



AFRICA 2.0

WE ARE THE ONES WE HAVE BEEN WAITING FOR

COLLATERAL BENEFITS

An Africa 2.0 paper documenting perspectives
on COVID-19's impact on Africa and its people

**27 contributions from 17 thinkers and doers
across Africa and its diaspora on:**

[AGRICULTURE & SUSTAINABILITY](#)

[CLIMATE CHANGE](#)

[ECONOMY, FINANCE & NATURAL RESOURCES](#)

[ENTREPRENEURSHIP](#)

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About Africa 2.0

Africa 2.0 is a Pan-African Civil Society Organisation made up of a community of emerging and established African leaders who share a collective vision for Africa and a commitment to finding and implementing sustainable solutions that will drive forward the transformation of the continent. For further information, please contact sefa@africa2point0.org or visit our website at www.africa2point0.org

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Foreword

At the time of writing (April 2020), the COVID-19 pandemic afflicting the African continent and global diaspora is increasing in number affected and the severity of its effects. Rather than showing Africans as critical partners in the global response to this virus, international media mentions are infrequent and paternalistic: At best, they portray a desperate continent clamouring for aid; at worst, they see a potential laboratory for human vaccine trials.

The numerous successes and achievements of African communities and the diaspora over the last 30 years have not removed the challenges that remain in receiving fair recognition, access to justice, or levelled the benefits received from communal resources. Even before the pandemic, these challenges would not have been overcome easily, but adding in the complexity of the virus to an already interconnected set of issues will challenge all Africans and Afro-descended people to demonstrate our resilience and make our contributions.

This briefing paper presents thoughts from some of Africa's best thinkers and doers on the impact COVID-19 will have in - and on - Africa, and how this might be used as an opportunity to move forward with justice and equity. Even in these dark times, we stand witness to positive steps and positive change and humbly offer our voices to the conversation, so that when we emerge from our lockdowns, the narrative has changed for the better, for the benefit of all.

*"No night is so dark that it will not end in dawn..."
Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o*

#COVID19 #CollateralBenefits #TheAfricaWeWant #EqualGlobalPartners
#WeAreTheOnesWeHaveBeenWaitingFor

30 April 2020

The Editorial Team:

Susana Edjang
Sarah J. Owusu
Sefa Gohoho Boatın
Mamadou Kwidjim Touré

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A word from the Founder

Over the past 10 years, every single year, six to seven of the top 10 fastest growing economies in the world have been in Africa. Can the continent sustain the growth and reinvent itself, despite the recent eruption of COVID19 and the alarmist bells ringing across media about the expected doom for the continent? Data seem to show clear resilience to date. But the question remains: is the resilience sustainable? And how do we transmute this current crisis into a sustainable, social-economic opportunity? This paper articulates some perspectives on how we might do this.

"Each generation must, out of relative obscurity, discover its mission, fulfil it, or betray it."

In these challenging times, these wise words from Frantz Fanon remind us of our responsibility and the choice we have as African leaders to take action and cross-share our knowledge and experiences in order to move continent to the next level. We have an appointment with destiny and the COVID-19 response beyond crisis response will be a unique opportunity to work together and co-create a prosperous and inspiring Africa. Many African leaders have risen to the occasion and displayed solid leadership in handling the pandemic. Many research centres across the continent have invented affordable rapid test kit solutions, ventilators, reorganized manufacturing industries to produce masks, gloves and other equipment necessary to address the crisis.

This document relates stories from the Africa 2.0 community and beyond; movers and shakers who are active across a number of sectors and industries, and across our 54 countries and the Diaspora. As a group, we have allocated time, attention and resources towards shifting narratives, advocacy efforts and providing mentoring and support to up and coming leaders. We are entrepreneurs, influencers, professionals, farmers, health workers, artists, students, and above all Pan-Africanists. It is these voices you can hear through this document. We believe in unity, animated by the ancestral values of *Ubuntu* ("I am because we are"). We know that Africa is the continent of the future and come together to share our thoughts and aspirations here, to be widely shared among those sincerely on this transformational journey with us.

We don't claim to know it all or have the magic secret formula but we believe in the value of activating our collective imagination and sharing our visions. We share this document with faith that it will impact or inspire you. As Margaret Mead suggested, "[n]ever doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

We live by these words and as a community, we have contributed in many ways over the past 10 years: the formulation of our Manifesto and holistic vision for the continent, the lobbying efforts of our members driving more cross-continental collaboration, our campaigns to rebrand and unify Africa and our promotion of leap-frog initiatives in the entrepreneurship and digital economy space. In line with this, we have accompanied and supported some pivotal moments for the continent as a whole: the ratification of Agenda 2063, the launch of the African Continental Free Trade Area (ACFTA), a 200% increase in Foreign Direct Investment between 2010 and 2019 and significant increases in venture capital to African startups, growing access to technology with 89% of adults in Africa owning a cell phone and many initiatives underway to improve internet penetration and accelerate the knowledge economy. There is much to be proud of.

And now...we share these perspectives with you at this crucial turning point in Africa's destiny. We invite all leaders, small or big, local, regional or international to take action and work collectively to turn this crisis into an opportunity. To integrate the lessons of the past and prioritise what matters. This paper is for you and everyone else who cares about our future generations and want to leave a long lasting legacy based on unity, freedom and prosperity.

Mamadou Kwidjim Touré

AGRICULTURE & SUSTAINABILITY

A green revolution: Putting agribusiness first

Caleb Tamfu, Cameroon, is a Technical Agricultural Advisor in West and Central Africa

Agriculture is the backbone of sustainable development in Africa. Smallholder farmers make up more than 60% of the population on the continent, and an estimated 25-34% of Africa's GDP comes from agriculture. Well over half of the world's arable land, most of it unfarmed, is in Africa. Any plans to overcome the coronavirus pandemic must ensure that Africa's full agricultural potential is realized.

The challenges created by COVID-19 have exposed weaknesses but also highlighted unique opportunities in the agribusiness value chain. High on this list are: (i) access to input materials for farmers; (ii) value addition; (iii) logistics; and (iv) access to markets.

Fertilizer manufacturers are lacking trucks to move the raw materials needed to produce fertilizers for the imminent planting season. Failure to deliver fertilizer on time (after the first rains) will affect yields, leading to potential food shortages, even as governments provide additional subsidies for farmers: On the 6th April 2020, the Nigerian government announced a 10% reduction in fertilizer prices. Exporters - who predominantly used passenger aircraft to ship their produce - are faced with increasing demand in Europe, but very limited availability of aircraft to transport to market. In Ghana for example, airfreight prices have risen from US\$1.50-1.80 per kilo to \$2.50-3.50 per kilo - in some extreme cases, up to US\$5 per kilo. Even at these prices, most exporters can only ship a maximum of 20% of their weekly consignment, and some exporters have been forced to lay-off workers. Adding to this, a lack of adequate storage and processing capacity across West and Central Africa translates to a high risk that most of the existing produce could go to waste.

As dire as this sounds, it offers new opportunities for direct involvement and collaboration and things are already changing on the ground. Vegetable and fruit associations are currently discussing the option of securing dedicated cargo freighters to transport their produce. Fertilizer producers have partnered with transporters and off-takers to deliver to farmers on credit, backed by the off-take contract from buyers – especially in maize and rice. In this example, the farmers will only have to pay 30% to 50% of upfront costs, with the balance paid after harvest. The transporter stays in business and the off-takers are guaranteed the input they require a couple of months down the line.

These are great initiatives, but they are short-term solutions for long-term problems. Now is the time for agricultural sector stakeholders to take new and bold approaches to ensure a sustainable value chain is developed, increasing yields through quality inputs and practices, enhancing storage capacity, as well as increasing processing capacity through training and technology transfer. Going forward, the opportunities are many, from investment and technical know-how for input manufacturers (seeds and fertilizers); processing crops such as rice, maize, mango, tomatoes and cashew into value added products; or a robust distribution network, locally, regionally and internationally.

Now is the moment to invest in a green revolution for Africa and honour the 2001 Abuja Declaration targets in the critical sector for the sustainable development of Africa.

Those interested in agriculture should invest and those already in agriculture should expand to prevent the rise of multidimensional poverty across the continent. At the very least, post-COVID-19, we must have sustained transformation of the sector to focus on its future as the engine for the Africa we want. #greenrevolution #agribusiness #collaboration #ReimagineSupplyChains

A chance for sustainable food security?

[Ayo Sotinrin](#), Nigeria, is Group CEO at SAO Group, one of Africa's leading social impact investments and advisory firms, and Africa 2.0 Nigeria Chapter Head

Around 63% of the world's poorest people work in agriculture, the overwhelming majority on small farms. Africa grows much of its own food supplies with about 60% of the population engaged in subsistence agriculture and 70% of Africa's food produced by women. Working in this way means that these people will have increased exposure to COVID-19 with knock-on implications for food production, food processing and ultimately, child nutrition. The spread of the virus and the complete shutdown of all economic activities will create an economic crisis, weaken resilience through massive job losses, rising food insecurity, malnutrition, and widespread inequality due to limited access to resources and services. Whilst Africa has a youthful population, young people tend to be less interested in agriculture and more likely to migrate to urban areas, so farmers tend to be older than average. This leaves a farming population that could be more vulnerable to the effects of coronavirus than average. The pandemic and related disruptions of trade, travel and markets could reduce food production and availability; a significant concern for the many countries in Africa that depend on these communities for their national food security. On the other hand, farmers who provide produce for the market as well as their own consumption may be well-placed to weather the crisis, both in terms of feeding themselves and earning an income when other forms of employment decline.

Post-COVID 19, governments should invest in more sustainable rural agricultural programmes that can help citizens to become more self-reliant, mitigate the impacts of severe events, increase rural prosperity, ensure more sustainable food systems and food security, and create greater resilience in fragile states. **Economic growth in agriculture has been proven to be 2-3 times more effective at reducing poverty and food insecurity than growth in other sectors. Farmers and agricultural workers should be included in the government's assistance package and any social protection programs addressing the crisis.** As lockdown measures have increased, demand has risen for home delivery of groceries and e-commerce. This trend should be encouraged and promoted post-corona to not only boost livelihoods, but also to reduce our carbon footprint and improve economic and ecological sustainability.
#AfricanEconomies #FoodSecurity #SustainableAgriculture #RuralFarmers #e-commerce

CLIMATE CHANGE

A greater commitment to green growth

[Ayo Sotinrin](#), Nigeria, is Group CEO at SAO Group, one of Africa's leading social impact investments and advisory firms, and Africa 2.0 Nigeria Chapter Head

COVID-19 is, in the words of Christiana Figueres, "*the most urgent threat facing humanity today...[but] we cannot forget that climate change is the biggest threat facing humanity over the long term*". The effect of the pandemic globally has been a drastic drop in carbon emissions especially from sectors such as transport, which usually emit 23% of global totals. These emissions have fallen in the short term due to measures such as restrictions in international travel and lockdowns. It is too early to tell the utility of lockdowns among African communities that live day-to-day in the informal sector. Among affluent African communities, the lockdown could lead to habits that are good for the climate and the sustainable growth of cities, in particular an appreciation for sustainable agriculture and local and regional produce, and - more importantly - a commitment to zero hunger on the continent. In this regard, **it is crucial that we lobby our leaders to ensure that green growth plans are not divorced**

from economic recovery stimulus plans. In particular, any approaches to national, regional and infrastructure development to strengthen Africa's economies.

One positive response from the coronavirus pandemic is that many communities have taken big steps to protect each other. These community actions have sparked hope for the climate in the longer term. Building on this mindset is critical to ensure this behaviour in the long term. With this resilient mindset we can better understand and support long term economic plans. But the public needs to understand them better and feel that their circumstances, views and leadership (as diverse as they are) are taken into account when these are being designed and implemented. When economies restart, it will provide a chance for nations to - also in the words of Christina Figueres - “*recover better, to include the most vulnerable in those plans, and a chance to shape the 21st century economy in ways that are clean, green, healthy, just, safe and more resilient*”.

#ClimateAction #GreenGrowth #SocialInclusion

ECONOMY, FINANCE & NATURAL RESOURCES

Opportunities on the financial front

Caleb Tamfu, Cameroon, is a Technical Agricultural Advisor in West and Central Africa

As health experts debate different scenarios of how COVID-19 will play out in Africa, the financial markets seem to have found a consensus: Africa will be impacted significantly. Despite limited fiscal and monetary capacities, African governments are compelled to put together stimulus packages to support their respective economies, while private investors are rushing to liquify assets. In the short term, this could lead to investments being put on hold, revised or cancelled completely; difficulties in raising growth capital and a significant decline of investments into new ventures. In the mid- to long-term, established business models will be forced to adjust to the “new-normal” of the post-COVID-19 economy.

The investment community is working relentlessly to limit the scale of the financial damage across Africa. Since the start of 2020, about 250 bonds have been issued by sovereign and corporate entities across Africa. According to EM Investment Partners, about 50% of these bond issues have been issued in April 2020 alone, with a good number associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Development Financial Institutions (DFIs) operating in Africa, as well as impact investors with a long-term view, have committed debt investments to support short- to mid-term liquidity requirements. The Islamic Development Bank (IsDB), a Saudi Arabia-based DFI, has ring-fenced US\$2.3 billion for a COVID-19 crisis platform. The funding will go into its member countries, 27 of which are in Africa. On top of that, IsDB has already provided a US\$279 million financing package to Tunisia, US\$162 million to Senegal, US\$46.2 million to Cote d'Ivoire, and US\$35 million to Sudan. IsDB has allocated US\$33 million to Mauritania, US\$25 million to Sierra Leone, US\$22.5 million to Mali, US\$20.2 million to Uganda and US\$15 million to Guinea-Bissau, US\$20 million to Chad and US\$20 million to Guinea. The funds are intended for strengthening healthcare systems, enhancing capital market liquidity and investment in technological solutions.

The African Development Bank (AfDB) has also unveiled a US\$10 billion package to combat the impact of COVID-19 across Africa. It is still too early to tell if these measures will be enough to avoid the expected collateral damage from the pandemic on the continent. However, as the situation unfolds, short-term risk aversion will eventually make way for investment opportunities as international investors pursuing diversification and higher returns will be compelled by investment opportunities in Africa. Most likely, the return of capital will start with debt

investments, then move to listed equity before private equity. In the long term, investors with significant asset/liability imbalances such as pension funds will have no choice but go on a search for returns in emerging markets – including Africa. **In the short term, proven business models in healthcare, health-tech, agribusiness and agri-health should still attract some sort of investments and/or grants.** For all other businesses, the focus will be to ride the liquidity crunch.

Mid- to long-term, capital will likely go to business opportunities focusing on intra-regional Africa trades, processing for local consumption, essential infrastructure and energy. A solid business model, strong liquidity and sustainable returns would be key determinants to enable investors to decide on how to allocate their capital in Africa. So long as these opportunities continue to exist and investors are keen to earn sustainable returns, Africa will still attract capital post the COVID-19 pandemic. #investmentopportunities #intraregionaltrade

Africa's energy: A sudden confluence of uncertainties

Adebowale Lukanmbi, Nigeria, is a global Energy thought-leader who articulates varied perspectives on global Oil & Gas trends, tying technical and business actions to geo-political and social impact

Africa is well-known for her wealth in a vast array of naturally-occurring raw minerals. Energy resources - crude hydrocarbons in particular - are easily found in several regions and the exploitation and monetization of these resources are the single highest source of foreign direct investment into the continent.

Africa's upstream Oil and Gas industry entered 2020 facing new, uncommon challenges. The trends resulting from the emergence of humungous volumes of high-grade hydrocarbons now being produced from shales - a previously impossible phenomenon - particularly from a region home to the biggest investors, now had alarm bells sounding off loudly. Traditional investors were at risk of drying up as they could comfortably invest their monies in an environment closer to home, with lower risks and decent returns. Over the previous couple of years, prolific Oil and Gas production from shale-producing regions had led to increasingly over-supply of the global market, leading to the need for serious supply cut-backs by members of OPEC+, the oil-producing nations group to which most large hydrocarbon-producing nations belonged. This led to a serious glut in global supplies and subsequent inevitable crash in prices, to levels not seen since the 1970s.

As the COVID-19 pandemic extended previously unheard-of lockdowns across most national regions, the demand for energy to run businesses and manufacturing plants dipped below critical levels. Demand for all forms of land, rail, air and sea travel – whether community, business, personal or holiday – all but totally dried up.

For nations like Nigeria, Angola, Algeria, Gabon and Equatorial Guinea, this impact on oil demand threatens foreign currency reserve levels by as much as 60%. Compounding this threat is the fact that these regional geographies are largely import-dependent for goods and services - and income from hydrocarbon sales can be up to 90% of the foreign money needed to pay for those imports. The pandemic has also led to a serious degradation of asset quality across global financial markets, leading to a rout in Foreign Portfolio Investments, particularly in Nigeria, with investors selling off investments in local Treasuries, Bonds and Stocks and exiting the country with dollars bought from the same depleted stock of foreign exchange reserves. However, even with these occurrences, certain externalities have led to interesting consequences and, indeed, paradoxes appear. We can use the Nigeria situation as an illustration:

As a nation with huge Oil and Gas resources, including Reserves, vast exploration & production infrastructure, mature and robust regulatory terms, 3 large refineries and several with smaller capacities, and a defined market, it has always boggled the mind why Nigeria spent billions of

precious dollars annually, importing petroleum products refined from its crude barrels in foreign countries. Coupled with this is a fixed local sales price regime on the most common products, such as gasoline, which has meant additional billions of dollars expended annually on subsidizing the price at the pump to maintain the fixed price. Over the years, this highly-subsidized fixed price has created a well-organized criminal supply chain of subsidized petroleum products being smuggled and sold across several countries in West and Central Africa. The sharp drop in global Oil prices has, however, altered the indices on this activity as the landing price of the imported products have now dropped below the fixed pump prices in-Country, automatically eliminating the concept of subsidies and saving the associated budgeted expenditure. This has given the opportunity to the Federal Government to announce, officially, the scrapping of the long-implemented practice of fixing prices through subsidies. Further, without subsidies, the petroleum product smuggling value chain becomes unprofitable, curbing volumes lost to that illegal market, leading to a drop in imported product volumes into Nigeria, with the consequent drop in the volume of dollars needed to finance the importation of each litre. This is bound to cushion the effect of depressed income from the drop in oil prices.

A key influence on the sustainability of continued expenditure on petroleum product importation in the West Africa region will be the successful completion of the 650,000 bbl/day refinery being built in Lagos and due to come onstream in 2021. **This refinery, one of the largest in the world, will be a game-changer in the expenditure profile of the region, particularly at this time of anticipated challenges in the national budgets of several countries. The refinery will eliminate the need for the expenditure of billions of dollars on petroleum product importation from foreign markets while lifting tax income to Local Governments and an expectedly cheaper source of energy to local businesses, providing a further cushion to the impact of lower Oil income on the governments purse.**

Lockdowns due to COVID-19 mitigation efforts have also resulted in a huge spike in digital communications and delivery. The impact of all these is, presumably, a drop in the demand for physical vehicular movement and air travel, with the consequent drop in energy demand. The resulting impact is a drastic reduction in the demand for dollars for personal travel, vacations and discretionary business travel activity. Economic analysts will be waiting to see if the increase in efficiencies will lead to an increase in economic activity and, possibly, an increase in Energy demand. #oil&energy #timeforAfricanrefineries

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Time for sleeping giants to wake

[Doreen Mbaya](#), Kenya, is a Health, Beauty and Wellness Manufacturer, CEO and founder of Karembou Spa Limited, Media and Communications Consultant, and a farmer

The opportunity we were all waiting for finally came, but it was disguised as work, looked too hard, wore a mask, gloves and kept a social distance.

Anyone who has ever tried to push through the bureaucratic path for government permits to allow them to do business - even in a normal environment - knows it can be a sticky and frustrating affair. Try getting a manufacturing permit in an environment where a pandemic is in progress and COVID-19 is ravaging the world, where countries that are developed, with abundant resources are floundering, will quickly turn you into a believer. A believer that no matter what, you will call and push and convince the bureaucrats that they can approve applications online instead of at lengthy committee meetings in a boardroom surrounded by endless flasks of tea where they may possibly end up infecting one another. A believer that knows that on the

other side of crisis lies opportunity, and how important it is that Africa doesn't waste a crisis like the one we have been handed now.

From manufacturing my skincare products for a specific segment that prefers fragrance free natural alternatives, I find myself waking up to requests for hand sanitizer, masks, pre-cut French fries and a host of other items that make a restricted life all the more bearable. *A crisispreneur* of sorts I became. Numerous phone-calls and persuasions on Twitter to wake up and fast track applications for local manufacture finally yielded results and Kenyans have risen to the task producing masks, some ventilators, more sanitizers, motorbike shields, etc. I am glad to note that I was not alone in the push for better. And somehow, despite the situation, my manufacturing approvals did come through and I am now off to the races.

The slowdown and stop of Chinese imports is indeed a delight. We have gone back to our kitchens and factories and literally dusted off our brains and started creating products to help us bridge the gap. But wait - we should stick with this long after coronavirus has left the building. Self-reliance, creating a sober balance of trade and putting some real energy behind our local creative entrepreneurship is certainly the way.

Five take-aways and ideas from my experience:

1. Let's lobby now to lift/reduce the regulatory barriers that exist with the various governments; the hurdles that local producers have to jump are much more than those that a Chinese/foreign company has to comply with to sell in Africa;
2. Put money behind local innovations that respond to the emerging crisis in healthcare and wellbeing of our people;
3. Talk up our local products and services in our social spaces;
4. Encourage and urge our governments to digitize their processes to enable faster turnaround and reduce corruption-hard but can be done with the right amount of pressure and persuasion; and
5. New Africametrics - for every Chinese product approved how many local applications in the same category are pushed through?

I see us coming out of lockdown with a different sense of who we are and what we can get done when we mean business.

#AfricanCrisispreneur #reinventingbusinesses

Africa's secret weapon: women and youth

Mireille Tushiminina, Democratic Republic of the Congo, is Executive Director of the African Development Solutions Lab-Experts (ADSL-E), a gender and youth mediator, and Political Affairs expert, and a community organizer

During 20+ years I have worked conscientiously on peace-building efforts in conflict-affected territories in Africa and accentuated the power of women through the *Women, Peace and Security Agenda*. I have spent many years in discourse about women, but now in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, I see a viable opportunity to move beyond rhetoric: We must place African women and youth centre stage. Although they account for the lowest portion of employment in African countries, if we think strategically about our response to this crisis, we can address both joblessness and the pandemic itself.

The pandemic in Africa is urgent and evolving but it is critical to put infrastructure in place while infection rates are still comparatively low. As we see in other regions around the world, health-care systems are overwhelmed and are facing an unprecedented need for personal protective equipment (PPE). Africa, where many countries have a critical shortage of health workers and health systems need to be strengthened, will too face these challenges if the pandemic is not

contained. Currently the global competition for PPE and other resources to manage the pandemic is increasing exponentially to the point where countries are appropriating each other's cargos or global suppliers, mostly Western, have established a global hierarchy of access where African needs are last to be met. But this is an opportunity for African leaders to strengthen intra-African production and markets to meet the continental surge in demand and to help prepare for and prevent the dramatic uptick in infections that seems bound to arrive.

African women entrepreneurs must be targeted and youth-led start-ups must be established to boost the capacity of manufacturers to repurpose production of PPE and empower these communities beyond COVID-19. This will go a long way to stimulate innovation and boost local economies ahead of projected economic devastation post pandemic. The African Union is predicting a substantial loss of 20 million jobs and a resounding impact on the economy, which might lead to social unrest and dire food security in the coming years. However, we can move ahead of the impending problem with a cohesive approach through the Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), by coordinating a single PPE production market across the continent that recognizes that the continent's most important resource is its people.

It is time for Africa to invest in local talent, especially women and youth, not as a short-term boost, but a long-term intervention that empowers meaningfully, and beyond COVID-19. Women and youth need sustainable funding and capacity-building opportunities as central tenets of the prosperity, peace and security agenda throughout the continent. #WomenPeace&Security #YouthPeace&Security #AfricanManufacturing #ResilientCommunities #Women&Youth4Africa

We all must be entrepreneurs

Ruth Dresselgn Deneke, Ethiopia, is a Global Marketing Life Science specialist, Pharmacist, Rotarian and Pan-African youth activist

One of the collateral benefits of COVID-19 is that to tackle it, many groups have come together to contribute their skills for free. These groups must know where to plug in to support government or civil society efforts, to avoid efforts becoming redundant and resources being mismanaged as a result.

In the words of Dr. Mehari Taddele Maru, at the European University Institute, *"the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic will not succeed unless the virus is fought tooth and nail by society in its entirety. Africa lacks the testing kits, technology, drones and Artificial Intelligence to trace effectively, but it has pervasive community social networks that could be easily mobilized and repurposed for tracing COVID-19 infections even in remote areas and difficult geography"*. Many other leaders, from all sectors, have echoed this sentiment. Hence, the importance of community cooperation, civil society mobilization and infrastructure repurposing and now African leaders need to speak with one voice and commit beyond words. They must walk the talk.

This is happening both from the top and at the grassroots. The leaders agreed to establish continental ministerial coordination committees on health, finance and transport to support a comprehensive continental strategy to tackle and mitigate the impact of the pandemic. An exceptional situation calls for exceptional measures and only creative and entrepreneurial leadership will beat the pandemic and ensure collaboration and transparency between sectors of civil society and communities.

At the grassroots level, youth are demonstrating their value as critical untapped resources to enhance sustainable efforts to build the infrastructure that many African countries and communities need. One example is the Ethiopia COVID-19 Response Team (ECRT), a volunteer team with 1,400 people around the world, myself included, working together to support the Ethiopian Ministry of Health and partners' efforts to fight against COVID-19. Our work includes seven workstreams including surveillance, awareness, food delivery, DIY gear, and volunteer training. Similar efforts are taking place in other African countries. ECRT is committed to share best practice through a blog.

Leaders and grassroots movements must be aligned against COVID-19 and beyond the pandemic. The public expect that we continue to innovate together and be entrepreneurs from our corners in everything that we do. And we must. #CommunityInnovation #PublicPrivatePartnerships #EntrepreneurialLeadership #CivilSociety #CommunityEngagement #AfricanYouth #AfricanUnity

Let entrepreneurs redefine the economy

[Sefa Gohoho Boatin](#), Ghana, is CEO of The Songhai Africa Group which focuses on three investment sectors: consumables, hospitality, agribusiness. Sefa represented Africa 2.0 for President Obama's Young African Leaders Initiative. She is Africa 2.0 Founding member, and incoming Africa 2.0 Chairperson.

This pandemic is a disruption of the entire world, changing how we work and interact at all levels. Early indications are that things may never return to how they were pre-COVID-19. Under lockdown, many young entrepreneurs have adapted their business models, embracing technological solutions to take business operations offsite, even if they were unprepared prior to the outbreak. While free online conferencing tools have undoubtedly saved some companies, the majority of small businesses depend on profits from daily sales, which are hampered by high data costs or poor connectivity. There are also businesses that cannot work remotely. If the pandemic persists, these businesses will not survive and some of Africa's most innovative and capable youth will join the ranks of the unemployed.

As COVID-19 began to grow in major economies, governments and startups in Africa implemented measures to conduct a greater volume of transactions away from cash and toward digital payments. This is a tool many young Africans were already used to using. Likewise, youth leadership in social media usage has affirmed its place as a necessity, not a luxury, for life in the 'New Normal'. The first month of lockdown has seen young Africans develop apps for every social interaction, even streaming funerals online and spearheading a new generation of working and shopping practices that will become permanent fixtures in a post-virus world.

We should use this as our entry point to a new Africa: a continent of social enterprise, driven by energetic entrepreneurs working in small and medium enterprises to create tangible local value. Finding local solutions to social concerns, we can provide environmental and food resilience, clean energy and other common issues to create an economic virtuous spiral, driving growth and inclusion of vulnerable groups, encouraging sustainable consumption and generating new governance models that put impact first. Greater localization will also increase value-addition as a norm, accelerating the industrialization of resource-based economies such as Ghana: Massive restructuring of supply chains will move production centers closer to end users to minimize dependence on vulnerable transport hubs.

Startups represent a large portion of the African economy so the government cannot afford to let them fail. Governments must find a way for them to survive, whether through tax cuts or cash grants or investment to keep business afloat. Growing the disposable income of youth brings societal-wide benefits, so entities and institutions need to support the companies that employ them as a priority, a social responsibility and a service to humanity. #supportAfricanentrepreneurs

HEALTHCARE

Agrihealth: Expanding Africa's superfoods

Caleb Tamfu, Cameroon, is a Technical Agricultural Advisor in West and Central Africa

Hippocrates said “*Let food be thy medicine and medicine be thy food.*” Sustainable health is both a preventive and a curative measure. Prevention-wise, our diet plays a vital role in keeping us healthy as well as helping us strengthen our immune system.

Even prior to the COVID-19 crisis, there was a growing demand for nutrient-rich food predominantly grown in Africa. Known as the “African superfoods”, boabab, tigernuts, neem, aidan fruits, tamarind, marogo leaves, sorghum, moringa, bitterleaf, fonio and teff are some of the items grown in Africa that have become increasingly popular in Western diets due to their numerous nutritional properties. They are rich in vitamins and minerals, gluten-free, suitable for vegans, and most of them can only be sourced from Africa. Most of these superfoods are cultivated and marketed by cooperatives or social enterprises, employing mostly people at the bottom of the income pyramid.

A post COVID-19 environment offers a new opportunity to increase the cultivation, processing, marketing and consumption of these superfoods, not just for the international market but equally for local consumption. Africa still has the highest prevalence of malnutrition. These superfoods should also be included in plans to boost agricultural production and promoted within the African markets. They should be included in plans to contain the pandemic. These superfoods should be included in school meal programs especially in the areas across the continent most affected by malnutrition.

For potential investors, entrepreneurs and related stakeholders, the African superfoods offer a unique opportunity to be involved in a high value and growing market, a way to have direct impact by providing jobs and sustainable source of income to the cooperatives or social enterprises, and most importantly an opportunity for all of us to stay healthy by enhancing our immune system.

As disruptive as this pandemic has been to the world and Africa, certain fundamentals will remain the same – everyone will have to eat and more so, eat healthily. **The COVID-19 pandemic has also highlighted the potential still available for Africa to play a vital role in the global food value chain. It is up to us to make good use of this opportunity.** #africansuperfoods #opportunity4agriculture #opportunity4health

Healthcare is an ecosystem

[Ngu H. Morcho](#), Cameroon, is the Founder & Managing Director of Yako Medical Africa, Ltd, and an Ashoka Fellow. Yako is pioneering a Pan-African Managed Healthcare Technology Services and Infrastructure platform operated through an Integrated Care Ecosystem (“Yako ICE Model”)

COVID19 has ushered in a New Normal globally and especially in Africa. The impact will be felt across sectors. Economically, most businesses will lose significant revenues or go out of business. Societally, as human interactions now include fewer physical touches, hugs and handshakes, at least temporarily. Finally, health systems will see investment and focus will be placed on improving health infrastructure and access to basic primary care.

The overall trend will be towards greater use of digital platforms for most interactions. Short-term, Africa will suffer more than other continents as we rely heavily on imports and most central banks are propped up by IMF loans. In two to three years, particularly in countries with aspirational and visionary leaders, **we should see greater access to primary healthcare for the**

average person and a shift towards more local manufacturing and production for essential products. A new mindset: made in Africa, for Africans, by Africans!

We spent the past four years at Yako educating our stakeholder community on the value that an Integrated Care Ecosystem business model can play in strengthening health systems across Africa. We are partnering with the private and public sector to develop new models to provide affordable access to quality healthcare with a focus on the working class, both the formal and informal sector, who make up over 80% of the African population. Sadly, we needed COVID-19 to make one of the strongest cases for such a model. The solutions exist, and are home-grown. As we move through this pandemic, let's accelerate their implementation. #CreatingTomorrow #YakoICEModel #AffordableAccessToHealthcare #NewNormalforAfrica

Investments in health are investments in our future

Ruth Dresselgn Deneke, Ethiopia, is a Global Marketing Life Science specialist, Pharmacist, Rotarian and Pan-African youth activist

COVID-19 has shown the lack of awareness, preparedness and weakness of the healthcare systems globally and in Africa. It has also brought to light issues such as weak infrastructure, in country coordination, and lack of cooperation between different actors.

Compared to other regions, African leaders were quick to shut down their borders and controls as preventive measures. Unfortunately, the socio-economic structure and cultures of their communities present many challenges to ensure that the lockdown is effective. In addition, globalization, as we understood it, has shown its limits as it failed to help allocate resources, especially essential health and emergency goods, across borders or continents.

The economic repercussions of these breakdowns in trade rightly worry African leaders. A global recession will have an impact in the necessary financial injections to ensure sustainable development in African countries on top of managing the population boom and potential social unrest that could occur if opportunities for personal growth are not generated or facilitated. Ethiopian Prime Minister, Dr. Abiy Ahmed, wrote "if COVID-19 is not beaten in Africa it will return to haunt us all", that is, **a failure to defeat the virus in Africa will only bounce back to the rest of the world.** Therefore, this is the moment for global leaders, from all sectors, to work together and invest in the long-term development of the health systems in Africa, and in particular in the development and retention of the health workforce. #InvestingInHealth #InvestingInAfricanHealthWorkforce

A renewed value for African health workers

Susana Edjang, Equatorial Guinea and Spain, is an international development, global health and peace and security expert. She is co-founding member of Afroinnova, an African diaspora innovation platform, member of the Council of the UK'S Royal African Society and member of the Governing Council of Africa 2.0.

African countries have made good progress reducing mortality and prolonging life since the 1970s. Through government commitments such as the Abuja Declaration, where they pledged to allocate 15% of national expenditure to health; strategies for the scaling up and promotion of mid-level health workers; and supporting a WHO *Global Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel* they have strengthened health systems, reducing the burden of disease across the continent, and strengthened its health workforce.

By the time COVID-19 hit the world, the global health workforce amounted to about 43 million people, unevenly distributed around the world. Most of these are concentrated in Western countries, but within Africa there remains great disparities and shortfalls: To achieve the SDG goals of 4.5 health workers per 1000 population (from an average 1.30 in Africa today), an extra 6.1 million more health workers need to be recruited and trained.

The backbone of any health system is its nurses. The 2020 WHO's *State of the World Nursing Report* estimates there are globally 27.9 million nurses, constituting nearly 60% of the health workforce. In Africa, as around the world, nursing is mainly a female profession – with men forming 24% of the industry - but where are the voices of nurses represented? Even in the times of COVID-19, when 13 out of 54 African countries (laudably) have female health ministers, nurses are seldom heard.

2020 is the first year of *Nursing Now's* global campaign to raise the profile and status of nurses so that African nursing voices can be found. It is also the WHO's *International Year of the Nurse and the Midwife*. Both of these mean 2020 is the year at the heart of African health systems.

Overcoming COVID-19 and moving beyond it will occur through sustained and enhanced progress on the education and employment of nurses, creating employment and leadership opportunities.

#AfricanHealthWorkforce #NursingNow #WomenInGlobalHealth
#diversityofvoicesinhealthcare

LEADERSHIP & HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

After the masks

Ciku Kimeria, Kenya, is an author, an explorer, a communication consultant, freelance journalist and travel writer. She has traveled to 55 countries, 22 of them in Africa. She is currently working on her second novel.

After the masks, who will we be? What version of Africa will we find ourselves in? After the memes and shared videos – some funny, some heartwarmingly showing Africans extending generosity to each other in these trying times and others a testament to the *can do* attitude on the continent. The scientists in Dakar innovating for the continent and beyond, businesspeople in Kenya reworking their models around social distancing, the growth of apps in Cameroon, Nigeria, Rwanda, providing services to help citizens adjust to the new normal.

After the masks, will we remember that even though this disease did not originate on the continent, a faction of society in China chose to dehumanize our fellow Africans? Will we think of all the injustices Africans everywhere face on the bottom rung of societies? Will we look inside and remember that we, as the home of humanity, need to do better – for everyone, but especially for Africans. Will we think of the times we have done better? My Senegalese friend says, “Even at the height of Ebola, the hundreds of thousands of Guineans in Senegal were not treated any differently? Will we remember that even despite the prevailing global narrative, Africa hosts 37% of the world's refugees – offering solace to many within our own borders? After the masks, will we remember that we are stronger as a unit than as individual nation states scrambling to sign unequal treaties with foreign powers – a rush to the bottom? Will we embrace the ways that Africa can better work for Africans?

After the masks – will we remember our collective humanity? Will we think of an Africa that existed before the 1884 Berlin Conference and the scramble for Africa? An Africa that our ancestors could roam freely around. An Africa that would look at confused by the plight of the hundreds of thousands of Nubians and ethnic Somalis in Kenya, fighting for the right to citizenship in a country they have called home for more than a century. What would our ancestors think of the fact that it's cheaper for us to fly - even get fruits and vegetables from -

Paris to Dakar, than it is from Nairobi to Dakar? Would they understand concepts such as Ivoirité, xenophobia and the countless other ways we *other* each other as Africans? What would they think of the people dying crossing the Mediterranean, bodies swelling in the ocean, brothers and sisters seeking better pastures, leaving behind a continent of 54 nations that they feel has offered them minimal life opportunities?

After the masks, will we extend the same Teranga (hospitality) to other Africans as we do to foreigners or will we go back to our colonial mentalities of viewing other Africans as *in need, coming to take our jobs, different, not like us*. Or will we, similar to Mohamed, my couchsurfing host in Bobo-Dioulasso open our hearts to other Africans as he did when he said, "I have hosted over 800 people and you are the first African I have met, coming here as a tourist. I am honored and have read so much about your country and want to hear about it from you." Will we, like almost every Somalilander I met in Hargeisa say, "Sister, thank you for visiting my country." Will we, as Africans, see the value to be found in tapping into this continent of 1.2 billion people, a GDP of \$2.5 trillion and the world's youngest population?

After the masks, will we remember who we are under the masks?

#TheAfricaWeWant #visafreeafrica #africanpassport #ACFTA #AfCFTA

Seize the moment and look within

Dr. Elizabeth Mary Okelo, Kenya, is Founder of Makini School Ltd and Kenya Women Finance Trust (KWFT), Palos Farm in Kibos, Kisumu City County, Kenya

We have been locked down in our homes and in our countries. Do we know what is in these homes? We have assets that can help us, we may be sitting on gold that we are not translating to anything, but complain a lot. We must look deeper and inward at this time to come up with our own solutions during the quarantine: Have we taken stock? What can we do with what we have? We need to take advantage of what is locally available at home whilst mobility is limited for an unknown period.

What value do we have? I have a lot of African vegetables. How can I preserve them to prolong their lives or package them to send them through courier to other parts of Kenya or East Africa that needs them? At my local home in Kibos, Kisumu City County, I have offered the local government the use of my pick-up truck to distribute food provided by the government of Kenya to local people. This is a symbiotic relationship in the era of COVID-19.

A key COVID-19 effect is claiming this moment for self-reliance in Africa by coming up with our own solutions to meet our needs.

Once we can come up with our own African solutions that solve African problems, we should have arrived and can then share and scale these home-grown solutions. This is the time to rise and conquer, starting with recognizing the assets available when we look closely. #opportunity4selfreliance #supporthomegrownsolutions

A new narrative: The rise of African Leadership

Sarah J. Owusu, Ghana and Denmark, lives in Mozambique and is an award-winning Organisation Development practitioner, innovation consultant and coach with a focus on facilitating conversations for transformation. She is co-founder of We Will Lead Africa (www.wewillleadafrika.com) that collects, curates and shares stories of everyday African leadership.

If one thing has become piercingly obvious as a result of the global pandemic, it is that everything and everyone is deeply interconnected. Whether we are talking about the invisible

spread of the virus across borders and other imaginary boundaries, the potential domino effect when one link of a supply chain is unable to survive, or the contribution of the healthcare system to our entire social fabric, it is clear: we are part of (not separate from) a complex system. This is not a new realization, but never before has it so directly impacted so many people, in a way that is impossible to ignore. I believe that this reminder of interconnectivity points towards changes in the way we will lead; towards more connectedness, less individualism. It means the days of the Lone Ranger or Superhero leader are numbered, and the space for collective leadership opening up. It is in this space that Africa has a lot to share with the world.

For my co-founders and I at *We Will Lead Africa*, collective leadership means a leadership that is relational, human, empathetic. Grounded in dialogue and story-telling, it is deeply respectful of the unifying web that we all form part of. Across African countries and cultures, we see different expressions of this we-ness. One example is the term *Ubuntu*, usually translated to mean “I am because we are”, that has become familiar globally.

Historically, African leadership has been portrayed as broken, corrupt, ineffective or even non-existent. Now we are seeing the decisive action of many African governments in the face of this pandemic paying off, and the World Health Organisation recognizing these efforts. **A new narrative around Africa and African leadership is emerging. The hierarchical leadership model has been flipped on its head and replaced with something more inclusive and distributed. Across the continent, many locally-led and locally-relevant innovations are emerging, bottom up.** Everyday Africans doing extraordinary things, together, demonstrating solutions to challenges are found through activating collective intelligence and collaboration. It is these stories that we collect, curate and amplify through the *We Will Lead Africa* platform. It is our contribution to shifting narratives and uplifting African leadership principles.

Despite the immensity of the current challenges still to overcome, one of the positive disruptions of this moment will be a return to the principles of what it means to lead as an African and that enable us to respond meaningfully to complexity. It is time for us to share this way of being with the world. #leadership #innovation #inclusion #narratives #EverydayLeaders

INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT

Accelerating the case for women's empowerment

Marina Diboma, Netherlands, is Deputy Managing Director at Netherlands-African Business Council (NABC), member of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs Think Thank platform INCLUDE for Inclusive Development, Board Member of the African Studies Centre (ASC) Foundation and Africa Unlimited TV Host & Co-producer.

We know that the most effective policy for sustainable development is investing in empowering women and girls. We have the evidence about their impact on families, communities, industries and nations. Any efforts to overcome the COVID-19 pandemic needs to ensure and enhance their empowerment, including especially their sexual and reproductive health and rights, social protection and access to finance.

Around the world, the value of women's unpaid work, at home and in their communities, is estimated to amount to 13% of the global GDP or about US \$10 trillion. On top of that, about 50% of working women are working in vulnerable situations, often unprotected by labor laws. According to UN Women, women make up over 74% of workers in Africa's informal sector, often in the agricultural, hospitality and domestics sectors (domestic workers represent about 2.2% of Africa's labour force, over 5 million people, 74% of whom are women). Most domestic workers do

not have access to any social protection. In agriculture, recent estimates by the World Bank found that, depending on the country, women contribute between 20-40% of labour input. Despite this situation, approximately 26% of African women are engaged in entrepreneurial activities, the highest rate of female entrepreneurship globally, according to the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor.

After COVID 19, **we must see women from all classes and at all levels participating and leading action in all sectors of society** in Africa and Afro-descendant communities around the world, beyond rhetoric and tokenism. It is important that there are at least double the women in positions in issues of their expertise and where they really have the last say and can advance the gender equality agenda and therefore, sustainable development for all. #GenderEquality #Sustainablefuture #Shedecides #Sheleads #WomenEmpowerment #AfroDecade

We are the ones we've been waiting for

[Sefa Gohoho Boatın](#), Ghana, is CEO of The Songhai Africa Group which focuses on three investment sectors: Consumables, Hospitality, Agribusiness. Founder of Creative Business incubator, UNTAMED EMPIRE. Sefa represented Africa 2.0 for President Obama's Young African Leaders Initiative. She is also Africa 2.0 Founding member, and incoming Africa 2.0 Chairperson.

Who could have believed four months ago what today's reality would be? The pandemic is hugely impacting Africa's youth - the same youth that hold the key to unlocking most of Africa's solutions - but African leaders remain uninterested. They are failing to recognise our power, especially that of young women, who are at the centre of health and care. Is there a clear way forward, when so many have lost hope in the systems of power that rule us? The answer is YES.

Across Africa, the critical class is the youth: With a combined youth population of 226 million, 60% of the entire continent and a median age of just 19.7 years old, the population as a whole is very young. Post-COVID-19, it is the youth that will emerge from the periphery of society's processes and structures to demand greater recognition as stakeholders, targets and partners for the attainment of development goals.

Many young people are taking matters into our own hands. We are having vibrant conversations and telling our stories about the changing world around us. We are sensitive to challenges specific to our communities, and providing concrete solutions to issues of value chain systems, care of the elderly and the homeless, the practical application of physical distancing in high density settlements, and how to use digital learning to develop essential life skills. **We no longer recognize the authority of domestic or foreign governments and entities over our lives and we are willing to take bold action to secure our right to healthy, prosperous and fulfilling lives.** We are here to save humanity as a whole, starting with our home, Africa. The youth are at the forefront of social media, assured of its place as a necessity in the fight against COVID-19. Through social media, African youth have the power to influence Africa even to the remotest villages – and not just for political campaigns: Digital activists founded [Mutual Aid Kenya](#) to assist vulnerable people falling between the gaps of government assistance; Stephen Selassie Asuo has used his platform [YALI TV](#) to launch an entrepreneurship competition called “Dis-Covid” for homegrown solutions post-coronavirus; Chef Elijah Amoo is feeding tens of thousands of the most vulnerable during the lockdown. Youth are the continent's nerve center and must be involved in the drafting of any plans for the nations of the continent. We need open digital platforms for youth to make suggestions, map and measure needs, and give ideas to their governments on national interventions. The best of these should be rewarded.

Long term, Africa has no choice but to harness its youth dividend and reposition youth at the centre of the broader agenda. Websites for Ministries of Youth lack any Covid-19 information for young people, so where will they go for direction? Given that these ministries are the highest organ in the current architecture of youth development, it is not surprising that its operations are

the subject of scrutiny by civil society organisations, development partners and of course, by us youth ourselves.

There is a lot that the world has lost, but the youth in Africa are and will always be the hope of the continent. The more you involve the youth, the closer we are to winning this battle. Like all things, COVID-19 too, shall pass, but what will be next? It is up to the youth to decide.

ARTS, MEDIA & ENTERTAINMENT

Overcoming fake news and media

Obi Asika, Nigeria, is Co-Founder of @SMWlagos one of the largest technology and new media conferences in Africa, Founder @IbaAjie an innovation hub & community resource center, Founder @DragonAfrica, based in Lagos, working and producing conferences, platforms and more

COVID-19 has shown the deep breakdown of media in Africa and around the world. The enormous volumes of fake news and conspiracies being generated are generally driven by political cells and peoples' fears. In particular since December 2019, when the world became increasingly aware of the situation of Wuhan, there has been a global push of anti-Chinese sentiment. Social media has been awash with all sorts of unverified videos of Chinese habits and many of us on the continent made up our mind about the alleged role of the Chinese in the pandemic before COVID-19 hit the continent.

If we consider the abysmal lack of education, and the colonial legacy, among most of us, these racist tropes, which most of us freely share, we should at least acknowledge our own prejudices and the fact that we have not been exactly balanced in our own analysis. There are some conclusions that can be drawn from this. It is becoming increasingly difficult to separate fact from fiction as most Africans grew up distrustful of the colonial powers and leaders and hence of their news sources, so perhaps this is one reason why we are easier to be impacted by the fake news sites that prey on all Africans and push all sorts of disruptive and distracting counter narratives. However, the real problem is how do we balance the need to protect and nurture our freedoms while at the same time protect ourselves from manipulated news, in particular the most vulnerable among us.

We must all be careful not to fall for constructed narratives with distracting political agendas. We have a lot of things to do, our plate is full. Thus, let's always remember that as Africans we must engage in this world fully aware of our own advantages and objectives. We can be friends and partners with China, Canada, the United States, Russia, countries in the West, the Middle East and Latin America and the Caribbean as long as we are also mindful of our lessons from history and act in our own best interests.

Post COVID-19, **one of the best ways to counter fake news is to invest and grow in our own reliable media and news platforms that are able to earn their reputation and public trust across our countries and communities.**

These trusted sources will be critical at all times, both for pandemic responses, for economic growth, for the protection of our fundamental human rights and for ensuring that our own channels tell our diverse stories. The control and development of media platforms is a place where Africa lags and as such we tend to be defensive in our communications instead of being proactive. We need more trusted and independent media platforms for all nations on the continent and we need to be able to promote enlightened views and not always react with a herd mentality approach to each new event. #FakeNews #AfricanMedia #NewNarratives #DecolonisingMedia

Nurturing the thirst for African original content

[Obi Asika](#), Nigeria, is Co-Founder of @SMWlagos one of the largest technology and new media conferences in Africa, Founder @IbaAjie an innovation hub & community resource center, Founder @DragonAfrica, based in Lagos, working and producing conferences, platforms and more

Like in all regions around the world, COVID-19 is an enormous blow for African arts, especially live entertainment, music concerts, theatre, the film industry, dance and comic performers and more. Over the last decade, Afrobeats, the West African music genre, has been winning over the world on all platforms with artists counting millions of streaming listens, views and sales on social media platforms. None of those platforms are owned by Africans. Very few of them are really available in Africa which brings home the key issue of partnering our hard with our soft power. We need African-owned platforms that are backed to scale across these spaces. Over 60% of one billion Africans have mobile phones; our markets are real.

The cultural and creative industries are growing rapidly in Africa. The focus must now be on the online and offline monetization to enable sales, distribution and merchandising content. Post-COVID-19, we need to focus on strengthening the business by building new platforms to help business infrastructure and nurture local talent, and, more importantly, to monetize our largest market: the domestic one.

In some countries like Nigeria, the formal banking authorities are classifying the creative industries for funding. This must be enhanced, strengthened and supported across the continent. We are supposed to be the storytellers of the world and the custodians of the original stories, yet, as a continent, we have not invested in telling our story. **I have a strong belief in the power of our mythology and our ancient folktales, in the way our melodies and rhythm affect the world and that magic that we bring into it.** The world has just started experiencing our flavour and I believe it will only grow, the same way it is being appreciated across our continent.

This next decade, we have the opportunity to scale up global audiences for the arts in African and its diaspora. In this regard, we must be willing actors in the convergence of technology and content, and be at the forefront of change and innovation as cultural drivers and early adopters. During this lockdown we are doing just that, through mediums like free to air (FTA) TV, radio and social media. We have been delivering original content on multiple channels to drive global attention to us from beauty and fashion influencers, to chefs, musicians, celebrities and comedians. For these reasons, we must support our creative industries so that when we rush to regain human contact and experience, it will necessitate and nurture African arts, culture and entertainment. At the same time, we must continue to populate these new platforms with authentic and original African perspectives on culture, music, comedy, lifestyle and more. #Africanoriginalcontent2theworld #Africancreativeindustry2theworld

Created In Our Own Image

[Sefa Gohoho Boatın](#), Ghana, is CEO of The Songhai Africa Group which focuses on three investment sectors: Consumables, Hospitality, Agribusiness. Represented Africa 2.0 for President Obama's Young African Leaders Initiative. She is Africa 2.0 Founding member, and incoming Africa 2.0 Chairperson.

As pastors flee their countries, they take with them the belief that men of God have privileged insights. But as they leave, the true insights of artists take their place. A quarantine that has been made more bearable by books, paintings, music and film is also now acting as a catalyst for many young Africans to express who they are with confidence and pride.

Untamed Empire Creative Business Incubator in Ghana is an ecosystem for artistic and business ideas, connecting creatives across the continent to create, collaborate and self-actuate. Contemporary African artists and designers will continue sharing their stories in their way. These lions and lionesses have learnt to write and now they are telling their own stories.

And what they tell us exposes the lie of materialism: No number of fast cars or designer clothes can save us from a pandemic. We can only hope COVID-19 kills twerking so that today's slay queens regain their truly feminine power to transcend the superficial. When you can't get your hair done, why not rock your natural hair? What's the big deal with how many social media likes you get? Maybe you will get more now - what does it matter? With banks crashing, all those funds leveraging paper stand naked as a house of cards built on shifting sand. The West is fragile and the world as we knew it has changed forever. Culturally, people are returning to basics. When Big Pharma is shut down, natural remedies and herbs remain our best option. After billions spent on arms, a virus conquers the world without a shot being fired. The overwhelm of health infrastructure that was previously only felt by a few is now felt by all.

Now is the time to question our priorities, now that money has no more worth than the toilet paper it can't buy – and if we are fighting over toilet rolls today, how much more vicious will be the fight over food tomorrow? Africans can grow our own food and have reliable access to water and energy if we tear up all that concrete paving and plant on it. We can sell or exchange our surplus. Food has become money and we have an abundance of “superfoods”. People now have no option but to choose life and nature if they want to survive. Meanwhile, the same high interest rates that forced some of us to pay for our homes, cars and everything else in cash now means we will not be swamped by debt. **African nations should engage with each other and with the wider world, but first must ensure that they, individually and as a continent, stand in good stead when we come out of lockdown to engage with the world as equal partners.**

It is time to chart a new course, one in keeping with our environment and our cultural values. The lie of the West has been exposed, and once more, necessity is making us seek home grown solutions to become the Creator in our own image.

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

The accelerated transformation of Africa's digital economy

Grace Obado, Kenya, is Associate Professor of International Relations and Sustainable Development at IE University and Schiller International University, and serves on the Board of the Choiseul Institute in Spain and the Advisory Board of Spain's Casa Africa.

While COVID-19 has brought many economic sectors to a standstill around the globe, the digital economy has emerged not only as a resilient sector but also as one with the ability to register exponential growth in challenging times. This means that countries with high levels of digitalization will suffer less from COVID-19 driven disruptions. For instance, in highly digitalized countries, students from primary to tertiary levels of education have been able to migrate to online learning within a short time period. These countries have also been able to offer telemedicine services to their citizens, their companies have been able to sell goods through online platforms and allow many employees to work remotely. This is not the case for many countries and communities in Africa.

However, in the last two decades, African countries have been increasingly investing in the digitalization of their economy with countries like Kenya leading in Fintech solutions (companies that provides financial services through software or other technology and includes anything from mobile payment apps to cryptocurrency) to M-Pesa, mobile money transfer technology. Investment in digitalization has not been homogenous across nations and sectors. COVID- 19 or not, African countries could benefit hugely by investing in the digital economy. According to a McKinsey report, the digital economy alone could offer between 20 to 30 million jobs a year between now and 2025, if the internet continues to grow at the same pace as mobile telephony. This could also absorb millions of young Africans streaming into the job market every year.

To spur the digital economy in Africa, challenges such as energy deficit, the digital gender gap, promoting STEMS in schools and creativity should be addressed with expediency. This would require private-public partnerships that would lead to inclusive economic growth.

While African countries try to overcome COVID-19, it is important that they allow space, as critical partners, to the private sector. Across the continent, we should see more private sector action across the board. In countries such as Nigeria and South Africa business leaders and philanthropists are contributing significantly to government stimulus packages. These **public private partnerships are excellent and about real commitments to sustainable development and the "Africa We Want" (better education and health results, gender equality, poverty eradication, sustainable growth, etc.)**. Developing long-standing and productive ways of working between the public and private sectors will be useful beyond this pandemic. Because of increasing urbanization across the continent and climate change, growing human-animal interaction might breed another pandemic or humanitarian situation again and we must be ready. #STEM #womeninSTEM #Africandigitaltransformation

At last a pan-African synchrotron

[Susana Edjang](#), Equatorial Guinea and Spain, is an international development, global health and peace and security expert. She is co-founding member of Afroinnova, an African diaspora innovation platform, member of the Council of the UK's Royal African Society and member of the Governing Council of Africa 2.0.

A synchrotron is a machine that uses electromagnetic fields to accelerate charged particles to very high energies, then smashes them together to study the results. The largest and most famous example in the world is at CERN, the European Organization for Nuclear Research, in Switzerland, from where for more than 50 years, where a sizable team of great scientific, technical, and administrative minds from across the world have advanced human knowledge and progress. Among other notable achievements, the internet was developed there. Through the Africa Academy of Sciences, African scientists have been asking for a synchrotron from African government and business leaders for many years. Alas, its symbolism and capacity to re-define African scientific, industrial and technological contributions to the world – comparable to sending an African to the moon - has not yet captured leaders' imaginations.

While African scientists continue to lobby for this large-scale research infrastructure, they have strengthened and mobilised investment with partners in higher education institutions. This has increased the number of people involved in research and development (R&D), which remains less than 100 people per million population (for comparison, Europe's is 3,500 per million). Bold regional initiatives such as the *Next Einstein Forum* are laying the groundwork to ensure that the next Einstein is an African; the *Federation of African Immunological Societies (FAIS) Legacy Project* aims to train 1,000 African PhD students in immunology over the next 10 years; the *AU Kwame Nkrumah Scientific Awards*; and the promotion of Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) and Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) especially among women, girls and young people.

Still, financing for R&D remains 0.5% of GDP in Africa, far behind the global average of 2.3% GDP. COVID-19 has highlighted the particular downside of this situation – the overdependence on other regions' technology that is oftentimes disconnected from local needs, agendas and priorities. This has resulted in unprecedented difficulties and costs of accessing the technology necessary to manage the pandemic.

However, **COVID-19 has renewed a taste for technical experts across the continent and a new type of accountability.** Fighting fake news means we are getting used to the sight of ministerial representatives making daily reports and highly visible experts commenting on these pronouncements. Reliable sources come across very well, tending not to be defensive and acknowledging what they don't know. These changes to the national discourse feed into a general understanding that, post-COVID-19, we will need more technical experts, scientists, independent institutions, research centres, advisory councils and, finally, our own synchrotron. In the meantime, the continent should also produce one or two Einsteins.
#STEM #accountability #AfricanResearch&Development #AfricanEinstein
#ScienceinAfrica #panAfricanSynchrotron

Platform revolution for Africa rising

Teddy Warria, Kenya, is Co-Owner of Africa's Talking Ltd, a mobile solutions platform that integrates reliable two-way SMS, voice, and USSD functionality across mobile providers across Africa.

In 2012 I visited South Africa for the first time to attend the inaugural Information and Communications Technology (ICT) INDABA that year in Cape Town. I was awestruck by the Africa rising narrative. At the time, I was in the second year of building *Africa's Talking*, a start-up for pan-African mobile solutions. Meeting people like Ms. Rapaleng Rabana, a computer scientist running *Yeigo Communications*, the first start up to offer free mobile VoIP in South Africa, an application for mobile application for mobile 3G, 4G, GSM, or another internet service to send voice calls as digital signals over the Internet. She, and many others at the conference, fuelled my hope of contributing to a more connected Africa through our own startup. Today, *Africa's Talking* has realized that dream and expanded to 18 countries. With an equity investment of US\$8.6 million - mainly from International Financial Corporation and Orange Digital Ventures - we are now contributing to the creation of a space for Africa in the global digital economy.

Since that trip, *Africa's Talking* and partners such as the *Africa Leadership Dialogues*, have visited more than two dozen countries on the continent and abroad to witness firsthand the gaps in various tech communities. This led to us developing *Decoded Ventures Africa Ltd*, aimed at democratizing technology to nurture the next one million jobs and usher in the digital gig economy - a free market system in the digital space in which temporary positions are common and organizations hire independent workers for short-term commitments. This will meet some of the employment challenges in Africa in the post COVID-19 period.

Decoded provides a learning infrastructure for communities: workspaces, internet, a community learning platform online and rent-per-day laptop at very affordable rates. Communities can become sustainable from a revenue model tied to learning pathways and product development.

The digital revolution that started with mobile phone technologies is now increasing through the use of e-commerce in cities. To keep moving forward, we should use the coronavirus crisis to push down on the accelerator. #Africandigitalrevolution #democratizingtechnology

COMMUNITY, CULTURE & DIASPORA

Recognition, justice and development

[Susana Edjang](#), Equatorial Guinea and Spain, is an international development, global health and peace and security expert. She is co-founding member of Afroinnova, an Africa diaspora innovation platform, member of the Council of the UK's Royal African Society and member of the Governing Council of Africa 2.0.

One of the saddest impacts of the coronavirus pandemic is its effect on the most vulnerable, and how, in this context, vulnerabilities are defined: by age; by race/ethnic group; by income bracket; by previous health conditions; by urban/rural. One of the triumphs of diversity over the years has been the increased representation from minority groups in the health professions and civil leadership. This resulted in bells being rung from early on about the potential impact of COVID-19 on these communities and its particular relevance to the 200+ million Afro-descendants that make up the sixth African region around the world.

In terms of access to care, physicians and other health workers of colour in the USA have been very active in their calls and actions to prioritize equity in access to healthcare. In the UK, there is already a government enquiry on the disproportionate impact that COVID-19 is having on Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups, including health workers. In Colombia, various civil society leaders are calling on action to prioritize the protection of the most marginalized and isolated communities, such as the indigenous and Afro-descendant communities in the Colombian Pacific, in the national response.

Come 2024, the UN *International Decade of the People of African Descent* will be over. Its motto is "Recognition, justice and development". This year their annual report should focus on the impact of COVID-19 in Afro-descendant communities as global instance of why racial justice is still highly relevant. Ideally, this would be done in collaboration with the AU Citizens and Diaspora Directorate, and the various offices and agencies around the world, from Peru to Brazil to Canada to the European Union, that last year adopted its first ever resolution on the fundamental rights of people of African descent.

Martin Luther King Jr. said "Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in health is the most shocking and the most inhuman because it often results in physical death." **Africa and its diaspora must work together to ensure that the factors that now constitute vulnerabilities are transformed into assets for the benefit of all.**

#AfroDecade #healthequity4all #RecognitionJusticeDevelopment
#AfricanDiaspora

Time to put people first

[Rita Chami](#), Morocco, is Founder of African global events provider and communications agencies, PROVERBOOM; conference interpreter & translator; Founder of Fitbees.ma, Co-Founder Lajuriste.ma, Africa 2.0 Vice-Chairman and Advisory Board Member of the Africa Youth Commission.

I can write pages on how COVID-19 is hard on women and entrepreneurship (I mean, it's already hard without it, so imagine with the virus) as I have my share of hard: all my businesses are either linked to event planning (all events are canceled till 2021 at least), food (our restaurants are closed and we chose not to have a "delivery service" in order not to put at jeopardy our employees and clients) and beauty (our spas and centers are also closed), and we still are paying our employees their full salaries. So yes, it's definitely hard.

However, I believe it is the beginning of a new era, a change of the "World Order", as this is an economic recession and pandemic that will change the trajectory of governments, economies

and businesses — it is altering the course of history! Including having a direct impact on biological, psychological and economic dimensions.

At the end of the day, I definitely believe this pandemic is more than just a virus because it gives one the time to rethink the MAN and WOMAN in HU-MAN, time to put people first. I am already noticing it – not looking at those who are trying to make business at the expense of the vulnerable – but at those who in Morocco and around Africa are producing masks, giving time, lending equipment, working to meet the human need. These actions will definitely lead to longer-term innovations and changes in trends: more resilient ecosystems? Digital bureaucracies? Security and health support systems? A post-Corona world, but also to fraternity, solidarity and Hu/MAN/ity.

This crisis is bringing us together. First as citizens of our African nations. Then as citizens of our continent. And finally, as citizens of the world.

Yes, COVID-19 is affecting our businesses but it's been a long time since I felt so peaceful, so sure and so blessed. And whilst you might not be okay now, you will be eventually, so in a way, doesn't that mean you really ARE ok now? #Weareonthistogher #StaySafe

FABA. For Africa. By Africa. (an origin story)

[Obi Asika](#), Nigeria, is Co-Founder of @SMWlagos, one of the largest technology and new media conferences in Africa, Founder @IbaAjie an innovation hub & community resource center, Founder @DragonAfrica, based in Lagos, working and producing conferences, platforms and more

A few years back, I was in Lagos with Mamadou, Founder of Africa 2.0, at an African Finance Corporation infrastructure conference. I was telling him the story of FUBU, the US streetwear brand, and how its motto of 'For Us By Us' impacted hip hop culture and mentality in the 90s and beyond. Suddenly, during our conversation I saw a glint in Mamadou's eye, and he smiled and said to me something like "you just gave me our most important idea: FABA, For Africans by Africans". It was a powerful moment that has not left me. We immediately spoke to the Africa 2.0 team and they came up with a campaign document. These days, I would like us to revisit FABA not as a campaign but as an ethos, as a way and means of life, as a principle that brings all of our people in Africa and the diaspora onto a common platform and shared philosophy.

If there is one thing COVID-19 has laid bare, it is our capacity...or lack thereof. Going forward, we Africans must be able to feed ourselves, educate our people so they can escape poverty, unlock our human potential and build real solutions from our indigenous flora, fauna and cultures. We have solutions all around us and we need to return to being masters of our environment. We can no longer afford to not invest in science and research and development. We have done very little with our natural endowments, be it our vegetation, land, culture or stories. It is way past time for us to step up and participate, not just sit and wait for the rest of the world to proffer solutions. As we watch the race to global solutions to this pandemic, we will see our Diaspora all over the world are part of those responding, researching and working on solutions. It sometimes feels as if we lack the collective self-confidence to value our own cultures, herbs or content. The world has mined Africa for solutions for centuries; it is time we Africans did the same but for our own benefits, to grow our own ecosystems and to make FABA ring true.

We must put pride of place on the makers, the manufacturers, the engineers and innovators who can find new solutions to engage and interrogate our original cultures. We must be able to build new networks to unlock our indigenous knowledge all over the continent for the benefit of all of us. All over Africa there are hidden gems but we cannot allow them to be hidden anymore. The world has taken a pause and will soon be back on track with the help of the post-COVID-19 exit strategies and recovery plans. African countries' responses must build their own, and sub-regional and continental, capacities

so that we can wean ourselves from imports and dependency. If we do not do that, then we have learned nothing. If we don't invest in education and public health infrastructure, then we didn't get the memo.

The future of this world will be driven by convergence and knowledge, we are at the beginning of a new age with huge opportunities ahead for Africa. I believe the concept of FABA, which at the core is about self-reliance, world class products and services, is the kind of connected thinking Africa can embrace to chart a new course and a new way. We must be able to leverage our combined networks through the continent and our diaspora to build this bridge going forward. I believe it is a concept that everybody can own, but we may have to drive. #FABA
#ForAfricaByAfrica #beyondslogans
