

AFRICAN VOICES OF HOPE AND CHANGE



2012 citizen media coverage
from the *Global Voices* community



GlobalVoices BOOKS
Sharing citizen media for the future

African Voices Of Hope and Change

2012 citizen media coverage from Global Voices community

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Editor: Bernardo Parrella

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Introduction

At the start of the new millennium, it felt as though the African continent was essentially written off by the international community. *The Economist* magazine even ran a cover story in May 2000 dubbing Africa “[The Hopeless Continent](#)”. The bottom line was that given the difficulties the world saw in helping African nations overcome their conflicts and economic despair, we might as well just give up on the entire continent.

How quickly things have changed since then.

Recent statistics suggest that [nine of the fastest-growing economies in the world are in Sub-Saharan Africa](#). *The Economist* acknowledged the turnaround in December 2011, featuring another [cover story on Africa](#), this time calling it the “Rising” continent and with a far different tagline: “the continent’s impressive growth looks likely to continue”.

Yet for all the optimism and growth potential, the road to sustainable prosperity is fraught with perilous cliffs and roadblocks. [According to the International Monetary Fund \(IMF\)](#), the Sub Saharan Africa’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) grew “by 5.5 per cent in 2011 and 5.8 per cent projected in 2012 (in real terms)”. However, the five countries with the [highest income inequality](#) in the world, based on the World Bank [GINI coefficient](#), are all from the same region (Seychelles, Comoros, Namibia, South Africa and Namibia).

Once just a concept, the [rise of the African middle class](#) now drives hope for more widespread prosperity. In 2010, the African Development Bank said the middle class had grown to [313 million people](#) (34% of the population) and was picking up speed. Economic growth is at the forefront of this evolution but such developments are tightly intertwined with political stability and social cohesion. Even if still not entirely peaceful nor democratic, governance has improved markedly in many places.

Noticeable developments

Most [African dictators have either fallen](#) or deceased (such as Charles Taylor in Liberia, Sekou Toure in Guinea, Idi Amin in Uganda), several civil wars like the one that crippled Angola have mostly ended, and two out of three African countries now hold elections, though they are not always free and fair.

Technology is also playing a crucial role in every possible field, and many citizens are making use of online media as a means to increase transparency and accountability. Today, more than 700 million [African citizens own a mobile phone](#), literally changing lives in many pivotal aspects, including business and health care.

Cultural, educational and social progress is also a big part of the shift, though again this can not be said of the entire continent. While many nations experience tremendous developments, others seem permanently marred by political and economic stalemate.

Examples of this uneven evolution can often be experienced within the same country. Take Uganda, where the [first African Gay Pride](#) event took place in August 2012 in Entebbe. Yet Uganda is also where politicians proposed introducing [the death penalty for homosexuals](#) in 2009 and where gay rights activist [David Kato was assassinated](#) in January 2011.

A similarly uneven progress can be observed in Madagascar. While environmental activists from this country [have been hailed worldwide](#) for their efforts to protect the Madagascar's natural resources, the government is still [completely ineffective in slowing down the illegal trafficking of rosewood](#) that jeopardizes the survival of the rainforests.

Warming up to optimism

Still, given the current prolonged global crisis, the cautious optimism originating from Africa is a most welcome sight. From economic growth and technological advances to resistance against political and social injustice to a broader citizen involvement, rapid changes are impacting the entire continent and its basic structures.

As history reminds us, it is never easy to achieve and maintain a fair balance between an on-going struggle for democracy and political stability. Even more so in a greatly diverse and rapidly evolving African continent. For instance, the broader outcome of the 2011 Arab Spring looks still cloudy and [controversial](#) (particularly in Egypt, with [new street protests](#) against President Mursi and an upcoming [Constitution referendum vote](#)). And the December 7th [election in Ghana](#) for a new President and Parliament is considered by many observers as a “model for democracy in Africa.”

While being acutely aware of the challenges ahead, African people are growing weary of a portrayal of a powerless continent, as in *The Economist* cover story mentioned above. There is a broader awareness for pursuing a fairer image of their countries, particularly by providing space and venues to actual African voices. Citizens are putting forward initiatives that showcase self-agency in solving local and regional issues. They specifically take exception of what they perceive as unfair or biased portrayal of the continent by outside observers. It is not by chance, then, that the campaign *Kony2012* became an exemplary platform for African voices to take a stand in the ensuing debate.

[Kony2012](#) launched last Spring with a viral video aimed at [making Ugandan guerilla leader and wanted war criminal Joseph Kony “famous”](#) in order to raise support for his arrest. The campaign swept the Internet by storm, prompting a wave of backlash from many Ugandans, worried about the oversimplification of this message and its misleading outcome. As a result, a collaborative [counter campaign](#) promptly came about to highlight other aspects of the continent that are mostly ignored or underestimate by external observers. Taking full advantage of social media and other online platforms, African citizens have snatched the rights to tell their own story and there is no looking back.

Expanding citizen empowerment

This example underlines the increasingly powerful rise of technology in the whole continent. However, Internet and mobile telephony mirror the uneven evolution outlined earlier. Whilst Senegal can [boast an amazing mobile penetration rate of 88%](#), only [0.2% of the population in Sierra Leone](#) currently have access to the Internet. Probably the positive impact of technology is most evidently felt in Kenya, where [M-PESA](#), a mobile money platform that has 68% market share and 14.9 million users, has proven to be [a major player](#) in driving the economic

growth in that country and nearby regions.

Still, the impact of technology is not limited to financial and social empowerment. Many experts actually believe that its most lasting influence will be on a broadening field of education. For instance, in some French-speaking countries, [Internet courses](#) are being steadily integrated in civil servant training. And African [youths with disability](#) have also received training on social media skills – something that will ultimately prove crucial for integrating all classes of the society. Also important is the potential for leveraging technology towards a more general transparency and accountability, as shown by initiatives based on social and citizen media for [monitoring local elections](#) or making [government data](#) available on the Internet. Linking activities on the ground to such online tools and platforms is helping [empower citizens](#) to defend themselves against corporations and private interests, while also supporting the [cultures](#) and [rights](#) of native population.

The following collection of posts – hand-picked from the 2012 production of the *Global Voices* community, including many African netizens – will try to parse out such complex framework. Given the variety of issues and territories involved, this e-book is focused on Sub-Saharan countries, leaving Northern Africa nations to a future production devoted to the larger Middle East and North Africa region.

Aimed at providing a larger context and fostering the *Global Voices* mission, the focus here is on places and people that too often are “forgotten” by mainstream media or overlooked by Western sources, despite Africa’s diverse but promising growth in the upcoming years. These voices tell us about moving forward in hope and change, their accounts reveal a path infused with struggle and collaboration.

– Lova Rakotomalala & Bernardo Parrella



What we do: [Global Voices Online](#) is a non-profit organization and community of about 700 volunteers from around the world, who report on how citizens use the Internet and social media to make their voices heard.

Volunteer authors and translators work together to amplify the online conversation, bridging different blogging communities by working across languages and cultures. Global Voices receives around 500,000 visitors a month across websites in many different languages (see our [Lingua Project](#)).

Launched at Harvard University in early 2005, our project relies on [grants, sponsorships, editorial commissions](#), and [donations](#) to cover technical and managing costs. Our international team of [Our authors and translators](#) and [part-time editors](#) are active participants in local online spaces trying to redress some of the inequities in media attention by leveraging the power of citizens' media. We believe in free speech, and in bridging the gulfs that divide people, culture, languages.

We publish posts in English drawing on the language of the relevant country, which are then translated by volunteers in over [25 languages](#), including French, Spanish, Portuguese, Greek, Italian, Catalan, Aymara, Indonesian, Swahili, Arabic, and more.

While initially focused on non-Western countries and issues, in these eight years Global Voices' coverage has expanded to literally include the whole planet. So far our [English website](#) counts over 80,000 posts, in addition to translations and some original posts of [localized websites](#), with an average of 8-10 new posts published daily. To [get involved](#) in our community and/or to suggest story ideas, please do not hesitate to [contact us](#)!

The African continent remains a major focus for Global Voices: only in 2012 we produced almost 800 posts on various issues and people of the [Sub-Saharan region](#). Even larger was our coverage of [Middle East and North Africa](#) countries, whose on-going developments will be addressed in a future e-book. This unique and engaging production is based on the “[Power of We](#)”, as also shown by authors, translators and editors who variously contributed to articles selected for this e-book:

[Afef Abrougui](#), [Ahmed Jedou](#), [Anna Gueye](#), [Eleanor Staniforth](#), [Endalk](#), [James Propa](#), [Kofi Yeboah](#), [Lova Rakotomalala](#), [Nwachukwu Egbunike](#), [Richard Wanjohi](#), [Sara Gold](#), [Sara Moreira](#), and [Ndesanjo Macha](#) (Sub-Saharan Africa editor).

Celebrating Humanity through Photos and Videos

*An article by BuzzFeed highlighting 21 pictures that “will restore your humanity” went viral on the Net. Unfortunately, Africans and Africa were absent from all of them. Yet, there is no shortage of great testimonies of human spirit from the African continent. Here are a few photos and videos showing that ‘Africa’s got Heart’ too.
Posted by Lova Rakotomalala on [26/06/2012](#).*

An article by *BuzzFeed* that recently went viral with over 1.6 million Facebook shares, highlighted 21 pictures that will restore your faith in humanity. Unfortunately, Africa and Africans were absent from the piece. Despite efforts to change existing narratives, the African continent is still widely known as a leading recipient of international aid and the place where international NGOs come to ‘save’ the fragile local population. While there is no denying the enormous needs of the continent, what is often lost in the many humanitarian stories from the region, are the stories of Africans helping Africans. But there is no shortage of great testimonies of human spirit from the African continent. Here are a few photos and videos that show that “Africa’s got Heart” too:

Protecting fellow citizens during prayers in Egypt

On February 3, 2011 during the Egyptian revolution, Christians put their own lives at risk protecting Muslims praying at Tahrir Square in Cairo, amid violence between protesters and Egyptian President Mubarak’s supporters. For more background on the context of the photos, see our [special coverage of the 2011 Egypt protests](#).



Egyptian Copts protecting Muslims on February 3, 2011, on Tahrir Square
([Public Domain image](#)).

Welcoming home returning IDPs in Sudan

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) returned to their original village, Sehjanna, after living seven years in an IDP camp in Aramba. They are welcomed by relatives and friends who stayed back. The voluntary repatriation program is organized by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Sudanese Humanitarian Aid Commission.



IDPs return to their village and are hugged by friends and relatives. Photo [on Flickr](#) by UNHCR (license CC BY).

Saving elephants in perils in Zambia

From Zambia's [Norman Carr Safaris](#) website: "The Kapani Lagoon is a source of drinking water for the animals of the area, as well as the place to go for a relieving mud bath. Unfortunately though, a young calf was unlucky enough to get stuck in the mud when visiting the lagoon recently. [The calf's cries attracted her mother who rushed to her rescue](#), only to get stuck in the mud herself."



Elephant stuck in mud, rescued and set free
([images](#) by Abraham Banda, Norman Carr Safaris).

Overcoming cyclone together in Madagascar

Cyclone Giovanna [made landfall in Madagascar](#) on February 13, 2012. The cyclone was classified as a category 4, with winds of up to 194 km (120 mph) ripping up trees and electricity towers. Officials reported that there were [at least 10 casualties](#). The two main cities in Madagascar, Antananarivo and Toamasina, were out of power for long stretches, marking the darkest Valentine's Day yet in the country. The cyclone did not dampen the spirit of Malagasy people, who showed resilience and helped one another to move away from the flooded areas, all the while still wearing their brightest smiles.



Citizens helping each other and still smiling despite the flood during Cyclone Giovanna.
Photo by Twitter user @aKoloina.

Helping students with disabilities in Ghana

[Emmanuel Oforu Yeboah](#) is an athlete and activist from Ghana. Yeboah was born with a severely deformed right leg. Yeboah rode 380 kilometers across his country to raise awareness and change perceptions of the disabled. He opened the [Emmanuel Education Fund](#) for promising students with disabilities.



Yeboah discussing overcoming disabilities with a child in a wheelchair. Screenshot from the [documentary Emmanuel's Gift](#).



Celebrating peaceful elections in Senegal

An historical ending to a tense electoral period took place in Senegal on March 25, 2012. Incumbent president Wade was defeated in the presidential elections after citizens protested for months against his nepotist and authoritarian regime. In downtown Dakar citizens celebrated the peaceful end of the Wade regime.



Demonstrators show their joy in Senegal. Photo by Nd1mbee [on Flickr](#), used with permission.

Protecting marine life in Mozambique

Janet Gunter showcases a local NGO, Bitonga Divers, that strives to protect marine life by “[making positive links between protecting sea life, tourism and economic development.](#)” Here is a video of their work:



Winning an Olympic heat for Equatorial Guinea, months after learning how to swim

[Eric Moussambani Malonga](#) is a swimmer from Equatorial Guinea. He gained fame when he won the heat although he had never raced more than 50m before the preliminaries, and was swimming by himself when the two other swimmers in his heat were eliminated for false starts. Eric confessed that the last 15m were very difficult for him as can be seen in the video. Yet his willingness to finish the race, while struggling mightily earned him a standing ovation from the audience.



Senegal: SunuCause, a Blogger-Driven Humanitarian Project

The team of bloggers that earlier this year created Sunu2012, an initiative to monitor the Presidential elections, has launched a new collaborative online project called SunuCause. The objective is to raise awareness over social issues in the region among the Senegalese online community.

Posted by Anna Gueye, translated by Sara Gold on [20/08/2012](#).

The Senegalese presidential elections in March 2012 were hailed as [an overall success](#) despite some confrontations during the campaign. One of the contributing factors to this assessment was the level of citizen involvement in the political process.

A monitoring election platform driven by Senegalese bloggers was one of the flagship projects. The same team is now switching its focus to a less political cause and has launched a new initiative - [SunuCause](#).

On the SunuCause website (the name means 'our cause' in the [Wolof](#) language) we can [read](#):

L'équipe de blogueurs sénégalais, qui avait créé [#sunu2012](#) pour couvrir l'élection présidentielle de février 2012 à travers les réseaux sociaux, s'est lancé dans les actions de solidarité participative en créant SunuCause.

L'objectif est de sensibiliser les internautes à des problèmes de société de manière à récolter des fonds grâce à des appels lancés sur [Facebook](#) et Twitter.

The team of Senegalese bloggers that had created the [#Sunu2012](#) project to cover the February 2012 presidential election through social networks has created SunuCause to engage in acts of participatory solidarity.

The objective is to raise awareness of social problems among Internet users in order to raise money through appeals launched on [Facebook](#) and Twitter.

The blog E-Goo Média explains, [Pourquoi #Sunucause?](#) (Why #SunuCause?):

[#SunuCause](#) s'inscrit donc dans des actions sociales, humanitaires et citoyennes avec la spécificité que toutes les actions seront menées à partir du web et de ses outils. ... nous ne comptons pas tout attendre d'un Etat car des citoyens volontaires et conscients peuvent beaucoup faire avec un peu de volonté.

[#SunuCause](#) is a part of social, humanitarian, and civic actions taking place through the Internet and its tools. ...we don't count on the State for everything because deliberate and conscious citizens can do much with a little bit of willpower.

Senegal: SunuCause, a Blogger-Driven Humanitarian Project

Senegalese tweeters, who identify themselves with the hashtag #Kebetu (which means “to twitter, to chirp” in Wolof), came together for that purpose, as explained by Wareef in his post *Sunucause: La mission humanitaire de la Twittosphère Sénégalaise*:

La Twittosphère sénégalaise s’est mobilisée ... à Dakar lors de la seconde édition d’un Sunutweetup [notre tweetup en [Wolof](#)] pour le lancement d’un nouveau projet dénommé « Sunucause »

Après une présentation de chaque Twittos, ...la bloggeuse Amy Jeanne a expliqué que le projet est déjà en cours car un petit groupe de blogueurs a déjà commencé le travail. Ceci dit, « sunucause est un projet ouvert à tout le monde, chacun peut y participer » poursuit Pape Ousmane.

[La plateforme étant lancée](#), les blogueurs ont déjà repéré une cause. Il s’agit d’un « enfant du nom de Mame Thierno [âgé aujourd’hui de 5 mois] qui est né [sans paupières, avec la peau lézardée, parsemée d’écailles](#). De jour comme de nuit, ses parents sont obligés de [l’enduire d’une crème hydratante qui coûte 7 000 F CFA l’unité](#) [environ 10 euros]. La famille, totalement démunie, en appelle à l’aide des bonnes volontés. »

The Senegalese Twittersphere rallied... in Dakar during the second Sunutweetup (means ‘our tweetup’ in Wolof) for the launch of a new project named “SunuCause.” After an introduction of each tweeter, ...the blogger Amy Jeanne explained that the project was already in motion because a small group of bloggers had already begun to work. Even so, “SunuCause is a project open to everyone, everyone can participate,” said Pape Ousmane.

[The platform is launched](#); the bloggers have already identified a cause. There is “a child named Mame Thierno (who is now five months old) who was born [without eyelids, with cracked skin scattered with scales](#). Day and night, her parents must apply a hydrating cream that costs 7,000 CFA each (about 10 Euros). The family, totally impoverished, calls on the goodwill for help.”

Basile tells us in his post [il faut sauver l’enfant Mame Thierno](#):

Un premier lot de pommade hydratante lui a été remis en attendant de recevoir une aide plus consistante de la part de la communauté des internautes.

The first batch of hydrating cream was presented to them while waiting to receive more consistent help from the Internet community.

Senegal: SunuCause, a Blogger-Driven Humanitarian Project



Sunucause team taking pictures with the family of Mame Thierno.
Photo by [@BoompasticPlo](#) on Twitter (used with permission).

And he [adds](#):

Nous lançons un appel au sens humanitaire de chacun pour collecter une somme considérable afin de se procurer une quantité importante de pommade pour aider Mame Thierno à mieux se sentir en attendant de trouver les moyens nécessaires pour organiser son évacuation en Europe pour un traitement plus avancé afin de guérir cet adorable enfant pour le bonheur de ses parents.

We appeal to the humanitarian sense of each person. We are collecting funds in order to procure a significant quantity of ointment to help Mame Thierno feel better. In the meantime, we are working to find the necessary means to organize her evacuation to Europe for more advanced treatment. We aim to cure this adorable child for the happiness of her parents.

Wareef continues in [Sunucause: La mission humanitaire de la Twittosphère Sénégalaise](#):

Le travail des blogueurs et twittos bénévoles sera maintenant de mobiliser les internautes à travers les réseaux sociaux pour régler une cause sociale.

The work of volunteer bloggers and tweeters will continue to mobilize the Internet community through social networks to address a social cause.

On August 15, 2012, members of the team paid their [second visit](#) to Mame Thierno's family and posted photos on Twitter [here](#) and [here](#).

On August 16, they showed off their [t-shirts](#) created to help finance this cause.

Uganda: Teenage Girl Becomes Africa's Youngest MP

Africa is truly rising and African women are rising with it. Currently, Malawi and Liberia have female presidents. Now Uganda has elected the youngest Member of Parliament in the whole continent: here is 19-year old Proscovia Alengot Oromait.

Posted by James Propa on [22/09/2012](#).

Proscovia Alengot Oromait has become Africa's youngest Member of Parliament (MP) at the age of 19, after she won the Usuk county election with 11,059 votes. The outspoken youngster replaces her father who died earlier this year.

Alengot is a member of National Resistance Movement, headed by President Yoweri Museveni. Other people who stood for the post included, Charles Ojok Oleny with 5,329 votes, Charles Okure from FDC with 2,725 votes and Cecilia Anyakoit of UPC with 554 votes.



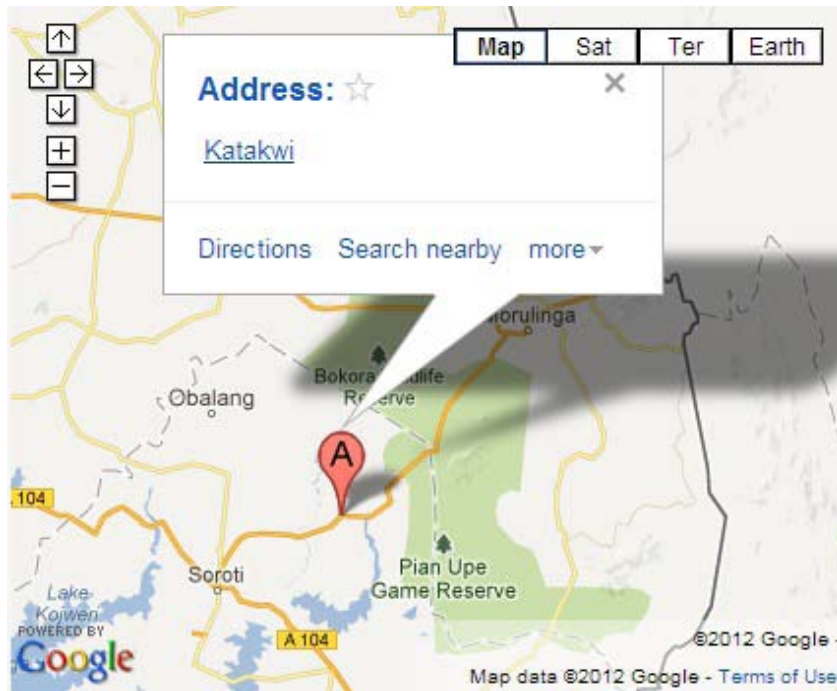
Honourable Alengot Oromait. [Photo](#) released by [monitor.co.ug](#) (used with permission).

Many people have come out to congratulate her, whilst some are saying she will not survive her term in parliament because of her age and limited experience. Some people believe this is the beginning of change in Africa and its time to get rid of the overly old leaders and allow young people to take the continent forward.

Hon. Alengot's area faces challenges of clean water, electricity and poor roads among others. For now the people of Usuk have their hopes pinned on the 19 year-old MP. Hopefully, she will be in position to represent her area and develop it.

Uganda: Teenage Girl Becomes Africa's Youngest MP

Google map of Alengo's constituency:



[View Larger Map](#)

Some citizen media comments are sampled below:

Solar Sister [believes](#) its the young women that are the pillar of change now:

Young women powering change! 19 year old Proscovia Alengot Oromait elected to Uganda Parliament. <http://fb.me/28DoJ2lUr>

Joy Doreen Biira requests someone to teach Ms Alomait the basics she needs to learn as an MP:

[@JoyDoreenBiira](#): Alengot Oromait, 19 years old is now a MP in Uganda.... Very Good. But can someone “home-school” her on the basics she needs to know else...

Commenting on New Vision website, Agambagye Frank [thinks](#) its good that she was elected and believes this is how democracy should be:

thats why democracy is good pple voted her.

lakodo [urges](#) Hon Aromait not to leave her boyfriend, now that she has got more money and has a lot of opportunities to get a rich boyfriend:

Hon Prossy , pls dont forget ur little 19 yr old boy friend who used to buy for u chapatis, he kind of also helped u in a way, and remember to take haert not to be scared of some MPs like Moses Ali who snores like the whole roof of parliament is coming down.

Uganda: Teenage Girl Becomes Africa's Youngest MP

Commenting on a story on the Monitor website, nkuutu [urges](#) advises the MP to concentrate on her studies, as the MP seat can be lost at anytime and she may have to look for a job:

I just have one piece of advice for the hon MP: Don't worry, be happy. This might be the only time in your life to shine! Come next elections ...who knows. Don't forget your day job ...I mean your studies. No one will give you a job with a CV with "ex-MP but no qualification". Anyone can be an MP, but not everyone is educated.

Congrats!!

ProWoman [thinks](#) people are treating Ms Alengot like a baby. She goes on to tell them to let her think for herself because she is an adult:

Proscovia does not need too much advice. You guys are treating her like a baby. At 19 she's an adult. Schooling began at home. Why is every man trying to be a parent to her? Leave this young woman alone to think critically for herself. It seems that there are too many cooks around. Proscovia actually has the figure of Michelle Obama. Tall, athletic, beautiful and confident. Michelle the first Black US first lady did not need too much advice on how to be a first Black first lady in the White House. Congratulations to Proscovia!

Proscovia Alengot was sworn in on Thursday 20, September, 2012. She is the youngest and first female teenage Member of Parliament in Africa.



Guinea-Bissau: Women, Citizenship and *Mandjuandades*

Informal voluntary associations, predominantly made up of women and sustained through solidarity and the sharing of individual and collective interests, may play an important role in strengthening participatory democracy: meet the mandjuandades.

Posted by Sara Moreira, translated by Eleanor Staniforth on [27/08/2012](#).

In a country which has experienced constant political instability, how can civil society mobilise itself to prevent further coups d'état and to build a participative democracy based upon its communities? Some possible ways forward were [suggested](#) by a group of 70 young people at a meeting promoted by the *Movimento Ação Cidadã* (Citizen Action Movement) in Cacheu, Guinea-Bissau, at the end of July, in which they debated the April 12th 2012 [coup d'état](#).

The [blog](#) *Ação Cidadã* (Citizen Action), created by the Movement in May this year in response to the “bustle of the political and historical context resulting from the unpredictable changes which the country has seen in the last two decades especially”, records the conclusions arising from the meeting, which include issues such as the reform of organised power (the Armed Forces and the State Administration), but also the importance of strengthening other values such as “living without ethnic divides, forgiveness, sharing and dialogue, love of one’s country and living *guinendadi* (a Guinean way of life)”.

The meeting was attended by students, teachers, journalists, youth organisations and “*mandjuandade*” groups.



Netos de Bandim. [Photo](#) by Rising Voices on Flickr (license CC BY-NC-SA 2.0).

Mandjuandade?

The blog of Luis Graça and Camaradas da Guiné [presents](#) the “mandjuandades” as “[feminine] associative organisations, with a voluntary and egalitarian foundation, sustained through solidarity and the sharing of individual and collective interests”.

An academic [article](#) on “Relations of Otherness and Identities” by Manuela Borges, of the Universidade Nova de Lisboa, with Joseania Miranda Freitas and Luzia Gomes Ferreira, of the Universidade Federal da Bahia, goes further:

A partir dos anos 1990, houve um recrudescimento da iniciativa e dinamismo da sociedade civil [da Guiné Bissau] em todos os campos – político, social, econômico e também organizativo –, crescendo rapidamente as associações informais voluntárias com participação predominante de mulheres. Essas associações femininas, denominadas em crioulo mandjuandades, acumulam várias funções, perseguindo diversos objetivos: poupança e compra coletiva de bens de consumo (por exemplo, a compra de um tecido para fazer, no mesmo padrão, o vestuário usado nas festas e cerimônias), crédito individual aos membros, celebração de cerimônias familiares e religiosas e ainda organização de acontecimentos lúdicos.

Since the 1990s, there has been an intensification of the initiative and dynamism of Guinea-Bissau’s civil society in all areas - political, social, economic and also organisational -, with informal voluntary associations predominantly made up of women growing rapidly. These feminine associations, called ‘mandjuandades’ in creole, assume various functions and pursue diverse objectives: saving and the collective purchase of consumer goods (for example, buying fabric with which to make, using the same pattern, clothes used at parties and ceremonies), individual credit for members, the celebration of family and religious ceremonies and even the organisation of leisure activities.



Enterramento Unido mandjuandade women’s group. [Photo](#) by Bairro Enterramento on Flickr (license CC BY-NC-SA 2.0).

The Portuguese ex-soldier Luis Graça, in the collective blog referred to above, makes a comparison with the Kixikilas in Angola, “a term which, in kimbundu, means the contribution of money for a particular collective goal”:

Em África, em geral, e em Angola, em particular, é aquilo que se designa pela expressão inglesa *Rotating Savings and Credit Associations* (ROSCA), um sistema informal de poupança e crédito, um grupo de ajuda mútua, liderado em geral por uma mulher, a “mãe de kixikila”. O pequeno grupo, de cinco a dez elementos, tende a ser constituído por pessoas que estão ligadas entre si por laços de amizade, parentesco, vizinhança ou profissão. Cada elemento faz periodicamente uma determinada contribuição para um fundo comum que é depois utilizado rotativamente por cada um, com uma taxa de juro nula ou de valor reduzido. Na ausência de sistemas de crédito bancário acessíveis à generalidade da população, o kixikila voltou aos hábitos dos kaluandas como forma de atenuar ou reduzir o impacto da pobreza.

In Africa in general, and in Angola in particular, it is what is referred to by the English expression *Rotating Savings and Credit Associations* (ROSCA), an informal system of saving and credit, a mutual help group, generally led by a woman, the “mother of the kixikila”. The small group, between five and ten members, tends to be comprised of people who are linked by friendship, family relations, neighbourhood or profession. Each member periodically makes a specified contribution to a common fund which is then rotated around the members, with a zero or minimal interest rate. In the absence of bank credit systems accessible to the general population, the kixikila returns to the customs of the kaluandas as a way of mitigating or reducing poverty.

But let’s return to the “mandjuandades” of Guinea-Bissau, their roots and their evolution. According to an article in Lusa [republished](#) on the blog of Aly Silva, Dictatorship of Consensus, “Mandjuandade is a culture” and it originated in the complaints inherent to married life:

Quando a mulher tinha queixas do marido procurava uma amiga ou amigas, a quem contava os seus desgostos, e criavam uma música sobre isso. Depois, quando a aldeia se reunisse, as amigas cantariam a música, ao mesmo tempo recados para o marido e lamentos da mulher.

“Basicamente mandjuandade é uma forma de as mulheres transmitirem os seus sentimentos, e uma fonte de conselhos, porque o marido quando ouve a musica já sabe que a mulher está a dizer o que se passa em casa” (...). Hoje já não é sobre a relação entre casais e já não se usam metades de barris mas sim tambores e tabuinhas para acompanhar os cânticos. Hoje são grupos de bairro que se juntam, que organizam festas, que animam cerimónias alegres (casamentos) ou tristes (funerais), ou mesmo cerimónias tradicionais como a do fanado (circuncisão e excisão).

Guinea-Bissau: Women, Citizenship and *Mandjuandades*

When a woman had complaints about her husband she sought out a friend or friends to whom she could tell her discontents and they created a song about them. Later, when the village met, the friends would sing the song, which comprised of a message for the husband and the complaints of the wife.

“Basically mandjuandade is a way for women to express their feelings, it is a source of advice, because when the husband hears the song he knows what the women is saying or what is happening at home” (...). Today it is no longer about the relationship between married couples and they no longer use half barrels but rather drums and tablets to accompany the chants. Today they are neighbourhood groups who get together, who organise parties, who enliven both happy ceremonies (weddings) and sad ones (funerals), or even traditional ceremonies like the “fanado” (circumcision and excision).



Aliu Barri, musician, intellectual and politician in Guinea-Bissau, gives some examples of the festivities organised these days by the “mandjuandades”, in an [article](#) published in the *Journal of African Music and Popular Culture*, underwritten by the researcher Christoph Kohl:

Por exemplo: num bairro junta-se toda esta comunidade da juventude para, nos domingos, organizarem festas. Organizarem convívios. Se houver um casamento vão animar o casamento, se houver alguma cerimónia tradicional eles vão lá e cantam, se houver choro alguém morreu, cotizam, tiram o dinheiro, arranjam tudo que é necessário. Vão ficar lá por uma semana a animar a família do defunto. Então isso [diz-se] “mandjuandade”: arranjam até [trajes] quando houver um funeral.

For example: in a neighbourhood this whole community of young people comes together to organise parties on Sundays. If there is a wedding they will provide entertainment, if there is a traditional ceremony they will go and sing, if there is a mourning for someone who has died they contribute money and use it to make the necessary arrangements. They will stay there for a week to cheer up the dead person’s family. So this is [what is called] “mandjuandade”: they even arrange [the clothes] when there is a funeral.



Aliu Barri continues:

Tradicionalmente, “mandjuandade” é uma coisa que não pára. Existe em todos os bairros da cidade. Nas “tabancas” [aldeias] também organiza-se. Isso é que se chama “mandjuandade”. Há pessoas que se destacam nessas “mandjuandades”, ganham muita fama, é isso é que nós dizemos “mandjuandade”. São manifestações culturais que existem em cada etnia.

(...) Há muitas festas que a “mandjuandade” faz. Mas se for um país progressista, um país que está a andar bem, “mandjuandades” teriam possibilidades de apresentar toda a nossa cultura tradicional. Porque os tradicionalistas, os folclores nativos lá têm dificuldade de manifestar aquilo que eles têm. Mas como a “mandjuandade” está composta de várias etnias cada qual faz a apresentação da sua etnia, com isso e apreciando a “mandjuandade” vai conhecendo a manifestação de todas as culturas da Guiné. Eles cantam, canções de todas as etnias, porque a composição da “mandjuandade” tem todas as raças [etnias].

Traditionally, “mandjuandade” is a thing which doesn’t stop. It exists in all the districts of the city. In the “tabancas” [villages] it is also organised. This is what is called “mandjuandade”. There are people who stand out in these “mandjuandades”, they win a lot of fame, it is this that we call “mandjuandade”. They are cultural manifestations which exist in each ethnic group.

(...) There are many parties which the “mandjuandade” organises. But if it was a progressive country, a country which was working well, the “mandjuandades” would have the possibility to present our traditional culture. Because the traditionalists, the native folklores have difficulty in showing everything that they have. But since the “mandjuandade” is made up of various ethnic groups, each of which presents her own ethnicity, by appreciating the “mandjuandade” we can get to know all of the cultures in Guinea. They sing songs from all ethnicities because the “mandjuandade” is composed of all races [ethnicities].

Guinea-Bissau: Women, Citizenship and *Mandjuandades*

In spite of the apparently uniting character of the cooperativism of the “mandjuandades”, according to the Citizen Action blog obstacles to female public participation still exist in Guinea-Bissau, as “women are viewed badly when they participate in action of this kind, their husbands can be jealous” or they may have an “excess of work in the home which doesn’t leave them time to get involved in associative dynamics”. However, greater feminine participation features on the list of “pro-development and peace” initiatives which can be carried out, “so that there may be more opportunities and space for participation and protagonism in associations and greater solidarity amongst their members”, independently of their gender.

Ghana: Meet Agnes Chigabatia, engaged politician for women's rights

There have been considerable efforts by women to have a voice in local politics. Ghana Decides, a non-partisan project aimed at fostering a better-informed electorate, provides an extensive profile of a former Member of Parliament particularly focused on women's rights.

Posted by Kofi Yeboah on [26/10/2012](#).

There have been considerable efforts by women to have chance in Ghanaian politics. [Ghana Decides](#), a non-partisan project which aims to foster a better-informed electorate for free, fair and safe 2012 elections using social media tools [took a personality profile](#) look on parliamentary candidate Agnes Chigabatia.

She is a former member of parliament for the Builsa North Constituency in the Fourth Parliament of the Fourth Republic from 7 January 2005 to 7 January 2009. She was also a deputy Minister of the Upper East region from 2005 to January 2009.

Ghana Decides is an initiative under [Blogging Ghana](#), a Ghanaian blogging community.



Ghanaian politician Agness Chigabatia. [Photo](#) courtesy of [ghanadecides.com](#).

Ghana: Meet Agnes Chigabatia, engaged politician for women's rights

In a post by [Ghana Decides](#) she [shares her story](#) on why she took the step to participate in politics:

She says growing up in northern Ghana; she felt the plight of the people, especially the youth and rural women who needed a little push to make a difference in their homes and communities. With the resources at her disposal, she joined the Builsa Ladies Association in Accra and through hardwork, she was elected President of the association in 1995. In 2002, she established a division of the Builsa Ladies Association in Bolgatanga in the Upper East region. She also helped create the Top Ladies Association to bring together women from the Kasena/Nankana areas of northern Ghana.

[She indicates](#) that:

In 1997 after floods destroyed a lot of homes in Builsa she organised a dinner party to help raise funds for the flood victims. She says the success of this project encouraged her to get into active party politics to help the people of the Upper West Region. In 2000, she joined the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and in 2004 she contested the Builsa North Constituency parliamentary seat and won. In 2005, she was appointed into the Gender and Children Committee in parliament and made deputy Minister of the Upper East region.

As a member of parliament and the Gender Committee, Agnes Chigabatia played an active role in getting the Domestic Violence Bill passed into law. She secured soft loans from the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs for women in her constituency to engage in trading activities to support their households.

[She describes](#) agriculture projects meant to empower women in her constituency:

After losing her seat in 2009, she has not stopped serving the people in her constituency. She is presently undertaking a project that is putting women in groups to engage in large scale farming in groundnuts, sorghum, millets, cowpea, rice, etc., as well as soap-making and other income generating skills.

Agnes Asangalisa Chigabatia is once again contesting the Builsa North parliamentary seat on the ticket of the New Patriotic Party. She strongly advocates a sheanut sector which is separate from the cocoa industry. With an ever growing cosmetics industry in Ghana, and the world, she believes that the creation of a separate sheanut sector, which is not overshadowed by cocoa, will generate a lot of income for the country and farmers.

She says her first project, when sworn into office, will be to use part of the MP's Common Fund to expand the children's ward of the district hospital in her constituency, which she says is too small to accommodate the growing population. According to her, if the mothers in every household in her constituency is empowered, the entire household benefits and the ripple effects is seen in the society as a whole.

After Kony 2012, “What I Love About Africa” Reclaims Narrative

*The online campaign about Ugandan war criminal Joseph Kony gave way to many reactions, including a counter initiative to highlight positive aspects of the African continent: #WhatILoveAboutAfrica is now trending on Twitter.
Posted by Lova Rakotomalala on 14/03/2012.*

Anyone following online citizen media closely this month, would inevitably have come across the heated global debate over the [Invisible Children viral campaign](#) to stop Ugandan war criminal and rebel army leader [Joseph Kony](#).

While the [Kony 2012](#) campaign certainly received the attention it sought, many Ugandans and Africans felt its message lacked the nuance required by context, and was more focused on raising funds for the organisation’s own survival rather than [empowering the people affected](#) by the conflict.

Furthermore, many African citizens felt that once again, the narrative of a highly publicized story about Africa centered on a negative story and neglected the upwards trends the continent has been witnessing.

As [a counter measure](#), many people started posting stories on Twitter about “what they love about Africa” with the hash tag [#WhatILoveAboutAfrica](#).

The initiative, [spearheaded by Semhar Araia](#), a blogger at the [Diaspora African Women Network \(DAWNS\)](#), started to [trend worldwide on Twitter](#) on March 13, 2012.

The other side of the story

While no one argues with the merit of exposing the despicable crimes perpetuated by Kony’s [Lord’s Resistance Army](#), the following citizen media commentaries explain why this debate is more than just a “[meme war](#)” but a struggle to reclaim the international perception and narrative about an entire continent.

When a group of North Ugandans, the main victims of Kony’s crimes, were showed the Invisible Children’s video in a public screening, they were not particularly pleased with the content of the [video](#) as is seen in an Al Jazeera English video below.

After Kony 2012, “What I Love About Africa” Reclaims Narrative

“If people in those countries care about us, they will not wear t-shirts with pictures of Joseph Kony for any reason,” says one man interviewed. “That would celebrate our suffering.”

A Ugandan man at another screening says, “There is some kind of people, some NGO, who are trying to mobilize funds using the atrocities committed in Northern Uganda.”



The campaign to show the positive sides of Africa has garnered quite a bit of clout as well in the social media scene. American student and Afrophile Karen Kilberg [collected a few of her favorite posts](#) about the meme, and also quotes African blogger [Tatenda Muranda](#) on Twitter as to why she wrote the post:

[@IamQueenNzinga](#): It’s about time we ushered in the era of afro-optimism through words and action

Kenyan journalist Paula Rogo curated on Storify of the “[best and the worst](#)” of the “WhatILoveAboutAfrica” conversation. Here are a few posts from her selection:

[@mwanabibi](#): #WhatILoveAboutAfrica The youth! Hopeful, optimistic and innovative

[@Sarenka222](#): #WhatILoveAboutAfrica resilient, perceptive, courageous, independent press, even in the face of intimidation (cc: [@dailymonitor](#) :)

[@RiseAfrica](#): RT [@texasinafrica](#): Innovations like mobile money, crowdsourced crisis mapping.
#WhatILoveAboutAfrica

The old struggle for the African narrative

Reclaiming the narrative about the African Continent through social media is not a new endeavor. In 2007, a similar campaign brewed throughout the African social media when several prominent bloggers invited fellow bloggers to weigh in on “[Why I blog about Africa](#)”.

After Kony 2012, “What I Love About Africa” Reclaims Narrative

Ivorian blogger Théophile Kouamouo [asked in 2008](#):

Bloguons nous pour la diaspora et le vaste monde, coupé de nos contemporains sur le continent ? Blogue-t-on sur l’Afrique comme on blogue sur l’Europe ou l’Asie ? La blogosphère afro-orientée a-t-elle quelque chose de spécifique à offrir au concert de l’universel version 2.0 ?

Do we blog for the diaspora and for the world at large, cut off from our contemporaries on the continent? Is blogging about Africa done in the same way as blogging about Europe or Asia? Does the African-oriented blogosphere have something specific to offer to the world version 2.0?



Map of Africa tagged by participants of Barcamp Africa in October 2008. From the Maneno Flickr photostream.

The meme was remarkable in that it not only managed to spurt plenty of reactions in the West African region but also spread across the continent to the [African Anglophone blogosphere](#). As a commentary to the meme back then, Rombo of “What an African Woman Thinks” provided [an inspiring response to What she loves about Africa](#):

Africa is under my skin. Africa is the voices in my head. Africa is the itch on my back that I can’t quite reach.

[...] She’s beautiful and she’s strong and she’s got so much to give, she inspires me and I love her truly madly deeply.

She’s battered and bruised and sometimes broken and I love her even more.

She’s always on my mind and in my heart.

It’s not so much, then, that I choose to blog about Africa. It’s that I can’t not.

I really wish the world would see in her all that I see in her.

That’s another reason why I blog about Africa: To make this wish come true.

Sokari of Black Looks [added back then](#):

... she makes me angry and frustrated, lets me down, goes on walkabouts and is influenced by some pretty horrible characters many from distant lands. But I cant help loving her deeply - she is alive, she is real and wise with so many wonderful meaningful stories of humanity and life. She is rich in stature and spirit. I love the way she moves, her facial expressions, the taste of her food and the smell and colours of the earth

After Kony 2012, “What I Love About Africa” Reclaims Narrative

The struggle for the narrative is an old story indeed. Binyavanga Wainaina wrote a famous essay about “How to write about Africa” in 2005. This essay was turned into a video called “[How Not to Write About Africa](#)” narrated by actor Djimon Hounsou:



In view of the long, drawn out struggle to portray the positive side of the continent, one might wonder why it is such a challenge to change the global perspective of the continent and why it matters so much to many people.

An answer to why it is important to highlight the positive side of the continent was offered during the TED Africa conference by Euvinn Naidoo, president of the South African Chamber of Commerce. He argues that trust is an important component for investments in Africa, and that a better understanding of [all the nuances of the continent is required](#). He states:

George Kimble said, ‘The only thing dark about Africa is our ignorance of it.’ So let’s start shedding light on this amazing eclectic continent that has so much to offer [..] The first myth to dispel is that Africa is not a country. It’s made up of 53 different countries. So to say ‘invest in Africa’ is a no-go. It’s meaningless.



Ethiopia: Messages of Solidarity from Christians for Muslims

Messages of unity from Ethiopian Christians have gone viral, as Ethiopian Muslims persistently kept their peaceful protest in a bid to end government's meddling in their religious affairs. A multitude of Christians have changed their Facebook status by announcing their allegiance with Ethiopian Muslims.

Posted by Endalk on [07/31/2012](#).

As Ethiopian Muslims pursue their [peaceful protest](#) in a bid to end the Ethiopian government's [meddling in their religious affairs](#), messages of unity from their compatriot Christians have gone viral in the Ethiopian digital space.

Many Ethiopian Christians have changed their Facebook status to announce their allegiance to Ethiopian Muslims.

There is no better summary than Abiye Teklemariam's [message of unity](#):

I don't like when you trample upon my basic right to worship. I don't like when you shove your version of my religion down my throat. I don't like when you intimidate, arrest and jail my leaders without any legitimate reason or due process. I don't like when you defile my place of worship. I don't like when you stoke the flames of suspicion and fear between Christians and Muslims in this beautiful country of mine. You can fool some of the people all of the time, and all of the people some of the time, but you cannot fool all of the people all of the time. I am Abiye Teklemariam. And today I AM A MUSLIM!

Jawar Mohammed [posted](#):

“Muslims in Ethiopia respect our Christian brothers and sisters and are hopeful that the recent fights and violence will not lead to a larger conflict between Muslims and Christians. We have other more important issues to deal with now in Ethiopia,”

I may add that despite ill wishes by some ‘international’ actors and deliberate provocation by our evil dictators, we, citizens of that country will never allow conflict between our Muslim and Christian communities. Indeed we have better things to do such as getting rid of dictators and pulling our country out of poverty, rather than fight among ourselves.



From Getu Nigussie’s public [Facebook page](#).

Obang Metho’s [message of unity](#) included a verse from the Qur’an:

Meles and his TPLF are trying to steal the real Ethiopia from us and make us to be divided. How can we stop him from breaking up our families and keeping future generations in bondage? We can stop him by loving our neighbor as ourselves. We can do it by refusing to tolerate hate, corruption, injustice, genocide, greed, lies or doing nothing. As it says in the Qur’an, [2:263] “Kind speech and forgiveness is better than charity followed by injury; and Allah is Self-sufficient, Forbearing.”

On Twitter, Welansa Asrat advised her Muslim compatriots to keep up their protest. She tweeted:

[@Dr_Asrat](#): Ethiopia #EthioMuslims Keep up the Protests & Know That Christians around the World Support You - Centuries Of Love & Respect Between Us.

Mohammed Ademo used HashTracking to measure the impact of tweets with Ethio-Muslims hashtag:

[@OPride](#): 323 tweets tagged #EthioMuslims generated 140K + impressions, reaching 50,671 followers in 24 hrs via [@hashtracking](#)

Ethiopian Muslims peaceful protest is now well over half a year and still counting.

Islam is the second-most widely practiced religion in Ethiopia after Christianity. In Islamic history and tradition, Ethiopia is known as the “[Haven of the First Migration or Hijra](#).”

Nigeria: Bloggers and Tweeps #SavedOke

Local netizens fought for the legs and the life of diabetic youth Oke and won the battle to keep him alive through social media advocacy. The successful #SaveOke campaign is another evidence of the rising power of social media in Africa's most populous country.

Posted by Nwachukwu Egbunike on [18/04/2012](#).

Ighiwoto Okeghene John is a young Nigerian who nearly lost not only his feet but his life to diabetes. Better put, #Oke almost “embraced” his ancestors because his financial state prevented him from getting basic medical attention.

The #SaveOke campaign was ignited by some Nigerian bloggers and tweeps – spearheaded by [Linda Ikeji](#) to save Oke's life. #SavedOke cyber-advocacy is one more proof of the rising power of social media in Africa's most populous country.

Who is #Oke?

The protagonist of this story in his own [words](#):

My name is Ighiwoto Okeoghene John. I attended Federal Government College, Warri. Gained admission into Obafemi Awolowo University. Like many young people but unlike most, I could not finish. I was diagnosed with Diabetes 1 and 2. My health started failing. My legs failed me. I had this wound that ate my toes that refused to heal.

Just like many of you, in January 2012, I was angry with the country that didn't have the best health care services, a country where I had to pay so much for my injections of insulin which I took daily. I was angry I could hardly keep to the diet my doctor gave me because it was expensive. I was angry yet I could not go out to march. I could not even walk. For six years now, my legs have failed me, they cannot move me; I cannot move them. My health is failing me but I keep up all hope that I will be fine.

There are some things you do not choose in life; the family you are born into; the country you are born into; your genes; the sicknesses passed through those genes. I cannot change these. You cannot change this but, there is something you can change. Something you can save; my legs; my life.

I need 5million naira for an operation in India. I need you to get me out of this couch. Truth is the couch is getting tired of me too. The wood from the edge that I use as pillow now pains me in the head, from wear and tear. Truth is my body is getting tired, getting weak. I need to get my life back. I need your help.

The Focus of #SaveOke campaign

Omojowa summarises:

Oke has been diagnosed with Diabetes type 1 and 2. The wound on his toe has taken his feet. It threatens to take his life. Oke needs your help. Oke needs 5 million naira for an operation in India. Oke needs this money fast.

There are two things that you can do to save Oke: Donate: You can donate any amount to save Oke's life. 5 million naira is a long way. It would be great if one person gives that. But 5m is just 5,000 people giving N1,000 each. Please try to give a minimum of a N1,000. More is better.



Igihwoto Okeoghene John (Oke). Photo courtesy: Lindaikeji.blogspot.co.uk.

How the campaign went viral

The strategies were best expounded by [Fairy GodSisters Blog](#):

Twitter:

I looked at the amount he needed for surgery, 5 million naira only. Pere! Immediately I thought of the probe going on at the National Assembly, the [almighty N850, 000 meal](#), and I knew that either one person wrote it off with a cheque or all of us would gather our pennies together. Either way, 5million naira was doable.

I went on Twitter, and with a 'warning because of the gory photos', started asking people to first publicise, and then donate. This is where my first set of thank you's start. To [@KathleenNdongmo](#), [@4eyedmonk](#), [@omojuwa](#), [@MrBankole](#), [@ykprojects](#) who not only ran with the story but helped out in their own way, may all the help you will ever seek never be more than a message from you!

@KathleenNdongmo (as if on cue) DM'ed me to get in touch with the CCHub guys. I hadn't heard of them before that night but apparently they'd successfully spearheaded a campaign to fix the blown off roofs of the Yaba Barracks using a [webpage](#). Sounded great, and is the second rung up the appreciation ladder. I rang Tubosun, one of the founders of CCHub past midnight (Nigerian time), and not only was he pleasant, he agreed to help! This was despite the fact that his company was in the middle of a pretty hectic event. A big thank you also goes to Stanley, a developer with the company who was detailed to our cause and was very patient with Oke and I in all the emails we had to exchange.

Blog Post:

On Sunday morning I did a blog post on his story, and on Monday a more descriptive one. By this time people in the diaspora were all over us, asking how they could pitch in. God bless you guys!

You Tube Documentary:

That same night I thought about making a video to connect us with Oke; not one of the silly '£/\$3 a day will save 1 million children in Africa' kind of videos, I just wanted him to tell his story. I got in touch with Onye Ubanatu (because only the best would do), and again, it was closer than further to midnight. After I pitched it to him, he agreed! He was billed to be out of Lagos the entire week but promised to get on it the day after he got back which in my opinion was good because it would provide new momentum for the campaign that week. Thank you Onye! Mwah!



Getting Government Involved (Mobile Telephony):

I got a call yesterday (Wednesday) afternoon. Ejiro Gegere (God bless you richly for your tenacity) called to say the [Delta State](#) Government got in touch and would cater to Oke. At the time she rang, they'd already gotten him admitted in a hospital on the Island for tests, and as you're reading this he's been to Immigration and is back with his passport! They have said they'll cater to everything, and they're well on their way to that.

#Oke has since been flown to India where he is currently receiving treatment. [@KathleenNdongmo](#) confirms:

[@KathleenNdongmo](#): YAY! So glad to see Oke's getting the treatment he needs RT [@seunfakze](#): another picture from #Oke from india #SaveOke <http://pic.twitter.com/LZZsnBdh>

The moral of the #SaveOke story

Emmanuel Udumah in [Virility is a Cause](#) propounds three lessons thus:

And it is therefore clear, that seeking to #SaveOke, we are **accepting the ease of categorization**. Understanding that it is either he's on his feet again, or not. Grey is not our colour of choice. Recall that Russell and his cohorts became famous by advocating a cause. **#SaveOke, too, is a cause**. A cause with endearing practicality, and tangible consequences. In this case, we do not have to grope for ethical implications or stumble in the cocoon of debates.



Oke in an Indian hospital (Image by [@seunfakze](#), April 11, 2012).

If we retain these questions in our head, and take no action, we lose the opportunity to enjoy the bliss of spontaneity. **One of the tools being employed in this cause is social media, which suffices, as KONY 2012 did, for the republic of the webosphere**. If this republic can cast aside all doubts, which legitimately exist, and act without thinking, I think we would have saved not just Oke, but ourselves.

In *Lessons from the #SaveOke Campaign* Fairy GodSister's gave four categorisations:

Social Media is Powerful

I've never doubted the power of social media (wouldn't have studied it if I did) but if I did, this campaign would have forever put paid to those doubts. The speed with which the blog posts spread and the amazing functionality called the 'retweet'.

Nigeria is in Trouble

Oke's story was just another instance pointing to a problem we (Nigeria) haven't gotten past. Unfortunately, even in 2012 we are still in the 'reaction' rather than 'proactive' mode. No one thinks to plan for the future, hell we're barely getting through today!

Who Sings for the Unsung?

How many people die every day because they have no access to qualitative healthcare? How many 'trivial' cases transform into life threatening because they were not nipped in the bud with adequate treatment? Who sings for the unsung?

We are still the World

Social media has always and will always revolve around people. Social media without human involvement can be compared to a beautiful car without a driver: it is nothing without our input. It is one thing to sit in the comfort of your home and moan every day about everything going wrong with the country, how the government doesn't care, how we need a 'paradigm shift (lol), etc. It is a totally different (and more profitable) thing however to do your civic duties, know your leaders (local and national), and then hold them accountable by getting informed, asking them questions, you know the drill.

Mozambique: Meanings Behind Women's Traditional *Mussiro* Masks

In the northern coast and islands of Mozambique, it is very common to come across women with their faces covered of a natural white mask, called mussiro. Their uses and purposes seem to have varied over time, but the tradition still survives. Posted by Sara Moreira on 01/08/2012.

In the northern coastal region and islands of Mozambique, it's common to come across women with faces covered with a natural white mask, called *mussiro* or *n'siro*. The purpose of the mask seems to have evolved over time. Nowadays it tends to be considered more as a means of beautifying the skin, but according to oral accounts, mussiro masks used to carry other subliminal messages related to the civil status of women.

While some meanings might have been lost through history, we pay homage to Mozambican women through this article on what some consider to be one of the strongest brand images of the country.

Matope Jose, from Mozmaniácos, [wrote](#) about the mussiro tradition:

A província de Nampula é tradicionalmente conhecida como a terra das “muthiana orera” ou, simplesmente, meninas bonitas. As mulheres daquela região do país possuem uma técnica que lhes é peculiar de tratar da pele, desde tenra idade, com recurso a uma espécie florestal bastante procurada, denominada mussiro, uma planta que consta da lista das que devem ser preservadas e multiplicadas e que, regra geral, são usadas pelas comunidades para cura de diversas enfermidades, bem como para fins decorativos.

The Nampula province is traditionally known as the land of “muthiana orera”, or simply beautiful ladies. The women from that region of the country have a technique that is particular to them: they treat the skin from an early age, using a sought-after forest species called mussiro, a plant that by law must be preserved and multiplied, and that is used more generally by communities to cure various diseases, as well as for decorative purposes.



Woman in a mussiro mask. [Photo](#) by VHGU on Flickr (license CC BY-NC-SA 2.0).

Mozambique: Meanings Behind Women's Traditional *Mussiro* Masks



Ibo Island. [Photo](#) by Rosino on Flickr (license CC BY-SA 2.0).

In the following [video](#) by Julio Silva, women from Angoche explain how the tradition has been passed down to today's generation from their grandparents, and they show how the cream is extracted from the *Olox dissitiflora* plant using a stone and some water:



Mozambique: Meanings Behind Women's Traditional Mussiro Masks

É esta planta é que nós usávamos na cara como mussiro. É como está a ver na minha cara, é esta planta.

Eu sou Fátima natural de Angoche. Este musiro nossos avós pintava primeiro uma pessoa quando é virgem. Depois entrava dentro de uma casa. Depois pintava este mussiro para ficar branca, até vir um namorado para namorar e casar-se com ele é que deixava mussiro. Só depois, para fazer assim este mussiro, depois uma pessoa quando está fora para ficar clara, para ficar bonita a cara. É este o mussiro. A planta está no mato. Nós costuma ir buscar nossos marido, o bisavô vão cortar e isto começa aí vender. Agora vou mostrar a maneira como se faz este mussiro.

This is the plant that we, as mussiros, use on our faces. It is what you can see on my face, that's the plant.

I am Fátima, from Angoche. This mussiro, our grandparents first used it to show when a girl was a virgin. Then she would enter a house. They painted themselves with this mussiro to become white, until a boy came along who they fell in love with and married; only afterwards did they stop using the mussiro. Only afterwards, they use the mussiro like this, when someone is outside, in order to be white, to make their faces beautiful. This is mussiro. The plant is in the forest. While we usually go and meet our husbands, the great grandparents go and cut it and start selling it. Now I will show you the way we make the mussiro.



Mozambique Island. [Photo](#) from Rosino on Flickr (license CC BY-SA 2.0).

Mozambique: Meanings Behind Women's Traditional *Mussiro* Masks

A [post](#) on the Baía magazine website adds that the tradition of mussiro being used by virgins or by women whose husbands were away is no longer its only usage:

Atualmente, esta pasta está massificada e “liberalizada” para todas as mulheres do norte a sul do país podendo ser usada não só pela mulher makwa ou makonde, mas também a manhungue, machuabo, maronga, machope, matswa etc. É já considerado um tratamento de beleza usado por todas aquelas mulheres preocupadas de forma especial com a beleza feminine africana. Algumas estilistas apostam as suas modelos a usarem esta “pasta afro” nas grandes passarelas como é o caso de Mozambique Fashion Week.

Nowadays, this paste is widely used and has been “liberalised” for all women, from the north to south of the country, so that it can be used not only by the Makwa or Makonde women, but also by the Manhungue, Machuabo, Maronga, Machope, Matswa, etc. It is already considered to be a beauty treatment used by all women specially concerned with African feminine beauty. Some designers are expecting their models to use this “Afro paste” on major catwalks, as they do at Mozambique Fashion Week.

Mauritania: Using Twitter to Mock the President

While the President, General Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, appeared on national TV, police attacked a journalist who was covering the arrest of a guest who called upon the General to leave. Real time coverage and comments by local Twitter users. Posted by Ahmed Jedou, translated by Afef Abrougui on 15/08/2012.

On August 6, Mauritanian President General Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz [appeared](#) on national television. During that televised appearance, police [assaulted](#) a journalist while he was covering the [arrest](#) of, and the aggression towards a guest who called upon the General to leave. Mauritanian Twitter users followed the events in real time, and reacted via the hash tag [#مسرحية_الجنرال](#) (The General's Play).

All this took place during a live transmitted and long [TV show](#) under the title "Encounter with the People." The televised appearance [of the President] coincided with the anniversary of the [2008 coup d'état](#), which led to the overthrow of [Sidi Ould Cheikh Abdallahi](#), Mauritania's first civil and elected President.

The President was insulting the opposition, and accused it of serving the interests of foreign parties. He also ridiculed the opposition's demand which called upon the regime to leave. The [Movement of Mauritanian Youth](#) staged several protests against the televised appearance of the General, and called for the fall of his regime. Dozens of I.R.A.[Abolitionist movement in Mauritania] activists [staged a protest](#) in front of the Justice Ministry building, and the Mauritanian Radio headquarters in protest against the President's slavery declarations during the TV show. They considered his statements as a denial of slavery in public, while standing by the side of slave owners in private.



Mauritanian President Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz. [Photo](#) published by Alkachiv blog.

Mauritania: Using Twitter to Mock the President

Activist Abdel Fetah Habib mocked the President's low education level:

[@afetah](#): لم يتكلم عن إنشاء جامعات عليمة بل يفهم فقط في التكوين المهني. هذا مستواه #مسرحية_الجزرال

[@afetah](#): He did not talk about establishing universities, as he only understands vocational training. That's his level. #مسرحية_الجزرال

Activist Baba Ould Deye echoed similar sentiments. He tweeted about the General's failure to obtain even the lowest educational qualifications:

[@babadeye](#): العالم الليلة يتابع حدث نزول مسبار كيوريوسيتي علي المريخ، ونحن نتابع #مسرحية_الجزرال الذي لا يمتلك شهادة ثانوية
#Curiositylands# موريتانيا

[@babadeye](#): Tonight, the world is following Curiosity landing on Mars, and we are watching the play of the general who does not have a high school degree.

Writer and blogger Abu Abbass Braham mentioned the General's history:

[@abbassbraham](#): مازال الذكي يتهم المعارضة بالانتماء للنظام السابق، رغم أنه كان حارسه مدة عشرين عاما.

[@abbassbraham](#): The smart one is still accusing the opposition of allegiance to the former regime, though he was its guardian for 20 years.

Sidi Ettaieb Ould Mojteba commented on the President's lies:

[@mojteba](#): الجزائر يتحدى كل من يقول أن في موريتانيا يوجد بها قمع، ويبدو أنه نسي قضية المشطوفي الذي قتل بدم بارد

[@mojteba](#): The General challenges anyone saying there is oppression in Mauritania. It seems that he forgot about the case of [Machdhoufi](#) murdered in cold blood.

Khalil Ould Jdoud, Al-Arabiya correspondent, commented on the same thing:

[@KHjdoud](#): مسكين مسيلمة وجدنا من يزايد عليه في الكذب، يستحق العريف دخول الموسوعة العالمية وأن تضرب به العرب المثل

[@KHjdoud](#): Poor [Musaylimah](#) [known as "the Liar", he claimed to be a Prophet], now we have someone who lies more than him. The knowledgeable deserves to be included in an international encyclopedia, and to be considered as a role model for Arabs.

Mauritania: Using Twitter to Mock the President

Ahmed Ould Ennahoui mentioned a caller who accused the General of lying:

[@nahmedou@](#): متصل رائع كذب الجنرال #مسرحية_الجنرال #موريتانيا

[@nahmedouA](#): wonderful caller, he accused the general of lying

Mejdi Ahmad expressed his lack of interest towards the General's televised appearance:

[@mejdmr@](#): علي العموم أنا لم اتابع #مسرحية_الجنرال ولا أبحث عن إعادتها إطلاقاً !!

[@mejdmr@](#): I did not watch the General's play, and I'm not looking for its replay

Mohammed Abdou inquired about the destiny of the young man arrested at the TV studio:

[@medabdou@](#): شباب هل لديكم خبر حول المعتقلين في #مسرحية_الجنرال البارحة ؟ ماهي أخبارهم هل أطلق سراحهم؟ #موريتانيا

[@medabdouDo](#): you have updates about those arrested during the General's play? Were they released?

Activist Bab Ould Hourma poked fun at the TV host:

[@bHourma@](#): اللحظة التاريخية يا منت البلي لم تحن بعد.. يوم تحين تلك اللحظة ستهربين كما فعلت هالة المصري!!

[@bHourma](#): Oh Ment Elli (TV host), the historical moment is not here yet...when that moment comes, you will run away like t

Journalist Yacoub Ould Mohamed Salem also commented on the TV host's lies:

[@YacoubBHD@](#): أحدهم اتصل عبر الهاتف.. بدأ ينتقد انقطع الاتصال فاعتذر المقدم لأن المتدخل اختار قطع الاتصال بنفسه #مسرحية_الجنرال #موريتانيا

[@YacoubBHD](#): Someone called on the phone..He started criticizing, and communication was cut. The TV host apologized, and said that the caller willingly chose to end his phone call.

Kenya: “Do Milk!” Campaign Targets Fast Food Generation

A nation-wide campaign to encourage the consumption of milk is an attempt to contrast changing lifestyle attitudes, with many youngsters abandoning healthy eating practices for “fast food”. This sparked a lively conversation on social media. Posted by Richard Wanjohi on [09/08/2012](#).

The Kenya Dairy Board and milk processors in the country have decided to launch a nationwide campaign to encourage the consumption of milk. This is in line with changing lifestyle attitudes in the country, which has seen many of the youth abandon healthy eating practices for fast food.

Using the title ‘Do Milk’, the campaign has sparked conversation among the country’s bloggers and commentary on social media sites. Here is a link of the advert on YouTube:



In a post titled ‘[Badvertising Vol.2 – Five Reasons to Do Milk](#)’, iCon on the blog Diasporadical took a curious look at the ad campaign:

Kenya: “Do Milk!” Campaign Targets Fast Food Generation

Some would say they were guided by the insight that everybody loves babies as fun, cute, bundles of joy. I say Evian are cowards. There are large demographics of people (in and out of prison) who would love to see babies in adult clothing doing sexy dances and buying each other drinks and be told to “do milk”. That’s not perverted at all. It’s edgy. It has sex appeal. Milk is sexy. End of story.

Speaking of inspirational, this ad is **necessary**. The whole idea, as I’m meant to understand, is that it’s a campaign by the Kenya Dairy Products Association to get people to drink more milk. An unofficial Diasporadical survey revealed that when people were asked what came to mind when they heard “Do Milk”, drinking milk came a staggering third (behind ‘boobs’ and ‘bestiality’). This is a crisis. People really need to start drinking milk and not associating the phrase “do milk” with any form of fetishist coitus. Best way to do that: babies. Why? Because research, that’s why. Research that was so indepth and focused it did not uncover a very similar ad. That’s how focused these guys are to get you to drink milk. How noble.

The blog [BornReadyEK](#), which chronicles the activities of a young agricultural farmer, said:

Most farmers will applaud this but the tough job will be how to sustain the consumption amidst changing feeding patterns in and around the region. According to an article published online on *The East African* titled ‘[Got Milk? Kenya’s Dairy firms in joint publicity campaigns,](#)’ Kenyans remain the highest consumers of milk in the East African regionthis is a fact usually seen in simple practice as tea-making and taking which is easily Kenya’s ‘social drink’. In some countries such as Tanzania, black tea or coffee is more common, a trait replicated in countries such as Ethiopia and shattered Somalia.

Another element which the KDB would have ‘milked’ is the sportsmen and women from this country. That they have been able to make their exploits across the world thanks to regular consumption of milk is without a doubt. Maybe someone should even look at patenting and packaging the famous [mursik](#) from the Rift Valley region (some sports science researchers have tried to link its consumption to Kenya’s prowess on the track but no conclusive findings have been ever been made). Imagine would impact this would have when our world-beaters at the Olympics hold up a gourd/glass of this drink at every public event and aggressively engage in its consumption?

All in all, it is a good start and it is our hope that the renewed interest in milk consumption will not just benefit the milk processors who are more commercially driven but also work to promote a healthy feeding culture in the country and region. It should also benefit the farmers with increased earnings from their labour in dairy farming.

Kenya: “Do Milk!” Campaign Targets Fast Food Generation

In a post titled ‘[Milk-drinking media campaign in Kenya, is the message accurately framed?](#)’, the Sci-Afrique blog wrote:

While I’m all for a campaign to get Kenyans to drink more milk, I wonder as to the effectiveness of using an image of toddlers drinking milk (which is what toddlers do anyway) to encourage teenagers/the youth to drink milk because it’s something “cool” to do. Another issue I have with the whole campaign is that it seems to be encouraging the consumption of processed, packaged milk (considering who the sponsors of the campaign are) yet it is well known that in sub-Saharan Africa, the prevalence of lactose intolerance in the adult population is as high as 80%. That being the case, why not instead encourage the consumption of our traditional fermented milk products? After all, studies have shown them to have probiotic properties, and the fermentation of lactose to lactic acid helps to minimize the gastric distress experienced by lactose intolerant persons when they drink fresh milk.

[Ifehenia’s Blog](#) also took a controversial turn saying:

I suppose the ‘[Do Milk, Stay Young](#)’ campaign hasn’t gone to waste. All that sexual objectification of infants wasn’t in vain. “Sexual objectification?” you ask. Yes, [research](#) has shown that a significant number of people, upon hearing the phrase ‘Do Milk’, thought not of milk, that rich, supposedly delicious and life-giving fluid. No, the first thing that came into their mind was bestiality, followed by boobs. Milk was a distant third. I know, even I was shocked to discover that the perverts I knew were actually formidable and surmountable. There are greater forces out there.... I was going to be able to ‘Take kindly the counsel of the years, gracefully surrendering the things of youth’. Now I suppose I have to rethink my strategy. Osteoporosis will be hard to get when I have been taking a glass of milk every day... because taking that glass makes the sexual objectification of those babies a little less worse.

If the conversation online is anything to go by, this campaign has created some interesting insights into the consumption (or lack thereof) of milk in Kenya. Let’s see how successful the campaign will be.

Angola: Rhythms of Resistance, Past and Present

Lisbon's Centro Interculturacidae paid a tribute to the Angolan music of resistance from the 1950's and 60's, N'Gola Ritmos. A journey to another time of Angolan music of resistance that becomes an occasion to reflect on the country's political present.

Posted by Sara Moreira on 18/06/2012.

On 24 May, 2012, Amnesty International [reported](#) that as the August elections in Angola approached, intimidation and violence against freedom of speech was expected to escalate, including that against political musicians. The report called for a full and impartial investigation into a violent attack against a group of anti-government activists, which included rapper [Hexplosivo Mental](#).

Two weeks later, on June 11, another artist, known for his open opposition to the government, Luaty Beirão, also known as Ikonoklasta or Brigadeiro Mata Frakuxz, [was arrested](#) at the airport of Lisbon, for allegedly carrying cocaine in his luggage. On social media, many people commented that the real reason behind [#Ikonoklasta](#)'s detention was political. In recent times, the rapper's voice of dissent has become more and more visible, as he openly lent support to the frequent street protests in Luanda where dissidents have been holding demonstrations to voice discontent with the government of President [José Eduardo dos Santos](#), who has been in power for 33 years now.

Previously, Luaty had been arrested in March 2011, in a [preemptive maneuver](#) by the government which resulted in the cancellation of the proposed large-scale, anti-government demonstrations scheduled for March 7, 2011. One year later he was [attacked](#) by pro-regime militias in Cazenga.

Time travelling to other 'rhythms' of resistance

In a journey to another time of Angolan music of resistance, the historical group [N'Gola Ritmos](#) from the 50's and 60's, was honored by the non-profit association [Centro Interculturacidae](#) in Lisbon, in the beginning of June, 2012. Celebrating the presence of Amadeu Amorim, one of the members of N'Gola Ritmos, blog Interculturacidae [paid](#) a tribute to the group, which was described as:



[Gathering with Amadeu Amorim](#), a tribute to N'gola Ritmos at Centro InterculturaCidade. Photo by Jorge Joe Martins, Lisbon, June 2012 (used with permission).

Angola: Rhythms of Resistance, Past and Present

motor da ideia de independência de Angola, e por isso perseguido. desmantelado e com vários dos seus elementos presos. Amadeu esteve longo tempo no Tarrafal e mais tempo esteve o líder do conjunto, Carlos Liceu Vieira Dias.

Force behind the idea of independence in Angola, and thus persecuted, dismantled, and several of its members arrested. Amadeu was long time in Tarrafal [[prison camp](#) in Cape Verde] - and the leader of the group, Carlos Liceu Vieira Dias, (was in prison) even longer.

In an [interview published](#) on the blog Nós Por Cá, by Silvia Milonga in 2002, Amadeu Amorim explained “what N’gola Ritmos stood for in the social and political context” back then:

No fundo, era uma rebelião pacífica, tentando despertar consciências adormecidas, que não acreditavam em mais nada, eram 500 anos de colonização. Não havia televisão, nem rádio para toda gente, os jornais não chegavam aos musseques nem ao interior do país e nós sabíamos que uma canção ficava presa no assobio, no cantar. Na LNA quando cantávamos em kimbundu, as pessoas viravam a cara meias envergonhadas, chamavam-nos os mussequeiros. Algumas pessoas no meio daquela malta que estavam acordadas, entediavam porque cantávamos em kimbundu, mais tarde outros apareceram a dizer que falavam ou cantavam em kimbundu. Chegamos a rádio Esperança, uma rádio que transmitia de Brazzaville, ouvida às escondidas. A nossa canção era a única que existia, as pessoas ouviam a rádio e o N’gola Ritmos, passando a mensagem de que não chegamos ao fim, vamos começar agora.

Basically, it was a peaceful rebellion, trying to awaken dormant consciences, who did not believe anything else, seeing the 500 years of [Portuguese] colonization. There was no television or radio for everyone, the newspapers did not reach the slums or the interior of the country and we knew that a song stayed stuck in a whistle, in singing. In the LNA [Angolan National Liberation] when we sang in Kimbundu, people turned their face half ashamed, they called us ‘mussequeiros’ [a mention to people from the slums, musseques in Portuguese]. Some people amidst those guys who were awake, understood why we sang in Kimbundu, others showed up later saying that they spoke or sang in Kimbundu. We made it to Esperança (Hope) Radio, a radio broadcast of Brazzaville, heard in secret. Our song was the only one that existed, people were listening to the radio and to N’gola Ritmos, the message saying that we hadn’t come to an end, we are just starting, was in the loop.

Angola: Rhythms of Resistance, Past and Present

The following [video](#) of the song N'zagi illustrates life in Angola back in the 1960s-70s:



Pioneers of the musical genre [Semba](#), N'gola Ritmos introduced in their popular songs, messages of “absolute claim”, which ended up leading the group to a “death before time”, as Amadeu said in the interview:

Tudo culmina com a prisão porque alguns de nós estávamos directamente metidos na luta política (...)

Depois de regressarmos da cadeia, eu e o Liceu tínhamos que nos apresentar de 15 em 15 dias à polícia e estávamos proibidos de fazer intervenções públicas; depois, veio a guerra e estivemos muitos anos com o recolher obrigatório, não se podia andar a noite.

It all culminated in the prison, because some of us were directly involved in the political struggle (...)

After we came out from the prison, me and Liceu had to present ourselves to the police every fortnight and we were forbidden to make public performances; afterwards, the war came and we were under curfew for several years; we couldn't go out at night.

Nowadays, despite the rhythms being different, there appear to be similarities with regard to the persecution of politically motivated artists in Angola.

Commenting on Luaty's detention, writer José Eduardo Agualusa [wrote](#) on his Facebook profile:

todos os que lutam pela democracia em Angola são neste momento alvos a abater - e, pelo que se vê, vale tudo.

all the ones who fight for democracy in Angola are targets for slaughter - and as one can see, anything goes.



Luaty Beirão. Public image by the Omunga Association, shared on Central Angola 7311 blog.

The blog *Central Angola 7311* [published](#) a note recalling that Luaty

não tem quaisquer antecedentes, sem ser os que têm acompanhado no último ano: Ativismo pacifista.

Como tantos outros em Luanda, tem sido perseguido física, social e politicamente, como têm testemunhado.

doesn't have any criminal record besides what has been following him since the last year: peaceful activism.

Like many others in Luanda, he is being physically, socially and politically chased, as you have witnessed.

On the evening of June 12, 2012, Luaty was [released](#) from custody by the Portuguese police, reported *Maka Angola*, adding that "while the investigations continue, the rapper, who has dual citizenship, including the Portuguese, must report to the police, if he is to be absent from the country for more than five days".

Moving Beyond the Resource Curse

Why is it that African nations endowed with many natural resources such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, Nigeria or Madagascar are also plagued with endemic poverty? This is the paradox of the resource curse, which has blighted many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Posted by Lova Rakotomalala on 13/08/2012.

Resource Curse: for many African countries, these two words sound both ominous and inescapable. They also provide a logical explanation for a paradox that remains inexplicable and intolerable for many observers: ‘Why is it that African nations endowed with many natural resources such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, Nigeria or Madagascar to name a few are also plagued with endemic poverty?’

The resource curse is a complex concept that strives to explain the mechanisms that drive regions rich in natural resources into long term poverty. In a recent article, Nobel laureate economist Joseph Stiglitz provided the [following primer](#) on the resource curse concept:

On average, resource-rich countries have done even more poorly than countries without resources. They have grown more slowly, and with greater inequality – just the opposite of what one would expect [...] Three of the curse’s economic ingredients are well known:

Resource-rich countries tend to have strong currencies, which impede other exports;

Because resource extraction often entails little job creation, unemployment rises;

Volatile resource prices cause growth to be unstable, aided by international banks that rush in when commodity prices are high and rush out in the downturns (reflecting the time-honored principle that bankers lend only to those who do not need their money).

Moreover, resource-rich countries often do not pursue sustainable growth strategies. They fail to recognize that if they do not reinvest their resource wealth into productive investments above ground, they are actually becoming poorer. Political dysfunction exacerbates the problem, as conflict over access to resource rents gives rise to corrupt and undemocratic governments.

The list above could describe the situation of many countries, the majority of them on the African continent. The question on many citizens’ and scholars’ minds is, what are the solutions?

Nigeria

Nigeria covers 923,768 kilometres square and possesses oil reserves [estimated at 35 billion barrels](#) (5.6×10⁹ m³) and natural gas reserves well over 100 trillion cubic feet (2,800 km³).

Nigeria is the United States' largest trading partner in Sub-Saharan Africa and supplies a fifth of its oil (11% of oil imports). Nigeria is currently experiencing a major economic boom but was for a while was the poster nation for misuse of natural resources.

In his 1999 book [The Political Economy of Poverty, Equity and Growth: Nigeria and Indonesia](#), economists David Bevan, Paul Collier and Jan Willem Gunning examine the diverging economic fortunes of Indonesia and Nigeria between the 1950s and the late 1990s:

They emphasize a variety of factors related to these countries respective economic, political and social structures. The first is the fact that Indonesia was more vulnerable to fluctuations in world food prices than Nigeria from the 1950s to the 1980s because it was a major importer of rice. This made the Indonesian government more concerned about promoting agricultural development than the Nigerian government. The second is that the Indonesian government was more responsive to the poor because the Indonesian army, saw itself as having a 'dual function' – that is, a responsibility for socio-political as well as military tasks. The third is the fact that Indonesia's commercial elite was predominantly ethnic Chinese, a factor that made it politically vulnerable, while Nigeria's commercial elite was from the south of the country where the main opposition to the ruling elite was based. This meant that the two countries' ruling elites had different incentives in relation to economic liberalization.



Economist Paul Collier on the consequences of exporting natural resources for Africa.
Video by [Carnegie Council](#).

Nigeria has now embraced economic liberalization and put the emphasis on the development of the private sector to boost its economy and has shown a steady 8% growth for the past six years. However, many natural resources such as natural gas, coal, bauxite, tantalite, gold, tin, iron ore, limestone, niobium, lead and zinc are still underexploited.

Liberalization certainly cannot solve on its own the resource curse. For waste of resources to be further alleviated, [other measures must be considered](#), as academics Subramanian and Martin argue:

- Nigerian citizens are to have access to an equal share of oil proceeds.
- Creating a Fund or distributing current revenues
- Debt relief
- Cooperation by foreign oil companies

Madagascar

Madagascar is one of the poorest countries of the world and despite its [many natural resources](#) (including raffia, fishing and forestry) , it is mainly known for its [mismanagement of arable lands](#). Marc Bellemare wrote in recent paper (July 2012) on land rights in Madagascar:



Land construction in Madagascar. Photo by Foko Madagascar, used with author's permission.

Because untitled and uncultivated lands officially belong to the state, half a million requests to obtain government lands are pending. (..) The central government agency in charge of land tenure is overwhelmed. The land titling system is bankrupt and that many landowners feel insecure on their own lands. Furthermore, land conflicts occur frequently, acquiring a land title is practically impossible without bribing the relevant authority figures, and landowners appear to have little to no incentive to invest in their own plots.

Such a system is prone to invite corruption, a major factor in the further development of the resource curse. Solutions to [prevent the resource curse were discussed](#) by the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative (EITI) back in 2007:

Madagascar was committed to transparency in managing revenues from Madagascar's resources. The GOM emphasized its continued interest in combating corruption and guaranteeing transparency in order to meet development objectives. Representatives from five mining companies made official public "declarations" for EITI: Rio Tinto / QMM (ilmenite); ExxonMobil (offshore oil); Dynatech/ Sherritt (nickel/cobalt); Madagascar Oil (onshore oil); and KROAMA (chrome). In response to a question, an industry representative explained that company reported payments and government reported revenues would be aggregated and compared by an independent body.

The regime change in 2009 brought all those resolutions to a halt and it is unclear where Madagascar stands on the transparency issue for its mineral wealth. A World Bank report in 2010 notes that [transparency on mining deals are still very tenuous](#), especially under the transition government:

Under the transition government, the mining cadastre has allegedly been stripped of its core function, with decisions on new permit allocation being made at the discretion of politicians. With growing demand for mining rights in Madagascar, this temptation is likely to increase. If widespread, such rent-seeking will risk undermining investments in exploration and thus the valuation of Madagascar's mining potential in the long-term. [...] There is a risk that political elites will seek to renege on the fiscal framework for large-scale mining companies. Since dominant coalitions of ruling elites are fluid and continue to change, a short-term 'survival' strategy is encouraged. Especially when under fiscal strain, political elites may thus place their short-term interests to extract rents from industrial mining companies rather than the long-term goal of attracting future investment through credible commitments.

For Africa to move past corruption and the resource curse, it will clearly take several measures and sustainable efforts from several major actors, both from the private and the public sector. However fragile growth might be, it is very tangible for a few African nations rich with natural resources like Nigeria. This is a lead the lesser developed nations, such as Madagascar, could get inspiration from.

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