, my colleagues and I named the period from ages 30 to 45 “established adulthood,” and then set out to try to understand it better. While we are still collecting

data, we have currently interviewed over 100 people in this age cohort, and have collected survey data from more than 600 additional people.

We went into this large-scale project expecting to find that established adults were happy but struggling. We thought there would be rewards during this period of life – perhaps being settled in career, family and friendships, or peaking physically and cognitively – but also some significant challenges.

The main challenge we anticipated

was what we called “the career and care crunch.”

This refers to the collision of workplace demands and demands of caring for others that takes place in your 30s and early 40s. Trying to climb a ladder in a chosen career while also being increasingly expected to care for kids, tend to the needs of partners and perhaps care for aging parents can create a lot of stress and work.

Yet when we started to look at our data, what we found surprised us.

Yes, people were feeling overwhelmed and talked about having too much to do in too little time. But they also talked about feeling profoundly satisfied. All of these things that were bringing them stress were also bringing them joy.

For example, Yuying, 44, said “even though there are complicated points of this time period, I feel very solidly happy in this space right now.” Nina, 39, simply described herself as being “wildly happy.” (The names used in this piece are pseudonyms, as required by research protocol.)

When we took an even closer look at our data, it started to become clear why people might wish to remain age 36 over any other age. People talked about >>

Most established adults we interviewed seemed to recognize that they were happier in their 30s than they were in their 20s, and this impacted how they thought about some of the signs of physical aging that they were starting to encounter

>> being in the prime of their lives and feeling at their peak. After years of working to develop careers and relationships, people reported feeling as though they had finally arrived.

Mark, 36, shared that, at least for him, “things feel more in place.” “I’ve put together a machine that’s finally got all the parts it needs,” he said.

### A sigh of relief after the tumultuous 20s

As well as feeling as though they had accumulated the careers, relationships and general life skills they had been working toward since their 20s, people also said they had greater self-confidence and understood themselves better.

Jodie, 36, appreciated the wisdom she had gained as she reflected on life beyond her 20s: “Now you’ve got a solid decade of life experience. And what you discover about yourself in your 20s isn’t necessarily that what you wanted was wrong. It’s just you have the opportunity to figure out what you don’t want and what’s not going to work for you.

So, you go into your 30s, and you don’t waste a bunch of time going on half dozen dates with somebody that’s probably not really going to work out, because you’ve dated before and you have that confidence and that self-assuredness to be like, ‘hey, thanks but no thanks.’ Your friend circle becomes a lot closer because you weed out the people that you just don’t need in your life that bring drama.”

Most established adults we interviewed seemed to recognize that they were happier in their 30s than they were in their 20s, and this impacted how they thought about some of the signs of physical aging that they were starting to encounter. For example, Lisa, 37, said, “If I could go back physically but I had to also go back emotionally and mentally, no way. I would take flabby skin lines every day.”



### Not ideal for everyone

Our research should be viewed with some caveats. The interviews were primarily conducted with middle-class North Americans, and many of the participants are white. For those who are working class, or for those who have had to reckon with decades of systemic racism, established adulthood may not be so rosy.

It is also worth noting that the career and care crunch has been exacerbated, especially for women, by the Covid-19 pandemic. For this reason, the pandemic may be leading to a decrease in life satisfaction, especially for established adults who are parents trying to navigate full-time careers and full-time child care.

At the same time, that people think of their 30s – and not their 20s or their teens – as the sweet spot in their lives to which they’d like to return suggests that this is a period



People think of their 30s – and not their 20s or their teens – as the sweet spot in their lives to which they’d like to return suggests that this is a period of life that we should pay more attention to.

of life that we should pay more attention to.

And this is slowly happening. Along with my own work is an excellent book recently written by Kayleen Shaefer, “But You’re Still So Young,” that explores people navigating their 30s. In her book she tells stories of changing career paths, navigating relationships and dealing with fertility.

My colleagues and I hope that our work and Shaefer’s book are just the beginning. Having a better understanding of the challenges and rewards of established adulthood will give society more tools to support people during that period, ensuring that this golden age provides not only memories that we will fondly look back upon, but also a solid foundation for the rest of our lives.

‘Established adulthood’ is an emerging area of study. ■



## Occidental Insurance Company Limited

### ABOUT US

Occidental Insurance Company Limited was incorporated in 1984 and has been transacting insurance business since 1987.

The company has grown its Gross Written Premium from 11 Million in 1987 to over 2.8 Billion as at December 2020 and its asset base to over 4 Billion.

At OIC we offer General Insurance in areas such as: Fire, Marine, Liability, Motor, Machinery, and Theft amongst others.

Notably, we offer travel insurance which covers Baggage Loss, Personal Accidents, Personal Liabilities, Flight delays or cancellation, Medical assistance, Trip curtailment, Emergency assistance and Covid-19.

### WHAT GUIDES US

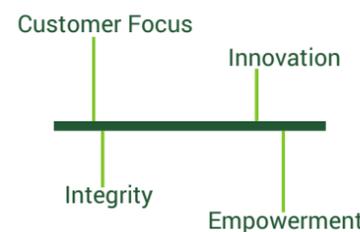
#### Vision

To be the most reliable protector of wealth and health in the East African Region.

#### Mission

To bring peace of mind to our clients by providing the best insurance solutions.

### Our Core Values



### PRODUCTS WE OFFER

1. Motor Private Policy
2. Motor Commercial Policy
3. Fire and Related Perils Policy
4. Domestic Package Policy
5. Personal Accident Policy
6. Work Injury Benefits Act (WIBA)
7. Marine Insurance Policy
8. Burglary Insurance Policy
9. Engineering Insurance Policies
10. Travel Insurance Policy



Travel Insurance Including Covid-19'



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# Yes, more and more young adults are living with their parents – but is that necessarily bad?

In most of the world today, it is still typical for emerging adults to stay home until at least their late 20s. In countries where collectivism is more highly valued than individualism – in places as diverse as Italy, Japan and Mexico – parents mostly prefer to have their emerging adults stay home until marriage.

**JEFFREY ARNETT**

Senior Research Scholar, Department of Psychology, Clark University

**W**hen the Pew Research Centre recently reported that the proportion of 18-to-29-year-old Americans who live with their parents has increased during the Covid-19 pandemic, perhaps you saw some of the breathless headlines hyping how it's higher than at any time since the Great Depression.

From my perspective, the real story here is less

alarming than you might think. And it's actually quite a bit more interesting than the sound bite summary.

For 30 years I've been studying 18-to-29-year-olds, an age group I call "emerging adults" to describe their in-between status as no longer adolescents, but not fully adult.

Even 30 years ago, adulthood – typically marked by a stable job, a long-term partnership and financial independence – was coming later than it had in the past.

Yes, a lot of emerging adults are now living with their parents. But this is part of a larger, longer trend, with the percentage going up only modestly since Covid-19 hit. Furthermore, having grown kids still at home is not likely to do you, or them, any permanent harm. In fact, until very recently, it's been the way adults have typically lived throughout history. Even now, it's a common practice in most of the world.

## Staying home is not new or unusual

Drawing on the federal government's monthly Current Population Survey, the Pew Report showed that 52% of 18-to-29-year-olds are currently living with their parents, up from 47% in February. The increase was mostly among the younger emerging adults – ages 18 to 24 – and was primarily due to their coming home from colleges that shut down or to their having lost their jobs.

Although 52% is the highest percentage in over a century, this number has, in fact, been rising steadily since hitting a low of 29% in 1960. The main reason for the rise is that more and more young people continued their education into their 20s as the economy shifted from manufacturing to information and technology. When they're enrolled in school, most don't make enough money to live independently.

Before 1900 in the United States, it was typical for young people to live at home until they married in their mid-20s, and there was nothing shameful about it. They usually started working by their early teens—it was rare then for kids to get even a high school education—and their families relied upon the extra income. Virginity for young women was highly prized, so it was moving out before marriage that was scandalous, not staying home where they could be shielded from young men.

In most of the world today, it is still typical for emerging adults to stay home until at least their late 20s. In countries where collectivism is more highly valued than individualism – in places as diverse as Italy, Japan and Mexico – parents mostly prefer to have their emerging adults stay home until marriage. In fact, even after marriage it remains a common cultural tradition for a young man to bring his wife into his parents' household rather than move out.

Until the modern pension system arose about a century ago, aging parents were highly vulnerable and needed their adult children and daughters-in-law to care for them in their later years. This tradition persists in many countries, including the two most populous countries in the world, India and China.

In today's individualistic U.S., we mostly expect our kids to hit the road by age 18 or 19 so they can learn to be independent and self-sufficient. If they don't, we may worry that there is something wrong with them.

## You'll miss them when they're gone

Because I've been researching emerging adults for a long time, I've been doing a lot of television, radio and print interviews



together resulted in greater emotional closeness and companionship with their emerging adults. On the other hand, 40% of the parents agreed that having their emerging adults at home meant worrying about them more, and about 25% said it resulted in more conflict and more disruption to their daily lives.

As much as most parents enjoy having their emerging adults around, they tend to be ready to move on to the next stage of their lives when their youngest kid reaches their 20s. They have plans they've been delaying for a long time – to travel, to take up new forms of recreation and perhaps to retire or change jobs.

since the Pew report was released.

Always, the premise seems to be the same: Isn't this awful?

I would readily agree that it's awful to have your education derailed or to lose your job because of the pandemic. But it's not awful to live with your parents during emerging adulthood. Like most of the rest of family life, it's a mixed bag: It's a pain in some ways, and rewarding in others.

In a national survey of 18-to-29-year-olds I directed before the pandemic, 76% of them agreed that they get along better with their parents now than they did in adolescence, but almost the same majority – 74% – agreed, "I would prefer to live independently of my parents, even if it means living on a tight budget."

Parents express similar ambivalence. In a separate national survey I directed, 61% of parents who had an 18-to-29-year-old living at home were "mostly positive" about that living arrangement, and about the same percentage agreed that living

Those who are married often view this new phase as a time to get to know their spouse again – or as a time to admit their marriage has run its course. Those who are divorced or widowed can now have an overnight guest without worrying about scrutiny from their adult child at the breakfast table the next morning.

My wife, Lene, and I have direct experience to draw on with our 20-year-old twins, who came home in March after their colleges closed, an experience shared with millions of students nationwide. I'll admit we were enjoying our time as a couple before they moved back in, but nevertheless it was a delight having them unexpectedly return, as they are full of love and add so much liveliness to the dinner table.

Now the fall semester has started and our daughter, Paris, is still home taking her courses via Zoom, whereas our son, Miles, has returned to college. We're savouring these months with Paris. She has a great sense of humour and makes an excellent Korean tofu rice bowl. And we all know it won't last.

That's something worth remembering for all of us during these strange times, especially for parents and emerging adults who find themselves sharing living quarters again. It won't last.

You could see this unexpected change as awful, as a royal pain and daily stress. Or you could see it as one more chance to get to know each other as adults, before the emerging adult sails once again over the horizon, this time never to return. ■

**Before 1900 in the United States, it was typical for young people to live at home until they married in their mid-20s, and there was nothing shameful about it**



# Here's how to help your kids break out of their pandemic bubble and transition back to being with others

Since March 2020, there's been a significant increase in reported youth anxiety, particularly in relation to fears of the coronavirus, along with greater frustration, boredom, insomnia and inattention.

## DOMINIQUE A. PHILLIPS

Ph.D. Student in Clinical Psychology, University of Miami

## JILL EHRENREICH-MAY

Professor of Psychology and Director of the Child and Adolescent Mood and Anxiety Treatment Program, University of Miami

Pilar's parents took all the recommended precautions to shield her from the dangers of Covid-19. They stayed at home, away from family, friends and group activities. Pilar had remained in virtual schooling throughout the pandemic as a first and then second grader.

As things began to open up again and her grandmother received the Covid-19 vaccine, Pilar's parents began to hear a new signature phrase from her: "I don't want to go." Not to her gymnastics class, not to the grocery store, not even to the outdoor patio of her favourite restaurant.

After all the events of the past year, 7-year-old Pilar was apprehensive and worried about reengaging with the world outside her close-knit family. With the return to in-person school looming, Pilar's parents were at a loss.

As researchers and clinicians who work directly with children and families experiencing anxiety, we have heard many versions of this story as the U.S. enters a new stage of the coronavirus pandemic. For

some children, avoiding others has become understandably normal and the path back to pre-pandemic interaction may feel like a challenge to navigate.

### Feeling stressed is normal these days

The pandemic led to abrupt and extended changes to families' routines, including more isolation and removal from in-person schooling, that are associated with worsening mental health in young people.

Since March 2020, there's been a significant increase in reported youth anxiety, particularly in relation to fears of the coronavirus, along with greater frustration, boredom, insomnia and inattention. Results of a survey from summer 2020 found that over 45% of adolescents report-

As children and adolescents begin to leave isolation and return to public spaces, they might worry more about becoming sick. Of course, it's entirely reasonable to have concerns about health and safety in the midst of an ongoing pandemic.

ed symptoms of depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress. Parents are also struggling emotionally. Adult's report increased symptoms of depression, especially those experiencing high levels of anxiety related to risk of coronavirus exposure or infection. Parents are at even greater risk for psychiatric illness, with many reporting less personal support since the arrival of Covid-19. Parents must juggle the demands of work, home management, virtual schooling and child behaviour during this time of prolonged isolation. The majority of people are able to adapt to new and stressful situations, but some experience severe and extended psychological distress.

So, what can parents do to care for both themselves and their children as we gradually transition back to interacting in public?

### Worried about catching Covid-19 out there

As children and adolescents begin to leave isolation and return to public spaces, they might worry more about becoming sick. Of course, it's entirely reasonable to have concerns about health and safety in the midst of an ongoing pandemic. Parents can listen to children's worries and express understanding about them in a brief and age-appropriate way.

But parents should also pay attention to how intense these worries seem to be. Is your child getting caught up in excessive hand-washing and cleaning? Adamant about avoiding even public spaces that you deem safe? With kids who are struggling, parents can discuss the differences between appropriate and excessive safety precautions.

Remind your child that while it's important to be safe, it is also important to adapt your safety strategies to new information and situations. Drawing distinctions between what you and your children can and cannot control when it comes to getting sick, limiting excessive reassurance about safety and having a

plan to manage challenging situations as they occur can help your child feel ready to meet the world.

### Not ready to socially reengage

Throughout the pandemic, some children have continued to attend school in person, while others have conducted most of their learning online. During the transition back into in-person environments, different people will adjust to engaging with others at different speeds.

For kids expressing worry about resuming face-to-face social interactions, parents can help ease the process by expressing empathy simply and clearly. This hasn't been an easy time for anyone.

Assist your child in taking smaller, more manageable steps toward regular interactions. For example, your child may not feel ready to spend time with friends indoors, but they may feel comfortable meeting one pal at an outdoor park. This first step can get them started down a path to participating in additional activities with more friends or in more settings, where safe and appropriate. Setting incremental goals can help children feel more in control about facing uncomfortable situations where their initial response may be to avoid.

While it may feel easier in the moment to accommodate your child's desire to avoid social situations that feel more awkward or overwhelming than before, it is important not to reinforce such behaviour. Prolonged avoidance can lead to even more anxiety and less confidence in socializing.

For kids expressing worry about resuming face-to-face social interactions, parents can help ease the process by expressing empathy simply and clearly. This hasn't been an easy time for anyone.

Instead, acknowledge that engaging with others can feel hard when you're out of practice. Help your child think about ways they've successfully coped with similar worries in the past. For example, you might ask how they handled adjusting to kindergarten when it felt new and different for them. What did they do then that felt particularly helpful for coping?

If they're assuming the worst about upcoming contact with others, encourage flexibility and help them develop more realistic expectations. In so many cases, the anxious anticipation is much worse than the reality of a dreaded social interaction.

### Resistant to a busier, more active schedule

For many families, the rise of the Covid-19 pandemic cleared calendars that were usually packed with obligations. Some kids might have welcomed a slower pace or gotten cozy with the more low-key bubble lifestyle. Now the shift back to a more active schedule might feel overwhelming.

If your child is having trouble handling the loss of downtime, work with them to strike their own version of "work-life balance." Help your child create new routines that incorporate regular meals, good sleep hygiene, necessary breaks and organization around completing schoolwork. These steps can establish more structure where it may be lacking and help ease the burden.

Remember to make new or renewed activities as fun as possible to promote buy-in from family members. While things will most certainly get busier, maintaining positive one-on-one or family time with your child will help them feel supported as they move into this next stage.

The good news is that many children like Pilar are highly resilient and recover well from difficult circumstances. The Covid-19 pandemic is something kids have been coping with, in some cases, for much of their young lives. It may take time and patience, but with positive support, even more anxious kids like Pilar can ease their way back to a comfortable, confident "new normal." ■

# How can all schools safely reopen?

Infection with the Covid-19 virus has been less common in school-age children, especially those in elementary school, than among other age groups.



**BRANDON GUTHRIE**

Assistant Professor of Global Health and Epidemiology, University of Washington

The question of when and how to open schools for full in-person learning in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic is one of the most consequential the U.S. currently faces. A wealth of evidence suggests that schools can provide in-person instruction with a very low level of risk when safety protocols are successfully implemented.

So, what do school districts, teachers, families and students need to know? As an infectious disease epidemiologist with more

than 15 years of research experience – and as co-editor of the Covid-19 Literature Situation Report, which produces a daily summary of the most relevant newly published and pre-print literature related to Covid-19 – I offer answers to some of the most urgent questions about how schools can safely resume in-person instruction. Some of this evidence is gleaned from pre-print studies that may change after they are peer-reviewed.

**Will school make children more likely to transmit Covid-19?**

Infection with the Covid-19 virus has been less common in school-age children, espe-

cially those in elementary school, than among other age groups. Evidence from Florida, Utah, Missouri and elsewhere indicates that less than 1% of school-age children have had Covid-19, despite most being in school in person. Most cases have not been linked to school exposures.

While school outbreaks have occurred, most have been small in scale. Transmission from an infected student to others in the household or community has been rare.

While not definitively proved by scientific studies, indications are that elementary school-age children are less likely than older children and adults to transmit the Covid-19 virus to others.

**What about teacher and staff vaccinations?**

Spread of Covid-19 through in-person K-12 schooling has been limited, even without vaccinations. Teachers are now eligible to be vaccinated in all states in the U.S., which means that the risk to teachers and staff who are vaccinated, as well as to students and others who may not be willing or able to be vaccinated, is greatly reduced.

No studies give us a magic number for the proportion of teachers and staff who need to be vaccinated before in-person learning can be implemented. In fact, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention advises that in-person learning can start

safely as long as other mitigation protocols like mask-wearing and adequate ventilation are in place. Vaccines offer an added level of protection.

The vaccines currently approved for use in the U.S. under emergency use authorization are all highly effective at preventing mild, moderate and severe Covid-19 disease, and they also prevent infections.

This means that these vaccines both protect the vaccinated person and reduce the risk of transmission from a vaccinated to an unvaccinated person. This is critical, because at this time there are no vaccines approved for use in those under the age of 16 in the U.S.

Pfizer and Moderna have trials underway in adolescents and hope to have results by late spring or early summer. In the meantime, to protect students from infection, it will help to vaccinate as many adults as possible in schools.

Transmission is far more common from teacher to student and teacher to teacher than from student to teacher. So far, research that has not yet been peer-reviewed shows that the vaccines approved for use in the U.S. have similar efficacy against the newly emerging variants of concern, especially in terms of preventing severe disease.

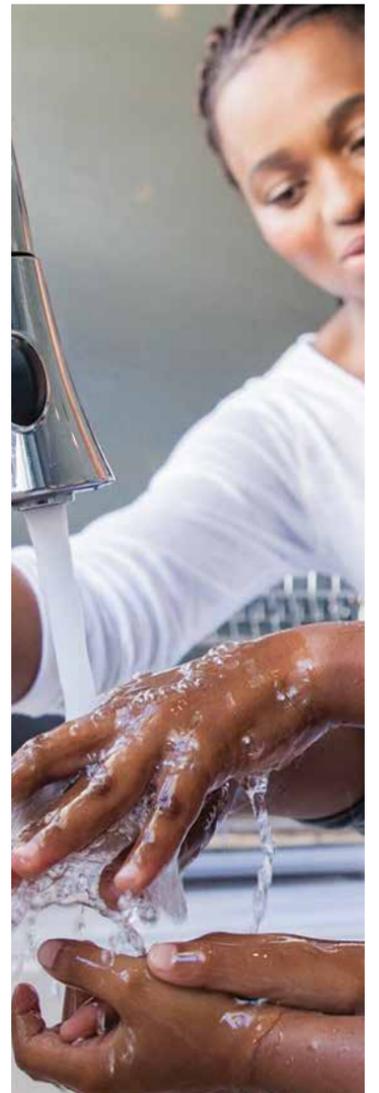
**What is the right amount of physical distancing?**

So long as people are wearing masks, there is no evidence that 6-foot physical distancing between students is more effective than 3-foot distancing. This led the CDC to shift its guidance to recommend a physical distancing of only 3 feet in classrooms. Three-foot distancing allows for much more flexibility in terms of classroom size and layout. Face masks are highly effective in reducing infection and transmission risk and are therefore a critical mitigation measure.

In addition, early research suggests that keeping students in groups, or cohorts, and limiting contact among cohorts may reduce the potential for widespread transmission if a case occurs in a school. Cohorting can also minimize the number of students who would need to be quarantined.

**On the bus or other transportation**

Just as in the classroom, masks work when transporting students to and from school. Double-masking is probably best, especially in indoor spaces, including cars and buses. Ventilation >>



Pfizer and Moderna have trials underway in adolescents and hope to have results by late spring or early summer. In the meantime, to protect students from infection, it will help to vaccinate as many adults as possible in schools

>> with outside air – either by opening windows or avoiding ventilation that recirculates air – may help to reduce the risk of transmission in buses. Students should space out as much as possible, given the elevated risk of transmission seen among passengers sitting close to an infected individual on airplanes, although universal mask usage is likely to reduce the importance of physical spacing.

While droplet and airborne transmission of the Covid-19 virus appear to be the dominant modes of transmission, hand-washing and using hand sanitizers before entering buses and upon exit may help reduce the risk of transmission through contact with contaminated surfaces.

**The gym, recess and after-school sports**

Growing evidence shows that kids can play sports and have recess if they are outdoors and players have no or low contact. Based on studies, including some that have not yet been peer-reviewed, activities such as soccer, tennis and cross-country are fine.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that athletes participating in indoor sports wear masks, except those participating in swimming and diving, cheerleading, gymnastics and wrestling, to prevent choking or suffocation. Some indoor sports, particularly wrestling and hockey, have been associated with large outbreaks. Also, outbreaks of Covid-19 have been associated with football teams.

An important finding from a number of investigations is that many of the cases of transmission, including on football teams, appear to be linked to activities not directly related to the sport itself, such as meetings in enclosed spaces without masks, eating together and parties and social events.



**Are masks still required?**

Masks are likely to be a critical part of protocols to prevent Covid-19 in schools, at least until vaccines are universally available, including for children. Even then, the potential emergence of new variants that are resistant to existing vaccines may make mask usage a necessity for some time. Schools that have provided in-person instruction during the Covid-19 pandemic, including during periods of high community transmission, have experienced few widespread outbreaks directly related to school transmission when masks are used.

This has been true in Florida, Massachusetts, Salt Lake City, England and elsewhere.

In contrast, not wearing masks was a problem in schools in Sweden. In this Scandinavian country, younger secondary-school students returned to full-time, in-person learning without masks and with few other mitigation measures. Older secondary-school students continued with remote learning. Students and staff who went to school in person and without masks or other safety measures had a somewhat higher likelihood of having Covid-19 compared with those learning remotely, although the absolute risk was still quite low.

**How critical is soap or hand sanitizer?**

While the coronavirus that causes Covid-19 has been detected on surfaces, touching those surfaces doesn't appear to be the dominant route of transmission. Even so, hand-washing and using hand sanitizers are still good ideas. Face masks and physical distancing are more important, though. ■

Growing evidence shows that kids can play sports and have recess if they are outdoors and players have no or low contact. Based on studies, including some that have not yet been peer-reviewed, activities such as soccer, tennis and cross-country are fine



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## Kenya has its **first female** chief justice: Why this matter

Justice Martha Koome's nomination is a historic moment for Kenyan women, who have been missing from higher ranking courts until recent years. Women in the judiciary were initially concentrated in magistrates' courts.

MARTHA GAYOYE

Teaching Fellow, University of Warwick

If parliament formally approves the nomination of Justice Martha Koome as the next Chief Justice of Kenya and president of the Supreme Court, as is widely expected, she will become the first woman to occupy the seat in Kenya's history. Justice Martha Koome topped nine other candidates – including two other

women – for the job during interviews carried out by the Judicial Service Commission between 10 April and 23 April 2021.

Justice Martha Koome will become the third Chief Justice under the 2010 constitution. She succeeds Chief Justice Maraga who retired on 12 January 2021 upon reaching the age of 70. Chief Justice Maraga will be remembered for his role in the Supreme Court bench that overturned President Uhuru Kenyatta's election in 2017 over irregularities.

Justice Martha Koome's nomination

is a historic moment for Kenyan women, who have been missing from higher ranking courts until recent years. Women in the judiciary were initially concentrated in magistrates' courts. This excluded them from high-ranking cases that shaped the legal principles to be followed, often for years to come.

The first woman judge joined the High Court only in 1993. It was not until 2003 that the first woman judge joined the Court of Appeal, then the highest court in the land.

Since then, there has been progress in the number of women joining the judiciary and rising through the ranks, particularly after the promulgation of Kenya's new constitution in 2010. This was largely due to the application of the two-thirds gender principle found in the new constitution. There have been divergent views on whether this threshold applies to each court, or as the Judicial Service Commission insists—the judiciary as a whole.

While there was no female appeal court judge in 2010, they constituted seven of the 22 Court of Appeal judges by 2017 (32%). The proportion grew from 40% to 42% in the High Court and from 32% to 40% in all superior courts during the same period. Moreover, the proportion of women magistrates jumped from 37% to a whopping 78%.

The Supreme Court has only had two women justices out of seven since its establishment in 2011. This still falls short of the one-third minimum threshold required under Kenya's constitution for all public institutions. This is about to change with the ascendance of a woman judge to the top of the tier, increasing the number to three.

### Why women judges matter

There is a proliferation of studies that show that having women judges really matters. These studies are framed on two justifications: first on grounds of legitimacy. On this count, judiciaries must democratically represent and mirror the population characteristics in terms of gender, race, class, among others.

The second justification is the difference that women judges will make for gender justice. Some researchers posit that they bring in an essentially female perspective to judging and law that is more “motherly”, or “womanly”. Others argue that women judges bring their unique life experiences to judging that will challenge laws that reflect male concerns. Still others believe that women judges will sensitise and educate male judges about gender stereotypes, myths and male bias reflected in their judgments.

My own recent research in the Kenyan context contributes to these existing debates about why women judges matter. I examined their collective efforts such as the Equality of Jurisprudence Programme run by the Kenya Women Judges Association. The association was founded in 1993 by Justices Effie Owuor and Joyce Aluoch, who have been joined by many more judges over the years, including Martha Koome.

My research found that these pioneer



1993

The first woman judge joined the High Court only in 1993. It was not until 2003 that the first woman judge joined the Court of Appeal, then the highest court in the land.

women judges—while they themselves were not in the Court of Appeal—had an indirect impact in those courts. This they achieved by training their male peers in the Court of Appeal and High Court to apply international human rights instruments—such as the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women.

These international human rights instruments were not yet infused into Kenyan laws at the time. Their efforts bore fruit particularly in matrimonial property disputes at a time when the Kenyan Constitution sanctioned discrimination against women.

There was a setback later after an Appeal bench reversed the precedent in 2007, requiring wives to prove direct contribution to matrimonial property. This was before the 2010 Constitution. Since then, the Constitution and the 2013 Matrimonial Property Act both recognise the equality of parties to a marriage, and the value of care, domestic and farm work as non-monetary contribution to marriage.

There is a proliferation of studies that show that having women judges really matters. These studies are framed on two justifications: first on grounds of legitimacy

Koome has been an active and long-standing member of the International Association of Women Judges—Kenya Chapter, which focuses on access to justice for women and children. She was the UN Person of the Year 2020 runner up, recognised for her advocacy work to improve the rights of women and children in the justice system.

Doubtlessly, her ascendance to the role of Chief Justice raises hope and expectations among many for a better world for women and children.

### Looking ahead

Chief Justice Martha Koome will be immediately confronted with a standoff between the judiciary and the executive arms of government that has stalled the appointment of 41 judges of the High Court and Court of Appeal. She also faces a huge backlog of cases built up over years.

She will be the President of a Supreme Court and head of a judiciary that has been perceived as conservative in a few serious matters of constitutional and public importance. These include the implementation of the two thirds gender principle and electoral fairness among others.

Internally, the new chief justice is expected to extend ongoing reforms. Most importantly, she will continue the reforms to rid the judiciary of corruption, inefficiencies leading to case backlogs while embracing ICT in the justice system. All these are intended to enhance access to justice and win the people's trust in the judiciary. ■

# Restricting digital media is a gamble for African leaders

Governments have given varying justifications for these moves. These include: combating hate speech and fake news in Chad and Ethiopia, suppressing violence in Sudan, and preventing exam cheating in Algeria and Sudan.

JEFFREY CONROY-KRUTZ

Associate Professor of Political Science,  
Michigan State University

Covid-19 pushed much of the world into the digital realm for everything from schooling and work to religious worship and dating. At the same time, many governments were turning data connections off. Full or partial shutdowns of the internet and social media are increasingly common parts of the “digital authoritarian” toolkit.

Many leaders seem threatened by the way digital media make it possible to share information and organise. Research shows that 2020 saw 156 full or partial shutdowns of the internet or social media like Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp. South Asia accounts for almost three quarters of these shutdowns, with India leading the way.

Africa was the next most affected region, with 20 shutdowns affecting 12 countries. Disruptions lasted from as short as a day or less, in Burundi, Egypt, and Togo, to nearly 90 days in parts of Ethiopia’s Oromia Region. A recent blockage of social media in Chad lasted for more than a year.

And 2021 has already seen shutdowns in Niger, Senegal and Uganda.

Governments have given varying justifications for these moves. These include: combating hate speech and fake news in Chad and Ethiopia, suppressing violence in Sudan, and preventing exam cheating in Algeria and Sudan. Disruptions in Mali in 2020 coincided with anti-government protests, while shutdowns were timed around elections in Burundi, Guinea, Tanzania, and Togo.

In some cases, official reasoning has shifted over time. When Uganda shut down digital media surrounding its January 2021 elections, foreign affairs minister Sam Kutesa initially said the move was retaliation for Facebook’s and Twitter’s actions against government accounts.

Investigations had alleged the government was behind “coordinated inauthentic behaviour” using fake accounts to spread disinformation and intimidate the opposition. After the election, however, Kutesa said the move was “a necessary step to stop the vitriolic language and incitement to violence.”

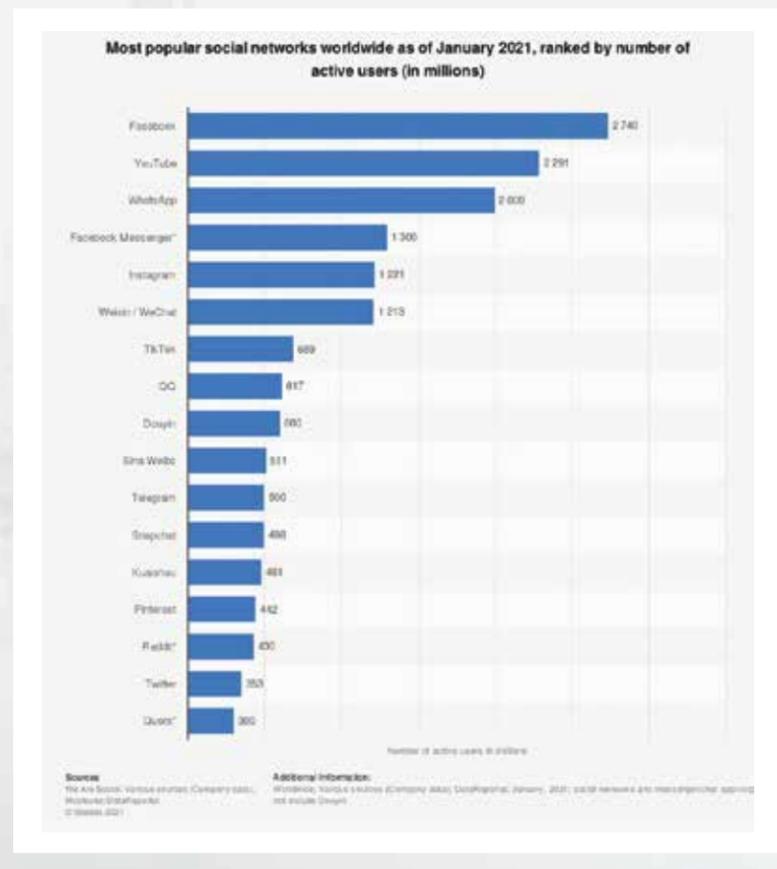
## Views on digital media limits

Online commentary usually harshly criticises these shutdowns. But these posts aren’t necessarily representative of general public opinion in affected countries.

To get a sense of broader opinion on these issues, we analysed data from Afrobarometer. This is an independent African research network that conducted nationally representative surveys in 18 countries in 2019/20. About 27,000 Africans participated in these surveys.

A larger share of respondents support access to digital media. When given a

**Restricting digital media is a gamble for African leaders. On the one hand, many governments are embracing digital media shutdowns, particularly around elections and protests, to limit threats.**



choice between two statements, 48% agreed that “unrestricted access to the internet and social media helps people to be more informed and active citizens, and should be protected”. Only 36% agreed that “information shared on the internet and social media is dividing (our country), so access should be regulated by the government”.

Majorities in 10 countries supported unrestricted access. Support was highest in Cabo Verde (64%), Gabon (63%), Côte d’Ivoire (63%) and Nigeria (61%). Majorities supported regulation in only three countries: Mali (53%), Ethiopia (53%) and Tunisia (59%).

## Guarding freedoms

Unsurprisingly, regular users of digital media were more supportive of freedoms. Of the 37% of respondents who reported using some form of digital media for their news at least a few times a week, 62% favoured unrestricted access. Only 35% favoured regulations.

Over half (54%) of respondents reported never using digital media for news in the last month. Those non-users were more divided, with 37% favouring regulations and 39% favouring unrestricted access. A quarter (24%) of non-users did not share an opinion or could not choose between

the positions. Factors like age, residence and education also made a difference. The groups more likely to use digital media were also more supportive of unrestricted access.

The youngest respondents (18-25) were almost twice as likely to oppose restrictions than the oldest respondents (over 60) were (56% vs 30%). Urban residents favoured unrestricted access more than rural residents (56% vs 43%). And those with post-secondary education were much more favourable towards unrestricted access than those without formal education (60% vs 34%). Men were only

slightly more supportive of unrestricted digital media than women (50% vs. 47%).

Perhaps surprisingly, support for unrestricted digital media does not fall neatly along political lines. Even among those who said they trusted their president “somewhat” or “a lot”, 45% still supported unrestricted digital media, versus 39% who favoured restrictions. Those who said they only trusted their national leader “a little” or “not at all” were even more supportive of open digital media: 53% supported unrestricted access and 34% supported regulations.

## Cost of shutdowns

Restricting digital media is a gamble for African leaders. On the one hand, many governments are embracing digital media shutdowns, particularly around elections and protests, to limit threats. They argue such moves are necessary to halt “the dissemination of messages inciting hate and division”, as a Chadian government spokesperson put it. In some cases, like Ethiopia and Mali, populations seem generally supportive of governments’ restrictions.

But commerce, education and social communication are increasingly online. One analysis found that digital media restrictions cost African economies some \$237 million in 2020. And using Afrobarometer data from 16 countries, we find that the share of Africans who regularly get news from digital media almost doubled, from 22% to 38%, between 2014 and 2019.

If African populations are sceptical now of limits on digital media, that opposition might grow as more enter the digital space for commerce, work, education, entertainment and social communications. Shutdowns will generate not only higher economic costs, but likely greater public outrage as well. ■

**Joseph Koné, a research associate and finance officer at Centre de Recherche et de Formation sur le Développement Intégré (CREFDI), the Afrobarometer National Partner in Ivory Coast, was co-author of the research on which this article is based.**

# As press freedom continues to struggle in Kenya alternatives keep hope alive

Reporters Without Borders reported that 50 journalists from around the world died in the course of duty. Their deaths were linked to investigative stories about corruption, misuse of public funds, organised crime, and the coverage of protests.



## WAMBUI WAMUNYU

Senior Lecturer in Media Studies, Daystar University

As we mark World Press Freedom Day 2021, let us remember that 2020 was terrible for the press in many parts of the world.

Two ranking measures—the World Press Freedom Index 2021 and African Media Barometer publications—indicate that journalists globally continued to face multiple challenges. These included intimidation, physical or online harassment, surveillance, disappearance, threats, arbitrary arrests, assaults, and lack of access to public facilities, authorities or data.

Reporters Without Borders reported that 50 journalists from around the world died in the course of duty. Their deaths were linked to investigative stories about corruption, misuse of public funds, organised crime, and the coverage of protests.

These assaults on press freedom occurred within the Covid-19 pandemic, which compounded existing problems.

Our mission is to share knowledge and inform decisions.

In Kenya, the first Covid-19 case was announced in March 2020. Since then, about 600 journalists have been retrenched. Many have endured pay cuts, and others long delays in salary payment.

A September 2020 report published by Article 19, a human rights organisation that promotes freedom of expression, indicated that at least 48 journalists had been attacked or restrained from doing their work during the pandemic.

The various reports and rankings measure the degree of freedom available to traditional journalists working in established media outlets. They show that mainstream media houses have been hardest hit by these challenges.

This has opened up space for other media workers to report the news and cre-

ate content. There is an emerging group of citizens, activists, experts, and independent journalists who have become an alternative source of credible, useful information.

In these difficult times, this is refreshingly good news.

This year's World Press Freedom Day theme—Information as a Public Good—provided an opportunity to appreciate this wider range of voices.

### Digital technologies

Digital technologies have provided relatively cheap and accessible platforms which citizens and activists have used to share ideas and to present the views and perspectives of marginalised or non-elite communities. These platforms include WhatsApp, YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and blogging websites.

Even though Kenya ranked 102 out of 180 countries on the World Press Freedom Index, there has been an emergence of voices in the digital space who are speaking

truth to power without many of the documented constraints faced by mainstream journalists.

However, audiences take on the burden of assessing the credibility of information that does not necessarily go through traditional verification processes.

Pundits are airing talk shows on YouTube to analyse and dissect the political landscape without limiting themselves to strictly government or official sources. Activists are using social media to fight Kenya's inefficient electricity provider.

Academics are taking advantage of new media platforms to teach, debate and interact with both academic and non-academic audiences.

And activists have created online databases to monitor Kenyan legislators, track official documents and monitor parliamentary proceedings and records.

Satirists, parodists and cartoonists have not been left behind. They are using digital media outlets to share animations and cartoons that keep leaders accountable. They also encourage citizens to participate in issues of governance. And environmental and civil society organisations are using the global reach of websites to promote green energy locally.

Many of these voices do not aspire to be as objective as the traditional press. They often have an agenda. Some of their agendas include fighting impunity or corruption, exposing injustice against the poor and marginalised, promoting deeper citizen engagement in governance, and creating political understanding.

Despite being unapologetically agenda-driven, they are dismantling the notion of the traditional mass media – television, newspapers, and radio – as the primary or only sources of information that is in the public good.

### Unique challenges

The newer voices may not be included in journalism ranking lists but they also face their own particular challenges to their freedoms of speech and expression.

Their voices and views are stifled or limited through legislation, disinformation and censorship campaigns, internet shut-

## 2021 World Press Freedom Index

Selected countries (change in ranking from 2020 shown in brackets)



Source: Reporters Without Borders

downs, new tax regimes, and content and revenue-generation restrictions from social media companies.

Thus, despite the emergence of new voices in the digital space, Kenya is nowhere near an ideal situation when it comes to press freedom.

### Towards more freedom

Generally, the mainstream press should be able to operate independently, sustain itself financially, and share information for the service of society.

Its normative role—widely espoused as being to serve the public good—is often

interfered with by heavy-handed political and economic systems that limit the independence of media houses and individual journalists. That is a disservice to the citizens.

The rankings help to show the range of challenges that deny Kenyans quality and untainted information from the traditional gatherers and sharers of news.

But the alternative voices also give hope that no matter what tactics are used to muzzle, restrict, limit or censor information, trustworthy information that serves the public good can still find its way to those who matter most: the citizens. ■

# We gathered rich **insights** into **child survival** in Kenya by mapping patterns **over 22 years**

Kenya has also made significant strides in promoting child health through legal frameworks. But floods, droughts, epidemics and post-election violence have made child survival more difficult.



## PETER MACHARIA

Newton Int'l fellow at Lancaster University and Visting researcher, KEMRI Wellcome Trust Research Programme

## EMELDA OKIRO

Head of Population Health Unit, KEMRI Wellcome Trust Research Programme

Improvements in child survival globally have been remarkable. Deaths of children under five declined by 59% from 93 deaths per 1,000 live births in 1990 to 38 in 2019.

However, 5.2 million child deaths still occurred in 2019. Over half of these were in sub-Saharan Africa. And all five countries with child mortality rates above 100 deaths per 1,000 live births were found in Africa.

While Kenya had 43 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2019, our previous work showed big differences across the 47 counties since 1965. A range of factors were likely behind this. These included disparity in the coverage of interventions such as the uptake of childhood immunisations, supplements and breastfeeding practices. Other important factors include pregnant women attending antenatal care, having skilled birth attendants and delivering their babies in a health-care facility.

We have conducted two studies that give granular insights into the situation in regions across Kenya. Between them the studies show which regions have insufficient coverage, which have high disease infection rates, and what factors have the greatest impact on child survival.

Our mission is to share knowledge and inform decisions. Our findings show that Kenya needs to focus its child care plans based on localities and populations with the greatest need. Prioritisation is key.

Our research provides a good starting point as an evaluation of what is currently in place – and what the threats to child survival are – at a local level. This is vital because national aggregates mask distinct differences across the country.

### Big differences across regions

In our first study, we set out to explore disparities and inequities by estimating the coverage and prevalence of 43 determinants. This we did for each of Kenya's 47 counties every year between 1993 and 2014.

In our second study, we evaluated the impact of the estimated determinants on child survival. We did this by using epidemiological impact evaluation approaches.

Our findings showed that in the early 1990s, the coverage of interventions was average. Coverage began to deteriorate through to early 2000. After 2006, there was an improvement in coverage of interventions and reduction in disease infection prevalence. Thirty-eight of the 43 mapped factors recorded an improvement over the two decades.

However, the improvement wasn't uniform. It ranged between 1% and 898% (increase in coverage or decrease in disease prevalence) at the national level. For example, maternal literacy increased by 9.6% while the use of bed nets among children living in malaria endemic areas increased from 6.2% in 2003 to 61.9% in 2014, a percentage increase of 898%.

There were also marked differences across the counties. Considerable differences in the coverage between factors were observed at the county level, ranging from low (less than 35%) for improved sanitation to high (over 65%) for childhood immunisations by 2014.

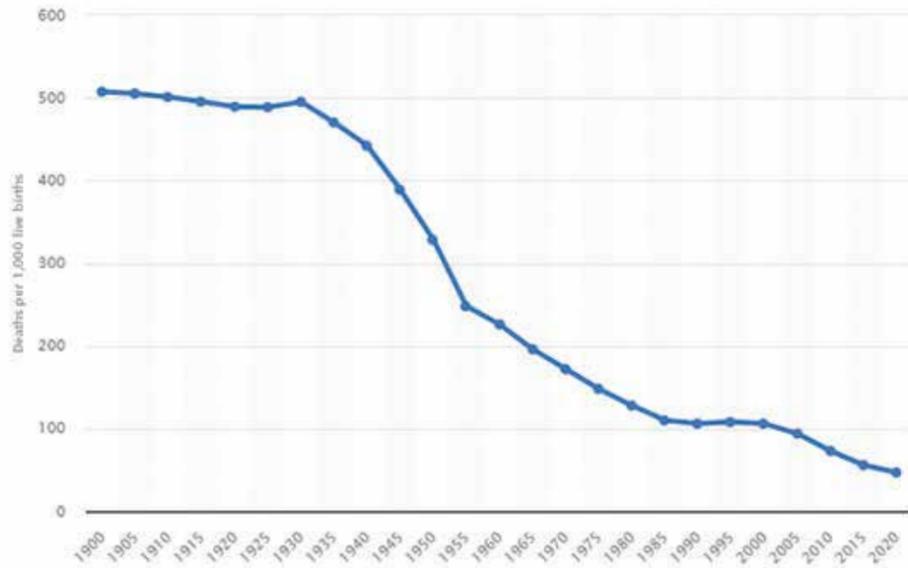
Counties in Northern Kenya consistently showed lower coverage of interventions throughout the period up to 2014. They did, however, have lower malaria and HIV infection prevalence.

Areas around Central Kenya have historically had – and continue to have – higher coverage across all intervention domains.

Most counties in Western and South-East Kenya along the Indian Ocean recorded moderate intervention coverage across all factors. But they bear the greatest burden of HIV and malaria infection prevalence.

We observed correlation between performance and levels of investment in affordable and accessible healthcare services. Some of the interventions have included policies on user fee, expanded immunisation programmes for common childhood illness, schools, community and health facility-based initiatives. Control interventions for diseases such as HIV and malaria, integrated management of childhood illness and the impetus to improve child survival also made a difference.

Kenya has also made significant strides in promoting child health through legal frameworks. But floods, droughts, epidemics and post-election violence have made child survival more difficult. >>



Child mortality rate (under five years old) in Kenya from 1900 to 2020. Source | Statista

**>> Determinants that made a big difference**

Our second study identified ten major determinants associated with changes in child survival in Kenya. They included: deliveries in a health facility, receiving all basic childhood vaccines, households' access to better sanitation, seeking treatment after fever, HIV and malaria infection prevalence, infants' breastfeeding within the first hour of birth, the prevalence of stunting in children, the number of children in a household and maternal autonomy. The autonomy factor was measured by assessing a woman's personal power in the household and her ability to influence and change her environment.

Under-five mortality increased in the 1990s, which resulted in many children not living to see their fifth birthday. This trend was linked to rising HIV infection prevalence and reduced maternal autonomy.

After 2006 the high number of child deaths started to come down. This was associated with a decline in the prevalence of HIV and malaria,



Under-five mortality increased in the 1990s, which resulted in many children not living to see their fifth birthday. This trend was linked to rising HIV infection prevalence and reduced maternal autonomy.

increase in access to better sanitation, fever treatment-seeking rates and maternal autonomy.

Reduced stunting and increased coverage of early breastfeeding and institutional deliveries (overall increased from 41.6% in 1993 to 62.2% in 2014 and averted 31,000 deaths) were associated with a smaller number of deaths averted compared to the other factors.

Again, there were wide variances across regions in Kenya. The highest number of deaths averted was recorded in western and coastal Kenya, while northern Kenya recorded a slightly lower number. Central Kenya had the lowest number of deaths averted.

A unique set of factors contributed to these wide differences.

**What needs to be done**

Our research provides an additional tool for determining what to prioritise, where to target and when to intervene. The Commission on Revenue Allocation, which allocates funds to county government, can use it to inform the allocation of funds.

Divisions within the ministry of health such as the national malaria control programme and international development partners can also use the estimates to evaluate the impact of interventions and funding or justify support for outreach programmes.

The findings also form a baseline for monitoring sustainable development goals, county-specific targets and inputs in epidemiological studies.

The framework can be applied to update estimates and evaluate progress at a more granular level such as the sub-county level as new data sources become available, including data from the 2019 census or the revamped routine health information system.

Decisions based on the findings and recommendations will improve child survival and enhance health equity across Kenya's 47 county governments, getting closer to ensuring no child is left behind. ■



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# Conflating morality and the law do South Africa's governing party no good

Morality shapes people's lives, including their thoughts and actions, on the basis of what society generally accepts as right and wrong. It is used to check people's "self-interested, emotional, or sentimental reactions to serious questions of human conduct".



MASHUPYE HERBERT MASERUMULE

Professor of Public Affairs, Tshwane University of Technology

Since the African National Congress (ANC) came to power in South Africa in 1994, it has been dogged by corruption and abuse of power.

These "sins of incumbency" – the seduction of politicians and public officials by power and their abuse of it for their own ends – became endemic during former president Jacob Zuma's term (May 2009 to February 2018).

The details coming out of the Zondo commission of inquiry into state capture have shown how deeply this has taken root. Can the governing party dig it out?

The ANC passed a resolution on how to deal with dishonesty in its ranks at its 54th national conference in December 2017.

Our mission is to share knowledge and inform decisions. It resolved that any of its cadres "accused of, or reported to be involved in, corrupt practices are to account to the Integrity Committee immediately or face disciplinary processes".

It added that those who fail to give an acceptable explanation or to voluntarily step down while they face disciplinary, investigative or prosecutorial procedures were to be summarily suspended.

The party's integrity commission was

established in 2013 to be the custodian of this moral stance, after a series of scandals that damaged its public image.

## On a path to political morality?

This, followed by the adoption of the anti-corruption resolution and election of Cyril Ramaphosa as president of the ANC, and of the country, created optimism that, finally, the party was set to mend its ways.

That was easier said than done. Three years later, the resolution is embroiled in controversies, pitting the ANC's factions against each other. The biggest test came last November, when the party's secretary general, Ace Magashule, was charged with corruption and appeared in court.

He defied the integrity commission's call on him to step aside, insisting that only the party's branches could make that demand. His loyalists pushed back against the resolution while those aligned to Ramaphosa supported it. The matter became embroiled in legalistic arguments about whether his stepping aside would be just and in keeping with the ANC's consti-

tution, and that of the country, or not.

But this misses the point in that it conflates morality and the law. It will scupper the resolution, robbing the ANC of a chance to clean up its act. If the distinction between morality and legality is blurred, the resolution could be mired in misconceptions.

## Morality versus the law

Morality shapes people's lives, including their thoughts and actions, on the basis of what society generally accepts as right and wrong. It is used to check people's "self-interested, emotional, or sentimental

The adoption of the anti-corruption resolution and election of Cyril Ramaphosa as president of the ANC, and of the country, created optimism that, finally, the party was set to mend its ways.



reactions to serious questions of human conduct". This is what enables people to coexist.

Morality depends on one's conscience to freely comply with societal expectations.

The law, which the legal scholar Arthur Scheller Jr defines as "an ordination of reason for the common good", is a system of rules that prescribe behaviour and is enforceable.

Various formations in society, such as political parties, may have their own laws or rules to regulate the conduct of their members. But such rules should not contradict the supreme law of the land - the constitution - especially in a constitutional democracy founded on the principles of the rule of law.

Morals and laws are not binaries. They complement each other. When the law enhances moral conscience and morality promotes legal consciousness, people can live together harmoniously and ethically.

The confluence of morality and law is what makes for a good society. This is what the ANC fails to grasp. It uses the law to stymie its own resolution, which is basically about the party reclaiming its political morality.

Instead of those who run afoul of the resolution stepping aside, contrasting legal opinions are sought. They don't provide clarity; they cloud a resolution that has all along been clear.

As the American sociologist Robert MacIver once said, 'to turn all moral obligations into legal obligations would be to destroy morality'.

## Innocent till proven guilty

Subjecting the ANC's "step-aside" resolution to legal interpretation ignores the context that gave rise to it, and its aim of restoring morality within the party. That is imperative if the ANC is to regain trust in society and win votes.

Sticking to the legal principle that one is innocent until proven guilty, just to keep those who flout the resolution in office, misses the point.

The guilt or innocence of a person is a function of a juridical process or law. That they should step aside is a moral stance. It is also for this reason that the party established its integrity commission, whose mandate is to protect the image of the organisation and enhance its standing in society by ensuring, among others, that urgent action is taken to deal with public officials, leaders and members of the ANC who face damaging allegations of improper conduct.

The commission cannot pronounce on the guilt or blamelessness of a person, but on political morality, a function of moral conscience and consciousness. Unfortunately, it is becoming difficult for some in the ANC to appreciate this. Indeed, as the American political activist Upton Sinclair once said: 'it is difficult to get a man to understand something when his salary depends upon his not understanding it'.

## Way forward

The conflation of morality with legality has obfuscated a resolution that led many corruption-weary South Africans to believe that the ANC, which fancies itself "the leader of society", was set on a new path of moral political rectitude.

Building organisational integrity requires that party leaders be guided by their moral conscience. These should shape the party's moral disposition in line with its values and principles to achieve its purpose, which has always been about the common good.

Changing the party's rules to make the integrity commission's recommendations binding is not going to make party leaders and members internalise morality. What the ANC needs is genuine commitment to institutionalise ethical leadership among all in its ranks. ■

# Social norms and poor services drive petty corruption in East Africa's health sector



Conventional anti-corruption measures and approaches often seek to scale up penalties and, by so doing, increase deterrence. Some focus on better laws, regulations and education and awareness campaigns about the negative effects of corruption.

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In East Africa, there are concerns over widespread petty corruption in some of the countries' health and medical services. This makes access to them conditional on who you know or who you can pay, to the detriment of everyone else who doesn't have the money or connections.

In Uganda and Tanzania health service providers are ranked as some of the most bribery-prone institutions in the country. By contrast, health and medical services in Rwanda are ranked as the least bribery prone.

We wanted to understand the behavioural drivers, such as the role of social norms and beliefs, in spurring petty corruption. To do this, we investigated the decisions of those seeking medical treatment and of health service providers that fuel petty corruption in Tanzania, Uganda and Rwanda.

We focused on these three East African countries, which share a common border west of Lake Victoria, because we wanted the opportunity to compare attitudes and experiences. All three countries have robust

anti-corruption legislation and institutions in place but all yielded different results.

Our research found evidence that social norms and shared beliefs spur corruption. For example, people are swayed by social pressure to help relatives, share contacts or reciprocate favours received from their networks. Many also believe that corruption is normal.

This was very evident in Uganda and Tanzania, but to a much lesser extent in Rwanda. This highlights our findings on why this behaviour comes about in the first place: people engage in corruption when health services are less available or accessible.

In Rwanda effective government social programmes exist. For example, Ubudehe provides targeted support to the poorest and most vulnerable groups. The programme has reduced the reliance of citizens on informal social networks by ensuring access to public services and social benefits.

We hope that our research provides insights into the importance of incorporating behavioural insights into anti-cor-

ruption policymaking that conventional measures have largely failed to address.

However, unless basic problems of accessibility and quality of public services are addressed, it will be extremely difficult to eradicate informal strategies to obtain the desired healthcare.

**Social norms and networks**

The research was conducted between January 2016 and August 2017 in Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda.

For our research we carried out interviews, focus group discussions and surveys. Our target communities were providers and receivers of healthcare. For those seeking treatment, we targeted women of child bearing age, young men, and elderly and disabled people.

The evidence suggests that social norms and networks play a role in fuelling and reproducing practices of petty corruption. Users of public health facilities in Uganda and Tanzania often turned to their social network, family, friends, friends of friends, when seeking medical services.

When personal connections are absent, offers of unsolicited bribes and gifts are used to create a relationship with the provider. The expectation is that having a "provider friend" helps facilitate access to treatment.

Social norms even dictate how large a bribe should be. In both Uganda and Tanzania, for those that were close-like family members—it would be a small gift or bribe. But for those more socially distant, like friends of friends, they were asked to pay more.

**Pressure from relatives**

The research also illustrated how corruption was perpetuated by relatives working within the health industry. The duty to help and provide for one's relatives was an essential, unquestionable premise of social life in the three countries.

A health sector district official in Tanzania explained that: It's not that we have a lot of money to help five or six relatives, but...whatever you get you share with others.

The imperatives of helping out, and

sharing with, the family results in practices of favouritism as explained by a health provider in Kampala, Uganda, who observed that, 'Your relative must be given priority if there is not an emergency. My mother, father, son or daughter come first'.

In some cases, family pressures pushed public servants to abuse their positions and engage in illegal acts, such as embezzlement of public funds or misuse of public resources. For example, focus group discussions in Tanzania showed that the misuse of public resources was motivated by the need to contribute to family duties such as paying for children's school fees, weddings and funeral costs.



Evidence suggests that social norms and networks play a role in fuelling and reproducing practices of petty corruption. Users of public health facilities in Uganda and Tanzania often turned to their social network, family, friends, friends of friends, when seeking medical services.

Another big driver of corruption in Tanzania and Uganda was the belief that corruption is commonplace, and is expected and accepted. This stereotype is used to justify corrupt behaviours and those of the doctors, nurses and pharmacists.

**Rwanda case**

Our research in Rwanda suggests that accessing health services by relying on networks is much less and limited to those very close to health staff.

This is predominantly associated with the fact that you don't need special connections or money to have access to good quality health services. The East Africa Bribery Index illustrates this point: the least probability for the request or offer for bribery was recorded at Rwanda's medical and health services.

Our research suggests that this is because it's less socially accepted. And it is partially helped by authorities publicly shaming those caught engaging in corruption, preventing it from becoming a norm.

**Traditional measures**

Conventional anti-corruption measures and approaches often seek to scale up penalties and, by so doing, increase deterrence. Some focus on better laws, regulations and education and awareness campaigns about the negative effects of corruption. But these aren't necessarily effective in addressing root issues.

Integrating behavioural insights into anti-corruption programming can provide complementary avenues to strengthen these endeavours. They pay attention to social norms and beliefs that have supported the persistence of corrupt practices to begin with.

We are exploring this in detail by developing an intervention that works with social networks and community opinion leaders. It uses behavioural techniques—such as environmental nudges which would encourage a certain type of behaviour, like anti-corruption posters—to address the social norm of accepted use of bribery in the provision of health services. ■

# South Africa's romcom revolution and how it reimagines Joburg

South Africa-based Multichoice has put up an effective fight for this market. Before the arrival of the Covid-19 pandemic, Multichoice was planning to produce 52 local movies and 29 dramas in 2020.

PIER PAOLO FRASSINELLI

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Netflix went live in South Africa on 6 January 2016. The arrival of the subscription-based content streaming service was a game changer for the country's film and television industry, as it had been for other countries.

At about the same time—in 2015 and 2016—there was another turning point for South Africa's film industry: the arrival of a new, commercially successful genre, the black romantic comedy.

For the first time, the country's black filmmakers were able to make an impact at the box office—and go on to licence their films to streaming platforms.

In South Africa, Netflix signalled the turn to streaming for watching films and television series. Despite a recent slowing of subscriber growth, Netflix has over 200 million paid subscribers worldwide. These numbers—and the way streaming services are reshaping content production, distribution and consumption—represent the most radical change in the film industry in recent years.

On the African continent, this expansion has had to face the challenges of lack of affordability, uneven connectivity and the cost of data. These keep Netflix beyond the reach of the majority of the population. According to data, in 2020 Netflix still had only 1.4 million subscribers across the continent. Still, in a growing number of African



countries, content acquisition and production for online streaming is a fast-growing industry.

And it's not just about Netflix. South Africa-based Multichoice—owner of digital satellite television service DStv and online subscription video on demand service Showmax – has put up an effective fight for this market. Before the arrival of the Covid-19 pandemic, Multichoice was planning to produce 52 local movies and 29 dramas in 2020.

The company claimed that DStv and Showmax doubled South African users between 2018 and 2019 and are now local-ly bigger than Netflix – though it did not

disclose the exact numbers.

The 2015 romcom *Tell Me Sweet Something* was a breakthrough. The African romcom seems a perfect fit for the streaming market. Versions of it are still being produced and made accessible via streaming platforms today. South African romcoms *Mrs Right Guy* (2016), *Catching Feelings* (2017) and *Seriously Single* (2020) are currently available on Netflix. They rub shoulders with a selection of Nollywood takes on the genre, including hits like *The Wedding Party* (2016).

My recent article on this genre explores what some of these popular films reveal about urban middle and upper-class lifestyles and aspirations. It also considers

R13.2 million in a box office previously dominated by Afrikaans films and Leon Schuster's slapstick comedies. In fourth place was Adze Ugah's *Mrs Right Guy*, which took in over R4 million by rehearsing one of the genre's standard plots.

The year before, Akin Omotoso had directed *Tell Me Sweet Something*, a romantic comedy set in Johannesburg's downtown hipster hangout Maboneng. It was one of the few black South African films since 1994 to gross almost R3 million. South African audiences, commentators concluded, had had enough of high-brow, socially engaged films and were turning to genre flicks. In the words of journalist Lindiwe Sithole, "It seems that South Africans are leaning towards the lighter offerings."

To understand their appeal, it is worth asking what these films say about the time and place where they are set.

## The end of the rainbow

South Africa's black romcoms break with the tales of racial reconciliation and the rainbow intimacies of a prior generation of English-language romantic comedies. Think of *White Wedding* (2009), where Elvis and Ayanda's interracial wedding in Gugulethu is joined by right wing Afrikaners ready to embrace racial diversity. Or *I Now Pronounce You Black and White* (2010), where a groom and bride transcend the conflict between their Jewish and Zulu parents—or Fanie Fourie's *Lobola* (2013) where a couple must also overcome their families' cultural differences.

Most black South African romcoms, like *Catching Feelings*, are set in Johannesburg. By contrast, *Tell Me Sweet Something*, *Mrs Right Guy* and *Happiness Is a Four-Letter Word* are conspicuously "black" films. In contrast to the previous generation of English-language romcoms, they all have black directors (a sign that the South African film industry is slowly transforming).

Set in Johannesburg's middle and upper-class cityscapes, they portray mostly young, hip, affluent, good-looking, heterosexual black characters falling in love with each other – with the occasional split and

disappointment to add spice to the quest for happiness, real passion and true love.

## Joburg as glamorous global city

The emergence and mainstreaming of the black South African romcom is also part of a broader trend in the cinema of the global south, where the appropriation of western commercial genres is accompanied by images of the "global city".

*Tell Me Sweet Something*, *Mrs Right Guy* and *Happiness Is a Four-Letter Word* reimagine Johannesburg by aligning it with an imagery of global urbanism that is associated with visual and narrative repertoires of contemporary African cinemas, such as New Nollywood comedies in Nigeria. This challenges discourses and stereotypes of "African backwardness" and is often captured in aerial or high angle shots of skylines made up of tall buildings, or through images of glossy, gentrified and glitzy urban landscapes.

The 2016 romcom *Mrs Right Guy* came fourth at the South African box office. But there is more to this, I argue. By representing a globalised version of Johannesburg, these films are throwing up their own contradictions. They cash in on the aesthetic of an African global city even as they unavoidably continue to remind us of the city's social conflicts and socioeconomic inequalities. They do this in their storylines as well as their images.

All three films repeatedly reference a more authentic version of the city as an object of love and desire. This is evoked not only through the high angle shots of some of Johannesburg's most densely populated urban areas, but also through images of some of its newly gentrified downtown neighbourhoods and via their characters' desire for loving, inhabiting and being part of "the city".

These films are not simply a celebration of consumerist lifestyles. They also represent the tensions and dislocations that accompany the black majority's occupation of affluent urban spaces and its embrace of the consumptive practices from which it had so long been excluded. It is no surprise they have turned out to be popular, boosted by the demand for streamed content. ■

# We must make moral choices about how we relate to social media apps

Social media platforms exploit our emotions and pre-cognate needs like belonging, recognition, acceptance and pleasure that are 'hard wired' into us to secure our survival.

## DION FORSTER

Head of Department, Systematic Theology and Ecclesiology, Stellenbosch University

Recently a South African radio show asked, "If you had to choose between your mobile phone and your pet, which would choose?" Think about that for a moment. Many callers responded they would choose their phone. I was shocked... But to be honest, I give more attention to my phone than to my beloved dogs!

Throughout history there have been discoveries that have changed society in unimaginable ways. Written language made it possible to communicate over space and time. The printing press, say historians, helped shape societies through the mass dissemination of ideas. New modes of transport radically transformed social norms by bringing people into contact with new cultures.

Yet these pale in comparison to how the internet is shaping, and misshaping, our individual and social identities. I remember the first time I heard a teenager speaking with an American accent and discovered she'd never been out of South Africa but picked up her accent from watching YouTube. We shape our technologies, but they also shape us.

The potentially negative impacts of social media have again been highlighted by The Social Dilemma on Netflix. The documentary, which Facebook has slammed as sensational and unfair, shows

how dominant and largely unregulated social media companies manipulate users by harvesting personal data, while using algorithms to push information and ads that can lead to social media addiction – and dangerous anti-social behaviour. Among others, the show makes an example of the conspiracy theory QAnon, which is increasingly targeting Africans.

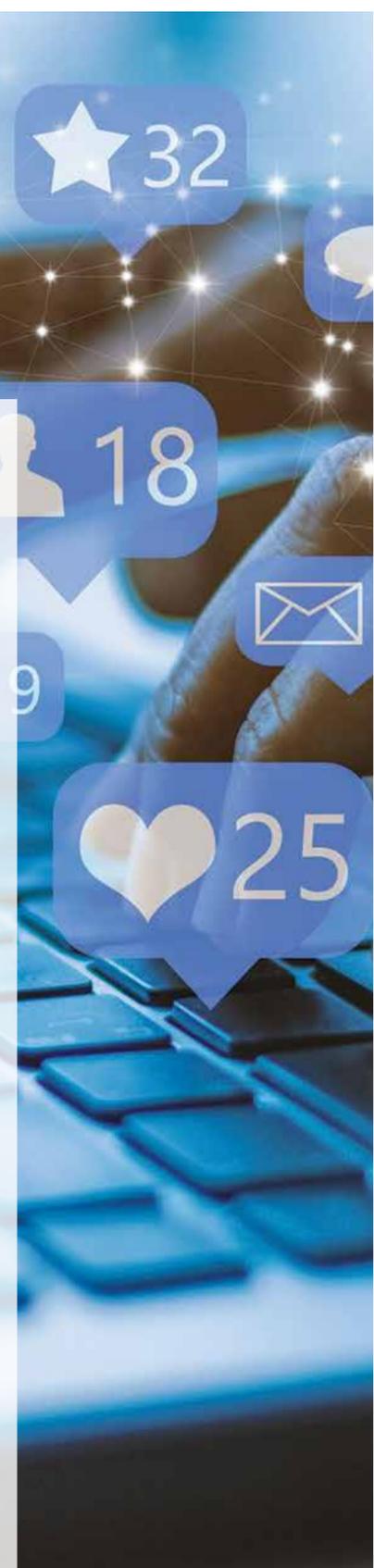
### Support journalism that you can trust

Despite its flaws, the doccic got me wondering what our relationship should be to social media? As an ethics professor, I've come to realise that we must make moral choices about how we relate to our technologies. This requires an honest evaluation of our needs and weaknesses, and a clear understanding of the intentions of these platforms.

### Tug-of-war with technology

Yuval Noah Harari, author of Sapiens, contends it's our ability to inhabit "fiction" that differentiates humans. He claims you "could never convince a monkey to give you a banana by promising him limitless bananas after death in monkey heaven". Humans have a capacity to believe in things we cannot see – which changes things that do exist. Ideas like prejudice and hatred, for example, are powerful enough to cause wars that displace thousands.

The wall between Israel and Palestine was conceived in people's minds before being transformed into bricks and barbed wire. Philosopher Oliver Razac's book



Barbed Wire: A political history traces how this razor-sharp technology has been deployed from farms that displaced indigenous peoples to the trenches of World War I and the prisons of contemporary democracies.

Technology is in a constant psychological, political and economic tug-of-war with humanity. Yet, some of today's technologies are much more subtle than barbed wire. They are deeply integrated into our lives – they know us better than we know ourselves.

I have thousands of 'friends' on social media – far too many to relate to meaningfully. Yet, at times I can be more present to people that I have never met than I am to my family. This is not by chance – social media platforms are designed to seek and hold our attention. They are businesses, intent on making money. Harvard University professor Shoshana Zuboff, who features in the documentary, explains in The Age of Surveillance Capitalism that social media "trades exclusively in human futures".

### We are the product

Zuboff says that social media platforms exploit our emotions and pre-cognate needs like belonging, recognition, acceptance and pleasure that are 'hard wired' into us to secure our survival.

Recognition relates to two of the primary functions of the brain, avoiding danger and finding ways to meet our basic survival needs (such as food or a mate to perpetuate our gene pool). These corporations, she says, are hiring the smartest engineers, social psychologists, behavioural economists and artists to hold our attention, while interspersing adverts between our videos, photos and status updates. They make money by offering a future that their advertisers will sell you.

Or, as former Google and Facebook employee Justin Rosenstein, says in The Social Dilemma: Our attention is the product being sold to advertisers.

If our adult brains are so susceptible to this kind of manipulation, what effects are they having on the developing minds of children?

The documentary also reminds the viewer that social media has a more subtle and powerful influence on our lives – shaping our social and political realities.

### Fake news and hate speech

The documentary uses an example from 2017 in which Facebook use is linked to violence that led to the displacement of close to 700,000 Rohingya persons in Myanmar. Something that doesn't really exist (a social media platform) violently changed something that does exist (the safety of people).

Facebook was a primary means of communication in Myanmar. New phones came with Facebook pre-installed. What users were unaware of was a 'third person' – Facebook's algorithms – feeding information that included hate speech and fake news into their conversations. In Africa, similar reports have emerged from South Sudan and Zimbabwe.

Another example used is the Cambridge Analytica scandal, which also played out in Africa, most notably in Nigeria and Kenya. Facebook user information was mined and sold to nefarious political actors. This information (like what people feared and what upset them) was used to spread misinformation and manipulate their voting decisions on important elections.

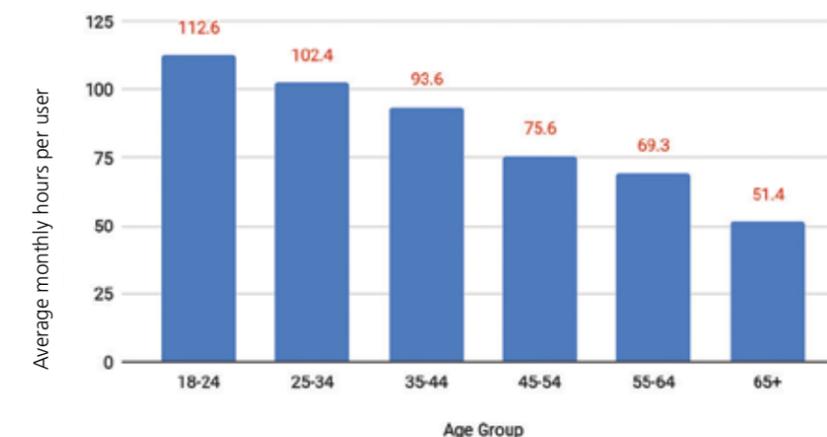
### What to do about it?

So, what do we do? We can't very well give up on social media completely, and I don't think it is necessary. These technologies are already deeply intertwined with our daily lives. We cannot deny they have some value.

However, just like humans had to adapt to the responsible use of the printing press or long-distance travel, we will need to be more intentional about how we relate to these new technologies. We can begin by cultivating healthier social media habits.

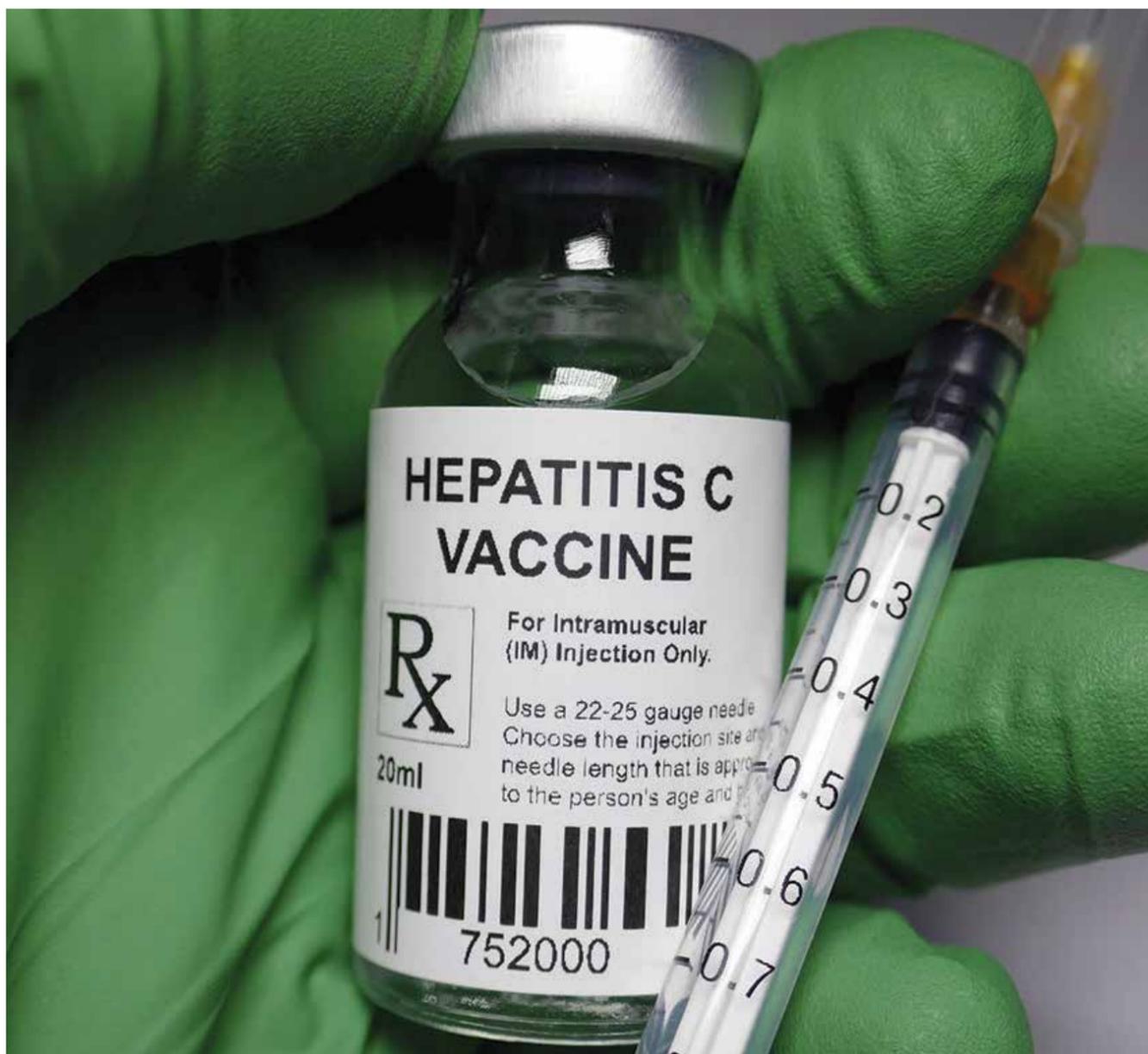
We should also develop a greater awareness of the aims of these companies and how they achieve them, while understanding how our information is being used. This will allow us to make some simple commitments that align our social media usage to our better values. ■

Average monthly hours per mobile app user by age



Source : Business of Apps

Technology is in a constant psychological, political and economic tug-of-war with humanity. Yet, some of today's technologies are much more subtle than barbed wire



## New drugs work against the many strains of hepatitis C found in African countries

In Africa, more than 10 million people are infected with the virus. Most countries have a limited infrastructure to diagnose infection, treat those who are infected and confirm that treatment has been successful.

JOHN MCLAUCHLAN

Professor of Viral Hepatitis, University of Glasgow

Around the world, 71 million people have been infected with the hepatitis C virus. The primary route of infection is through direct contact with another person's blood. This means the virus can be transmitted in a number of ways, including intravenous drug use, tattooing,

contaminated blood or blood products and surgical procedures.

Infection with this virus can lead to severe disease of the liver. Annually, there are about 400,000 deaths resulting from the effects of infection. If the body fails to naturally clear the virus within a few weeks of initial infection, then it can remain in the liver for decades. This may gradually lead to cirrhosis or liver cancer. In addition, those carrying the virus are often stigmatised, which may prevent people from coming forward for testing or treatment.

There's no vaccine available to prevent infection. For more than 20 years, the only available treatment for infection relied on weekly injections of interferon combined with an oral drug called ribavirin. But this treatment was only successful in curing between 40% and 65% of those who were infected. And it frequently led to adverse side effects (such as fatigue, nausea and depression) that could continue after treatment stopped.

Within the past few years, a new series of drugs called direct-acting antivirals have been developed, which give a much higher rate of curing infection (exceeding 90%). These drugs only need to be taken orally, and have very few side effects. They also require a relatively short course of treatment for 12 weeks – compared to as long as 48 weeks for interferon-based therapy.

The hepatitis C virus has evolved in different human populations for hundreds or even thousands of years. Over time the virus has become extremely genetically diverse. But the number of strains is limited in high-income countries where the new drugs are in use and known to be effective.

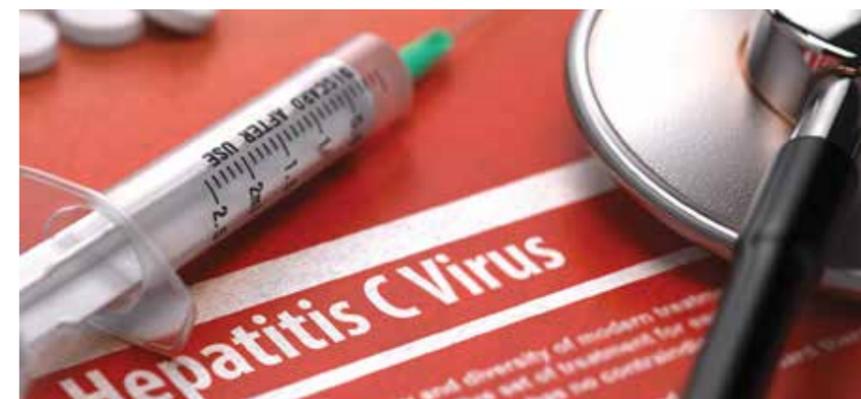
The question we sought to answer in our recent research was whether direct-acting antivirals would be effective in areas where many more strains are found, which are primarily low-income countries. Our findings show that these drugs would indeed be effective against most strains. This information is invaluable to countries with scarce treatment resources. More effective use of such resources ultimately will save more lives.

### Testing new treatments

Our study examined a large cohort of people born in 32 African countries but living in the UK, who were infected with strains of the hepatitis C virus found in their country of birth.

Most of this group had received direct-acting antivirals to treat their infection. So we were able to combine an analysis of the genetic diversity of the hepatitis C virus strains with which they were infected and whether treatment had been successful.

Therefore, it is important to catalogue all possible diverse strains of the virus and determine whether they respond to direct-acting antivirals treatment. The main problem with hepatitis C virus diversity is that some strains can have natural resistance to treatment. Since confirming successful treatment of infection is an added burden for low-income countries, it is crucial that the most appropriate direct-acting antivirals combinations are used in settings where potentially resistant strains may circulate.



The hepatitis C virus has evolved in different human populations for hundreds or even thousands of years. Over time the virus has become extremely genetically diverse. But the number of strains is limited in high-income countries where the new drugs are in use and known to be effective.

Overall, we showed that direct-acting antivirals were very effective against almost all the hepatitis C virus strains found across Africa. There were two strains that did not respond well to some treatment combinations. But re-treating people with a different set of direct-acting antivirals led to successful cure in most cases.

This study is important because low-income countries face numerous challenges with hepatitis C virus infection.

In Africa, more than 10 million people are infected with the virus. Most countries have a limited infrastructure to diagnose infection, treat those who are infected and confirm that treatment has been successful. In addition, the cost of direct-acting antivirals places an economic burden on many countries.

### Improving treatment in Africa

Our study shows that more potent direct-acting antiviral drugs would work successfully in countries where numerous different strains are found, including those with strains that are resistant to some of the less potent direct-acting antivirals combinations.

Hence our study feeds into the information needed to select the best suite of drugs for curing hepatitis C in low-income environments.

Moreover, since the World Health Organisation has mandated the global elimination of hepatitis C by 2030, our study contributes to that goal by confirming the crucial role that direct-acting antivirals will play. ■

# Covid in India: the deep-rooted issues behind the devastating crisis

India is an inherently high-risk country for an epidemic. The country holds 1.4 billion people, living in crowded areas with extensive community networks and limited facilities for sanitation, isolation and healthcare.

**VAGEESH JAIN**

NIHR Academic Clinical Fellow in Public Health Medicine, UCL

India finds itself in the throes of a humanitarian disaster. Until March 2021, case numbers were low in most parts of the country, leading many to think that the worst was over. Much like in Brazil though, jingoism, overconfidence and false reassurance from the political elite negated hard-won progress.

Mass gatherings have acted as state-sanctioned super-spreader events. More infectious variants and a sluggish uptake of vaccines are also fuelling the current surge. These are the triggers, but there are more deep-rooted issues at the heart of the current crisis.

India is an inherently high-risk country for an epidemic. The country holds 1.4 billion people, living in crowded areas with extensive community networks and limited facilities for sanitation, isolation and healthcare.

Most do not have the luxury of isolating at home for prolonged periods. Over 90% of workers are self-employed with no social safety net. The vast majority rely on daily earnings to put food on the table. Many predicted that because of all of this, the initial wave of COVID in 2020 would have a devastating impact.

The fact that it did not lead some to believe that the Indian population was innately less vulnerable to Covid. An old theory, the hygiene hypothesis, was dusted off in an attempt to explain the low num-



A view inside a temporary Covid care centre built up in Chennai Trade Center in Chennai, India.

ber of cases. The idea is that poor hygiene trains people's immune defences, so when people are exposed to the coronavirus, their bodies are well-equipped to deal with it.

But this theory largely relied on population studies that failed to account for various factors involved in disease severity at an individual level. Even with higher quality research, correlation does not imply causation, especially with the threat of new variants on the horizon. And yet this theory settled comfortably into the national psyche of a traditionally patriotic country.

Complacency gave the coronavirus an opportunity to spread. Unlike in the first wave though, proportionally more cases have progressed into deaths this time

around because the health system was overwhelmed. Supplies of oxygen, ventilators, health workers and beds are critically low in hotspots like Delhi. But the fact that so many require medical care in the first place, is a symptom of longstanding structural deficiencies in the Indian health system.

Age is the single biggest risk factor for severe disease and death with Covid. India has an exceptionally young population, with only 6% aged 65 and over. Even with a slightly more deadly virus, one would expect most to recover at home without the need for hospital care. But a relatively unhealthy middle-aged population in part offsets this advantage.

Air pollution is closely associated with

lung and heart disease. A whopping 17.8% of all deaths in India were due to pollution in 2019, and Delhi, currently flooded with Covid patients seeking oxygen, is the most polluted capital in the world.

**Complacency gave the coronavirus an opportunity to spread. Unlike in the first wave though, proportionally more cases have progressed into deaths this time around because the health system was overwhelmed.**

Obesity is also a growing concern in India, with high rates in urban areas where Covid outbreaks have been most concentrated. The prevalence of diabetes in those aged 50-69 years is over 30%, much higher than in other Asian countries. One in five women of reproductive age has undiagnosed high blood pressure.

All of these are significant risk factors for death from Covid. Having an unhealthy population also leads to excess deaths because non-Covid health services are suspended during such emergencies.

Despite these health needs, total health expenditure in India represents only 3.9% of GDP, well below the 5% minimum recommended to achieve universal health coverage.

The nation remains starved of the resources needed for a robust, resilient and well-equipped health system.

What money is spent goes into an expensive hospital-based system predominantly delivered through the private sector. Most people do not have insurance and pay for care out of their own pockets. This can lead to unnecessary costs and delays in seeking care or getting tested, which is critical to controlling epidemics in the early stages.

### No incentive to prevent disease

Private institutions operating in this way rely on people becoming unwell to generate revenue. There is no incentive to prevent disease.

A largely commercialised and profit-driven system centred on treating disease has skewed investment away from essential public health functions. It is this market failure that is in part responsible for India's ailments, and many avoidable deaths during this epidemic.

Despite a recent expansion of primary care centres and a large health insurance scheme for the poor, infrastructure remains poorly aligned with need. As a result, capacities for infectious disease control like surveillance, testing, contact tracing, guidance and research were limited at the start of the pandemic.

Efforts to prevent and control chronic diseases have also been traditionally neglected despite their escalating burden and early onset in the Indian population.

India is a high-risk setting for an epidemic, but the current situation was not inevitable. As more are infected, the pool of susceptible people will shrink, the virus will relent, and the country will rebuild. There will be a chance to reflect on the fundamental goals of the health system.

For future epidemics, bolstering hospital capacity will be necessary but not sufficient. Death must be averted not just by treating disease, but by preventing it altogether. ■

## US-backed vaccine patent waiver: Pros and cons explained



The intent behind the push for the waiver is of course well intended – to remove any bottlenecks due to intellectual property protections and ramp up the production and distribution of these vaccines in the rest of the world.

**FARASAT BOKHARI**

Senior Lecturer (Associate Professor) in Economics, University of East Anglia

**T**he Biden administration has now agreed to back a proposal to suspend intellectual property protection for Covid vaccines. This is a break from US government's long-held position on strong intellectual property protection, which has also been supported by many research-intensive countries in western Europe as well and the pharmaceutical industry.

These protections are codified in the World Trade Organization's Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) agreements. India, South Africa, and many other emerging economies have been pushing for a waiver from patent protection, and have been supported in this effort by the director general of the WHO, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus.

While the waiver cannot be put into place until other WHO members agree (at which point manufacturers can presumably start production without any licensing agreements), more and more countries that were previously opposed to the deal, including France and New Zealand, are also now indicating their support. It could be a matter of time before the proposal goes into effect.

So, what are the pros and cons of this waiver and what are the alternatives?

The primary concern remains that while the Covid-19 vaccines now thankfully exist, their distribution across the world is not even, despite the existence of the COVAX network: a global effort to share vaccines between countries.

At the time of writing, 44% of the US population and 51% of the UK population



Vaccines are priced far more reasonably even if all countries do not pay the same price for them. So even if companies like Pfizer are making profits, would removing the IP protection increase production and distribution in the developing world?

are vaccinated, but these percentages are woefully much lower in many developing economies with India at 9.4% and all of Asia and Africa at 4.4% and below 1% respectively.

The intent behind the push for the waiver is of course well intended – to remove any bottlenecks due to intellectual property protections and ramp up the production and distribution of these vaccines in the rest of the world.

The question remains as to whether the bottlenecks in Covid vaccine production are due to intellectual property protection. Typically, we think of patent protection leading to high prices and reduced output as monopolies tend to set prices well above the marginal cost of production to maximise profits.

But high prices do not seem to be the problem here. This is not the same situation as the \$750 dollar pill, Daraprim, bought by “pharma bro” Martin Shrekeli.

Vaccines are priced far more reason-

ably even if all countries do not pay the same price for them. So even if companies like Pfizer are making profits, would removing the IP protection increase production and distribution in the developing world?

### Immediate relief

If IP protection is waived, perhaps some immediate relief in terms of production and distribution could follow if more manufacturers in emerging economies can join in and allocate resources to vaccine production immediately.

However, in addition to waiving legal protections, manufacturers in emerging economies need to be supported with the technology to actually produce the vaccines. This may be particularly true of the newer mRNA vaccines such as those from Pfizer and Moderna, which are difficult to manufacture, but may equally apply to adenovirus vaccines such as the one produced by AstraZeneca.

While opening up the possibility of production via the waiver may be a start, it is not a guarantee that enough manufacturers will be found to take up production. This type of technology transfer may be best achieved via voluntary licences—in which originators provide manufacturers with the know-how to produce their vaccines—as has already been done by AstraZeneca.

### Future complications

One might then ask, where is the harm in trying even if this does not work? The trouble is in maintaining incentives for the future. After all, the reason we created patent protections in the first place is to provide incentives via short-term monopoly profits so that firms and individuals can invest in innovation. The monopoly creates inefficiencies, which we tolerate in exchange for technical progress.

If intellectual property protection is waived in the face of a public emergency, even as a one-off, will firms invest next time there is a similar emergency? The fact that Pfizer reaped millions in profits is beside the point.

What is more relevant is how much more we benefited from the vaccines through saving lives, reducing suffering, and opening up the economy (when we eventually do).

Setting aside intellectual property protection can be a dangerous precedent, particularly if it may not work.

So, what can be done to alleviate the production problem globally? Voluntary licenses are a start. Along the same lines, the US could just buy the patents from the current manufacturers outright based on their discounted future value, and then make them available to manufacturers world over.

These purchases could be done not just for the patents, but also for providing assistance for technology transfer. This would maintain incentives for research, development and innovation, and at the same time protect populations around the world and in the US from the rise of variants that may be able to evade the vaccines we have. ■

# Covid vaccines: why waiving patents won't fix global shortage – scientist explains

South Africa and India have petitioned the World Trade Organization (WTO) to waive certain IP protections, for a limited time, that relate to products for preventing, containing or treating Covid-19.

**ANNE MOORE**

Senior Lecturer in Biochemistry and Cell Biology, University College Cork

Covid-19 vaccines are key to ending the pandemic. From a humanitarian, moral and pragmatic perspective, the countries must unite to ensure fair and rapid access to these vaccines, worldwide. As political and health leaders have stressed: no one is safe until we are all safe.

But satisfying this need is complicated. Before the pandemic, the global demand for all vaccines was around 5.5 billion doses a year. We now need at least three times this for Covid-19 alone, with continued high-scale production likely to be needed in subsequent years.

Such a fast increase in vaccine production is unprecedented and expected obstacles need to be addressed. One particular idea gaining traction is that vaccine production is being limited by patents and other intellectual property (IP) rights – legal mechanisms that allow organisations to stop others (for a limited period) from making, using or selling their inventions without their permission – and that these should be waived. This, however, should not be a major priority.

## Not the main barrier

South Africa and India have petitioned the World Trade Organization (WTO) to waive certain IP protections, for a limited time, that relate to products for preventing, containing or treating Covid-19. This would allow countries to produce Covid-related products, such as vaccines, for themselves, without fear of being punished for infringing

the IP rights of the companies that developed them.

Various NGOs, former heads of state and Nobel laureates have declared their support. It's claimed that waiving IP agreements "would expand global manufacturing capacity", allowing production to ramp up "unhindered by industry monopolies that are driving the dire supply shortages blocking vaccine access".

The WTO petition references suggestions that IP rights have limited the availability of personal protective equipment and the production of ventilators during the pandemic. However, little (if any) evidence has been presented that suggests IP protection is blocking Covid-19 vaccine manufacture.

Rather, technical and logistic issues are the biggest barriers currently standing in the way of increasing vaccine production and deployment. To boost vaccine availability right now, it would be better to address these.

**One obstacle to increasing production is the supply of raw materials needed to make and deploy these vaccines. The almost instantaneous tripling of demand for specialised materials is placing huge pressure on many pharmaceutical and medical supply chains**

One obstacle to increasing production is the supply of raw materials needed to make and deploy these vaccines. The almost instantaneous tripling of demand for specialised materials is placing huge pressure on many pharmaceutical and medical supply chains. This needs to be fixed, not just to help with the production of authorised Covid-19 vaccines, but also to ensure we don't delay testing and approving vaccines still in development.

## Empty glass vaccine vials

Second, transferring the manufacturing process from one facility to another always takes significant resources, as staff at the new site need to be trained in every aspect of production and quality assurance. On top of this, skills are also required in the clinical, legal, commercial and regulatory aspects. Expanding production capacity is thus not instantaneous, and certainly wouldn't immediately happen just because IP protection has been waived.

Nevertheless, this technology transfer continues, with several Covid-19 vaccine manufacturers transferring their technology, under licence, to sub-contractors. An example is the licensing of the AstraZeneca vaccine to the Serum Institute of India. To get manufacturing going, the institute dedicated 1,000 staff to the project.

This raises a further point, which is that for technology transfer to work, countries must have specialised facilities and a skilled workforce capable of making vaccines. They also need robust regulatory authorities to audit and approve the safety of what's produced.

Advocating for current and long-term commitments to increasing these skills around the world could be a more successful way of increasing the number of



countries manufacturing vaccines in the long term, compared to waiving IP rights. Indeed, past efforts to increase worldwide manufacturing capacity and access for other medicines, such as those for drug-resistant tuberculosis, have taken this sort of broader approach and not focused solely on IP.

Likewise, if we are serious about improving access to Covid-19 vaccines, other issues need to be addressed. Pricing, as well as allocation and deployment mechanisms, such as Covax, must be optimised to allow equitable vaccine deployment.

## IP remains useful

Love it or loathe it, IP also plays a central role in getting vaccines developed.

Given the emergency we're in, companies that are normally competitors are working together to produce vaccines. Here, IP can facilitate cooperation; it's

clear which organisation owns what technology, meaning companies don't have to worry about their ideas being taken when collaborating.

Plus, for academics who aim to translate their research into having real-world impact, there are few options other than to license their innovations to commercial entities who have the expertise and resources to bring the research into clinical use.

The Covid-19 vaccine partnership between the University of Oxford and AstraZeneca is a successful example of this inter-dependency.

Such transactional agreements (and so developing health innovations from academic research) rely on IP and being able to give commercial partners exclusive access to knowledge. Enacting an IP waiver risks bringing levels of uncertainty across the vaccine field because, without

the exclusive rights to a product, it's less clear if developing it will lead to a return on investment.

This may put companies off working on vaccines. The vaccine space has only recently grown from being a very narrow field, comprising just a few companies at the start of the century, so the threat of losing developers is real.

We need to have as many competitors in the field as possible to sustain diverse academic-commercial partnerships. This diversity has already helped create a range of Covid-19 vaccines.

Current IP regulations are not perfect, and this IP waiver discussion rightly forces an examination of current systems. However, waiving IP is unlikely to be a short-term solution to rapid vaccine manufacture and deployment and could lead to long-term obstacles for vaccine development. ■

# Medical oxygen **should not be a luxury** – we're trying to develop a **cheaper way to produce it**

Oxygen is mostly obtained from liquefied air. Engineers turn the air we breathe into a liquid, using a combination of processes that cool down gases until they condensate.

## DAVID FAIREN-JIMENEZ

Reader in Molecular Engineering, University of Cambridge

People might once have considered oxygen a human right. But the pandemic has revealed that access to oxygen—in a pure form, for medical use—is a luxury in most low and middle-income countries.

Getting access to pure oxygen for medical treatments is a complicated, expensive and often very dangerous business. The current situation in India is a harsh reminder of this issue. The second wave of Covid-19 has hit the country hard; the total number of deaths has just passed the 200,000 mark. Oxygen is in short supply.

Because of the current emergency, Indian citizens have turned to the black market to purchase oxygen way above its regular price.

This has happened partly due to the way oxygen is produced, stored and transported around the world. That's why scientists like me are working to find a cheaper alternative.

## Bottlenecks

Oxygen is mostly obtained from liquefied air. Engineers turn the air we breathe into a liquid, using a combination of processes that cool down gases until they condensate. Once they've managed to liquefy the mix, they use distillation—the same process used to make whisky and gin—to separate air into its different components, oxygen among them.

This process requires enormous amounts of energy and huge industrial facilities, so it's limited to just a few areas in the world, most of them in the global north. Liquid oxygen must be stored and transported under great pressure, creating serious logistical issues and safety concerns – oxygen is really explosive.

This means the main bottleneck of oxygen production is, precisely, bottles. The US relies on heavy-duty pipes to transport pressurised oxygen. In Europe, transport is mainly through liquid oxygen carried in big tanks. For lower-income countries, distribution is done in bottles.

But the oxygen bottle market is cornered by only a handful of chemical com-

panies. Using bottles also adds another layer of safety concern, as handling them correctly requires several precautionary measures and proper training. Developing countries therefore lack both the infrastructure required to produce liquid oxygen and that to easily and cheaply transport it to a hospital.

## Out of thin air

Another way of “making” oxygen is using concentrators, devices that selectively remove nitrogen – the gas that makes up 78% of our atmosphere – using a series of membranes, porous materials and filters. These started being produced in mid-70s, and the technology is very well established.

These devices turn air into a stream of oxygen-enriched gas, typically above 95% (the rest is formed of mostly argon). This is usually good enough for respirators and ventilators. The benefit of a concentrator is it can be produced as a small device to be used in hospitals or care homes.

Commercially available concentrators exist now, but they are expensive and difficult to produce in developing countries.

This is why scientists like me are looking for solutions. My team studies new types of materials that store and separate gases, some of which provide potentially affordable solutions for devices such as oxygen concentrators. We develop two main types of materials—zeolites (crystals of silicon, aluminium and oxygen) and metal-organic frameworks (usually called MOFs). Both are highly porous materials; you can imagine them as miniature, molecule-sized sponges.

Like sponges, these porous materials adsorb more fluids than you'd intuitively imagine. Although the millions of pores inside zeolites and MOFs may seem tiny, their total surface area is monumental. In fact, one gram of certain record-breaking MOFs features a surface area of over 7,000 square metres.

Tiny amounts of zeolites and MOFs can store huge amounts of fluids, often gases, and they have been used in gas storage, purification, carbon capture and water-harvesting.

Some of my team, partnering with the engineering company Cambridge Precision, and the Centre for Global Equality, have started looking into whether they can be used to store oxygen. We've developed an initial prototype that works. We hope to have a final prototype in place in two months' time, and after this we will need to seek medical approval.

## The process

The principle is quite simple. We have an aluminium cylinder full of porous materials and we circulate a stream of air through it. This purifies the oxygen up to 95%—with the remaining being mostly argon. Nitrogen is trapped in the zeolite because of the way the electric charge is



distributed in nitrogen atoms, meaning it interacts more strongly with the zeolite's electric field. Oxygen and argon are not.

The nitrogen therefore stays trapped inside the millions of tiny pores, and we empty them later after storing our oxygen.

Usually, we commercialise our porous materials through Immaterial, a spin-out of the University of Cambridge. Yet, making huge profits selling oxygen in a pandemic seemed immoral. In Africa, for example, oxygen is five times more expensive than in Europe and the US. Our team and Immaterial therefore partnered up with other scientists in Cambridge to create the Oxygen and Ventilator System Initiative, OVSI, with the aim of advancing and manufacturing affordable oxygen treatments.

We hope the advantages of a cheap oxygen concentrator device will outlive the pandemic. Oxygen supply is key to treat childhood pneumonia and chronic pulmonary diseases—both conditions that globally kill more people than AIDS or malaria. Everyone should have access to oxygen, and technology like ours could one day help provide that access. ■

**But the oxygen bottle market is cornered by only a handful of chemical companies. Using bottles also adds another layer of safety concern, as handling them correctly requires several precautionary measures and proper training**



## Severe Covid in **young people** can mostly be explained by **obesity** – new study

### NERYS M ASTBURY

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**F**rom the start of the pandemic, it was clear that some people who were infected with the coronavirus were experiencing more severe illness, which increased their chances of being hospitalised, admitted to an intensive care unit (ICU) or dying.

As we age, a weaker immune system and chronic health conditions could influence the way our body responds to the virus. Indeed, age is the biggest risk factor for developing severe Covid or dying from it. Over 70% of deaths attributed to Covid in the UK are in those aged 75 years and over.

**A study published last year in Nature reported that obesity increased the risk of Covid-related death substantially. People with the highest BMI (over 40) were at 92% higher risk of dying from Covid compared with people with a healthy BMI (18.5-25).**

Ethnicity, sex and obesity were also found to be risk factors for severe Covid outcomes. But, of course, we can't do anything about our age, sex or ethnicity. We can do something about being overweight, though.

Body mass index (BMI) is a measure applying height and weight to calculate a weight score. A person with a BMI over 25 is considered to be overweight, and over 30 is considered to be obese.

Early studies reported that many more people who were overweight or obese were admitted to an ICU and needed mechanical ventilation than people who were not overweight or obese. Indeed, even Prime Minister Boris Johnson attributed the severity of his own Covid infection to the fact he was "way overweight" at the time.

A study published last year in Nature

reported that obesity increased the risk of Covid-related death substantially. People with the highest BMI (over 40) were at 92% higher risk of dying from Covid compared with people with a healthy BMI (18.5-25). But most people are not this overweight. Many people have been inactive during the lockdowns and may have gained a bit of extra weight, so could that excess weight also increase the risk of developing severe Covid? Our latest study looked at just that.

Using the anonymous health records from almost 7 million people aged 20-99 years in England, we explored the risk of severe Covid across the full BMI range.

Of the 6,910,695 people who had their weight recorded, 13,503 were admitted to hospital with Covid, 1,602 needed treatment in an ICU, and 5,479 died of Covid during the first wave in the UK (January-May 2020). Most of these people were aged over 60 (72% of hospital admissions, 56% of ICU admissions and 93% of deaths).

### Risk starts to increase at high-end of healthy weight

We found that the lowest risk was found among those with a BMI of 23, at which point the risk increased linearly, around 5% higher risk of hospital admission, 10% higher risk of ICU admission, and 4% of death per each unit increase in BMI.

### The Lancet Diabetes & Endocrinology

Our analysis took into account several factors that might influence risk, such as age, sex, ethnicity and existing health conditions, including type 2 diabetes. People with a BMI under 23, which includes people who are underweight (BMI below 18.5) were also at risk of Covid-related hospital admission and death. This could be linked to frailty associated with having a low body weight.

Notably, the effect of excess weight on the risk of severe Covid was greatest in young people aged 20 to 39 years of age, and decreased after age 60. Excess weight had very little effect on the risk of severe Covid in people aged over 80 years.

The increase in the risk of hospitalisa-

tion per BMI unit for those aged 20-39 is 9%; for those aged 40-59, 8%; for 60-79 years, 4%; and 1% for people aged 80-99 years. The increase in the risk of death per BMI unit for those aged 20-39 is 17%; for those aged 40-59, 13%; for 60-79 years, 3%; and 0% for people aged 80-99 years.

Younger people generally experienced much less severe Covid and were less likely to die compared with older people. Still, a younger person with a BMI of 30 would have a much higher risk of severe Covid than their healthy weight peers.

The risks associated with higher BMI were greater for black people compared with white people. The increase in the risk of hospitalisation per BMI unit for black people was 7% compared with 4% for white people. And the increase in the risk of death for black people was 8% versus 4% for white people. There was no evidence that the risks for other ethnic groups differed from those of the white populations.

Early studies reported that many more people who were overweight or obese were admitted to an ICU and needed mechanical ventilation than people who were not overweight or obese

### Many good reasons to lose weight

Although we couldn't look to see if losing weight could reduce these risks in this study, it is plausible that shedding excess weight could help reduce the risk of developing severe Covid. And, of course, losing weight has other health benefits too.

But losing weight is hard. We need more support systems to help people lose weight. This could help reduce the severity of Covid at a population level, which may help reduce the burden on healthcare systems, while also reducing the risks for heart disease, type 2 diabetes and some cancers. ■

# Will coronavirus really evolve to become less deadly?

There is little or no direct evidence that virulence decreases over time. While newly emerged pathogens, such as HIV and Mers, are often highly virulent, the converse is not true.

**ED FEIL**

Professor of Microbial Evolution at The Milner Centre for Evolution, University of Bath

**CHRISTIAN YATES**

Senior Lecturer in Mathematical Biology, University of Bath

A recent modelling study painted a reassuring picture of a post-pandemic future in which SARS-CoV-2 transitions, over “a few years to a few decades”, from dangerous pathogen to just another common-cold coronavirus. This predicted loss of virulence, the authors stress, is based on a specific idiosyncrasy of the virus, namely that it rarely causes serious disease in children.

Still, many experts agreed that we should not be in the least surprised by the authors’ conclusion, as all viruses “become more transmissible and less pathogenic over time”. After all, the seductive logic goes, from an evolutionary perspective it makes no sense for a pathogen to harm the host on which it depends for its survival. According to this reasoning, virulence is little more than a temporary evolutionary imbalance.

This comfortable chain of reasoning was rudely broken by the announcement of “a realistic possibility” that the new highly transmissible B117 variant “is associated with an increased risk of death”.

Although the evidence is still accruing, early estimates from Nertag, the UK’s New and Emerging Respiratory Virus Threats Advisory Group, suggest that B117 may be around 30% more deadly.

But perhaps this is a single exception to an otherwise well-observed rule, and we can still be confident that SARS-CoV-2 will slowly fade away to obscurity. So, what is the evidence for this view? And how confident can we be in predicting how evolution will shape the relationship between a pathogen and its host?

**Law of declining virulence**

It was the bacteriologist and comparative pathologist Theobald Smith (1859-1934) who began the narrative of the “law of declining virulence” in the late 19th century.

Studying tick-borne disease of cattle during the 1880s, Smith realised that the severity of the disease was determined by the degree of prior infection. Cattle that had been repeatedly exposed to the pathogen suffered from much more moderate disease than cattle encountering it for the first time. Smith reasoned that this was because host and pathogen conspired over time towards a mutually benign relationship.

The story then takes a distinctly antipo-

**Although the evidence is still accruing, early estimates from Nertag, the UK’s New and Emerging Respiratory Virus Threats Advisory Group, suggest that B117 may be around 30% more deadly. But perhaps this is a single exception to an otherwise well-observed rule, and we can still be confident that SARS-CoV-2 will slowly fade away to obscurity.**



dean turn. In 1859, the year Charles Darwin published his Big Idea, European rabbits were introduced to Australia for sport, with devastating consequences for the indigenous flora and fauna. Having turned down Louis Pasteur’s offer of mass délapinsation using fowl cholera as a biological control agent, the Department of Agriculture turned to the myxoma virus that causes the lethal, but highly species-specific disease, myxomatosis in rabbits.

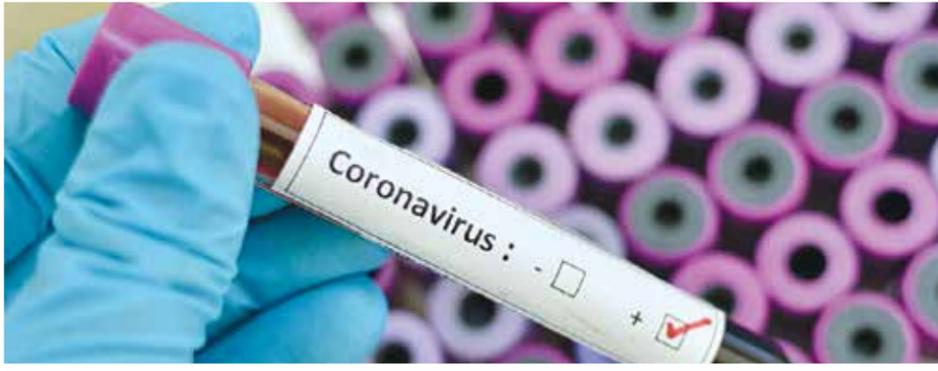
By the 1950s, the myxoma virus was spreading rapidly among the rabbit population. Recognising the opportunities provided by this unique experiment, the virologist Frank Fenner documented how the virulence of the disease decreased over a few years from 99.5% mortality to about 90%. This was taken as strong empirical evidence in support of Smith’s law of declining virulence – and occasionally still is.

**A challenge to the law of declining virulence**

At around the same time, a talented young Australian mathematician named Robert May came across the work of his compatriot Charles Birch, an eminent ecologist working on the regulation of animal populations. Together with epidemiologist Roy Anderson, May went on to pioneer the application of mathematical modelling to the ecology and evolution of infectious dis-

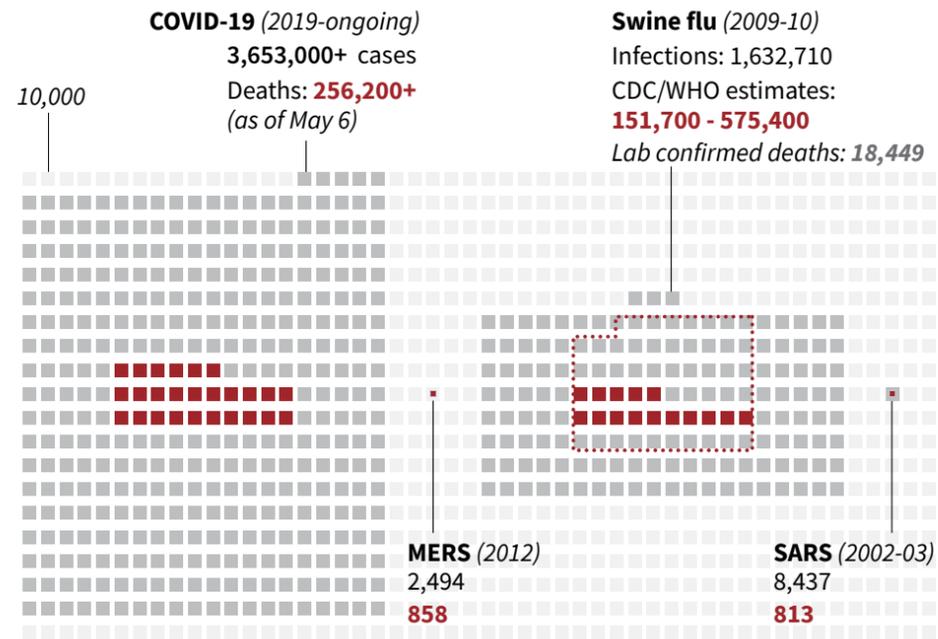
ease. By the late 1970s, May and Anderson had developed the “trade-off” model for the evolution of virulence – the first conceptual framework in 100 years to challenge the Smith’s general law of declining virulence.

The trade-off model recognises that pathogen virulence will not necessarily limit the ease by which a pathogen can transmit from one host to another. It might even enhance it. Without the assumed evolutionary cost to virulence, there >>



**Global outbreaks in the 21st century**

Death tolls and caseload estimates compared



Source: WHO

>> is no reason to believe that disease severity will decrease over time. Instead, May and Anderson proposed that the optimal level of virulence for any given pathogen will be determined by a range of factors, such as the availability of susceptible hosts, and the length of time between infection and symptom onset.

This last factor is a key aspect of the epidemiology of SARS-CoV-2. The long time period between infection and death (if it occurs) means that SARS-CoV-2 has a significant window in which to replicate and

Dengue fever has afflicted humans since at least the 18th century, but an increasingly large and mobile human population is thought to have driven a marked increase in virulence over the last 50 years or so

spread, long before it kills its current host.

The trade-off model is now widely accepted. It emphasises that each host-pathogen combination must be considered individually. There is no general evolutionary law for predicting how these relationships will pan out, and certainly no justification for evoking the inevitability of decreased virulence.

There is little or no direct evidence that virulence decreases over time. While newly emerged pathogens, such as HIV and Mers, are often highly virulent, the converse is not true. There are plenty of ancient diseases, such as tuberculosis and gonorrhoea, that are probably just as virulent today as they ever were.

A change in conditions can also drive the trend in the other direction. Dengue fever has afflicted humans since at least the 18th century, but an increasingly large and mobile human population is thought to have driven a marked increase in virulence over the last 50 years or so. Even the seminal case of the rabbit-killing myxoma virus is uncertain. There was little subsequent decline in virulence after Fenner's early reports, and it may even have risen slightly.

**Plausible but not inevitable**

Of course, these counter-examples do not in themselves present evidence that the virulence of SARS-CoV-2 will not decline. Declining virulence is certainly plausible as one of many potential outcomes under the trade-off model.

Conversely, mutations might simultaneously heighten both virulence and transmissibility by increasing viral replication rate. Although we will have to wait for more evidence to be certain – and the precise mechanisms may be difficult to pin down – the emerging evidence around the B117 variant currently points more towards increased mortality. ■



**WHO WE ARE**

**Amref International University (AMIU)** is a premier pan African university of health sciences fully owned by Amref Health Africa. AMIU is founded on the experience and intellect of Amref Health Africa, which is reputed with over 60 years of quality and innovative public and community health interventions in over 35 countries in Africa.

AMIU's focus is on training, research and extension in health sciences with emphasis on promotive, preventive, rehabilitative and palliative health.

The University offers Postgraduate, Undergraduate, Higher Diploma, Diploma, Certificate programmes as well as Continuing Professional Development (CPD) courses that prepare human resource for health to serve throughout the health system.

AMIU has two intakes every year, the April intake and the August intake.

**MY AMIU EXPERIENCE**



I speak for the entire class of 2019 when I say that our experience at AMIU was an unforgettable one. We will remember the serene learning environment, the flexible (and blended) study mode and essential learning resources, including well-equipped skills lab and competency-based training and assessment methodology at AMIU.

This class of 2019 will remember the relationships we built, the people we met and the entrepreneurial and professional training we received through practical sessions, which sharpened our technical, research, managerial and leadership skills and prepared us for successful professional careers.

**Walter Owate (Kenya) | Valedictorian, 2019**



As an international student I felt at home the moment I set foot at AMIU, having been attracted by the warm and compelling learning environment at the University. The interactive and flexible learning mode has made it possible for me to progress my studies remotely during the Covid19 pandemic. I will be graduating in 2021.

I relish my time at this great institution where I was granted vast opportunities that have positively defined me: I served in the Students Council, participated in the Work Study Programme and most notably was a beneficiary of the Vice Chancellor's scholarship fund.

I have had impactful and life changing interactions that have influenced and strengthened my resolve of Inspiring Lasting Change wherever my profession leads me.

**Tertoury Nyarugwe (Zimbabwe) | Health Systems Management & Development Final Student, 2021**



# Coronavirus variants: how did they evolve and what do they mean?

Although not all the mutations are thought to be important, the effect of any individual mutation might be changed by the presence of other mutations (an effect called epistasis). This greatly complicates the problem of figuring out precisely what these mutations are doing and of assessing the risk of newly emerging variants from the sequence data alone.

ED FEIL

Professor of Microbial Evolution at The Milner Centre for Evolution, University of Bath

When supplies of oxygen at hospitals in Manaus, Brazil, recently ran out, the air force was called in for emergency evacuations while healthcare workers frantically tried to save lives with manual ventilation. For those that could not be saved, there was only morphine and a final hand-squeeze.

As calamitous as the situation is for those affected, the devastating surge in Covid cases in Manaus over the last few weeks has set alarm bells ringing ever more loudly for governments and agencies around the world struggling to manage the pandemic. Cases continue to surge in the UK and South Africa and, as in Manaus, they appear to be mainly due to the emergence of new variants of the coronavirus.

### Three variants causing concern

The naming of these “variants of concern” – as scientists refer to them – is somewhat muddled. For simplicity, they are referred to here as the Brazilian, South African and UK variant. All have emerged recently, and all have picked up several mutations that mark a distinct shift in the evolution of the virus. Similar variants are almost certainly out there spreading under the radar. More are likely to evolve.

Despite arising independently on three different continents, the three variants share striking similarities. Each has picked up several mutations over a short time, with many in the gene providing the instructions to make the virus’s spike protein.

The spike protein is where the key battles between human and virus are being waged, including the vaccines. It is the key to how the virus interacts with the human body, both regarding the immune response and in binding to and entering human airway cells.

Not only have several mutations affected this protein, but identical mutations have cropped up independently both in the variants of concern and in other viral lineages. In effect, the virus has repeatedly stumbled across the same evolutionary solutions to specific challenges. This phenomenon is known as evolutionary convergence (consider the independent evolution of wings in bats, birds and insects).

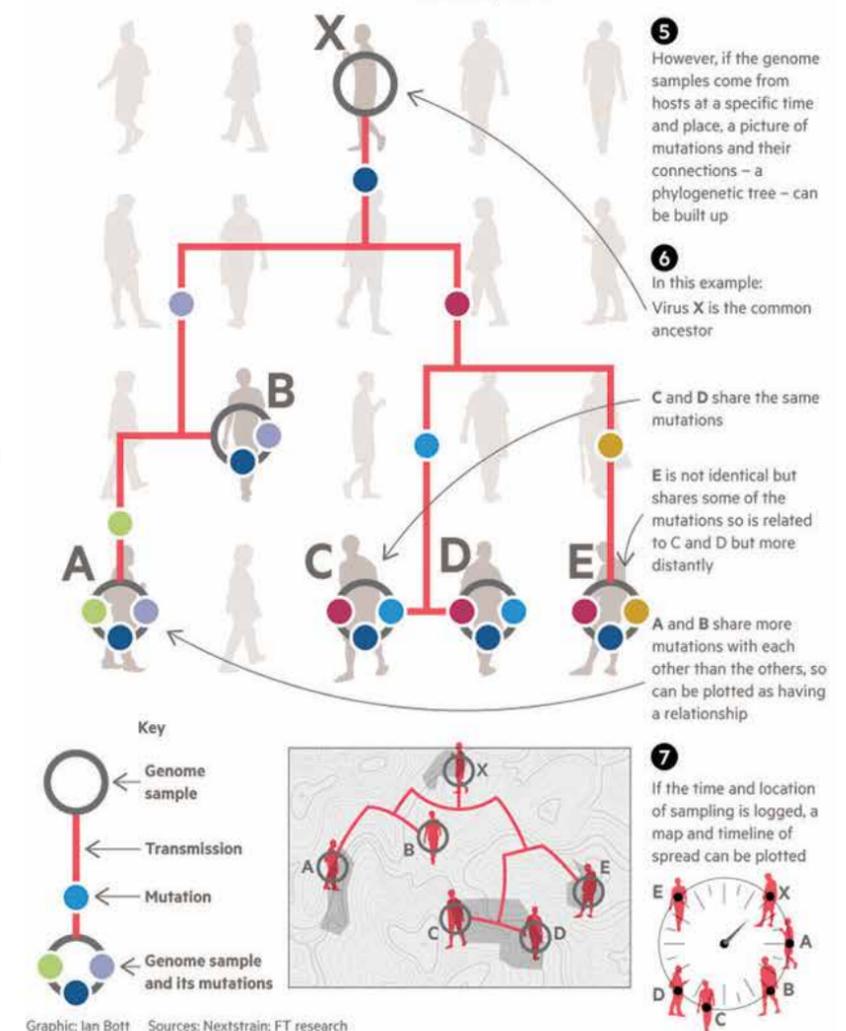
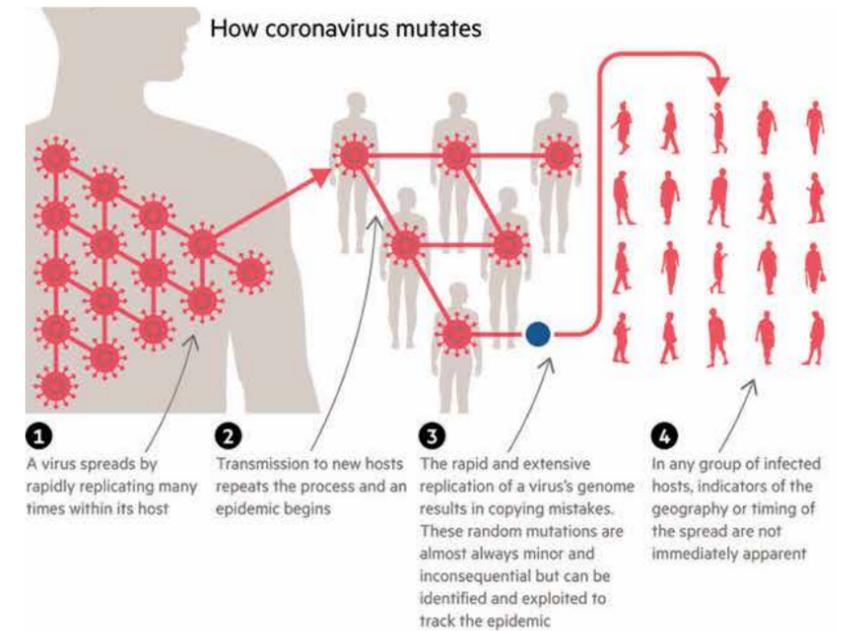
Understanding how these mutations might affect the coronavirus’s behaviour at the molecular level is difficult. Work to bridge the gap between each variant’s “genotype” (the mutations) and its “phenotype” (how quickly it spreads) is being ramped up in the UK and elsewhere, but will require a sustained multidisciplinary effort.

Understanding how these mutations might affect the coronavirus’s behaviour at the molecular level is difficult. Work to bridge the gap between each variant’s “genotype” and its “phenotype” is being ramped up in the UK and elsewhere

### Constellations of mutations

The task is made more difficult because several mutations have accumulated in these variants (so-called constellations). The UK variant, for example, has 23 separate mutations, representing a remarkable evolutionary jump with no known intermediate variants (like there are “missing links” in the evolutionary chain).

Although not all the mutations are thought to be important, the effect of any individual mutation might be changed by the presence of other mutations (an effect called epistasis). This greatly complicates the problem of figuring out precisely what these mutations are doing and of assessing the risk of newly emerging variants from the sequence data alone.



Graphic: Ian Bott Sources: Nextstrain; FT research © FT

>> Despite these complexities, a combination of computational analysis and laboratory experiments have yielded valuable evidence of the effect of these mutations. For example, one mutation found in all three variants is N501Y. The name refers to an alteration in the spike protein, where the type of amino-acid molecule located in position 501 has changed from asparagine (N) to tyrosine (Y).

Position 501 is on the receptor-binding domain—part of the spike protein that attaches to a particular receptor (ACE2) on cells in the human body—and this change appears to strengthen the binding between the virus and human cells. Yet for reasons that remain unclear, the effect of N501Y is greatly amplified when combined with other mutations.

Other mutations in the spike protein offer the virus some protection from the immune response. Examples include E484K (found in the Brazilian and South African variants, but not the UK variant), and a mutation in the UK variant in which two amino acids are deleted (del69-70) and which is repeatedly found in combination with mutations in the receptor-binding domain.

**Selection pressure**

Specific evolutionary challenges and selection pressures that favour the survival of some variants of the virus over others may be driving the emergence of the variants of concern. This would help to explain why they acquire several mutations so quickly, or why these variants are starting to emerge now.

A plausible explanation for the emergence of the UK variant is that it arose in a single chronically infected person with a weakened immune system who was being treated with convalescent plasma (antibodies from a recovered patient). This would have given a strong



Variant of Concern (country where first detected)	Total Characteristic Mutations	Mutations in the S gene receptor binding domain	Possible functional changes
<b>B.1.1.7</b> (United Kingdom)	18	N501Y	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More efficient transmission</li> <li>• Reduced antibody binding and immune protection</li> </ul>
<b>B.1.351</b> (South Africa)	8	N501Y, E484K, K417N	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced vaccine efficacy against B.1.351 and P.1</li> </ul>
<b>P.1</b> (Brazil)	21	N501Y, E484K	

*Note: A separate variant D614G (China) is also shown in the diagram but not detailed in the table.*

A plausible explanation for the emergence of the UK variant is that it arose in a single chronically infected person with a weakened immune system who was being treated with convalescent plasma (antibodies from a recovered patient).

advantage to any variant that could resist the therapeutic antibodies. But it remains a theory.

A second possibility relates to the emergence of the Brazilian variant. The current wave of infection in Manaus is only the latest Covid disaster to hit this city. Previous waves may have led to 76% of the

population being infected. The resulting high level of immunity in the population may have given an advantage to mutations in the spike protein.

Although these variants are causing concern, we should remain confident that the vaccines will ultimately prove successful in ending the pandemic and allow a return to normality. There is currently no evidence that the vaccines are less effective against the new variants. While it remains impossible to be certain whether, or how, the virus will make further evolutionary jumps when confronted by the vaccines, modifications to vaccine design should ensure that we stay one step ahead. ■

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