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African Review

of BUSINESS and TECHNOLOGY

THE ROAD AHEAD P34

Ambitious road and bridge projects across Africa, plus the latest truck innovations

GENSET REVIEW P44

Power solutions to keep vital projects moving

22

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Abduhamid Abu, general manager, trade finance, International Islamic Trade Finance Corporation

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Editor's Note

Strong transport infrastructure is the lifeblood of economies. For Africa, it means goods and people can move easily within countries and across borders and, as intra-continental trade becomes less bureaucratic, roads, bridges and the right vehicles will all play important roles.

In this issue, as African countries simultaneously fight the COVID-19 pandemic, move towards more free trade and plan for economic recovery after a rocky first half of 2020, we look at some of the major road (page 34) and bridge (page 36) projects which are already making a difference. On page 38, we continue our focus on transport with an overview of new heavy vehicle technology which promises to make road transport cleaner and more efficient, as well as great things that are already happening in Africa, such as an innovative truck solution being used in Ghana and vibrant truck manufacturing in Nigeria.

With Africa emerging from the pandemic with relatively lower COVID-19 caseloads, it is worth turning to page 18 for the wise words of four powerful African women, Graça Machel, Dr Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Dr Vera Songwe and Maria Ramos. Their message is clear – now is the time to work towards more equal societies across Africa because of the great economic and social benefits this can bring.

Samantha Payne, *Editor*

Contents

Africa50 boosts Egypt's solar power sector

Africa50, an independent infrastructure fund focused on high-impact projects mostly in the energy and transport sectors, has invested in Egypt's 37sq km US$4bn Benban photovoltaic solar park, which will be the largest in the world upon completion.

The Benban project will help Egypt to reach its target of generating 20 per cent of its power from renewable sources by 2022, putting Egypt on the map as a major solar player in Africa.

Image Credit: World Bank/Flickr

World Bank Group president David Malpass tours the Benban Solar Park with representatives from TAQA Arabia.

Africa50, which was established by the African Development Bank, is one of the largest contributors to the Benban park. In 2017, it joined investors Norfund and Scatec Solar to reach financial close for six of the 32 utility scale solar power plants in the complex, totalling 390MW. With a 25 per cent stake, the investment platform contributed equity to fund construction, alongside Scatec Solar and Norfund, which helped leverage total funding of around US$450mn from the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and other funding agencies.

"Benban is a good example of how we use early stage project development expertise and financing to rapidly bring projects to financial close and then add equity to encourage broader financing," said Alain Ebobissé, Africa50 CEO."Benban is also the first of our dozen active projects to become fully operational and is now delivering clean energy to Egyptian people and businesses."

The plants are supported by 25-year power purchase agreements with the Egyptian Electricity Transmission Company (EETC) under Egypt's feed-in tariff programme. Access roads and interconnection facilities were funded collectively by the Benban project developers under a cost-sharing agreement with EETC and the New and Renewable Energy Agency.

Africa50's six plants alone created around 1,000 construction jobs. In 2019, when the plants were operational, they started producing about 870 GW hours of power annually, providing clean energy for more than 400,000 households and avoiding 350,000 tons of CO_2 emissions.

The consortium is also pioneering the use of bifacial solar modules, capturing the sun from both sides of the panel to increase generation.

ALGERIA IMPROVES INVESTMENT ENVIRONMENT

Algeria has abandoned the rule limiting foreign investment in an Algerian entity to 49 per cent, and put in place several incentive measures in the 2020 Additional Finance Act, aimed at boosting foreign investments in the country.

Foreign investors are now able to set up a 100 per cent foreign owned company in Algeria, except in "purchase and resale activities" and five strategic sectors, where the 49 /51 per cent rule will continue to apply. The five sectors are mining; upstream energy; military; railways, ports and airports; and the pharmaceutical industry, although some uncertainties surround the regulations.

Algeria is also offering incentives such as a two year exemption from customs duties and VAT on the import and purchase of certain components and raw materials, and tax exemptions for start-ups.

The 49/51 per cent rule was introduced in 2009, and resulted in a drastic decline in foreign investment.

SUDAN JOINS "BETTER THAN CASH ALLIANCE"

Sudan has joined the United Nations-based "Better Than Cash Alliance" and announced commitment to accelerate digital payments.

Moving from cash to responsible digital payments is central to the government's economic recovery and reform strategy.

In particular, digital payments will be critical to the success of the Sudan Family Support Program, which will provide monthly direct digital transfers to around 80 per cent of Sudanese families. The Program seeks to spur economic growth, reduce poverty, and improve food security and health throughout the country.

"Digital payments will improve financial inclusion and transparency throughout Sudan's vast territory, especially in conflict-affected regions, help stem corruption, and build a more direct link between citizens and the state," said Dr Ibrahim Elbadawi, Minister of finance and economic planning. "This digital transition will ensure equitable access to resources and government services, and revitalise the private sector, which are central to our efforts to achieve a just and lasting peace and revive the national economy," Dr Elbadawi added.

The move is in line with the Government of Sudan's intention to establish the multi-ministerial Digital Transformation Agency, which will spearhead the modernisation of government services, including the Family Support Program.

"Over 30mn Sudanese men and women will benefit from getting government assistance in a speedy, safe and transparent way, giving them new economic opportunities. We celebrate the Government of Sudan's membership to our Alliance as a clear statement about their commitment to building a dynamic economy that will work for everyone," said Dr Ruth Goodwin-Groen, managing director of the Better Than Cash Alliance.

BRIEFS

Image Credit: Activ Solar/Flickr

Solar generates only two per cent of total electricity.

Algeria looks to solar power

Algeria plans to build several photovoltaic solar plants with a total production capacity of 4,000 MW, at an estimated cost of US$3.2-3.6bn to meet growing domestic demand for electricity and free up gas for export, the government has announced. Algeria has started talks with the Desertec Industrial Initiative (DII) to launch solar power projects. Gas is currently used to generate 98 per cent of total electricity output, with solar accounting for the remaining two per cent.

Image Credit: World Bank/Flickr

The support includes credit for small businesses.

Moroccan business support

Morocco's Credit Agricole bank has announced the launch of a special mechanism to support Morocco's economy post-COVID-19. by assisting enterprises to resume or successfully continue their activities. It includes loans to finance working capital needs of firms with a turnover of more than MAD 10mn (US$1mn) and credit for small businesses and traders, craftsmen, cooperatives, and liberal professionals whose revenues do not exceed MAD 10mn (US$1mn).

Kenyan companies get behind sanitation project to fight COVID-19

An alliance of Kenyan companies and community organisations have joined forces to roll out an extensive sanitation programme aimed at curbing the spread of COVID-19 across the country.

Over the past two months, 1.25mn people have been reached months in Nairobi and the alliance reached 2mn people by the end of June with the Safe Hands programme. The emphasis is on using products from Kenyan comapnies with 87 tonnes of locally produced soap and 1,500 locally manufactured handwashing stations rolled out in two months, while 500,000 locally manufactured masks are being distributed. The programme has acted as a catalyst for job creation and training, as well as proving to be a boost to a range of Kenyan businesses.

Image Credit: Safe Hands

The Safe Hands project is reaching millions of Kenyans and it has the backing of multiple businesses.

Safe Hands Kenya is composed of more than 30 private sector and community actors with strong established networks, credibility and trust within the target communities. Founding coalition members Dalberg and KOKO Networks have been instrumental in catalysing and driving Safe Hands Kenya activities, donating substantial time and resources to launching the effort.

Andrew Waititu, CEO of Safe Hands Kenya commented, “The actions up and down the Safe Hands Kenya supply chain are spurring economic activity and acting as a vital stimulus for Kenyan families working within local manufacturing and supply chains. The Dandora public spaces disinfectant campaign has created 300 temporary jobs, the Mega Apparel factory is engaging 140 people to make masks and we have engaged local artisans and tradespeople to assist in the manufacture of handwashing stations. It is critical to keep as many people in work as possible and to enable skills development and training.”

GE COMPLETES WORK ON KIPETO WIND POWER PROJECT IN SOUTH-WESTERN KENYA

GE has announced the completion of the construction activities of Kipeto wind farm project, located in Kajiado county in south-western Kenya.

The Kipeto wind farm aims to have a capacity of 100MW and will be the second largest of its kind in Kenya after the Turkana Wind Power project.

For this project, GE Renewable Energy supplied and installed 60 wind turbines. The contract, signed in 2019, provided for a 220 kV high-voltage line for the transportation of electricity from the project site to the Isinya substation in Kajiado county.

As per a 20 year power purchase agreement signed in 2015, the produced electricity at the Kipeto wind farm will be sold to the Kenya Power (KPLC) and is expected to provide clean energy access to around 40,000 Kenyan households.

SOMALIA ACCELERATING ITS NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

In early 2020, Somalia, with support from the United Kingdom government and the European Union, settled its arrears to the African Development Bank (AfDB), paving the way for the lifting of 30-year old sanctions imposed by the bank and the resumption of full engagement with the fragile East African country.

A US$122.55mn grant agreement signed in March, between the AfDB’s vice-president for regional development, integration and business delivery Khaled Sherif and Somali finance minister Abdirahman Beileh, marked a milestone on a tough but necessary process of rehabilitation which began in 2014.

The shift to a new and more hopeful phase in which Somalia, with assistance from the AfDB and other development partners, can accelerate its national development agenda of consolidating peace, fighting poverty and ensuring inclusive growth “is a new beginning” for the country.

The reforms, driven by IMF Staff Monitored Programmes (SMPs), restored the confidence of international finance institutions and led the UK and the EU to provide the funding to support the clearance of Somalia’s loan arrears to the bank group.

Although Somalia had been under the bank’s sanctions since 1990 when the government of Siad Barre fell, the institution continued to provide technical and governance support to the country through the African Development Fund, Transition Support Facility, and other special funds including Special Relief Funds, Africa Legal Support Facility Green Environment Fund, African Water Facility, RWSSI and the Multi-Partner Somalia Infrastructure Fund.

Somalia benefitted from the bank’s drought-related assistance channelled through the Intergovernmental Authority on Development.

BRIEFS

New World Bank financing to boost Djibouti's inclusive economic growth

Image Credit: Hiren Ranpara/Adobe Stock

The financing will be helpful to measure progress in growing economy.

The World Bank has approved two projects worth US$25mn to help Djibouti achieve inclusive economic growth. The project has been set up to support the Djibouti government to fill data gaps, improve the quality of crucial statistical products and processes and contribute to boosting the capacity and infrastructure of the National Institute of Statistics of Djibouti (INSD).

UIA predicts investment decline in Uganda

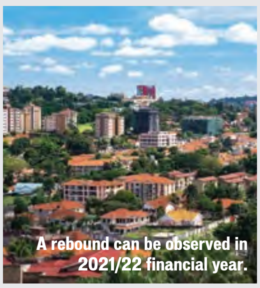


Image Credit: Reidar Johannessen/Adobe Stock

A rebound can be observed in 2021/22 financial year.

The Uganda Investment Authority (UIA) has forecast a decline in foreign direct investment (FDI) and domestic direct investment (DDI). The decline has been predicted in sectors such as tourism, transportation and construction, mainly due to the COVID-19 pandemic scenario. According to the UIA, the investment is projected to decrease in 2019/20 and 2020/21 financial years. A rebound can be observed in 2021/22 financial year.

Private sector enhances energy and healthcare in rural Ethiopia

Image Credit: Adobe Stock

The private sector has an increased role to play in developing rural Ethiopia.

InfraCo Africa, with funding from the Private Infrastructure Development Group Technical Assistance (PIDG TA), is upgrading medical facilities near the company's Corbetti Geothermal project site in rural Ethiopia to enhance preparedness for managing COVID-19 and for meeting the area's longterm healthcare challenges. Working with the team at Corbetti Geothermal in Addis Ababa and Awassa, the funding will support the training of local people to provide public health and awareness training in communities near the project site. The funding will enable the installation of solar PV systems with battery back-up to provide light and power to clinics in Corbetti village and Shala district. Once power is installed, the initiative will supply medical refrigeration equipment to keep vaccines and other medicines cool.

The Corbetti Geothermal project continues to explore options to address the quality and availability of water in the area in the mid to longer term, and indeed to support local communities in developing healthcare, education and transportation solutions. Cases of COVID-19 in Ethiopia have, to date, been limited and largely confined to urban areas; providing an opportunity to upgrade medical facilities in rural areas.

InfraCo Africa's CEO, Gilles Vaes said, "Working with PIDG TA, we are pleased to be able to support the efforts of our local colleagues and communities to prepare for the challenge of COVID-19 and to deliver initiatives in and around the Corbetti project area which will support the health of these communities in the longer term."

IMPROVED BANKING IN TANZANIA

The Chartered Institute for Securities & Investment (CISI) and the Tanzania Institute of Bankers (TIOB) have signed an MoU with the aim of advancing professional standards in the Tanzanian banking sector. The collaboration has been set up to ensure that the following CISI qualifications will be offered to TIOB students and members: International Certificate in Wealth & Investment Management; Global Financial Compliance; Risk in Financial Services; Operational Risk; and Managing Operational Risk in Financial Institutions.

Damas Mugashe TIOB Director of Finance and Business Development said, "TIOB believes that its members, having acquired those qualifications will enhance their professional careers and better serve the financial sector in Tanzania, and will be part of the larger international network of professionals. Moreover, TIOB believes that this partnership will contribute to accelerate its transformation agenda and will enhance cooperation between the two entities".

WorldRemit, Mukuru expand cash pick up network in Zimbabwe

Image Credit: Pedro Ramirez Paz / WorldRemit

The money transfer service operates six days a week, and provides cash in US dollars.

WorldRemit, an online money transfer service, has announced a partnership with Mukuru, one of the largest remittance providers in Africa, to broaden cash pick-up options in Zimbabwe.

The partnership will play an important role in bringing financial services to Zimbabweans and generating new synergies for financial inclusion in Africa.

Pardon Mujakachi, head of sub Saharan Africa and country director for Zimbabwe at WorldRemit, said, "We have witnessed an increasing demand as more Zimbabweans are using our digital app to send money to their loved ones.

"Through this partnership we are able to drive our service further and wider, providing access to remittances even in small towns and growth points across the country. We want to ensure that everyone, everywhere has access to our service which offers a fast and convenient user experience, affordability and easy access to cash."

Andy Jury, CEO at Mukuru commented, "These types of synergies bring immediate value to our customers, and alleviate their day-to-day challenges with user-friendly solutions."

With many families in dire need of financial resources during the coronavirus pandemic, the partnership enables WorldRemit customers in more than 50 countries including the UK, US, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and Europe to send money to their loved ones in Zimbabwe.

Recipients can now collect their WorldRemit remittance at any of Mukuru's 120 orange booths and branches, located across the country in both rural and peri-urban areas. The money transfer service operates six days a week, and provides cash in US dollars.

"WorldRemit is 25 per cent more affordable than the traditional players and banks. Our extensive cash collection network, flexible cash collection hours and lower fees, offer value for money to our customers. This proves us to be the most affordable means of sending money to Zimbabwe," concluded Mujakachi.

ZAMBIA'S ZESCO, POWER CHINA SIGN SOLAR POWER PLANT CONTRACTS

ZESCO, a state-owned power company in Zambia, and Power China have signed three contracts worth US$548mn to develop 600MW (AC) grid connected Solar PV Power Plants to be located in Chibombo, Chirundu, and Siavonga Districts.

The three-grid connected solar PV projects will have a capacity of 200MW each. The signing of the three contracts is historic for ZESCO and Zambia as a whole, as it is a significant step towards diversifying renewable energy development in power generation. Victor Mulenga Mundende, ZESCO managing director, said that the project will greatly profit the over one million current and potential customers by increasing access to reliable electricity, enhance industrial development and create employment opportunities for local people. Mundende urged Power China to ensure that the plant technology takes advantage of the tremendous technologies that are continually improving on the market.

CSIR, DBSA TO SUPPORT SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA) and the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) are set to work together to develop technologies and infrastructure to support socio-economic development in South Africa and Southern Africa.

Recently, the parties signed a framework agreement to collaborate on projects of mutual interest in areas such as water, energy including bioethanol production, development of infrastructure, emerging and small-scale support, and DBSA's Development Labs, known as D-Labs.

D-Labs are development precincts designed to create economic development spaces within communities where all local participants are connected and have access to digital presence, technologies and information.

It is expected that the partnership will pave the way for the commercialisation of CSIR technologies in an effort to boost the competitiveness of local industries and regional economies. This is consistent with the strategy of the CSIR, which aims to use science, technology, and innovation to reinforce industrial development and to create a capable state.

The DBSA plays a critical role in supporting the government to leverage skills and capabilities to accelerate the implementation of infrastructure programmes in the major priority sectors of the economy, such as energy, information and communication technology, water and sanitation, education and health, as well as various municipal infrastructure programmes.

CSIR CEO Dr Thulani Dlamini said, "This partnership brings together complimentary capabilities in innovation and development which could see us make a significant impact in South Africa and also the region."

BRIEFS

Zambia records drop in trade flows: Report

Image Credit: Chuttersnap/Unsplash

Export traffic volumes also declined by three per cent.

According to the latest COMESA Statistics report on 'COVID 19 Impacts on Trade', Zambia recorded reduced trade flows in March and April. The main declines were recorded at Kazungula border with Botswana and Zimbabwe and the Nakonde border with Tanzania. Volumes of import traffic declined overall by 25 per cent between March and April, mainly due to a decline of 83 per cent in volumes recorded at Kazungula, and a 42 per cent decline recorded at the Nakonde border.

CASE CE delivers equipment to Angola

Image Credit: CASE Construction Equipment

The delivery was concluded successfully, despite COVID-19.

CASE Construction Equipment, with an order for 125 units from the Angolan Ministry of Transport, has recorded one of its largest deliveries for 2020. The result of a tender won by the country's CASE partner Redondo y García SA, the order consists of a mix of Backhoe Loaders, Crawler Excavators, Dozers and Graders. Aftermarket services tied to this delivery are being supported by local CASE dealer Ivecar SA. Despite COVID-19, the delivery has been successfully concluded.

South Africa's upstream petroleum resources bill in the spotlight at webinar

South Africa is hoping for more offshore opportunities in the oil and gas sector in the coming months.

Progress on the South African Upstream Petroleum Resources Bill was discussed by a webinar panel on South Africa's oil and gas future, which included the new CEO of the South African Oil & Gas Alliance, Total E&P South Africa, the independent view from Impact Oil & Gas and Africa Energy and the Petroleum Agency SA represented by Lindiwe Mekwe, general manager: Regulation Division and former acting CEO. The panel was hosted by Frontier.

The panellists urged the South African government to prioritise passage of the bill, which will be put before Parliament in the coming months. Attractive fiscal terms and state investment in energy infrastructure are the main focuses of the bill.

Lindiwe Mekwe gave an overview of oil and gas exploration and highlighted the importance of consultation between government and industry. She anticipates the bill will become law by 2021.

Adewale Fayemi, managing director, Total E&P South Africa talked about the success at Brulpadda, the follow-on field development and other prospects that Total are exploring in the region. Impact's exploration director, Philip Birch, meanwhile, stressed the importance of the Venus well in Namibia, which Total will drill with its partners this year.

Jan Maier, vice-president - exploration, Africa Energy said the company was hopeful for the Gazania-1 well, which they are working on in partnership with Azinam Limited and Panoro Energy subject to approval by the South African government. He said they are expected to spud by the end of 2020. He spoke of the importance of South Africa's attractiveness versus other more established hydrocarbon opportunities such as Angola as investors look for exploration opportunities in the southern part of the African continent.

Adrian Strydom, CEO, South African Oil & Gas Alliance said that South Africa is ready to grow the upstream sector and emphasised the world class skills, research and opportunities the country had to offer, in return for jobs and investment.

SOUTH AFRICAN AIRWAYS DRAFTS RESCUE PLAN

South African Airways (SAA) has appointed two business rescue practitioners (BRPs), Siviwe Dongwana and Les Matuson, to issue a draft business rescue plan for comment and consultation. However, the draft report was leaked to media outlets last month and included plans to retain 1,000 jobs from a staff of around 4,700, with contracts being revised before renewal, and for SAA to gradually build up to a fleet of 26 aircraft, a 40 per cent reduction on fleet numbers from December 19. The draft plan proposed seven long-haul jets, nine narrow bodies and 10 smaller aircraft with the fleet being rebuilt in the period to January 2021. In the wake of the leaks to the media, the airline issued a statement saying that it is irresponsible to comment on the draft version of the rescue plan and that the BRPs "will endeavour to publish the final business rescue plan as soon as they are in the position to do so and will update creditors on the process of the development of the plan."

GALANE GOLD OPTIMISTIC WITH Q1 RESULTS

Galane Gold, an un-hedged gold producer operating in Botswana and South Africa, has released Q1 results which the mining company CEO Nick Brodie has welcomed despite the challenges of COVID-19. Highlights of the report included: the production of 6,818 ounces of gold at the Mupane mine, located in north-eastern Botswana; and the company selling its gold at an average sales price of US$1,552 per ounce. Earnings for the first quarter of 2020 were US$1,659,756. Positive cash flows from operating activities, before working capital, came in at US1,449,765.

Galane Gold produced 952 ounces of contained gold in concentrate at its Galaxy operations, which are located 8 km west of the town of Barberton and 45km west of the provincial capital of Nelspruit in the Mpumalanga Province of South Africa.

Mr Brodie commented: "A good result despite the restrictions we encountered at the quarter end due to COVID-19. At the quarter end we had 1,335 ounces of gold unsold due to transportation constraints related to COVID-19. This gold has now been sold and if it had been sold in the normal course our earnings would have improved by a further US$1.2 million and positive cash flows increased by US$2.3 million."

"While we continue to face challenges related to COVID-19 restrictions, we are confident that we have put in place sufficient procedures and policies to continue to operate safely in both Botswana and South Africa and continue advancing our operations. We believe that decisions made by the company during the years of lower gold prices to utilise debt where we could advance our operations and minimise dilution of our equity are now proving to be sound as we see the benefits of higher gold prices just as our production profile is increasing," he added.

BRIEFS

Partnership for digital skills in South Africa

Simplilearn, a digital skills training provider, has announced its partnership with Deviare, a South Africa-based digital and IT solutions platform. Simplilearn will be offering African market learners and corporations digital skills programmes in the fields of data science, cybersecurity, and cloud programming. Deviare will take Simplilearn's digital training programmes to the region as an authorised partner, enabling learners to gain from the high-touch learning platform of the company.

Image Credit: Adobe Stock

Online training grows in Africa.

Image Credit: Adobe Stock

Maize is among affected crops.

Rwanda cereal crop drop

The second cereal crop harvest for 2020 in Rwanda is expected to be lower than the average for the past five years because of poor late season rains in central areas of the country. However, the first cereal crop yield for Rwanda was above average, which should provide some relief. Torrential rain in March and April did not have a negative impact on crops overall, but below-average rainfall for May is expected to hinder the second harvest for 2020.

LiuGong expands dealer network in West Africa

Image Credit: Liugong

LiuGong's sales team works towards implementing the global strategies of the company.

LiuGong Machinery is looking for exclusive distributors to represent the brand for sales, parts and integrated aftersales organisation. "In order to be at the forefront of continued growing demand and interest from customers in the West African region, LiuGong is looking for new distributors to expand its operations. We will continue to build a strong team and culture together with our dealers and stakeholders, for a better future in Africa," announced Li Yi, the general manager of LiuGong's sub-Saharan Africa subsidiary.

LiuGong opened its liaison office in Nigeria to facilitate the functioning of its dealer network in the region. Wu Kaimeng, sales manager of LiuGong West Africa, who coordinates the network expansion, stated that the company will focus on quality and look at partnering with distributors possessing extensive knowledge as well as a wide network within one or more of the countries in West Africa.

LiuGong is one of the top selling brands in the region, especially, its H series of wheel loaders and the E series of excavators. All types of road construction, compact, forklift and concrete products are widely sold and supported in sub-Saharan Africa, he added.

"The aftersales and parts departments provide the availability of main components, engines and a variety of other parts, over the SAP system, to professionally support the distributors in sub-Saharan Africa for providing maximum customer satisfaction," said Kaimeng.

LiuGong's sales team coordinates closely with the head office to implement the global strategies of the company, aimed towards boosting sales and marketing of its products across Africa.

LiuGong South Africa, in cooperation with the Nigeria office, carries out marketing and branding activities throughout its dealer network in West Africa. "We choose our target markets carefully and prepare tailored marketing programmes together with our dealers. Marketing programmes and sales campaigns go well beyond promotion, with better understanding of our customer needs and forming a unique strategy with our dealers," said Kivanc Eren, marketing and branding director of LiuGong in Africa.

IFC INVESTS IN NIGERIA'S ZENITH BANK TO SUPPORT SMEs

IFC, a member of the World Bank Group, has announced an investment of up to US$100mn in Nigeria's Zenith Bank Plc to help it increase support to clients and companies whose cash flows have been disrupted by challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ebenezer Onyeagwu, group managing director and CEO of Zenith Bank, said, "IFC's support is essential and will help us respond to challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. It will allow us to support compelling export initiatives and trade financing for critical goods and materials, especially for the medical and pharmaceuticals sectors. Our partnership with IFC is strong and we are committed to its environmental, social, and governance (ESG) requirements."

"IFC's support for Nigeria's banking sector will help keep the wheels of Nigeria's economy turning at a time of a major challenge due to COVID-19," said Eme Essien Lore, IFC country manager in Nigeria.

DANGOTE TO BOOST ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION THROUGH MAIDEN CLINKER SHIPMENT

The exportation of 27,800 mt clinker from the Dangote Cement Export Terminal in Apapa Port, Lagos, is set to place Nigeria as one of the leading clinker exporters in the world.

"This vessel, being the maiden ship is exporting to Senegal and is just the tip of the iceberg. We have plans to send clinker from Nigeria to Ivory Coast, Cameroon and Ghana," said the group executive director Alhaji Sada Ladan-Baki.

He recalled that only a few years ago, Nigeria was one of the world's largest bulk importers of cement. "Dangote has gradually made Nigeria self-sufficient in cement production as well as an exporter of clinker to other countries," he commented during the departure of the ship conveying clinker.

He disclosed that the company would also be launching its export terminal in Onne in the next few days, adding that it would enable it to export clinker, initially to its grinding facility in Cameroon and then to new grinding plants the company is building across West Africa.

"This terminal will assist Dangote to actualise the full potential of the company's investment in cement. This feat by Dangote is going to generate a lot of jobs because the export terminal has already created jobs for many Nigerians. As of now, the numbers of employed Nigerians at the terminal have reached 100. We are targeting around 200 to 300 workers in Lagos Terminal alone."

"Apart from job creation opportunities, the exportation of clinker by Dangote will position the country to participate fully in the Africa Free Trade Liberalisation Agreement when it comes into being, so that Nigeria will be protected against foreign products. It will also help it to compete effectively with every country in the business of exportation of clinker,"said Ladan-Baki.

BRIEFS

Beat Drone deploys drones to disinfect communities


Image Credit: IgorZH/adobe Stock

The Nigerian government will be championing the setting up of a drone assembly plant in Akure, Ondo state.

Nigerian startup Beat Drone is providing its drones to the Ondo state government to aid in disinfecting neighbourhoods faster and with better accuracy.

"Our experience in spraying farmlands all over Nigeria is coming into play here, we have recorded more than 20,000 hours cumulatively spraying farmlands of over 30,000 hectares. We knew that we are the most experienced to engage the Nigerian government," stated the company.

Faymonville delivers MAX Trailer low loader to Ghana

Image Credit: Faymonville

The MAX410 was delivered to Mobicrane.

Faymonville Distribution Ag has announced the delivery of a five-axle MAX410 platform trailer and eight-axle MultiMAX semi-trailer in Ghana. The MAX410 was delivered to Mobicrane, and aims to fulfil the requirements for a safe, manoeuvrable and efficient tool to transport counterweights and crane elements.

The MultiMAX semi-trailer is the first Faymonville trailer for Baj Freight Limited, a freight and logistics company in West Africa.

African equity capital markets see a drop but domestic investment rises: PwC Nigeria


Image Credit: Adobe Stock

Domestic investment in Ghana has remained robust despite challenging economic times this year.

The Making Finance Work for Africa (MFW4A) partnership and PwC Nigeria co-hosted a webinar to explore the impact of COVID-19 on African capital markets. Data presented from the PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) Nigeria 2019 African Capital Market Watch, which reviewed the performance of Africa's capital markets between 2010 and the first quarter of 2020, shows that African equity capital market activity has seen a downward trajectory over the past three years as major economies on the continent are faced with fiscal challenges due to growing debt levels and slow economic growth.

Capital market value in 2019 was the lowest seen over the past decade, with the volume of deals lower only in 2012. African economies now face the unprecedented challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has severely impacted global financial markets, according to Andrew Nevin, PwC Nigeria's chief economist, and Alice Tomdio, the firm's director capital markets, who presented the data. Commenting on the data and the potential impact of the COVID pandemic, Geoffrey Odundo, CEO of the Nairobi Securities Exchange said: "Capital markets in East Africa have taken a hit, with a 20 per cent decrease in trading volume since the beginning of COVID-19."

On the positive side, there was increased activity from domestic investors, he added.

Daniel Ogbarmey Tetteh, director-general, Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), Ghana, said that market activity on the Ghana stock market had remained robust, with an almost threefold increase in trading volumes between January and April 2020, compared to the same period in 2019. Again, a good proportion of these trades originated from domestic investors. Speakers stressed the importance of African capital markets in supporting post-COVID recovery. For this to happen, African markets need to be deepened and provide avenues for investment of the significant pools of local capital currently tied up in "dead" assets. Expanding the range of available asset classes should include measures to attract and support new listings. The panel agreed that the increased engagement of local investors was a positive sign, and that developing a deep pool of domestic investors is essential for African capital markets to play their full role in supporting the post-COVID economic recovery.

WORLD BANK INVESTS US$68MN IN MAURITANIA

In response to the influx of Malian refugees into Mauritania, the World Bank mobilised a total of US$68mn from the dedicated window for Refugees and Host Communities financed under the 18th replenishment of the International Development Association (IDA18), to help improve access to basic infrastructure and services for poor and vulnerable communities, including the 60,000 refugees in the Hodh Ech Chargui.

"The financing provided by the Refugee Sub-Window is complementing the humanitarian work of UNHCR which focuses on the most fragile areas of the country where climate change, poverty and growing insecurity are affecting the daily lives of people," said World Bank country manager, Laurent Msellati.

According to the World Bank, long-term investments are needed, as well as short-term aid for immediate relief, to ensure that local host communities that are receiving refugees become self-reliant and do not remain dependent on assistance for extended periods of time.

DHL EYES AMBITIOUS WEST AFRICA EXPANSION

DHL Global Forwarding has strengthened its leadership teams in Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Senegal and Morocco with new country manager appointments.

In the West Africa region, Gisele Bambara leads a team made up of almost 80 per cent women in Burkina Faso, where they have grown the business exponentially in the past 14 months to establish DHL Global Forwarding as the preferred logistics provider of choice among its customers.

Lamine Junior Cisse will assume the dual role of country manager for Senegal as well as the region's Industrial Projects commercial manager. He joins DHL from an international energy firm and takes over the country manager position from Elhadji Galaye Ndaw. Ndaw has been tapped for his expertise in business development, sales and marketing to advance the business in Côte d'Ivoire for the company. All three executives will report directly to Serigne Ndanck Mbaye, CEO, DHL Global Forwarding, West Africa.

"The economic outlook for West Africa remains positive, and we are especially upbeat about the opportunities present in these three countries, which are among the continent's top ten economies. With these new country heads, I am convinced that we are now better equipped to advance our market leading position in the forwarding business," said Mr Mbaye of the new appointments for the region.

In North Africa, meanwhile, DHL has appointed Tina Manoukian, an industry veteran who has been with the company for 22 years, to manage the growing presence in Morocco, reporting directly to Pramod Bagalwadi, CEO, DHL Global Forwarding, Sub-Saharan Africa.

DHL has been expanding its automotive portfolio in the past few years as Morocco emerges as one of the continent's largest motor industries.

BRIEFS

Image Credit: SEED

Families receive urgent relief.

Senegal supported by SEED

Five hundred low-income households in Senegal have received essential food and household items, as the SEED Project concluded the first phase of its COVID-19 campaign providing temporary relief to families with children. "With schools now closed in Senegal and livelihoods being compromised, SEED Project is conscious of a double negative impact the COVID-19 crisis has on vulnerable populations concerning access to food," stated SEED Project president Joseph Lopez.

Image Credit: Dangote Group

Aigboje Aig-Imoukhuede

Private sector healthcare help

Aigboje Aig-Imoukhuede, founder of Access Bank, in collaboration with the Private Sector Health Alliance of Nigeria (PSHAN) have unveiled a new initiative geared towards significantly improving Nigeria's healthcare system at the grassroots level. The innovative strategy, in furtherance of a vision from an earlier stakeholders' roundtable, entails delivering one primary healthcare centre (PHC) in each of Nigeria's 774 Local Government Areas (LGAs) at global standards.

Upcoming Events Calender 2020

SEPTEMBER

8 - 9

INFRASTRUCTURE AFRICA
Cape Town, South Africa
www.infrastructure-africa.com

14 - 18

POWER WEEK AFRICA
Johannesburg, South Africa
www.power-week.com/africa

30 September - 1 Oct

AFRICA PROPERTY INVESTMENT SUMMIT (API)
Johannesburg, South Africa
www.apisummit.co.za

OCTOBER

11 - 12

FT AFRICA SUMMIT
London
live.ft.com/Events/2020/FT-Africa-Summit

20 - 22

AFRICA ENERGY FORUM
Amsterdam, The Netherlands
www.africa-energy-forum.com

Image Credit: aef

The Africa Energy Forum (aef) is the global investment conference & exhibition for Africa's energy, infrastructure & industrial sectors.

NOVEMBER

3 - 6

ECOMONDO
Rimini, Italy
www.ecomondo.com

4 - 5

POWER & ELECTRICITY WORLD AFRICA
Johannesburg, South Africa
www.terrapinn.com/exhibition/power-electricity-world-africa/index.stm

4 - 6

THE BIG 5 CONSTRUCT KENYA
Nairobi, Kenya
www.thebig5constructkenya.com

24 - 26

AFRICAN UTILITY WEEK AND POWERGEN AFRICA
Cape Town, South Africa
www.african-utility-week.com

Building material, mining machines and construction machinery technology in focus at Buildexpo Africa

The 23rd Buildexpo Africa 2021 will be held from 24-26 June 2021 at Kenyatta International Convention Centre, Nairobi, Kenya, focusing on a wide range of the technology in building materials, mining machines, construction machinery and heavy equipment.

Exhibitors from more than 40 countries are expected to attend the 2021 event. According to the World Bank, infrastructure is crucial to Africa's economic turnaround and will play an even greater role in the continent's continued development. Kenya, in particular, is making giant strides in infrastructure and urbanisation, with demarcated economic zones, commercial and residential buildings and resorts for tourists. The country's infrastructure and construction industry value is expected to double between 2019 and 2020. There has already been a spike in the demand for building materials and machinery.

Organised by Expogroup, this mega expo is the ideal forum for international players to showcase their products and services to the huge market in Africa. The three-day event is set to unveil around 14.3mn business prospects, with more than 10,000 products, equipment and machinery on display. Last year's event witnessed international pavilion participation from India, Turkey, China, Italy, Malaysia and Germany.

The event will showcase cutting-edge technology in the building and construction sector.

Image Credit: Expogroup

The 22nd edition of Buildexpo Africa hosted various dignitaries including ambassadors, high commissioners and trade representatives from more than 14 countries namely India, Egypt, Pakistan, Malawi, Angola, Colombia, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, Portugal, Sudan, Ukraine, Estonia, South Africa and Congo.

The visitor profiles include importers, distributors and retailers; manufacturers and exporters; miners and contractors; architects, consultants and engineers; airport sector; aluminium industry (including equipment, technology, foundry and suppliers); building materials industry; contractors; construction equipment and machinery manufacturers, traders and service providers; cement manufacturers, distributors, importers and exporters; ceramic and tile manufacturers, distributors, importers and exporters; electricals, power transmission and cables; wholesalers and retailers; escalators and elevators and others.

"We are in this together with our communities. Going forward, supporting micro and small businesses who are the fabric of our communities and the backbone to Africa's resilience, will be a key priority for us."

BRUNO PIETRACCI

President of Africa and Middle East, The Coca-Cola Company

"Our industry has been devastated by the impact of COVID-19, possibly more so than most other economic sectors, mainly because of the almost total shutdown of borders and of the aviation sector – no flights means no guests."

TREVOR WARD

Managing director, W Hospitality Group

"Africa remains largely a commodity-based economy, and raw materials make up one-third of the continent's export income. The road to recovery will be extremely slow and arduous. The full effect of COVID-19 on our economies is not fully recognised yet."

MARCIA ASHONG

Founder and executive director, TheBoardroom Africa and Brace Energy

"LNG demand was up 8.5 per cent year-on-year globally. That is feeding through to Africa. For an African project [Total's Mozambique LNG] to raise $15 billion in debt financing in the middle of COVID-19 is an astonishing achievement. With no material second wave occurring and, from an energy perspective, the world could be right side by the end of the year. Hopefully 2021 will be Africa's 2020."

PAUL EARDLEY-TAYLOR

Oil and gas coverage, Southern Africa, Standard Bank

"In this time of worldwide uncertainty, it is even more important to support people living with chronic conditions like sickle cell disease. We are excited to join forces with the Ministries of Health of Uganda and Tanzania and local partners to reimagine treatment and care for people with sickle cell disease."

DR PATRICE MATCHABA

Group head of global health and corporate responsibility, Novartis

"Digital payments will improve financial inclusion and transparency throughout Sudan's vast territory, especially in conflict-affected regions, help stem corruption, and build a more direct link between citizens and the state. Joining the digital economy is the natural progression for Sudan, whose young men and women innovatively used technology during the December Revolution to usher in a new era in our nation's history."

DR IBRAHIM ELBADAWI

Minister of Finance and Economic Planning, Sudan

"Africa tourism's sector has proven its capacity to bounce back and multiply recovery to other sectors. We must jointly implement recovery plan and build a roadmap towards a sustainable, innovative and resilient African tourism."

DR AMANI ABOU-ZEID

Commissioner for Infrastructure and Energy, African Union

"We don't want to stop at meeting the needs of today's farmers; we must support future generations. We need to continuously bring to market high-tech solutions to support farmers in producing nutritious food while reducing resource and environmental impacts."

ERIC HANSOTIA

Chief operating officer, AGCO Corporation

"Up to 60 to 70 per cent of health services are delivered by the private sector, so we know that the private sector has to be included in this response system [to the COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria]."

DR OSAGIE EHANIRE

Minister of Health, Nigeria

"Having issues of cash flow front and centre forces the cost of talent into the limelight – but it doesn't mean putting profit before people. Relooking at their relationship, this is where the CFO and HR team need to come together, working more closely than ever before. Together, the CFO and HR need to evaluate skills and resources, minimise temporary and long-term loss of staff, and look after their people. All of these will build a resilient business."

TAMER FAROUK

Oracle South Africa

"Depending on how the pandemic evolves, knowledge of the virus deepens, or science improves, industry and governments will be better prepared for a globally coordinated response. That includes the potential removal of measures when it is safe. That will give airlines some breathing room to rebuild demand and repair damaged balance sheets."

ALEXANDRE DE JUNIAC

Director-general and CEO, IATA

"More than ever, this highlights the need for resilient and local practices in agriculture, such as agro-ecology. These practices can act as a safety net in terms of food security, communities' living conditions and overall resilience to climate change."

HIND AISSAOUI

Regional migration specialist, IOM on programmes to help displaced people in rural Africa return to farms

"If tourism's restart is managed in a responsible and coordinated manner, harnessing the power of innovation and entrepreneurship, then it can transform millions of lives and help protect and preserve Africa's rich cultural and natural heritage."

ZURAB POLOLIKASHVILI

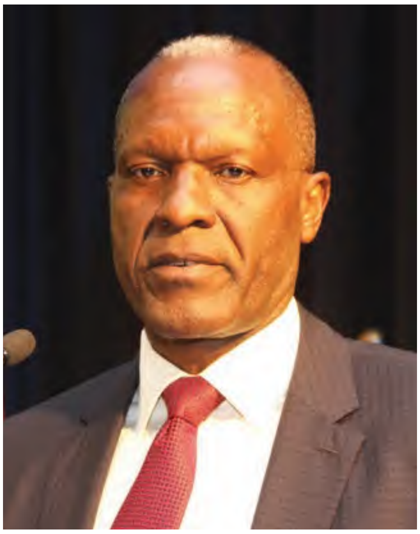
Secretary-General, UNWTO

"Despite challenges, I believe in the power of trade to change lives and the WTO has a vital role to play ... The WTO must be reformed to work for the benefit of all its members. "

DR NGOZI OKONJO-IWEALA

Board chair, Gavi the Vaccine Alliance, and African Union Special Envoy to Mobilize International Economic Support for the Fight Against COVID-19 tweets on her candidacy for the World Trade Organization director-general position

"On the renewable energy sector, we have been able to introduce some reforms that have made it possible for independent power producers to come into the sector and produce clean energy, especially through solar and wind."



TOM ALWEENDO

Minister of Mines and Energy, Namibia

"Berlin has established itself as a hub for medical science throughout Europe in recent years and so it is only right that we take part in this effort to tackle this disease. We're looking forward to working closely with our partners to find innovative solutions to prevent and treat malaria (in Africa) in the future."

DR JÜRGEN ALLERKAMP

Chairman of the board, Investitionsbank Berlin

"Nuclear is a serious option to be considered in terms of energy transition. Smaller modular reactor designs, which will come online in the next few years, are economically competitive with combined cycle natural gas plants."

SUZANNE JAWOROWSKI

Chief of staff and senior advisor, US Office of Nuclear Energy

"The economic outlook for West Africa remains positive, and we are especially upbeat about the opportunities present in these three countries, which are among the continent's top 10 economies. With these new country heads, I am convinced that we are now better equipped to advance our market leading position in the forwarding business."

SERIGNE NDANCK MBAYE
CEO, DHL Global Forwarding, West Africa

"We expect to see explosive growth at the intersection of online media and casual games across Africa, which could ignite more activity among everyone from mobile operators to handset manufacturers."

DERRICK HORNER
Chief strategy officer and co-founder, Pulse Games

"No country has been spared from the economic ravages of COVID-19, with an unprecedented increase in unemployment and severe impacts falling on the poorest and most vulnerable. The pandemic has exacerbated inequalities which the SDGs are meant to address, and threatens to set back decades of progress."

LEILA FOURIE
CEO, Johannesburg Stock Exchange

"Investing in sustainable and resilient infrastructure is an investment in human capital and the productivity of our nation."

DR RANIA AL MASHAT
Minister of International Cooperation, Egypt

AFRICAN REVIEW / ON THE WEB

A selection of product innovations and recent service developments for African business
Full information can be found on www.africanreview.com

UKEF PROVIDES LOAN FOR BENIN'S ROAD PROJECT

Image Credit: UKEF

Sogea-Satom UK will source goods and services from the UK supply chain and boost UK exports to the region.

The UK Export Finance (UKEF) has provided more than US$123.91mn loan to the government of Benin in support of a UK contract for construction firm Sogea-Satom, to redevelop the major interstate road, securing business for the UK supply chain.

The agreement follows six months on from the Africa Investment Summit that took place in January of this year where the UK committed to being the 'partner of choice' for African nations. Total UK exports to Benin were worth US$35.93mn in 2019 and this deal is set to significantly increase that figure during the two years of the road's development.

Graham Stuart MP, minister for exports, said, "This deal will bring significant benefits to UK construction exporters and suppliers at a time when we need to keep trade flowing. It shows that UK businesses, with the right support from government, can continue to export anywhere in the world."

Construction company Sogea-Satom UK, part of one of the world's largest construction group VINCI, will undertake the works on the road between Bohicon and Parakou to better connect Benin to neighbouring Niger.

The rehabilitated road provides essential infrastructure for businesses in Benin. It will improve access to landlocked African countries to the north, helping to transform the country's trading potential and allow the free flow of commercial traffic in the region.In addition to this road project, Sogea Sotum UK is also responsible for managing other large-scale projects in Benin. These include civil works, construction of buildings, refurbishment and development of roads and construction of marine infrastructure. Sogea Sotum UK is strengthening its relationships with UK suppliers to contribute to its project pipeline in the region.

ALTERNET SYSTEMS EARNS INVESTMENT INTEREST AS UBER FEATURES AFRICAN ELECTRIC MOTORCYCLE MARKET

Image Credit: Alternet Systems

Uber Africa launches Uber Cash with Flutterwave and explores EVs.

Alternet Systems has announced that the interest expressed by UBER in the African electric motorcycle market has spurred new investment interest in ALYI's ongoing US$300mn electric mobility project in Africa centred on the commercial manufacturing launch of ALYI's ReVolt Electric Motorcycle.

ALYI has an overall comprehensive electric vehicle strategy in Africa founded on initially launching the commercial production of the company's own ReVolt Electric Motorcycle. The ReVolt Electric Motorcycle pilot passed initial design requirements and ongoing pilot design refinements are expected to soon deliver a reduced overall weight and improved cruising range.

ALYI has partnered with an independent firm founded specifically for launching an initial crypto currency offering (ICO) dedicated to funding ALYI's overall US$300mn electric mobility project in Africa.
ALYI is well on track with its funding partner for the African electric mobility project. A cryptocurrency has already been partitioned on the Ethereum Blockchain. A pre ICO funding round is ready to launch and ICO details are being finalised.

Uber Africa has launched Uber Cash with Flutterwave and explores EVs. Regarding this news, ALYI management was subsequently contacted by investors that have already expressed interest in potentially underwriting the planned ICO. As a result, ALYI management will be presenting a detailed update to the investors next Wednesday, June 17th, aimed at accelerating and increasing the pre ICO funding round in order to likewise accelerate the manufacturing launch of the ReVolt Electric Motorcycle.

AFDB APPROVES US$20MN TO CONTAIN SPREAD OF COVID-19 IN G5 SAHEL NATIONS

The African Development Bank (AfDB) has approved US$20mn in grant funding from the African Development Fund, to build capacity to curb and stop the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic in Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger and Chad.
The operation will provide funding for the project which will also boost resilience of vulnerable communities, including internally displaced persons, refugees and their host communities, in the countries, also known as the Sahel zone's Group of 5 (G5).

The project will support epidemiological surveillance and case management capacity; make available medical products for COVID-19 prevention, control and treatment; ensure the deployment of social protection measures in targeted communities, especially, internally displaced persons, refugees and their host communities; and strengthen food and nutrition systems. The United

Image Credit: World Bank Photo Collection/Flickr

The operation will provide funding for the project which will also boost resilience of vulnerable communities.

Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) will provide operational support for the project. "This operation will complement the development and humanitarian actions of the huge partnership of the Sahel Alliance Initiative and will support the most vulnerable," said Yero Baldeh, director, Transitions States Coordination Office.

This extension of grant funding to the G5 Sahel zone countries falls under the framework of the Bank's COVID-19 response facility of up to US$10bn, which is the institution's main channel to provide assistance to African countries to cushion the economic and health impacts from the crisis. Recent CRF assistance packages have been directed to a group of Economic Community of West African states as well as to countries in the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa zone and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

NEW PARTNERSHIP TO BRING MODULAR NUCLEAR POWER TO REMOTE LOCATIONS

Capital advisory firm RWT Growth Inc. and StarCore Nuclear Canada have announced a partnership to bring cleaner nuclear energy to remote locations and industries which rely on traditional sources of power such as diesel generators.

StarCore Nuclear Canada utilises similar technology to that which has long been used aboard nuclear submarines or large warships and, in 50 years, has seen no major

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incidents, making it a safe choice of clean-tech. When applying this innovation to remote towns, such as those in Canada currently relying on diesel generators to power their communities, this can be a highly beneficial, more sustainable technology for energy access.

StarCore is the only nuclear technology manufacturer whose plant qualifies for remote and off-grid locations. StarCore Nuclear Canada is


Image Credit: homocosmicos/Adobe Stock

The technology aims to change the way we provide power to some of the world's most remote locations and provide economic power solutions while dramatically lowering CO2.

a Generation IV High Temperature Gas Reactor technology that has been designed, optimised and patented for the purpose of providing small-scale, safe, low-cost and low CO2 power production in remote locations.

The StarCore nuclear technology can significantly reduce the reliance on diesel to produce power and by doing so reduce greenhouse gases and lower the cost of energy production, which is critical for remote communities, mines, island communities and large industry. StarCore's reactors involve a considerably lower cost compared to traditional reactors and only need a few members of staff to maintain them.

StarCore Nuclear Canada has engaged RWT Growth. as the exclusive corporate and capital advisor for its global operations and StarCore's forthcoming small modular nuclear reactor power projects in Canada. RWT Growth. is a boutique corporate advisory and investment banking advisory banking firm with offices in Canada and London.

Reece Tomlinson, CEO of RWT Growth, commented, "StarCore represents a technology that can change the way we provide power to some of the world's most remote locations and provide economic power solutions while dramatically lowering CO2. We are pleased and excited to be working with such a great company on such an important technology."

AFRICAN GOLD GROUP ANNOUNCES BOARD AND MANAGEMENT RESTRUCTURING


Image Credit: spiritofamerica/Adobe Stock

The company is set to position itself to be the next multi-asset gold producer in Africa.

African Gold Group Inc has announced structural changes to the board of directors and management of the company as it moves towards construction and first gold at its flagship Kobada Gold Project in southern Mali.

Danny Callow appointed is the president and CEO; Scott Eldridge is non-executive chairman of the Board; Jan-Erik Back is vice-chairman, strategy of the Board; John Begeman is lead independent director of the board.

The proposed change of the company's name is Avion2 Gold Inc.

Callow, currently serving as chief operating officer of the company, is an experienced mining engineer from the Camborne School of Mines with an MBA from the Henley Management College, UK. Eldridge has served as vice-president finance and CFO of Amarillo Gold Corp, President and CEO of Arctic Star Exploration Corp and is CEO of Canarc Resource Corp.

"We are very pleased to be announcing the restructuring of AGG at a time when we are ready to move to the construction phase of our flagship Kobada Gold Project," commented Stan Bharti, outgoing chairman and CEO of AGG.

"We are positioning AGG to be the next multi-asset gold producer in Africa, and have the benefit of this new Board's vast experience to take this Company into production. We now have a top-class operating team led by Danny Callow who has built and operated a number of mines in Africa over the past 28 years, most recently running Glencore's African Copper and Cobalt division, and who has fast-tracked Kobada into being construction ready in a few short months," he added.

Access to education is vital for the economic success of African women.

Image Credit: Adobe Stock

Empowering women as Africa rebuilds

Graça Machel, Dr Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Dr Vera Songwe and Maria Ramos have joined forces to call for Africa to use this time of crisis as a period of economic and social opportunity, especially for girls and women.

COVID-19 has unearthed massive inequalities within our societies and brought to glaring light the unique burdens which women carry the world over. Allocation of response resources should be targeted towards the immediate needs of managing the virus as well as future-looking to simultaneously dismantle the structural, systemic barriers which reinforce inequality and disenfranchisement. We have been presented the opportunity to reimagine and redesign our society into a vibrant and equitable one. We must place women and women's leadership at the core of the response and beyond. COVID-19 has caused massive shocks to informal and formal economies in Africa. World Bank estimates that the Sub-Saharan Africa region will see economic decline, and plunge to -5.1 per cent this year. Women have been hit particularly hard by this downturn. Emerging evidence from the ILO on the impact of COVID-19 suggests that women's economic and productive lives will be affected disproportionately. They have less access to social protections and their capacity to absorb economic shocks is low. As the economic toll of the crisis is felt, there is an increased risk that female children will be forced into early marriages, and the number of child marriages and early pregnancy may increase as girls are turned into a source of quick income for families. It is no surprise that our food systems will be dealt a significant blow resulting in the exacerbation of food insecurity and nearly doubling levels of hunger.

COVID 19 has disrupted supply chains and thrown the global food economy into disarray. As border closures, production stoppages, and export restrictions limit supply, demand has surged, inflating prices and impacting the world's poorest and most marginalised people.

Women are central in the food chain and agricultural output in Africa. Half of the agricultural activity on the continent performed by women, who produce about 60-70 per cent of the food in Sub-Saharan Africa. Studies reveal that the cost of malnutrition has an impact on a country's economic growth. A lack of adequate nutrition is a contributor to high levels of maternal and child mortality as well as stunting, and therefore to the loss of human capital for economic, social and political development. The fragility of African health systems is revealing itself and women and children are most vulnerable to the lack of services the diversion COVID 19 is causing, resulting in an anticipated surge in child and maternal mortality. Domestic violence has risen by upwards of 25 per cent in some countries in lockdown. Victims face limited access to protective services during quarantine.

Women should be at the heart of the COVID-19 response. An intentional focus on the lives and futures of women and girls is an essential part of breaking structural practices which marginalise them. A system for collecting and disaggregating data needs to be place to ensure that the impact of the crisis on women is informing the redesign of fragile and inequitable socio-economic and health systems into fully inclusive, equitable ones. It is important to implement equal rights in the workplace, providing equal pay for equal work.

Governments should give women and female businesses direct access credit, loans, tax and social security payment deferrals and exemptions, and preferential procurement. Structural barriers to access to finance, inheritance, and land rights must be removed. Create and support the enabling environment for ICT infrastructure so rural and urban women are able to contribute to the digital economy.

Response resources should target female SMEs and rural women associations to increase productivity in formal and informal economies, eradicate hunger and malnutrition, boost local food production and confront the indignity of Africa importing its food. Food security is a fundamental investment.

Narrowing gender-based education gaps are needed, such as building ICT infrastructure for online learning and retrain teachers on virtual curriculum so every African child can access education. Protecting girls from child marriage and early pregnancy, and safety net resources for households to keep girls in school are needed.

Comprehensively strengthening the criminal justice system and increasing efforts around survivor support amust be deemed as essential services with mass media efforts to spur a fundamental change of mindset whereby gender-based violence is deemed socially unacceptable and intolerable.

COVID-19 presents us with unprecedented opportunities for the regeneration of the African socio-economic landscape and the movement towards a just, equitable and sustainably prosperous continent. Let us dare not squander this opportunity for a rebirth. ■

Image Credit: Adobe Stock

Will the COVID-19 pandemic lead to a new dawn for the Nigerian economy?

Nigeria: Diversifying on the road ahead

With a relatively low COVID-19 caseload, Nigeria is looking forward to opening borders and getting back to business across a range of industries. Report by Bola Olowo and Georgia Lewis.

At the time of publication, Nigeria had 18,480 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 475 deaths from a population of 206mn. With this relatively low caseload in mind, the Nigerian economy is taking bold steps to reopen across multiple industries. While oil and gas remains important to the country, other economic sectors are keen to make progress.

Godwin Emefiele, governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), said that the drop in oil revenue presented Nigeria with an opportunity to diversify the economy. He said the time has come for Nigeria to produce what it can consume via local production.

"COVID-19 presents Nigeria with an opportunity to reset the economy, a need for the country to prepare itself to get the manufacturing sector working, while the banking sector supports the economy. With the revenue drop from sale of crude, Nigeria has no choice but to diversify its economic base," Mr Emefiele said.

Steel

The government is hoping to revive the steel industry with a Presidential Project Implementation Team set up in May for the Ajaokuta Steel Mill. Nigeria's largest steel mill, a government-owned facility, has gulped millions of dollars but remained moribund 40 years after it was set up. Located in Ajaokuta, in Kogi State, North Central Nigeria, Ajaokuta Steel Company (ASCL) is built on a 24,000-ha plot. The government had maintained that the mill was 95 per cent completed, but the sprawling complex lay abandoned and only the light mills have been put into operation for small-scale fabrication and the production of iron rods.

The implementation team tasked with reviving the mill is chaired by Mr Boss Mustapha, the secretary to the Nigerian government with Mr Ucheckukwu Ogah, junior minister, mines and steel as the alternate chairman, with other, members mainly experts and technocrats drawn from the ministries of mines and steel, finance and justice, as well as Ajaokuta Steel Mill, National Iron Ore company and the Infrastructure Concession Regulatory Commission.

Mr Mustapha said, "The Ajaokuta Steel plant has languished in economic unproductivity for about four decades and previous efforts at reviving it had proved abortive … [the team is] meant to kickstart the process of re-directing the activities of the steel plant with the aim of bringing the steel project back to life for the growth and economic development of our dear nation."

He added that the non-completion of the mill had resulted in avoidable massive foreign exchange losses and intolerable opportunity cost to the count and "a pressing need to redress these avoidable challenges has necessitated this presidential intervention at this time."

The Ajaokuta Project was undertaken by the former Soviet Union under a cooperation agreement with Nigeria in 1967 and after other attempts to complete the mill, the Nigerian government had turned again to the Soviet Union. Mr Mustapha said the mill would be resuscitated on the basis of a government-to-government agreement with funding from the Afrexim bank and the Russian Export Centre, with the Russian government and Afreximbank providing up to US$1.46bn to fund the resuscitation of the Ajaokuta Steel Company. In meetings between Nigerian and Russian Presidents in October last year, it was agreed that the Ajaokuta Steel Project will be resuscitated on the basis of a government-to-government agreement through a technical audit, upgrade, completion and operation. The new team is expected to prepare and submit a periodic work plan along with quarterly progress reports on assignment activities, end-of-assignment report and develop concession contract terms.

Road infrastructure

Across Africa, ambitious road-building projects are taking place (see page 34) and Nigeria is no exception. The Nigerian government, via the Debt Management Office, has commenced the third tranche sale of N150bn seven-year Islamic sukuk bond offer, an Islamic financial bond. It closed last month. Offered in a units of N1,000 per unit subject to a minimum of N10,000 and in multiple of N1,000 thereafter, the seven-year sukuk with a rental rate of 11.2 per cent per annum, has a half-yearly payment and full payment on the day of maturity. Proceeds will be used for the construction and rehabilitation of vital roads across the six geopolitical zones of the country. In 2017, the Nigerian government had raised a N100bn seven-year sukuk bond for the financing of 25 road projects across the country and another N100bn in 2018.

Oil and gas

The pandemic has not silenced calls for greater deregulation and private sector participation in the oil and gas industry. Private stakeholders in the Nigerian downstream sector have urged the government to completely deregulate that end of the business. Stakeholders such as Major Oil Marketers of Nigeria (MOMAN), Depot and Petroleum Products Marketers Association of Nigeria (DAPPMAN) and Petroleum Products Retail Outlets Owners Association of Nigeria (PETROAN) have joined forced to ask the government to draw up a pricing plan formula to usher in a seamless, market-determined price for premium motor spirit.

Oyetunji Oyebanji, president of MOMAN, said the downstream sector requires significant investment to improve service delivery and to generate employment, help in expanding and growing the economy, requiring “a full and total deregulation with appropriate standards and regulation in terms of consumer protection”.

Mr Oyebanji said, “We are all interested in the future of the country as stakeholders. But we need to make the right policy decisions at the appropriate time. Nigeria cannot, as we know, continue to subsidise fuel. Over the last 15 years, we have spent close to N10tn subsidising fuel. This is just unsustainable in this environment, and I think posterity will not judge us properly if we don’t take the right decisions.”

The fall in oil prices has led to Godwin Emefiele, governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), offering reassurance in regard to security of investments and repatriation of funds, even if revenue from oil has dwindled during the first half of 2020. Mr Emefiele said measures had been put in place to ensure an orderly transfer of funds, pointing out that when a similar shortage of foreign exchange occurred in 2015, the CBN was able to settle all commitments in an orderly manner. He added that the CBN is collaborating with the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment to galvanise the manufacturing sector in a bid to reset the economy, and that the foreign exchange available would be devoted to strategic importation or service obligations that are of priority. In regard to his meetings with the banks, manufacturers in the health sector and the larger manufacturing sector, he said the challenge posed by the pandemic required that the fiscal and monetary authorities work together to moderate the health and economic impact of COVID-19.

Agriculture

Notore Chemical Industries, a Nigerian agricultural chemicals company, has released its half-yearly report up to March 2020 with much optimism. The Rivers State company reported N13.12bn of gross revenue, a three per cent increase compared to the N12.68 bn in the same period in 2019, an operating income of N2.7bn ,and a net loss before tax of 5.7bn. Operating expenses increased by 29 per cent to N10.43bn during the period from N8.05bn for the corresponding period last year, due mainly to a combination of increases in production activities, plant repair and maintenance expenses and the impact of naira devaluation.

Onajite Okoloko, group CEO, said, “The modest growth in revenue is attributable to some improvements in plant reliability derived from the on-going Turn Around Maintenance (TAM) programme, which has begun to impact positively on plant operations and resulting in some marginal increases in production volume during the period.”

Mr Okoloko added that Nigerian fertiliser demand is “quite robust” and expected to grow in line with the Nigerian government focusing policies on agricultural development.

“The domestic fertiliser market is yet to reach its full potential as the consumption of fertiliser per hectare of arable land in Nigeria is still far below the 200kg per hectare recommended by Food and Agriculture Organization. The impact of the pandemic on the fertiliser market and Notore in particular, remains minimal, as it operates in the essential goods industry," the report said, adding that once the TAM programme is completed by the end of 2020, Notore is looking to return to profitability.

As Nigeria Agricultural Quarantine Services (NAQS) resumed export certification activities at the country’s ports, a statement from the agency reflects the optimism expressed by Notore. A statement from the agency said export of agricultural produce, which had crawled to a halt during lockdown, will soon pick up pace. The statement went on to say that with the oil price drop, Nigeria is looking at agriculture to fill in the gap in the economy.

“[Nigeria is] up to the task and creatively adapted to the challenge of the current context and will balance the consideration of professional protocols and adherence to all recommended COVID-19 safety precautions in the discharge of its statutory mandate of inspection and certification of agricultural products," the statement said. ■

There is hope for growth in Nigeria’s agricultural sector as the country seeks to produce more of its own food.

Image Credit: Adobe Stock

Diversifying vital investment across Africa

Abduhamid Abu, general manager, trade finance, for International Islamic Trade Finance Corporation talks exclusively to *African Review* about the impact investing across a range of sectors is making in multiple countries.

Abduhamid Abu is optimistic about African development.

Image Credit: ITFC

Abduhamid Abu explains how the International Islamic Trade Finance Corporation (ITFC), an an autonomous entity of the Islamic Development Bank Group, makes a difference in Africa.

How long has ITFC been working in African markets?

Driving intra-OIC trade, particularly between the African member countries and the Member Countries of the OIC is one of ITFC's strategic focus areas. Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) is facing developmental challenges, but with tremendous potential and opportunities. The region is vitally dependent upon trade to fuel its economic development and alleviate poverty, yet it is lacking the financial and economic infrastructure to optimise trade potential. Since 2008, ITFC has provided US$19bn to 28 OIC member countries in Africa, to drive growth across multiple sectors, including high-growth import-export industries such as agri-foods and critical industries such as energy and power generation.

Which African markets are the busiest for ITFC?

ITFC supports all 28 African OIC member countries with a wide range of trade interventions to develop sectors in line with each country's development goals. Working closely with public and private sector stakeholders and partners, in 2019 alone, ITFC disbursed US$2.9bn to African countries. The main beneficiaries were Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Egypt, and Senegal.

In SSA, ITFC has played a catalyst role in the cotton sector bringing badly needed funding to support exporters. The product is a vital export crop, providing employment and livelihood to large segments of the populations in many of the exporting countries in West Africa, and boosting economic activities and foreign currency earnings. ITFC's financing efforts in cotton sector are over US$1.65bn, with 21 operations in Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, and Mali. In Burkina Faso and Cameroon, since 2008, ITFC disbursed over US$840mn to purchase fertilisers and provide early payments to cotton producers. ITFC is known as "the Cotton Bank of Africa."

Senegal is amongst the steadily growing nations in West Africa and growth has been high at over 6 per cent since 2014. In 2019, ITFC signed a US$1.5bn multi-year Framework Agreement to support the priority sectors of Energy, Agriculture and SMEs. Projects include the export of agricultural products, the import of agricultural inputs and foodstuffs and the import of basic energy products such as petroleum and electricity. Since 2008, ITFC has approved trade financing worth US$700mn for Senegal, focusing on these critical sectors of agriculture, energy, and SMEs.

In the Gambia, ITFC approved, since 2008, a total of US$544 million in support of the country's development efforts. Almost 70 per cent of the approved financing went towards the energy sector for the importation of petroleum products and over 30 per cent towards the agricultural sector for pre-export financing of groundnuts, one of the country's primary export.

In 2019, ITFC signed a major agreement to mobilise financial resources of up to US$600 million over three years for Djibouti. These include the import of energy commodities such as petroleum products; and the development of the private sector through partnerships with local financial institutions to support SMEs.

What have been some of the major projects for ITFC in Africa?

A fundamental part of ITFC's strategy is to align its financing efforts with the national development strategies of its member countries, with strategic sectors such agriculture and energy. In line with a commitment to support SDG2, Zero Hunger, ITFC has been actively working towards increasing the participation of African agriculture producers and smallholder farmers to global agri-food value chains. The focus has been on improving their access to knowledge and inputs, assisting them in meeting increasingly stringent international standards, and providing them with timely payment. Since its inception, ITFC has provided about US$5.6bn of financing towards food and agriculture in Africa.

Since 2008, around US$13bn of financing has been extended to support a sustainable supply of energy inputs in OIC member countries. In 2019 alone, ITFC has provided US$1.8bn (US$700mn in SSA). This has provided an estimated 13mn people with access to electricity.

Another important sector is the SMEs, which represent 90 per cent of businesses in West Africa and provide 80 per cent of private sector jobs, but the sector faces major financing gaps. This led to ITFC launching its flagship West Africa SME programme, worth US$18mn. It is being implemented in phases, provides financing lines, capacity building and advisory services to partner banks and SMEs within the WAEMU zone, including Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Senegal and Togo. The programme was piloted in 2018 in Burkina Faso and resulted in a 23 per cent increase in loan application approvals with over $US1mn in financing granted to local SMEs. The second pilot in Senegal, rolled out in November 2019 for around 200 multi-sector SMEs, 20 per cent of which is reserved for women-led enterprises. In 2019, US$367.9mn channelled towards SMEs funding with disbursements benefitting an estimated 120 corporations and sustaining 45,000 jobs.

What sectors are looking the most promising in Africa?

One of the key priorities for the continent is the continuity of trade and availability of trade finance to promote the flow of goods and continued economic activity. There is a need to ensure that buyers and sellers in the critical and value-added sectors continue to trade.

Since 2017, ITFC has been working towards strengthening trade integration between the African and Arab regions through its flagship initiative of The Arab-Africa Trade Bridges Program (AATB). It is a program by ITFC and its strategic partners, including the Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa (BADEA), the African Import Export Bank (Afreximbank), IsDB and ICIEC.

AATB has the mandate of driving regional economic integration between the African and Arab regions and strengthening trade related cooperation. With the COVID-19 crisis, AATB partners have realigned all existing financing engagements towards a range of interim and medium-term measures that respond directly to the needs of both regions. Initiatives focusing on pharmaceuticals and healthcare, as well as agriculture and textiles have been identified as priorities.

In the pre-COVID economy, the AATB program had successfully implemented a series of business matching events for buyers and sellers in the agri-foods and pharmaceutical sectors in the African and Arab regions. These efforts led to US$150mn pharmaceutical and US$30mn agri-food deals. With the crisis, these platforms will play an even more important role in terms of continuing to engage B2B companies in the two regions to become part of the crisis solution. The 4th AATB Executive Committee meeting approved an AATB Response to COVID-19 Crisis.

The planned enactment of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) represents a real opportunity for the Africa to mitigate the economic impact of the crisis. Despite talks of delays in implementation given the current crisis, ITFC remains fully supportive of the AfCFTA because it is crucial for the continuity of trade in Africa.

How has COVID-19 affected the work in project finance?

The Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) pledged US$2.3 billion for the Group's Strategic Preparedness and Response Programme for COVID-19 pandemic. Each component focuses on Respond, Restore and Restart. ITFC was appointed by IsDB to execute the trade finance operations in the Respond phase supporting the prevention, containment, and mitigation of the pandemic.

ITFC's Rapid Response Initiative (RRI), intends to sustain supply chains and enable the revival of trade. A US$300 million package has been allocated to member countries for the purchase of emergency medical equipment and supplies, as well as for strategic commodities, such as staple food. The Recovery Response Program (RRP), earmarks another US$550mn for deployment over the next two years. This aims to fixing the socio-economic damage which is expected to last longer than immediate impact of the virus.

Since the crisis hit, ITFC has approved US$442mn trade financing to 3 OIC member countries from Africa and a regional financial institution. This includes fresh allocations as well as repurposing of previously approved facilities. The financing supports the funding of imports of medical supplies, food security items, and funding support to the private sector and SMEs.

On the trade development front, ITFC has been actively supporting the enhancement of capacity and knowhow for medical preparedness to effectively withstand the impact of COVID-19 in Africa.

What is the outlook for project financing in Africa – and where do you think the opportunities will be in the coming years?

ITFC's overarching goals are aligned with the UN SDGs. Our mandate is to advance trade and improve lives in all OIC member nations and this will continue throughout and after the pandemic. COVID-19 highlights the positioning of SDG 3 - Good Health and Wellbeing - and its interlinkages with other SDGs. Strengthening the capacity of members for early warning, risk reduction and management of health risks is a pre-requisite to achieve the 2030 Development Agenda.

In 2019, ITFC extended US$3.9bn of financing to support Intra-OIC trade. Amongst the key initiatives was a US$500mn joint agreement with Afreximbank to create the Arab Africa Trade Finance and Promotion Programme (AATFPP) under the umbrella of AATB. This milestone was further complemented by ITFC's MoU with the African Union (AU) in February 2020, to partner on joint activities to boost inter-regional trade between African and Arab OIC member countries and help enterprises tap into large-scale opportunities across the two regions. ITFC will continue to leverage these important foundations to help OIC member countries to withstand the economic fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Emphasis will be placed on global agri-food value chains and improving market access for smallholder farmers through initiatives that contribute to better quality agri-food output, transport, and storage. These initiatives include the training of farmers on improved agricultural techniques.

On the SME front, ITFC's priorities include an ongoing assessment of OIC member states' emergency commodity needs and the provision of capacity development for SMEs, in addition to access to capital. Just recently, ITFC approved a 8mn euro financing facility for the Senegalese bank, Banque Islamique du Sénégal (BIS), to support private sector development. With around 300,000 SMEs and microenterprises accounting for 90 per cent of businesses in Senegal, the financing is aimed at supporting the country's efforts to drive economic inclusion and ensure the continuity of intra-OIC trade. The facility is expected to support around 1,000 jobs in the private sector, including companies in food and distribution. There will also be a continued focus on the training of partner banks and other financial institutions to promote Islamic finance across OIC member countries to fuel intra-OIC trade. ■

RCS and SES Networks partner up with an upgraded SD-WAN service for South Sudan

RCS Communication, an ICT company in South Sudan, has adopted a Software-Defined Wide Area Network (SD-WAN) built upon SES Networks' SD-WAN service that will enable RCS to deliver an improved user experience while optimising resiliency and bandwidth usage.

RCS has been using SES's low-latency MEO solution since 2014 to provide reliable and uninterrupted Enterprise connectivity services to NGOs, embassies and a wide range of businesses operating in Juba, the capital of South Sudan.

Image Credit: SES Networks

John-Paul Hemingway, CEO of SES Networks.

With the recent availability of fibre networks in the country, RCS began seeking services that would enable them to bring resiliency and intelligence to the edge and pass end-to-end traffic securely over different available WAN links based on application-aware steering.

Through SES Networks' SD-WAN service, RCS is promising to dynamically and intelligently prioritise and route application traffic between its MEO satellite and fibre links, resulting in improved up-time. Always-on network performance monitoring and analytics provides RCS with high visibility and insights on which to base informed decisions.

"Having been a long-time customer of SES Networks, RCS is pleased to expand the partnership through SES Networks' fully managed end-to-end SD-WAN service," said Flippie Odendal, managing director of RCS. "SES Networks' SD-WAN service has met RCS's requirements and direction of moving towards intelligent, software-defined services that will enable us to dynamically react to evolving market conditions and scale whenever needed."

"We developed SES Networks' SD-WAN service to bring to our customers intelligent, application-aware resiliency, efficiency, visibility and control. In today's cloud-scale world, we believe it is essential that our satellite network services are a seamless, integrated extension to our customers' networks. Our SD-WAN service is another step towards enabling our customers to grow their business with more intelligent and resilient, cloud-optimised services," said John-Paul Hemingway, CEO of SES Networks.

FACEBOOK IN DIGITAL LITERACY DRIVE FOR AFRICA

Facebook announced the launch of "My Digital World," a programme designed to equip the youth and general public across sub-Saharan Africa with skills needed to navigate the digital world. My Digital World is a consolidation of all Facebook digital literacy programmes including Safe Online with Facebook, Ilizwe Lam, and eZibo and will be offered virtually this year to adapt to the COVID-19 pandemic. This year, the social media giant is preparing to train close to 20,000 participants across Nigeria, South Africa, Kenya, Zambia, Senegal, Cote D'Ivoire and Ethiopia on how to use the digital platforms.

Commenting on the announcement, Phil Oduor, policy programme manager for economic impact and digital literacy, Facebook, said, "We remain committed to equipping young people and the general public across Sub-Saharan Africa with the vital digital skills needed to navigate the digital world, especially during these challenging times of COVID-19."

HELP FOR START-UPS IN FRANCOPHONE W.AFRICA

Suguba, in partnership with Mercy Corps and the French Development Agency AFD, is organising their second six-month investment readiness program to support the eight most promising startups in the digital sector in Francophone West Africa.

L'Afrique Excelle, the Francophone adaptation of the World Bank's XL Africa tech accelerator, was Suguba's first acceleration program. The programme which operated in 2018 and 2019 aimed to connect francophone startups across the continent with mentors and investors. Afrique Excelle had enabled 18 of the top 20 startups in French-speaking Sub-Saharan Africa to raise funds of approximately US$10mn dollars.

Afrikhaliss is aimed at digital startups with impactful solutions for local and regional value chains. The programme targets companies that already have a product or service on the market and are generating revenues. However, applications from companies not yet generating revenue will be considered. Eligible companies are based or generate at least 75 per cent of their turnover in one or more of the following markets in Francophone West Africa: Benin, Togo, Burkina Faso, Guinea Conakry, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Niger and Senegal.

Entrepreneurs will be mentored by international and local experts, trained through a tailor-made programme, increase their brand visibility and have access to potential partners and investors. Through its collaboration with leading investors with a focus on Francophone Africa, Afrikhaliss will help the selected start-ups attract capital.

This year's programme will take place in two virtual or physical residences, in Senegal, depending on the evolution of the health situation, and in Côte d'Ivoire.

The programme has as partners leading investment funds and business angels which are active in Francophone Africa.

BRIEFS

Image Credit: Guilhem Vellut/Flickr

Ouagadougou will gain capacity.

Boost for Burkino Faso

MainOne has been contracted by Burkina Faso, backed by the World Bank, to provide bulk connectivity services to a consortium of operators through the PAV-Burkina Cooperative, for the next three years. Following an international bid to select a preferred operator, MainOne was chosen by the Burkinabe Government, withthe financial backing of the World Bank, to provide PAV-Burkina with bulk capacity to nodes in Ouagadougou and Bobo Dioulasso.

Image Credit: Adobe Stock

E-commerce is booming in Africa.

UN meets on e-commerce

The International Trade Centre (ITC) in partnership with the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) held its first ecomConnect Day on the future of e-commerce. The online event focused on how e-commerce can help Africa's businesses survive in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. The day brought together policymakers, industry leaders, and experts to explore what opportunities e-commerce can bring to Africa as part of ITC and ECA's contribution to AfCFTA implementation.

Protecting information, fighting fraudsters

The open system on Android smartphones can be exploited by fraudsters. Geoffrey Cleaves, head of Secure-D, an anti-fraud platform, explains to Phil Desmond how such fraud happens, and how to combat it.

Upstream, a leading mobile commerce platform, offers protection against fraud through a security platform called Secure-D that provides end-to-end protection – from ad clicking to subscription to user billing.

The obvious questions are: what sort of security threats do you report or guard against in the mobile space? How serious is the threat? And how it could affect African end users? Geoffrey Cleaves, head of Secure-D, explained that the Secure-D platform guards against fraudsters attacking the operator's billing systems, which can cause subscribers to be overcharged. "It is known as direct carrier billing fraud (DCBF)," he explained, "and our platform prevents mobile users from being subscribed to premium services without their knowledge."

Many of the harmful apps which carry out this type of fraud perform advertising fraud and steal personal information. Ad fraud works when apps send automated 'clicks' to the advertisers. The advertisers pay the app developers for these 'customers' that have been sent to their service from the app. "Our platform is able to spot this unusual activity and prevent it from happening," said Cleaves. But not only is this an attack on advertisers. Harmful applications often harvest personal data and ship this information to foreign servers for later use.

So how do the threats differ between developed and developing markets? Essentially, said Cleaves, "Secure-D operates in data-centric markets where we guard against DCBF occurring on the web".

In developing markets, subscribers are more dependent on mobiles for web access and operators rely on value-added subscriptions. Also, with low use of traditional banking, the billing system is a trusted payment mechanism. But in terms of connections there is no difference between 3G or 4G in fraud levels.

According to Cleaves, security is a bigger priority in Africa than in the past: "DCBF empties subscribers' wallets or credit – and that makes them angry. Operators might be faced with the cost of refunding credit and, regardless of that gesture, will still be blamed by subscribers for allowing this to happen. That anger tends to hurt their net promoter scores and in competitive markets that usually results in a loss of market share."

Plus low-cost smartphones may bring new problems. Some low-cost devices suffer from poor quality control are more likely to be preinstalled with malware. Additionally, said Cleaves, low-cost devices will be unable to run the latest systems that guard against some known vulnerabilities. As for 2G devices, these are not inherently more secure, but they do tend to be voice-centric and not used for data as much as 3G or 4G.

Apple's system for iPhones is effectively closed, and apps don't make it onto the store without a great deal of testing. The Android system is more open, which hashelped small developers get their apps to market, according to Cleaves. But he added that it has created opportunity for fraud, especially when apps removed from Google Play can still be downloaded from third-parties. This makes it harder for Google to police it in the way that Apple can with the iPhone.

"Big data analytics is of paramount importance for fraud detection solutions as the threats are continuously evolving and cannot be prevented by static rules alone. Optimising fraud detection is an ongoing process. We are constantly validating and updating our existing fraud detection models, as well as developing new ones to incorporate. We use a wide variety of models and techniques, including the three major modelling types of supervised, unsupervised and semi-supervised," he said. "Depending on the set-up – anomaly detection or historical pattern recognition – these approaches are implemented via deep learning or through the latest machine learning algorithms. Analysing the outcomes from the different models determines whether an action or request is valid or potentially fraudulent." ■

The Mobile Ad Fraud 2019 Report, is available for free download at www.secure-d.io

Image Credit: Adobe Stock

Android phones have transformed e-commerce but fraud potential is high.

Millions of people in ultra-rural areas are now more connected.

Image Credit: Adobe Stock

Meeting the rural connectivity challenges

Brian Jakins, regional vice-president, Intelsat, talks about an ongoing partnership with Africa Mobile Networks to enhance rural connectivity: what services it can enable and the role played by satellite technology.

Satellite communications company Intelsat and mobile network infrastructure company Africa Mobile Networks (AMN) entered into a partnership in October of 2018 to accelerate the deployment of mobile connectivity to unserved communities across Africa. The partnership connected its 1,000th remote site, bringing access to 3.5 million people in Africa.

What are the component parts that make up this solution?
The low-cost solution, developed by AMN, is powered by a highly reliable, small-cell solar-based system that can be rapidly deployed in less than six hours. AMN has combined its solution with the power, performance and efficiencies of three high-throughput Intelsat Epic satellites, along with our 23 other satellites that cover the African continent. The result is a mobile network infrastructure that is a fast, cost-effective, reliable solution ton help mobile network operators (MNOs) scale to meet evolving connectivity demands.

Who sells the service on the ground?
Relying on Intelsat's satellite fleet, AMN provides MNOs with a network-as-a-service solution in which AMN builds and operates the ultra-rural network. African mobile operators can deliver reliable mobile connectivity to communities in sub-Saharan Africa that many previously thought were impossible to connect.

What challenges did you face in the early stages of this project?
Sub-Saharan Africa is one of the most difficult and challenging regions of the world to connect because of its geographic complexities and number of remote communities. Intelsat has served Africa for decades, and our team's expertise, combined with AMN's deep understanding of the region, has helped us develop optimal solutions that help MNOs grow their subscriber and revenue base, and better serve their customers. Bringing mobile connectivity to the most rural parts of Africa is not straightforward, and we have learned it requires hybrid networks and innovative business models to truly close the business case.

Has satellite connectivity much more affordable to launch, supply and roll out on the ground?
Over the past few years, the industry has introduced major innovations that have made satellite technology more accessible and more affordable. The power of high-throughput satellites, such as the Intelsat Epic fleet, which delivers 10 times the throughput of a traditional satellite, combined with advances in ground and antenna technology, have lowered the total cost of ownership for mobile operators. Small terminals of less than 10kg can transmit high throughput, while some antennas can be fitted onto car roofs for communications on the move.

One of our 19-year old satellites recently returned to service with an extra five years of life following its docking with the first-ever Mission Extension Vehicle (MEV-1). Already, Intelsat and AMN have connected 1,000 remote sites, bringing access to 3.5 million people in sub-Saharan Africa, and are on track to connect a total of around 12 million Africans by this time next year. Yet, there is still room for improvement; according to the ITU, in 2019, only 28.2 per cent of the population in Africa had access to the internet.

What sort of satellites are involved and what frequencies?
Today, we have 23 traditional GEO satellites and four high-throughput Intelsat Epic satellites. We have a multi-frequency strategy and our satellites have different frequencies, depending on their use.

What services is this enabling that weren't possible before?
This new connectivity can bolster commerce, deliver critical medical information and care to communities far removed from the nearest hospitals, drive curriculums in schools where teachers may be scarce, steady communities after disasters, and importantly, connect families and bridge divides between different cultures through the distribution of news and entertainment.

Does Intelsat's recent financial restructuring announcement impact its ability to move forward?
No. On the contrary, our day-to-day operations, engagement with customers and partners, and capital investments will continue as usual. This is a US-based process that companies like General Motors have gone through, 'reset', and emerged stronger. This is positive because we're using the financial restructuring process as a mechanism for investment and growth. ■

SUEZ supports Angola in facilitating access to clean drinking water


The drinking water needs of Luanda are increasing due to a fast-growing population.

Image Credit: chriss73/Adobe Stock

EPAL, the public water management company in Luanda, has signed a contract with the SUEZ group and its partners, Mota Engil and Soares da Costa, aimed at developing the Bita drinking water plant in Luanda. The contract, worth approximately US$109.90mn for SUEZ, includes pumping of raw water from the Kwanza river, the development of a water treatment plant during a 39-month period and 9 months of operational support.

The plant will meet the drinking water needs of the fast-growing population of Luanda, which has reached 7.5 million inhabitants, while supporting the capital city's economic development. The contract is part of a larger-scale developmental project that benefits from secure financing of the IBRD, the World Bank and BPI France.

With a capacity of 260,000 cubic metres per day, the plant will be one of the largest drinking water production plants built by the group in sub-Saharan Africa. Within the consortium, Mota Engil and Soares da Costa will manage the civil works. In addition to conducting engineering studies, providing equipment and assembling and commissioning the plant, SUEZ will be responsible for training the local teams from EPAL to ensure long-term operations.

Ana Giros, senior executive VP Group in charge of the APAC (Asia, Australia and India) and AMECA (Africa, Middle East, Central Asia) regions commented,"This contract is a testament to our expertise in water treatment technologies as well as our experience in African infrastructure projects which is recognised by our customers, partners and international funding organisations. We would like to thank our customer for its confidence in SUEZ teams' expertise and commitment to delivering to populations. Such services are even more essential in the context of a global health crisis."

The plant will integrate SUEZ technologies such as PulsatubeTM and Aquazur V in order to guarantee excellent water quality production. These technologies reduce the footprint due to their compactness, optimise the treatment of micropollutants and organic matter, and are easy to operate.

SUEZ has built several drinking water plants in Angola, including Kifangondo in Luanda. SUEZ manages the drinking water and sanitation services of Greater Casablanca and Algiers as well.

SOMALIA RECEIVES FINANCING TO IMPROVE SANITATION AND CLEAN WATER ACCESS

The African Development Bank-financed water supply and sanitation project is a critical control intervention in Somalia, with 2.6mn internally displaced persons and the outbreak of COVID-19 posing an additional challenge.

Through its implementing agency, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), internally displaced persons, hard-to-reach rural communities and vulnerable populations now have access to clean water. The project is also promoting good sanitation and hygiene practices by constructing public handwashing stands to help slow the spread of COVID-19 across vulnerable communities in Somalia.

"The African Development Bank and the International Organisation for Migration were the first partners to provide us with handwashing facilities and to create community awareness of COVID-19," said Mohamed Sheik Aden, a medical officer in the Kismayo District in Jubaland.

The US$10.4mn Improving Access to Water Supply and Sanitation in Rural Somalia Project,to be completed in December 2020, aims to reduce mortality among children under five years.

"The continuous hygiene promotion has helped those of us in IDP camps to better understand the pandemic and how handwashing is critical to prevention," said Halima Aden of the Danwadaag IDP settlement in Dhobley Port of Entry.

In coordination with the Somali Ministry of Water and Energy, Ministry of Health, and Federal Member States, 62 handwashing points have been established at health facilities, ports of entry, markets, and community centres in Kismayo and Dhobley IDP sites in Jubaland State.

BRIEFS

Nigeria approves funds for road construction and water projects in Niger State

Nigeria's Federal Executive Council (FEC) has approved more than US$300mn for road construction in different parts of the country and US$13mn for water projects in Zungeru in Niger State.

Image Credit: Adobe Stock


Access to water is improving in Zungeru, Niger State.

As reported in *This Day,* the minister of water resources Malam Adamu Suleiman, said, that the efforts to complete the projects has huge socio-economic impact on the lives of the people.

Image Credit: Riccardo Mayer/Adobe Stock


Water projects have a huge socio-economic impact.

New dates announced for Water Reuse Conference

The International Desalination Association (IDA), has announced March 15-17, 2021 as the new dates for the International Water Reuse and Recycling Conference. The conference represents a global collaborative effort to implement best practices surrounding water reuse and recycling, taking into account regulations, financial challenges, innovative technologies, success stories, and cutting-edge research.

Waste management on the pan-African stage

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, waste management was high on the agenda in Africa. The good news is that it remains a priority and Tunisia is an example of a country that is tackling this challenge. Georgia Lewis reports.

Tunisia is seeking solutions to deal with the 2.5mn tonnes of rubbish it produces yearly.

Image Credit: Adobe Stock

In February this year, one the last physical events held by the United Nations before such meetings moved to the virtual world was the third Conference f the Parties (COP-3) of the Bamako Convention on the Ban of the Import into Africa and the Control of Transboundary Movement and Management of Hazardous Wastes within Africa. Delegates from across the continent descended on Brazzaville, Republic of the Congo, under the theme: From Decisions to Action: Working for Africa with a Safe Chemicals and Waste Future.

"Waste management is today one of the biggest challenges to our planet and a major concern for our countries because of its health and environmental consequences," said Joseph Seka Seka, minister of the environment and sustainable development for Côte D'Ivoire and the outgoing President of Bamako Convention. "We have a collective responsibility to protect and save our environment and our common planet in the face of threats to the health and well-being of our populations, and to work in favour of an Africa safe from the harmful effects of chemicals and waste."

Within weeks of COP-3, the world went into lockdown but this has not stopped Tunisia from making progress in addressing its serious waste management issues.

The country produces more than 2.5 million tonnes of rubbish each year, with wastewater treatment plants expelling an extra 247 million cu/m of wastewater annually into the Mediterranean Sea, as well as inland waterways.

Tunisia has in recent years provided national workshops on waste management, improved the treatment and disposal of medical waste, but significant hurdles still need to be overcome to build on the changes already made.

To this end, UNEP's Chemicals and Waste Management Programme is partnering with Tunisia to fund a three-year project to strengthen Tunisia's regulatory and institutional framework in the management of hazardous wastes and chemicals. Tunisia will provide assistance to companies licensed by the Ministry in charge of the Environment for the management of hazardous wastes.

> "We have a collective responsibility to work in favour of an Africa safe from the harmful effects of chemicals and waste."
>
> **JOSEPH SEKA-SEKA, OUTGOING PRESIDENT OF THE BAMAKO CONVENTION AND MINISTER OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, CÔTE D'IVOIRE**

At a regulatory level, public-private partnerships, online monitoring systems for chemical movements, and drafting guidelines for the environmentally sound management of chemical and hazardous waste at the industry level will all be priorities.

The project is slated to conclude after three years with a programme of awareness-raising and capacity building for stakeholders, such as national institutions concerned with managing hazardous wastes and chemicals, leaders in the industrial sector covering public and private companies, citizens and NGOs. This programme will consist of training modules and organising workshops on revised or new regulations which are expected to be passed. ■

Crushing the challenging problems

The latest crushing solutions mean that difficult-to-manage waste, such as railway sleepers and reinforced concrete poles, can be easily and cost-effectively reduced and recycled on site.

There are materials some operators consider “difficult” to dispose of; these materials often pile up for years and take up space. Old light poles, columns, and concrete pipes, railway sleepers, vineyard poles with spring steel: these objects seem to be more complicated and expensive to recycle than others. However, construction sites that adopted MB Crusher units found an easy and inexpensive way to crush and recycle these types of inert material.

Four minutes – it’s not a riddle or an equation: it’s how long it takes MB’s crusher bucket to crush an eight-metre light pole. With the MB unit attached to the excavator on the construction. A single operator can collect the pole, crush it, and separate the iron from the concrete, all by themselves.

Disposing of reinforced concrete poles in recycling centers is pricey, even if it’s just the cost of transporting the material. If a company wants to be autonomous and use a stationary crusher, the rebar in the concrete can easily cut the conveyor belt or jam the machine, which results in downtime, work stops, and wasting time and money. Alternatively, some crush with demolition shears, but it is a slow process.

This doesn’t happen when using MB’s crushers: the iron comes out while the unit is crushing and can be separated from the processed material with the iron separator, which is installed on the MB unit and controlled by the operator from the cabin. With the MB crusher bucket, it is easy to obtain different material output sizes. The excavator’s operator can do it directly on-site, by just unscrewing a few bolts, inserting or removing shims and adjusting the jaws according to workplace needs. Not only that, but the resulting material is of good quality and ready to be reused or sold.

From two construction sites, one in France and the other in Bulgaria, where the recovering of railway sleepers and reinforced concrete has become a new source of income. Using MB’s crusher buckets and their excavator, the companies can collect poles and sleepers and crush them. During the crushing phase, the rebar is separated from the concrete and then removed from the crushed pile with an iron separator installed directly on the MB unit. The same crusher is used for crushing rocks. The material is quickly processed on-site with a single machine.

Why throw it away when it can be recycled, asked the administration of a Slovakian municipality thought when they were handling material from the demolition of sidewalks. The company who took charge of recovering the material created a real recycling centre with only two attachments. A BF70.2 crusher bucket to crush the waste and an MB-S14 screening bucket to separate it. The material was then reused as a base for road work.

In Brazil, meanwhile, it had been a long time since a large company had used the old light poles on a construction site. They used the MB crusher bucket to crush them, recover the iron, and obtain excellent revenues from the resale.

And in the Czech Republic, a railway company needed to dispose of old sleepers – renting a stationary crusher was too expensive and complicated. Bringing the material to a recycling centre meant high hauling fees. Instead, they used the BF70.2 crusher bucket, attached to their operating machine, crushed the old sleepers on the spot, eliminating rental and transportation costs. ■

Crushing materials on site can be a cheaper solution than transporting difficult waste.

Image Credit: MB Crusher

COVID-19 depresses Africa's hotel construction sector

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating impact on Africa's hotel industry. African hotel development had returned to growth at the start of 2020, with more than 78,000 rooms in 408 hotels in the pipeline, according to the 12th annual survey by W Hospitality Group.

W Hospitality Group's managing director, Trevor Ward, said, "The growth of the chains' presence in Africa has been a very positive story since we started this analysis in 2009. It is quite clear from the numbers that the chains, the developers, the investors continue to believe in the opportunities that Africa presents in the hotel and tourism industry. However, our industry has been devastated by the impact of COVID-19, possibly more so than most other economic sectors, mainly because of the almost total shutdown of borders and of the aviation sector – no flights means no guests."

Image Credit: David Stanley/Flickr

The pandemic has had a devastating impact on hotel construction in Africa.

"With that background, we see a slowdown in pipeline growth in 2020, as we all get to grips with the new reality. With so many of the players locked down, fewer deals will be signed, and it is inevitable that some of the planned openings in 2020 will be delayed, due to closed or slower-paced construction sites, restrictions on funding and a lack of market demand. According to our latest data, there are 90 hotels with 17,000 rooms scheduled to open in 2020, but we estimate that at least half of these will be delayed, bringing the actualisation rate down to no more than 40 per cent."

The 2020 African Hotel Chain Development Pipeline survey reveals that a record 68 chain hotels opened last year, with 11,000 rooms. Accor and Marriott performed particularly well.

Tourism is a vital industry in Africa, because of the direct and indirect jobs that it creates and sustains, as well as its strong foreign currency earnings.

NAMIBIA LAUNCHES HOUSING PROJECTS

Nambia's National Housing Enterprise (NHE) has launched new housing development projects across the country that will see NHE construct 335 houses. This is part of its ongoing efforts to empower Namibians through the provision of affordable and quality housing while continuing to fulfill its mandate.

The houses will be constructed through NHE's Public Private Partnership (PPP) construction model, whereby NHE partners with private investors on a turnkey basis.

The current PPP projects will commence this month and NHE will deliver a total of 335 houses in seven towns across Namibia, at a cost of N$124 million. These towns are Outapi (82); Omuthiya (50); Keetmashoop (77); Karibib & Omaruru (76); Ongwediva (10); and Okakarara (40).

Under this arrangement NHE makes available land for construction and the final products are sold to customers on the NHE's waiting list.

NEW CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS FOR MAURITIUS

The construction industry will drive the economic recovery of Mauritius, the country's National Infrastructure and Community Development, Mahendranuth Sharma Hurreeram said at the National Assembly, according a report in AllAfrica.com.

The Minister announced Rs40bn worth of development projects. He said that the Road Development Authority is implementing nine projects and 18 new ones will be undertaken over the next three years. The National Development Unit is carrying out upgrading, resurfacing and drain works across the country. In the community development sector, construction and upgrading of roads, leisure centres and other amenities are planned. Projects plannned in the 2020-21 budget include the construction of 12,000 social housing units, bus terminal modernisation, the construction of the Rivière des Anguilles dam and completion of a metro system.

The construction sector employs around 120, 000 workers, representing around 22 per cent of the total workforce and in 2019 contributed to some 9.7 per cent to GDP with a net investment of Rs48.3 billion.

LESOTHO DAM CONSTRUCTION RESUMES

Operations at the Polihali Dam construction site in Lesotho have resumed with the excavation for two diversion tunnels. The works are part of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project (LHWP) Phase II advance infrastructure which had been temporarily been suspended during the COVID-19 lockdown period. The resumption of the advance infrastructure works will be gradually increased based on the lifting of travel restrictions and meeting of COVID-19 safety precautions by contractors.

BRIEFS

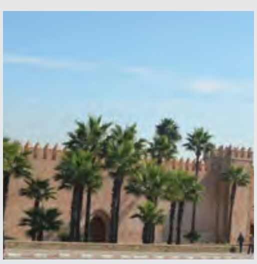


Image Credit: Pedro/Flickr

The tunnel is part of King Mohammed VI's Rabat development programme.

Rabat project commences

Construction on a tunnel to decongest traffic around Rabat's iconic Bab el Had square has commenced. The project has an estimated cost of nearly MAD40mn (US$4.12mn) and includes the construction of a roundabout and underground car park. It is part of King Mohammed VI's Rabat development programme, designed to improve mobility and living conditions within the capital and throughout its suburbs.

Image Credit: Adobe Stock

The new hospitals will help to address the infrastructural deficit in the healthcare sector.

NNPC funds hospital building

The Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) and its subsidiaries have made available N21 billion for the building of hospitals in 12 states across the six geopolitical zones of the country. Minister of Health, Senator Olorunnimbe Mamora, said the healthcare delivery sector is currently witnessing major infrastructural development that would outlive the COVID-19 pandemic and address the infrastructural deficit in the health sector.

South Africa minister appeals for vigilance to ensure health and safety of employees

South Africa's Public Works and Infrastructure Minister Patricia De Lille has appealed to companies to exercise extreme vigilance to ensure the health and safety of employees as more businesses open, following the easing of the lockdown on 1 June.

"Many industries, including the construction industry, will return to work to commence operations in a safe manner in line with alert level 3 of the lockdown regulations," said De Lille.

She acknowledged that many industries, especially the construction industry, have experienced severe economic hardship since the country went into a standstill in March.


Image Credit: Adobe Stock

The construction sector is critical to South Africa's economic growth.

"We can, however, together overcome and rebuild the construction industry, retain and create more jobs to get the economy growing. The construction industry is crucial to South Africa's economic growth as it contributes significantly to the development and to South Africa's GDP," she said, adding that it also contributes substantially to the labour market. She called on the industry to ensure that they continue to keep safe and minimise the spread of the virus.

"Therefore, as the construction industry returns to work today, along with many others, we are mindful that it will be difficult for the industry to adapt to a new way of working, but we are all in this together and it is up to government and the private sector to work together to rebuild the construction industry.

"As companies have staff returning to work, I would like to ask company owners and management to ensure that the resumption of work is done in a careful and responsible manner by ensuring that workers are properly protected and that companies comply with the alert level 3 regulations."

HAC WINS INFRASTRUCTURE CONTRACT

Hassan Allam Construction (HAC), a subsidiary of Hassan Allam Holding, has been awarded a design and build works contract by Egypt's Ministry of Housing and Development for a major infrastructure project in Sheikh Zayed City in Giza. The project aims at expanding the footprint of Sheikh Zayed City due to heavy demand for housing, led by economic growth and development. HAC's scope of work covers the complete design and construction of all utility networks, roads, car and service tunnels for an area of more than 3,000 ha.

The project, which will be executed over a 24 month period, will provide infrastructure to serve one million Egyptians and will create around 2,000 direct and indirect jobs at peak construction.

Hassan Allam Holding is one of the largest privately owned corporations in Egypt and the MENA region, with more than 80 years of experience in the fields of engineering, procurement and construction, building materials and utilities.

Funding for Ethiopia/Sudan railway link feasibility study approved

The African Development Bank (AfDB) has approved a US$1.2mn grant to Ethiopia's government to finance a feasibility study for construction of a standard-gauge railway (SGR) link between Ethiopia and neighbouring Sudan

The grant, from the African Development Fund, the bank group's concessional-rate lending arm, would cover 35 per cent of the total estimated US$3.4mn cost of the study. The remaining funding will be provided by the NEPAD Infrastructure Project Preparation Facility (NEPAD-IPPF) in the form of a US$2mn grant, and by a contribution of US$100,000 each from the two countries involved. The two-year, comprehensive feasibility study will assess the proposed project's technical, economic, environmental and social viability, as well as alternative financing arrangements, including a public-private partnership (PPP).

The railway line will link Addis Ababa in Ethiopia to Khartoum in Sudan, with an extension to Port Sudan on the Red Sea. The route, agreed by both governments, stretches 1,522 km between Addis Ababa and Port Sudan.

According to the document presented to directors of the African Development Fund, the absence of a regional arterial route linking Ethiopia, Sudan and other countries in the Horn of Africa is a brake on trade, development and regional integration. The movement of goods and people between Sudan and Ethiopia often requires the use of several modes of transport, which increases costs and lengthens journey times.

Image Credit: Erik Cleves Kristensen/Flickr

The proposed railway link would bring benefits to a large proportion of the population of Ethiopia and Sudan.

The feasibility study's findings will be keenly awaited because its implementation would benefit a large proportion of Ethiopia's 110mn people and 43mn inhabitants of Sudan, as well as populations in the wider region.

The proposed project is aligned with the bank's Country Strategy Paper 2016-2020 for Ethiopia. It is also consistent with the long-term development goals of the Sudanese Government, as set out in its national 25-year strategy (2007-2031).

CEVA LOGISTICS EXPANDS IN AFRICA

UK-based CEVA Logistics has launched a three-part expansion plan for the African market, through which it aims to become a continent-wide market player. The company has acquired a controlling shareholding in AMI Worldwide, a third-party logistics provider with an extensive network in East and Southern Africa, which has more than 100 years of expertise in the region. Effective from 1 July, the AMI Worldwide office network in 12 countries in East and Southern Africa and its almost 1,000 employees will join the CEVA global network. They will provide a platform for further investment and expansion throughout the continent, with the objective of offering CEVA's customers a seamless network, facilitating cargo movement within Africa and strengthening trade ties with the rest of the world.

Mathieu Friedberg, CEO at CEVA Logistics stated, "With our strategic, continental expansion plan, CEVA will play an integral part in supporting the continent's socio-economic emergence."

DHL INVESTS IN AFRICAN E-COMMERCE

DHL Express has announced its minority stake acquisition in Link Commerce, the UK-based e-commerce firm that helped the logistics company develop its hugely successful DHL Africa eShop platform.

Hennie Heymans, CEO of DHL Express sub-Saharan Africa, said, "Acquiring a stake in Link Commerce – the company behind the MallforAfrica.com platform – shows our tremendous support of e-commerce in Africa. It also positions us to realise our ambitions of growing the eShop offering globally, and work on the scalability of the platform when the opportunity arises."

"With the DHL investment we are now able to grow faster by leveraging the amazing shipping network DHL has built globally. This will help us expand our white-label turnkey B2B eCommerce platform and provide online shoppers with the ability to shop more and get more at great shipping rates fast," said Chris Folayan, founder and CEO of Link Commerce and Mall for Africa.

The DHL Africa eShop (www.Africa-eShop.dhl) was initially launched in 11 countries in April 2019 and is now live in 34 countries across Sub-Saharan Africa with tens of thousands of users across the continent. It offers African consumers access to international retailers via an easy-to-use platform, with purchases delivered directly to their door by DHL Express.

E-commerce is proving to be one of the most important and fastest-growing market sectors in Africa. A report published by the McKinsey Global Institute estimates that Africa's online retail market could potentially reach US$75bn by 2025.

"Our strategic investments in innovative technology and connectivity across the region, are all aimed at promoting global trade and ensuring that businesses and individuals across the continent can leverage global opportunities," Heymans concluded.

BRIEFS

Image Credit: APO

The cooperation programme strengthens the capacity of airport staff for the prevention and detection of COVID-19.

Training for airport personnel

With funding from the German government, the East Africa Community (EAC) Secretariat and the EAC Civil Aviation Safety and Security Oversight Agency (CASSOA) is implementing emergency COVID-19 intervention trainings for staff at the nine international airports in the six EAC Partner States. As a result, surveillance capacities will be strengthened, early-warning systems improved and public health responses at the airports better coordinated.

Image Credit: Papjeff/Flickr

R1.1bn in support will be available for the South African taxi industry.

Relief for taxi industry

South Africa's Transport Minister Fikile Mbalula has announced a relief package of more than R1.1bn for the taxi industry in the form of a one-off payment to operators, and an economic stimulus for transport entities including aviation, maritime and rail transport. "Measures to stimulate the economy include gradual resumption of operations across all modes," he said, adding that entities playing a central role in accelerating economic recovery require urgent financial support.

The changing landscape of the logistics sector

Macroeconomic factors, tenant needs, last-mile delivery and ever-rapid technology developments are all factors that are reshaping the demand and design for warehousing and logistic networks. Abhishek Paul reports.


The future of retail is changing at an accelerated pace as the businesses are choosing advanced warehouses.

Image Credit: Adobe Stock

The materials handling webinar 'Forecasting future demand for logistics and warehouse space', hosted by Messe Frankfurt, has discussed the strategic evolution of supply chain strategies and focus on the growing demand to satisfy inventory controls, supply chain diversification and e-commerce needs in the COVID-19 era.

Giving a top-line overview of implications of COVID-19 on the UAE Industrial & Logistics market, Peter Haywood, Industrial & Logistics Agency MENA, JLL, noted that the trend is shifting from retailers to e-commerce platforms and sophistication of the supply chain.

"The impacts of COVID-19 have not fully materialised, but the initial impacts have been felt," said Peter. "There is optimism that the abruptness of these events has forced the markets into adapting, which will have a positive outcome for the future."

The future of retail is changing at an accelerated pace as the businesses are choosing advanced warehouses, new technologies, automation and re-shoring, he said.

Logistics firms offering services to hard-hit sectors such as retailers, manufacturing, automotive are facing challenges due to the pandemic, said Mohsen Ahmad, CEO, Logistics District, Dubai South. To mitigate the impact of COVID-19, it is imperative to look at reducing the operating costs, collaborating with customers, addressing cash flow challenges and finding innovative operational methods, according to Mohsen. How to keep the business functional even in the lockdown is a lesson learnt by many of the companies, he pointed out.

Ako Djaf, vice-president, Contract Logistics /SCM & Land Transport Middle East and Africa, DB Schenker, noted, "As a consequence of e-commerce growth and advanced technology, automation and innovation, we believe, will determine the future success in our industry.

The growing shortage of labour in matured logistics nations and in our region in many locations and explosion in demand of online retailers will automatically drive automation and innovation, according to Ako.

However, re-skilling the labour force is needed to collaborate and maintain the new machines in the facilities, he said.

Talking about the strategies, he noted that advanced warehouse management system with AI features and interface capabilities is picking up rapidly. Enabling customers better material flow through visibility and traceability is increasing in terms of customers expectation, he added. Creating a value proposition and stable strategic partnerships remain vital for all the logistics firms, in Ako's view.

Another panellist, Alain Kaddoum, general manager of Swisslog Middle East, said, "The traditional retailers in the market are expecting that 50 per cent of their transactions will be 30 per cent to 50 per cent on e-commerce for the next one year at least due to COVID-19 impact. People will get a habit of ordering online more than before."

Sharing his insights on the trends, Alain said that retailers are moving to the e-tailer approach having a smaller footprint of a retail shop and delivering more on e-commerce.

All the panellists have agreed that macroeconomic factors, tenant needs, last-mile delivery and rapid technology developments are all factors that are reshaping the demand and design for warehousing and logistic networks across the region.

As operators pivot to deal with the long-term ramifications of the pandemic, supply chain strategies will be overhauled and this will lead to a resulting boost in warehousing demand, according to the industry experts. ■

Keeping the capitals connected

Martin Clark reports on how the ambitious Trans African Highway initiative to build a high-grade continental roads network is already yielding results, particularly as Africa seeks to open up more cross-border trade.

Africa's roads infrastructure, still notoriously bad in places, has nonetheless seen vast improvement in recent times, especially when it comes to connecting the big urban centres and ports. An example is the Nairobi-Addis-Ababa corridor, which has enhanced the potential for trade and economic growth in Ethiopia, Kenya and across eastern Africa.

The project, which received US$670m in funds from the African Development Bank (AfDB), has cut road freight transit times between the two capitals from about two weeks down to just 24 hours.

It forms part of a wider East Africa route through to Mombasa, one of the region's busiest ports.

The hope is that these improved transport links will nurture intra-regional business, against a backdrop of new trade deals like the African Continental Free Trade Area.

Bilateral trade between Ethiopia and Kenya has increased by 400 per cent, says AfDB's infrastructure director, Amadou Oumarou, facilitated by better connections. Ethiopia trades at least 20 per cent of its freight more competitively through Mombasa, he adds.

The idea of improving links between Africa's capitals and main population centres has become a popular theme elsewhere on the continent. In West Africa, a US$3bn mega project is taking shape that will run a six-lane highway between Lagos, Nigeria's commercial hub, and Abidjan, the Ivorian capital.

The ambitious road development, stretching over 1,028 km, is intended to drive cross-border trade along the West African coast, benefiting Ghana, Togo and Benin, and the wider Ecowas (Economic Community Of West African States Commission) community.

The project remains in the planning stages for now but received extra cash from the AfDB recently for additional studies. It is also expected to connect more of the interior with coastal ports.

The plan forms part of the wider Dakar-Lagos Corridor, and is a major part of the Trans African Highway network within the Ecowas region.

The Trans African Highway network comprises transcontinental road projects developed by the African Union, the AfDB and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, in conjunction with Ecowas and other regional economic communities – the total length of the nine highways is 56,683km.

> "Close to 13,000km of regional highways have been built on 17 road corridors, along with 26 one-stop border post facilities."
>
> **AMANDOU OUMAROU, INFRASTRUCTURE DIRECTOR, AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK**

The quest to integrate Africa is one of the AfDB's strategic 'High 5' priorities, a point highlighted by Oumarou in a recent paper on cross-border road corridors.

"Over the past 12 years, the bank has financed nearly US$8bn of regional transport projects," he noted. "As a result, close to 13,000km of regional highways have been built on 17 road corridors, along with 26 one-stop border post facilities."

And new trading routes have emerged along the way, he says.

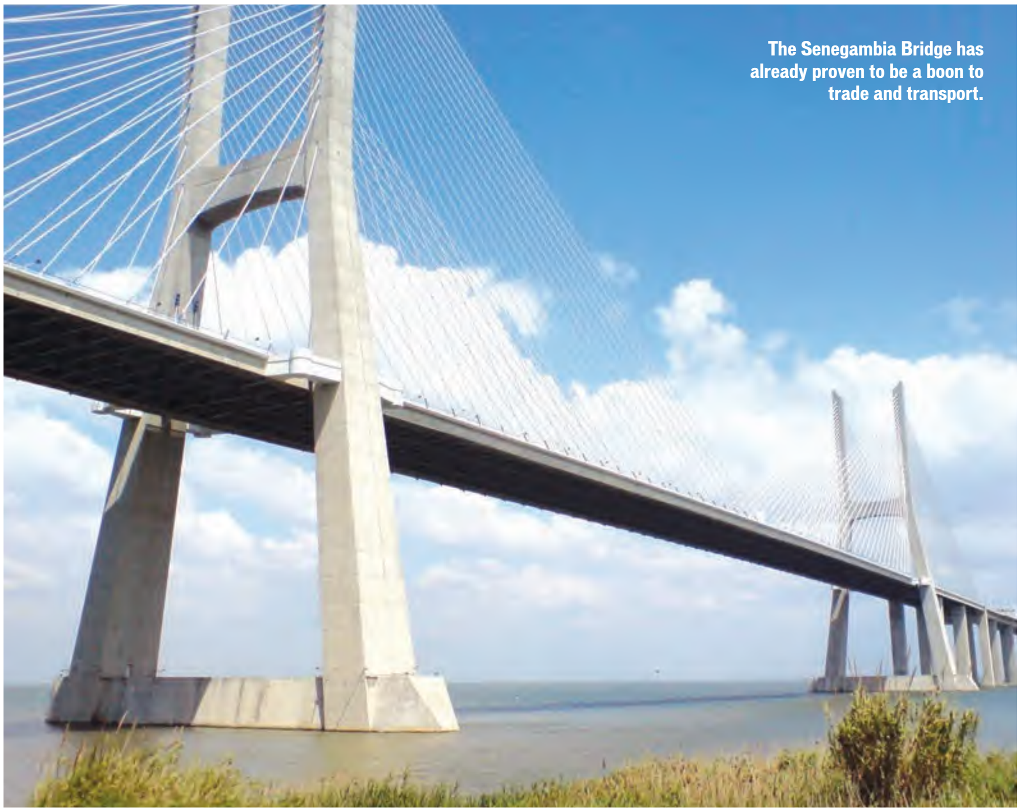
The Bamako-Dakar highway, for instance, now carries more than 50 per cent of Mali's import and export goods to and from the port of Dakar in Senegal. It has allowed Mali – one of Africa's poorest states – to diversify its trading routes, reduce costs by more than 20 per cent and increase international trade by 10 per cent. Similar results have been seen in southern Africa with the Nacala Corridor, that connects landlocked Zambia and Malawi to the Mozambican port of Nacala. ■

Bamako, the Malian capital, is now in easier reach of the Port of Dakar for easier trade.

Image Credit: Adobe Stock

Bridging the divide, transforming West Africa

Martin Clark explores the bridge-building projects that will redefine West Africa's trade routes as economies seek to reignite as COVID-19 restrictions are eased and the continent reopens for business.



The Senegambia Bridge has already proven to be a boon to trade and transport.

Image Credit: AfDB/Flickr

One bridge can make a monumental difference. Last year, Senegal and Gambia unveiled the 1.9km Senegambia bridge that has helped to transform travel and trade in the area. Before the bridge, people had to use a ferry crossing or take the long way round, a journey that could take days.

But smaller bridges can make an equal difference to people's lives. The 120-metre Alemondji bridge in northern Togo has opened up new potential for more of the region's agricultural sellers and other traders. Located 200km north of the capital Lomé, the bridge is a symbol of the opening-up of many of the region's neglected agricultural-based communities. Today, Alemondji market is busier simply because it is easier to get to in a region that has for too long been starved of good infrastructure.

"This infrastructure ensures a flow of agricultural production and improved access to markets for inputs and products. It stimulates the economy and facilitates the region's integration into the national and international economies," said Georges Bohoussou, African Development Bank's country manager in Togo.

Continent-wide, such lifelines boost cross-border trade and Africa's economic competitiveness.

Major new works are in the planning elsewhere in West Africa that could further help redraw and expand intra-regional trade.

Financing is taking shape for the construction of a bridge that will connect Cameroon and Chad across the Logone river. While the two countries are linked by a controversial oil pipeline, the new project aims to promote more interstate trade, linking Yagoua in Cameroon and Bongor in Chad. As well as cutting time and transport costs, it will help safeguard lives and property during the river crossing.

> "The infrastructure stimulates the economy and facilitates the region's integration into national and international economies."
>
> **GEORGES BOHOUSSOU, TOGO COUNTRY MANAGER, AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK**

The project is supported by the AfDB) among others.

Further south, a permanent road and rail bridge is planned over the Congo River to connect Kinshasa in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) with Brazzaville in the Republic of Congo.

Detailed studies have been completed, though this project remains some way behind the Chad and Cameroon link, and it remains unclear when work will commence. Once the bridge is sanctioned, however, it will join two highly urbanised and fast-growing cities and create a welcome economic lift on both sides of the Congo river.

According to an AfDB study, the aim is to more than double passenger numbers and freight traffic between the two sides within five years. The project will entail road and access works on each side leading up to the bridge itself.

A major cross-border bridge project, linking Senegal with Mauritania, is closer to completion. The Pont de Rosso bridge, that will span the Senegal river, is scheduled for completion in 2022 and will replace the ferry services of the Mauritania Ferry Corporation which currently connect the two banks. Like Senegal's bridge crossing to Gambia, it is likewise expected to spur local trade and development, as well as boost passenger traffic.

Another international crossing will see a bridge built over the Ntem River to connect Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea. As well as transforming West Africa's physical infrastructure, all of these landmarks could well help to trigger a turnaround in the region's economic fortunes. ■

A complete solution for chip-sealing

From production of emulsion to final laying of chips, there is a Vimpo product for all road-building projects.

Vimpo is working on major road projects around the world.

Image Credit: Vimpo Road Construction Machines

We understand the difficulties at the sites and, as a result, constantly developing new solutions for our customers and dealers all around the world. With 20 years of experience in road construction machines, reliability was and always will be the priority.

Our precision asphalt distributors, powerful chip spreaders and tailormade plants are ready for the most difficult tasks.

For example, our revolutionary chip spreaders offer the most powerful solution in the market with 320hp diesel engines driving all four wheels while keeping the price competitive. Combining with fully automatic asphalt distributors and bitumen emulsion plants, we are proud to see the highest rates for road-building among our customers.

As we have already mentioned, we know the reliability and ease of operation are the most important points for our customers. With high ratio of in-house production, strong quality control protocols and fast after-sale service, we achieve ultimate customer satisfaction.

We design our machines to operate safely and easily with just one or two days of training required for operators.

Additionally, our experienced design team can customise the machine according to the requirements of the customer's country, while providing all technical data and manuals in five different language of your choice. We are proud to deliver hundreds of pieces of powerful and reliable equipment every year around the globe.

As well as our various products for chip sealing, we produce machines and equipment for high viscous liquid transfers, bitumen storage options, bitumen transfer tanks, polymer-modified bitumen plants, bitumen emulsion plants, road maintenance equipment, and thermal oil generators.

> "Vimpo understands the difficulties at worksites so new solutions for customers are being constantly developed."

We have announced our newest VCF400 crack-filling machine and we are happy to see that we have already received very good feedback from construction sites.

Currently, the VCF-400 is being used at Istanbul Grand Airport, as well as a wide range of worksites worldwide. There are many new developments with 2020 version of this machine. These include better efficiency, a new heating system, new electronic trigger and a completely renovated sealing apparatus. We are always keen to announce new developments and we will be launching a completely new series by the end of 2020. ■

www.vimpo.com

On the road again

The commercial vehicle sector is becoming more sophisticated. Georgia Lewis reports on some of the latest innovations which will keep businesses moving across Africa and beyond.

Electrified highways may be an alternative to traditional truck and rail transport.

Image Credit: Siemens Mobility

The commercial vehicle sector is exciting and diverse, especially as manufacturers look to be more sustainable and innovative. Now, the sector is moving beyond vehicles with internal combustion engines and high emissions and developing products which will be seen on the roads and on industrial sites in the very near future.

Anglo American is working with ENGIE to to develop and fuel the world's largest hydrogen-powered mine haul truck. ENGIE is providing the hydrogen-generation solutions and Anglo American is developing the truck. It is hoped that by the ened of the year, a testing and validation programme will be underway at Anglo American's Mogalakwena platinum group metals mine in South Africa, after which the trucks are expected to be deployed at other Anglo American operations. Engineers are looking to develop trucks with performance the same or better than the original diesel trucks, with cleaner air, less noise and lower maintenance costs.

"As part of our Smart Power Project, where we analysed our mine site power requirements and applied a unique decision process on how we look at renewable energy systems and their benefits, we came up with a mix that allows us to be carbon neutral and have a very different footprint. This is part of our plan to create a smart energy mix that moves us closer towards our carbon and energy targets for 2030 and, ultimately, our vision of operating a carbon-neutral mine," said Tony O'Neill, technical director of Anglo American.

> "Using hydrogen as a carrier of green electricity to power long-haul trucks is an important part of the puzzle, and a complement to electric vehicles."
>
> **MARTIN LUNDSTEDT, VOLVO GROUP PRESIDENT AND CEO**

Daimler Truck AG and the Volvo Group, meanwhile, have signed a preliminary non-binding agreement to establish a new joint venture. The intention is to develop, produce and commercialise fuel cell systems for heavy-duty vehicle applications and other use cases. Daimler will consolidate its current fuel cell activities in the joint venture.

"Truly carbon-neutral transport can be accomplished through electric drive trains with energy coming either from batteries or by converting hydrogen on board into electricity. For trucks to cope with heavy loads and long distances, fuel cells are one important answer and a technology where Daimler has built up significant expertise through its Mercedes-Benz fuel cell unit over the last two decades," said Martin Daum, chairman of the board of management for Daimler Truck AG.

"Electrification of road transport is a key element in delivering the so-called Green Deal, a carbon neutral Europe and ultimately a carbon neutral world. Using hydrogen as a carrier of green electricity to power electric trucks in long-haul operations is one important part of the puzzle, and a complement to battery electric vehicles and renewable fuels," added Martin Lundstedt, Volvo Group president and CEO.

Looking beyond Africa for ideas on how to make road travel more sustainable, Siemens, through its Siemens Mobility division, has been involved in developing eHighways as an alternative to transporting freight by rail in a more sustainable way than simply putting more traditional trucks on the road.

Developing eHighwys will have the additional benefit of sustainably eliminating some of the limitations of rail transport, such as a lack of door-to-door service, impracticality over shorter distances and difficulties in reaching areas that are not seviced by rail lines. This measn that a share of this transport will need to be carried out by trucks that are reliable with minimum environmental impact. Siemens has found that the eHighway system is twice as efficient as conventional internal combustion engines. This works by supplying trucks with power from an overhead contact line. This reduces local air pollution and helps reduce the carbon footprint of the transport sector.

Siemens Mobility has already been involved in eHighway projects in Germany, Sweden and the US.

In Germany, the project was commissioned by the University of Keil's Research and Development Center in 2018 to create the first infrastructure for electric trucks on the autobahns. This was piloted with a 5km stretch of road between the Reinfeld and Lübeck interchanges on the the A1 autobahn.

For the American transport sector, where traditional trucks have reigned supreme on the roads for decades, Siemens Mobility installed and tested a two-mile-long overhead contact line system for hybrid electric trucks near the US ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach in November 2017. Three trucks hauling freight run along the stretch of highway with select lanes electrified via an overhead catenary system. This catenary system supplies the trucks with electric power, similar to trams on many city streets. The system allows for truck operation outside of the electrified sections of infrastructure.

> "For trucks to cope with heavy loads and long distances, fuel cells are an important answer and Daimler has built up significant expertise."
>
> **MARTIN DAUM, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD, DAIMLER TRUCK AG**

In Sweden, the first eHighway system on a public road was inaugurated in June 2016 after two years of testing. The catenary system for trucks was tested on a two-kilometre stretch of the E16 highway north of Stockholm. The trial used two diesel-hybrid trucks manufactured by Scania and adapted, in collaboration with Siemens Mobility, to operate with the catenary system. During the trial, Sweden's transport authority Trafikverket and the district of Gävleborg gathered data to see whether the system is suitable for further expansion, particularly as the country has committed to ensuring its transport sector is independent of fossil fuels by 2030.

Moving away from ambitious mega-projects which require serious infrastructure investment, meanwhile, Faymonville has successfully launched its eight-axle MultiMAX semi-trailer and it has arrived safely at the port of Tema in Ghana. It is the first Faymonville trailer for Baj Freight Limited, a West African freight and logistics company which provides customs brokerage, freight forwarding and logistics support across a wide range of industries including oil and gas.

The company chose Faymonville, as an all-rounder to move a large variety of heavy and oversized cargo, such as tanks, columns, transformers and cranes. The MultiMAX iis equipped with hydraulic suspension and steering, an hydraulically lifting and lowering gooseneck and robust double ramps. The platform is double-extendable up to a maximum length of 33.5 metres.

At an African manufacturing level, Enugu-based Anambra Motor Manufacturing Company (ANAMMCO) has been busy building trucks since 1980 and in the past four years, production has been boosted, largely thanks to the N63bn investment made by the Dangote Group. The partnership started in 2016 with an initial order of 350 Trucks by Dangote when they signed an Transit Support Services (TSS), a subsidiary of ABC Transport. As of this year, 3,500 trucks have been supplied to Dangote from the ANAMMCO plant. Each of the trucks costs more than N18mn.

Chairman of TSS, Mr. Frank Nneji said the revival of ANAMMCO was made possible by Dangote's patronage "in identifying a plant that has capacity in the south-east, in Enugu to give us the opportunity to produce trucks locally instead of importing them." ■

This Faymonville eight-axle semi-trailer has become a familiar sight at Ghana's port of Tema.

Image Credit: Faymonville

The rise of the robots

The materials handling market in Africa remains buoyant despite the COVID-19 pandemic and it is set to see a shift to leveraging new automation technologies and clean electric systems. Martin Clark reports.

Image Credit: Adobe Stock

Electric forklifts are part of the new wave of material handling technology.

Demand for all kinds of materials handling equipment is expected to rise as Africa's economy matures, coinciding with a push to further automation and new technology.

While the coronavirus pandemic has derailed most business predictions for the year ahead, the region had been seeing a healthy growth across all areas, from industrial trucks, storage and engineered systems, through to bulk materials handling.

According to one research paper by Mordor Intelligence, the combined Middle East and Africa automated materials handling market was worth US$853m in 2019 and projected to rise to US$1.4bn by 2025 – an annual growth of around 8.3 per cent, driven in large part by the push to more automation.

While much of Africa may lag behind more developed markets, it perhaps offers higher growth potential for materials handling firms going forward – and in more sophisticated territories, like South Africa, a glimpse into the future.

This is supported by another paper by Market Research Engine, which also highlights the increased adoption of automatic materials handling equipment. This, in turn, has driven interest in new wireless technologies, artificial intelligence, and driverless vehicles, among other innovations.

In the USA, courier giant UPS received approval for its drone airline to expand delivery services – another sign of things to come.

A June report by Frost & Sullivan says automated robotic solutions, such as automated storage and retrieval systems, have the highest adoption rate in the industry. It states that the global warehouse automation market is expected to nearly double from US$14bn in 2019 to US$27bn by 2025.

> "Electric forklifts are becoming more popular because of their lack of harmful emissions."
>
> **VICTOR NEMUKULA, MANAGING DIRECTOR, SHUMANI**

Again, while other markets like the USA may be far ahead, the potential for long-term development right across Africa is vast.

"The warehouse industry across the globe is experiencing transformation at a rapid pace with the increasing adoption of different types of autonomous and automated robotic solutions," says Frost & Sullivan's Doraiswamy Bharath Sunderraj.

Sunderraj highlights technologies such as automated storage and retrieval systems (AS/RS), goods-to-person technology (G2P), automated guided vehicles (AGVs), automated guided carts (AGCs), autonomous mobile robots (AMRs), unmanned aerial vehicles, and articulated robotic arms.

"Further, AS/RS have the highest adoption rate because of their promising features such as increased inventory storage density, reduced labour costs, and increased inventory-picking accuracy."

Environmental considerations are also increasingly important, a trend that may accelerate post-pandemic.

In South Africa, Shumani, the only black-owned and managed company of its size in the materials-handling sector, identifies this as a key trend shaping decisions.

The company's managing director, Victor Nemukula, says that electric forklifts are becoming more popular due to their lack of harmful emissions. It offers a range of forklifts and brands that include Bendi, Doosan, Crown, and Hubtex, including diesel and electric models. ■

MAN boosts generation capacity in Burkina Faso by almost 20 per cent


Image Credit: MAN Energy Solutions

The MAN engines being transported to Kossado.

MAN Energy Solutions is supplying three MAN 18V51/60TS engines for a power plant extension in Burkina Faso. Located in Kossodo, a suburb of the capital city, Ouagadougou. The extension will feed a 55 megawatts (MW) of electrical power into the national grid, thus increasing the country's generation capacity by almost 20 per cent. The plant is owned by the national energy supplier, SONABEL, with local company Tecmon BF acting as main contractor.

"At present, only 30 per cent of Burkina Faso's population has access to electrical energy. The government now wants to change this and is planning to significantly increase generation capacity in the next years. We are proud of our contribution to this through our new engines in Kossodo," said Waldemar Wiesner, head of MEA (Middle East Africa) Region Power Plant Sales at MAN Energy Solutions.

The national energy supplier, SONABEL, has relied on power plant engines from MAN Energy Solutions since 1978. In total, MAN has supplied electricity generation technology for five power plants, which are still in operation all over the country. "As soon as the Kossodo power plant is extended, nearly 50 per cent of Burkina Faso's installed capacity will be based on MAN technology," added Wiesner.

He further commented, "Not only the reliability of our engines, but also the high service quality that we have demonstrated over the years in maintaining various engines already in operation was decisive for winning this order. In addition, SONABEL has chosen an innovative engine setup for the power plant in Kossodo, making it by far the most efficient power plant in the country and clearly meeting the emission guidelines of the World Bank."

In Kossodo, the customer is relying on three MAN 18V51/60TS engines with two-stage turbocharging. Gensets of this design have both a low- and a high-pressure compressor, which operate in series to deliver an increase in power density and efficiency. This simultaneously guarantees maximum fuel efficiency and a more compact system design.

PANDEMIC SHOCKS GLOBAL ENERGY SYSTEM

The COVID-19 pandemic will have a fundamental impact on the world's energy systems and on the pace and direction of the global transition, according to the World Energy Council's global survey of its extensive network of energy leaders and experts in 61 countries. Dramatic cuts in spending and a reallocation of funds into digital solutions and environmental sustainability are among some of the most significant changes likely to emerge as a result of the crisis, which led to the biggest-ever decline in energy demand and sharply lower oil and gas prices. According to the survey, a third of energy companies plan to shed jobs; one in three plan to shut one more business units; four out of five plan drastic cost reductions; four in 10 report cutting operational expenses (OPEX) by more than 10 per cent; a reduction of US$200-400bn in capital expenditure (CAPEX) is expected; and 80 per cent of organisations are making reallocations in investments towards digitalisation, R&D programmes and Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) activities.

WORLD BANK FINANCES INTEGRATION PROJECT

The World Bank has approved US$385mn in International Development Association (IDA) financing to promote regional power interconnections and to allow the Republic of Cameroon and the Republic of Chad to increase electricity supply for their populations.

The Cameroon-Chad Interconnection Project (CCIP) aims to interconnect the southern and northern power systems of Cameroon, enable electricity trade between Cameroon and Chad, and increase access to electricity in N'Djamena, the capital city of Chad. It will finance the first high-voltage interconnector in Central Africa, enabling clean electricity supply available in the South of Cameroon to reach its northern region and Chad, allowing millions of people in both countries to have access to reliable and affordable electricity. The project will reinforce Chad's power network and expand access to electricity in and around N'Djamena. It constitutes the first transmission backbone in Chad, and supports the development of the country's solar potential in the future. It will finance a programme to improve the operational and commercial performance of the country's national power utility.

Deborah Wetzel, World Bank director of Regional Integration for Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, and Northern Africa, said,"The new project well establishes the economic benefits of regional integration, but it is also critical for improving access to energy for some of the poorest communities on the continent and therefore also helping to reduce inequality".

The CCIP will provide Central Africa with its first transmission backbone, providing lessons and incentives to other countries that may well benefit from power trade, and eventually driving a stronger consensus towards regional power system integration.

BRIEFS

Report highlights need for renewables progress


Image Credit: Rob Lawrence/ Flickr

More progress is needed in renewable energy for transport.

Growth in renewable power has been impressive over the past five years, but too little is happening in heating, cooling and transport, according to REN21's *Renewables 2020 Global Status Report (GSR)*. "Renewable power beats all other fuels in growth and competitiveness. But the progress in the power sector is only a small part of the picture. If we do not change the entire energy system, we are deluding ourselves," said Rana Adib, REN21's executive director.

Global energy investment falls, IEA finds


Image Credit: Tony Webster/Flickr

Spending on rooftop solar installations has fallen back.

Global energy investment is expected to fall by 20 per cent or almost US$400bn this year, according to the IEA's *World Energy Investment 2020* report. Power sector spending is forecast to decrease by 10 per cent, with investment in electricity networks down 9 per cent, spending on rooftop solar installations has been strongly impacted and FIDs in the first quarter of 2020 for new utility-scale wind and solar projects fell back to the levels of three years ago.

Angola steps up development of renewable energy across four provinces

Angola is looking to install 300MW of solar energy in the coming months.

The Angolan government started a public consultation on 29 May to determine the environmental impact of the planned US$400mn two-phase project in the clean energy segment, funded by the World Bank and the French Development Agency (AFD). The project aims at improving the distribution of electricity in four provinces. It expects to reform the structure of public companies in the sector with the aim of increasing access to affordable Energy for Angola's underserved populations. According to João Baptista Borges, the Minister of Energy and Water, 300MW of solar energy will be installed in the country in the coming months.

The minister announced at the 3rd African Business Forum in February that the government is prepared to invest around US$ 500mn over the next two years in solar energy projects in the country as part of a strategy to increase clean energy generation, and bring electricity to the entire country, where 50 per cent of the population lacks access to reliable energy.

This follows the signing of an agreement last year by the Angolan state oil company, Sonangol, and Italian major Eni to create a jointly controlled company, Solenova Ltd. to assess and develop renewable energy opportunities in Angola. Eni and the Angolan Government also agreed to jointly develop the 50MW Caraculo Solar Plant in Angola s south western province of Namibe. Other IOCs are also looking to invest in clean energy projects as they seek to increase their non-carbon footprint.

"We see many projects in the pipeline in Angola, in addition to those that are already ongoing. This is a testament that the government is serious about boosting industrialisation with the help of affordable energy. I believe these investments will pay off in the coming years and for generations to come," said Verner Ayukegba, senior vice president of the African Energy Chamber.

According to the minister, the Angolan Electricity Sector Development Plan and the Energy Security Plan point to the construction of a capacity of about 600 MW of solar energy in the country by 2022, with the installation of around 30,000 individual photovoltaic energy production systems, in line with the country's National Development Plan 2018-2022. The Minister stressed that the government will open up the sector to competition from the private sector to achieve this goal.

SOUTH AFRICA PROGRESSES NUCLEAR POWER

South Africa's Department of Mineral Resources and Energy has published the Request For Information (RFI) in preparation for a 2,500 MW nuclear build programme. This is in line with the country's 2019 Integrated Resource Plan 2019 which states that the Department will "commence preparations for a nuclear build programme at a pace and scale that the country can afford". The consultations will enable the Department to gain insight into the cost of the programme, possible ownership structures, cost recovery, the end user cost and sustainability of the programme.

"Given the long lead-time of building additional new nuclear capacity, upfront planning is necessary for security of energy supply to society into the future," said the ministry said in a statement.

South Africa announced in May that it planned to procure 2,500MW of new nuclear capacity by 2024. This will help to address power shortages because of problems at state utility Eskom's coal-fired power plants.

RED ROCKET LAUNCHED

The management in partnership with Inspired Evolution's Evolution II Fund has successfully closed a buy-out of Building Energy's Africa and Middle East business to launch the newly branded Red Rocket Group.

The new joint venture will see the re-capitalisation and positioning of Red Rocket to become one of Africa's leading emerging renewable energy independent power producers (IPPs).

Evolution II holds a majority shareholding in the reconfigured IPP platform alongside management. It vis managed by Inspired Evolution, an Africa-focused investment advisory firm that specialises in clean energy infrastructure and resource efficiency investments.

The buy-out deal leverages the resources of multiple Development Finance Institutions (DFIs) and international investors together with local leading South African investment institutions active across Africa, to strengthen and forge stronger partnerships for its African expansion.

Headquartered in Cape Town, Red Rocket is an integrated renewable energy IPP that develops, designs, constructs, operates, and owns utility-scale grid-connected renewable energy projects (wind, solar, hydro and biomass) with operations across Africa.

Matteo Brambilla, CEO of the Red Rocket Group, commented, "We are pleased to be partnering with Inspired Evolution ~who bring sector expertise and proven project finance return performance to augment our efforts in building Red Rocket into one of Africa's premier long-hold utility scale IPP platforms offering least-cost clean and reliable energy to African customers. Our auction successes under the REIPPPP in South Africa and in select countries across Africa are testament to the innovation we continually apply to our renewable energy public and private bid strategies."

BRIEFS

Image Credit: Adobe Stock

The minigrids will bring clean energy and spur economic development.

Partnership for minigrids

Renewvia Energy Corporation, a global solar developer, and All On, a Nigerian off-grid impact investor, have announced a partnership to electrify rural communities unserved by conventional utilities in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. The agreement includes a commitment of US$1.2mn from All On to enable Renewvia to develop and operate solar minigrids to bring clean energy, and ultimately spur economic development in the region.

Image Credit: Thomas Cizauskas/Flickr

The dam will be built on the Bandama River.

Hydroelectric dam to go ahead

Morocco's Themis Power has issued a Full Notice to Proceed to French group Eiffage, to build the US$2.2mn Singrobo hydroelectric dam and power station in Côte d'Ivoire, for commissioning in 2023. The dam will be built on the Bandama river between Abidjan and Yamoussoukro in the villages of Singrobo and Ahouaty. It will fuel the turbines of a 44 MW power plant. The electricity will be sold to the Ivorian national power utility, Cienergues, under a 35-year power purchase agreement.

Africa Development Bank approves loan for Egypt's electricity sector


Image Credit: Saragoldsmith/Flickr

Tne funding will support a sound electricity infrastructure base.

The Africa Development Bank has approved a 225 million euros loan to finance Egypt's Electricity and Green Growth Support Program (EGGSP). The funding will help meet the Government of Egypt's financing requirements in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic, and support a sound electricity infrastructure base, a major enabler for the private sector and for the country's competitiveness.

The EGGSP reform program seeks to promote a sustainable, competitive and diversified electricity sector that ensures secure supply and supports climate change mitigation and green growth.

"Accelerated deployment of the EGGSP reform program is instrumental to meet energy needs, combat climate change and promote sustainable development in Egypt. This multi-partner programme provides a model for effective coordination among development partners to promote a green recovery," said Minister of International Cooperation, Dr Rania Al Mashat.

"The EGGSP aims to improve the security of energy supply by increasing the share of renewable energy and improving the financial sustainability of the electricity sector with a view to ensuring greater participation of the private sector in injecting more investments in renewable energy," Dr Mohamed Shaker, Minister of Electricity and Renewable Energy, noted.

"Whilst the pandemic has put extreme pressure on the economy and the social situation, the economic reforms undertaken by the Government of Egypt and the Central Bank of Egypt over the past few years have helped create greater resilience and provide a buffer against shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic," said Yacine Fal, the Bank's deputy director general for the North Africa Region.

The financing provided under the EGGSP support will buttress measures being taken by the Government of Egypt to combat the pandemic and to protect the most vulnerable during these difficult times. It will also help stimulate new private investments in the electricity sector and increase the deployment of clean energy in line with Egypt's targets for green growth.

GAS DEMAND IN TANZANIA FORECAST TO GROW

Wentworth Resources, the independent, East Africa-focused natural gas company expects a significant increase in natural gas demand in H2 2020 now that COVID-19 restrictions in Tanzania have been lifted. A US$4.6mn work programme is underway to maintain well integrity and meet the growing demand. The company's core producing gas asset Mnazi Bay remains fully operational, with 2020 production guidance unchanged at 65-75 MMscf/day. There have been no reported cases of COVID-19; the health and safety of employees remains the priority with robust precautionary measures in place.

The power access gap in Tanzania is growing despite energy supply increasing, with a reported access rate of only 32.7 per cent, leaving 7.7 million households without power. Natural gas will play a critical role in meeting the demand for cheaper and more reliable electricity as well as facilitating an enabling environment for carbon-free renewable energy systems, such as hydro and solar.

BBOXX LAUNCHES NEW GLOBAL BRAND IDENTITY

BBoxx, a next generation utility, that manufactures, distributes and finances decentralised solar powered systems in developing countries, has unveiled the launch of its new global visual identity, signalling its ambitions for the post-Covid-19 future.

The business has achieved scale driven by its innovative IoT technology and forging partnerships with multi-national firms, investors, and governments across the globe. Bboxx's US$50mn Series D funding round led by Mitsubishi Corporation, and joint venture with EDF in Togo have been key turning points. It has also been expanding in key markets Rwanda, Kenya and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) with Africa Infrastructure Investment Managers (AIIM), and providing energy to citizens in Togo, DRC, and Rwanda by working with governments.

Mansoor Hamayun, CEO and Co-founder, Bboxx commented, "Ten years after we founded Bboxx, the launch of our new global brand comes at a pivotal time for our business and the industry. As Covid-19 has laid bare: the world is changing. We are adapting as a business and are determined to emerge as a stronger company, with a vital role to play in the green economy recovery. Our new brand will propel us forward to build for the future, with our customers' energy needs at the very heart of this.

"Bboxx exists to solve a major global problem: energy poverty. We are proud to have provided clean, reliable and affordable energy to over one million people across Africa and Asia – and we have only just begun."

Bboxx now employs more than 800 people globally across its HQ in London, with offices in Africa including in Rwanda, Kenya, Togo and the DRC, and manufacturing in China.

BRIEFS


Image Credit: dotun55/Flickr

The project will increase the power supply as well as boosting job opportunities.

Nigeria's PPI to commence

The Nigerian government has approved the release of funding to kick off the pre-engineering and concession financing work streams for the Presidential Power Initiative (PPI) power and infrastructure upgrade and modernisation programme agreed to by the Nigerian government and Siemens with the support of the German government. The Nigerian government believes that the project will increase power supply from the current five megawatts to 25MW nationwide.


Image Credit: Sheila Sund/ Flickr

Spending on renewables projects has fallen.

MENA energy investments fall

Committed and planned energy investments in the MENA region according to APICORP's 2020-24 investment outlook amount to USD792bn, a USD173mn drop compared to USD965bn in 2019-2023. This is largely attributed to the COVID-19 health crisis, the oil crisis, and a looming financial crisis. Spending on renewables projects and transmission and distribution networks were cut due to delays in project development, restrictions imposed and expectations of lower demand.

Promising power supply across Africa

Gensets continue to play a vital part in supplying back-up power to multiple industries. Abhishek Paul reports.

As the African continent grapples with grid uncertainty and low power production, the spread of COVID-19 in the region is throwing up new challenges.

In particular, mining, construction, and health sectors are struggling to supply reliable power for their operations. A case in point is the health sector. Energy security seems to be a significant issue in hospitals that rely on constant electricity supply to power ventilators, oxygen contractors and other essential medical equipment. As per an estimate, only 28 per cent of health facilities in certain parts of sub-Saharan Africa have access to reliable electricity.

Some of the major diesel genset players in the African market, such as Himonsa, Caterpillar, Kohler Power, FG Wilson, Perkins and Cummins, are offering healthcare power solutions to bridge the supply gap. The back-up power products of these companies are applicable in other secors such as mining, construction and energy.

Given the African region conditions, the factors responsible for driving the growth of the Africa diesel genset market include the rising demand for electricity and the development of the industrial and mining sectors.

Population growth

Despite being home to 17 per cent of the world's population, Africa accounts for just 4 per cent of global power supply investment, according to Africa Energy Outlook 2019. "How Africa meets the energy needs of a fast-growing and increasingly urban population is crucial for its economic and energy future – and the world," said Dr Fatih Birol, IEA execute director.

Last year, Africa accounted for nearly 70 per cent of the global population lacking power, a proportion that has almost doubled since 2000, the IEA found.

Achieving reliable electricity supply for all would require an almost fourfold increase, to around US$120bn a year through to 2040, the report revealed. Growing urban populations mean rapid growth in energy demand for industrial production, cooling and mobility.

Power needs

Some 80 per cent of companies in sub-Saharan Africa suffered frequent power disruptions in 2018, leading to financial losses that curbed economic growth.

"Operators are facing a power cost crunch. As 5G emerges, network operators face rising energy costs in their mobile and data centre networks and must adopt new approaches to thrive," according to a new report from MTN Consulting.

Of course, it isn't easy to be precise about this, but the report suggests that 5G could double or triple energy consumption in mobile networks. Site power requirements are a particular concern, suggests the report.

Favourable outlook

Positive government measures of expanding the adoption of gensets pave the demand for diesel gensets in the market.

"For instance, gasoline is subsidised in Nigeria and is cheaper than diesel. The subsidies are expected to gradually decline and narrow the price difference between diesel and gasoline, affecting the consumption patterns and composition of generators," says GMI Research study.

Additionally, the continuous growth across several industries, including mining, oil and gas, leads to the high adoption of such gensets in these industries.

In countries such as Ghana and Nigeria, the electricity infrastructure is highly inefficient, often suffering transmissions losses and leading to a huge demand–supply gap, points out Prescient & Strategic Intelligence report.

Additionally, the high investment requirements for installing and maintaining the grids, specific natural and macroeconomic factors, and old infrastructure lead to erratic power supply or low production.

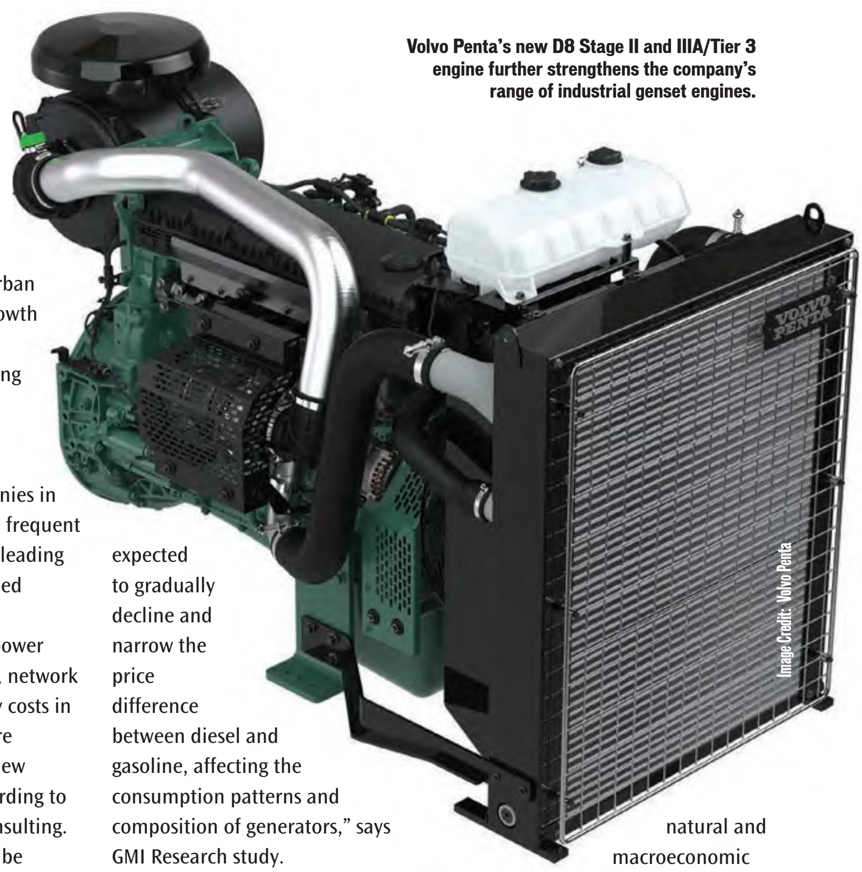
Based on the power rating, the less than 75kVA gensets are anticipated to lead the market during the forecast period due to its high adoption in various sectors such as residential, telecom sectors, and other sectors, reveals the report. The low cost of diesel gensets and its several applications spur the market growth in the region.

Innovations

Following the unveiling of its Stage V engines for mobile gensets in November last year, Volvo Penta has further strengthened its industrial power generation product range.

The latest addition to the family – the 8-litre D8 Stage II and IIIA/Tier 3 engine – was presented to

> "Achieving reliable electricity supply for all would require an almost fourfold increase, to around US$120bn a year through 2040."



Volvo Penta's new D8 Stage II and IIIA/Tier 3 engine further strengthens the company's range of industrial genset engines.

Image Credit: Volvo Penta

customers for the first time at Middle East Energy (MEE). The new addition to the company's genset product portfolio can deliver better power density and a compact design for its power class, as well as low fuel consumption and noise levels.

"We are excited to introduce another new premium product to our customers with the launch of the Stage II and IIIA/Tier 3 D8 engine," says Giorgio Paris, head of industrial at Volvo Penta. "With our strong range of products for power generation, our customers can expect reliable, fuel-efficient and cost-effective engines which deliver an extremely attractive total cost of ownership throughout their service life."

Cat C18 diesel generator set with high power density.

Image Credit: CAT

Caterplillar's Cat C18 diesel generator set, capable of meeting power needs and emission targets with greater precision for operators across Africa, is now available. Engineered to maximise power output and reliability, the C18 ratings are 706 to 850 kVA at 50 Hz. It features a smaller footprint of up to 37 per cent and offers excellent power density. Compared to past models, the main benefits of the genset include reduced installation costs and low fuel consumption.The generator set meets NFPA 110 loading requirements and ISO 8528-5 transient response requirements. The EMCP4 scalable control platform ensures reliable generator set operation, providing extensive information about power output and engine operation.

Another gensets manufacturer, KOHLER-SDMO, has expanded its KD series of generators with the rollout of four new models ranging up to 4500kVA (@50Hz) / 4000kWe (@60Hz), its most powerful systems on the market. These generators are powered by the company's most powerful K175 engine, the KD103V20, expanding the limits of standby generators.

> "The continuous growth across several industries, including mining and oil & gas, leads to the high adoption of generator sets."

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"At present, only 30 per cent of Burkina Faso's population has access to electrical energy. The government now wants to change this and is planning to significantly increase generation capacity in the next years. We are proud of our contribution to this through our new engines in Kossodo," said Waldemar Wiesner, head of Region Middle-East Africa, Power Plant Sales at MAN Energy Solutions.

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Power plant expansion in Kossodo will feed additional 55MW of electrical power into the West African states national grid.

Image Credit: CIF Action/Flickr

PERU GOES GREEN WITH TRIO OF ELECTRIC EXCAVATORS

Marcobre S.A.C.'s Mina Justa Project is home to the first Hitachi electric mining machinery in the Americas.

ZAMine, the local dealer and distributor for Hitachi mining equipment in Peru, delivered the three EX5600E-6LD (face shovel) machines in mid-2019. The machines are serving as the main material-loading equipment on the Mina Justa Project, lowering Marcobre's carbon footprint.

ZAMine, as part of the Marubeni Group, is providing an important inventory of main components, spare parts and consumables for the machines which are covered by a labour-plus-parts (LPP) contract.

Image Credit: Hitachi

Image Credit: Hitachi

ZAMine's product support team has joined Marcobre personnel during operation and maintenance of the electric excavators.

As part of ZAMine's extensive support to the customer, its product support team has joined Marcobre personnel during operation and maintenance of the electric excavators.

MORE ABOUT MINA JUSTA PROJECT

In Peru's Ica Province, HCM customer Marcobre S.A.C. owns the Mina Justa Project. Once the project is complete, it will consist of two open pit copper mines and two processing facilities. The project is located near the town of Nazca, home to the world-famous Nazca lines – 2,000-year-old geoglyphs carved into desert sands.

What makes Mina Justa Project special to HCM is that it's the first site in the Americas to have Hitachi electric mining machinery.

SANDVIK PRESENTS DR410I ROTARY BLASTHOLE DRILL

Sandvik Mining and Rock Technology introduces the Sandvik DR410i rotary blasthole drill to enhance safety, improve productivity and reduce cost.

Compact, powerful and technologically advanced, Sandvik DR410i is designed to deliver productivity and return on investment for 6-97/8" (152-251mm) rotary and DTH holes, with a standard mast offering a first pass capability of 10m or 33 ft and a max depth of 46.6m or 153ft. The extended mast option delivers a first pass option of 14 metres or 46ft with a total depth capacity of 32.3m or 106ft. across all recommended pipe diameters.

The Sandvik DR410i is automation-ready, when equipped with our AutoMine solution module which provides functionality for on-board and off-board automated needs.

Sandvik's new Guide Adapter enables customers to achieve greater productivity.

SIEMENS UNVEILS 80 GHZ COMPACT RADAR TRANSMITTERS

Siemens has introduced Sitrans LR100 series 80 GHz radar transmitters, compact instruments with a narrow beam for flexible installations in existing vessel openings, or even non-intrusively through plastic vessels. The transmitters' 80GHz high frequency is capable of delivering reliable measurements even in challenging environments such as those with vapors, condensation, turbulence, or solids. The custom microchip technology offers fast response and high sensitivity to detect even the weakest of signals.

The series consists of three products: Sitrans LR100 for basic measurement to 8 metre, Sitrans LR110 with communication and hazardous approvals options and range to 15 metre, Sitrans LR120 with communication, longest range to 30 metre and optional submergence shield for flooding protection. Two-wire loop powered with HART or optional Modbus RTU connectivity consumes low energy and the fast start up is suitable for CSO (combined sewer overflow) applications.

The transmitters' dependable readings reduce workers' exposure to hazardous situations: no need to climb tanks, lean out over sumps, or crawl into confined spaces to maintain instruments. As well, zero-meter blanking distance allows measurement right up to the sensor, thereby avoiding costly overfilling.

All this performance is wrapped in an IP68 submersible housing constructed of corrosion resistant PVDF. Simple commissioning is achieved with the Bluetooth interface and the Sitrans mobile IQ App or the Sitrans RD150 remote display. In remote areas connected to the Sitrans RTU3030C remote terminal unit, critical data can be transmitted as well as remote servicing can be performed.

Integrating critical level readings or process control data into operations can unlock new opportunities to react to safety concerns, analyse processes and identify areas for improvement. Users can monitor level measurements or diagnostic and maintenance information from the comfort of the control room or connect to Siemens MindSphere, the cloud-based, open IoT operating system.

Anglo American Platinum briefly shuts ACP Phase B

Anglo American Platinum has temporarily closed Anglo Converter Plant (ACP) Phase B unit due to detection of a water leak in the high-pressure cooling section.

"Our systems allowed us to bring the unit down proactively and safely. All employees evacuated the area safely," the company said in a statement.

The detailed technical investigation into the cause of the water leak shows localised damage to a single cooler tube that is now being replaced and confirms that this leak is unconnected to the repair work recently completed on the ACP Phase B unit.

"A prudent approach will be taken to safely ramp up the ACP Phase B unit. Increased monitoring will likely result in intermittent stoppages to inspect the plant until the repairs to the ACP Phase A unit are completed." it added.

The stoppage of the ACP Phase B for repairs of this water leak is not expected to have any impact on full year refined production guidance, which remains at between 3.1-3.6 million PGM ounces.

Image Credit: Adobe Stock

The repair of Phase A unit is progressing well and is unaffected by the ongoing work at ACP Phase B unit.

ALPHAMIN ANNOUNCES GRANT OF STOCK OPTIONS

Alphamin Resources has announced that, subject to regulatory approval, it has granted stock options to acquire an aggregate of 9,880,000 common shares to directors, officers and employees of Alphamin and its subsidiaries under its stock option plan. Each option is exercisable for a seven year period to acquire one common share at a price of C$0.20 per share. The options granted vest over a period between three and four years from the date of grant.

COVID-19: MINEXPO 2020 POSTPONED TO SEPTEMBER 2021

The National Mining Association (NMA), the MINExpo INTERNATIONAL 2020 sponsor, has announced that it is postponing the event, the world's largest mining-focused equipment and technology convention held in Las Vegas, Nevada every four years, from the planned dates of 28-30 September, 2020, until a new set of dates to be announced for September 2021.

"Because NMA's highest priority is the health, wellbeing and safety of exhibitors, attendees, stakeholders and their respective families and colleagues, as well as event partners in Las Vegas, the COVID-19 pandemic has made holding MINExpo in September 2020 impracticable," the statement said.

NMA states that it is "working with our event partners to identify and secure the necessary exhibition facilities and hotel accommodations in Las Vegas for a successful MINExpo INTERNATIONAL 2021."

CAT LAUNCHES 966 GC WHEEL LOADER FOR WIDE RANGE OF APPLICATIONS

Caterpillar's new Cat 966 GC Wheel Loader is set to provide reliable performance and long-term durability in a wide range of applications, including a number of tasks in governmental applications that require a capable, versatile machine that fits the budget.

The Cat C9.3B engine, with a maximum gross power rating of 239 kW (321 horsepower) and emitting equivalent to U.S. EPA Tier 3/EU Stage IIIA emission levels, features a common-rail fuel injection system designed for fuels available in emerging markets.

An electronically controlled, hydraulically driven, variable speed cooling fan, combined with the Cat Engine Idle Management System, results in lower fuel consumption and reduced sound levels. An optional automatic reversing fan assists in cleaning cooling cores in high-debris environments. A high-ambient cooling package and cold-start system also are available.

Image Credit: CAT

The 966 GC Wheel Loader is equipped with the Cat Product Link telematics system to enhance machine operating efficiency and to assist with preventive maintenance and servicing.

The loader uses a 4F/4R electronically controlled, planetary powershift transmission, designed and built by Caterpillar, and featuring an electronic clutch, pressure-compensated, single clutch shifting system for smooth, efficient gear changes in all operating situations.

The field-proven Caterpillar Z-bar loader linkage, with cast cross-member and tilt-lever, is designed to deliver both strong digging capabilities and high breakout forces with Cat Performance Series buckets. The load-sensing implement hydraulic system continuously controls flow and pressure to precisely match requirements of the operating situation.

A range of available work tools includes a selection of Cat Performance Series buckets (general purpose, rock, and light material configurations), which incorporate a long floor, wide opening, and curved side plates.

GRAPHENE PROTECTIVE MATERIALS TO EXTEND LIFE IN MINING EQUIPMENT

First Graphene has announced that several new PureGRAPH enhanced bucket liners have been supplied by newGen to a second major iron ore producer in Pilbara, Western Australia.

newGen use PureGRAPH high-performing graphene additives from First Graphene to manufacture their ArmourGRAPH rubber wear linings with strength and wear characteristics, increasing the life of wear linings and leading to significant productivity benefits for the mine.

The mine is installing PureGRAPH in other process equipment such as conveyor skirting products. PureGRAPH enhanced bucket liners have been successfully in service since the middle of 2019 and as reported in February 2020 these materials continue to outperform standard rubber wear liners.

Sandvik guide adapter for reduced hole deviation

Sandvik Rock Tools is launching an new product for their bench-drilling top hammer customers: the guide adapter. It enables customers to reduce hole deviation in challenging conditions by up to 50 per cent and achieve considerable cost savings.

The guide adapter is now available for T51 and GT60 Top Hammer threads in different diameters.

Image Credit: Sandvik

Significant hole deviation (greater than 8 per cent) can pose problems for many bench drilling companies that operate in challenging ground conditions such as bad and soft rock, as well as deep overburden. This often results in reduced productivity, safety risks and increased tool wear.

"By using the Sandvik guide adapter, our customers achieved a hole deviation between 3 per cent to 5 per cent - a reduction by up to 50 per cent - and also increased the service life of their rock tools by up to 40 per cent. This truly has an effect on both productivity and in turn, profitability," says Fredrik Björk, product manager top hammer surface tools, rock tools division, Sandvik Mining and Rock Technology.

Advertiser's Index

South Sudan energised by power development

Ambitious projects led by the African Development Bank are paving the way for improved access to energy in South Sudan, as this young nation finds its feet amid low oil prices and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Image Credit: AfDB

The Juba Power Distribution System Rehabilitation & Expansion project provides energy and employment.

Despite the challenges of low oil prices and the Coronavirus pandemic, the African Development Bank (AfDB) remains positive about the future of the Republic of South Sudan. One of its current projects is to provide a city-wide power grid in Juba for the first time since independence in 2011. The US$38 million Juba Power Distribution System Rehabilitation and Expansion Project is lighting up the capital, promoting security and transforming lives and businesses. The project is on track to be completed at the end of 2020 in a city which hasn't had a reliable electricity supply since independence. It will consist of a 145km medium voltage distribution line and a 250km low voltage distribution line connecting 145 new transformers, eventually reaching at least 20,000 domestic and commercial consumers.

The Transitional Government of National Unity was established in February 2020. Flavio Soares Da Gama, South Sudan country economist for the AfDB, says the power-sharing arrangement dictates ways for the management of economic and financial resources, maps out the way forward for transitional justice and accountability, and moves towards a permanent constitution.

Da Gama notes that implementing the peace agreement has been slow and hampered by disputes over governance of oil-rich states, such as Upper Nile, Jonglei and Unity, the appointment of state governors and commissioners, and control of Eastern Equatoria, with the COVID-19 pandemic further complicating matters.

John Bosco Bukenya, AfDB's South Sudan country programme officer, says that the disease has compromised the country's "recent economic recovery that was mainly linked to the reopening of some oil fields located in Upper Nile and Unity States, and the resumption of oil production that helped to an increased GDP of 5.5 per cent in 2019, from -7.7 per cent in 2017." Bukenya adds that "this is a clarion call for bold economic diversification away from oil, which is long overdue."

South Sudan could benefit by promoting economic diversification away from oil and investing oil revenues into agriculture and infrastructure. Bukenya says the government could focus investment in the following: Resilience building in agriculture, livestock and fisheries; Renewable energy, development and electrification; Electricity transmission; Road and transport infrastructure; Enhanced water resource development and sanitation service provision; and natural resource management, especially forestry development

The bank believes promoting sustainable development, job creation and poverty alleviation are top priorities, in addition to security and petroleum sector reform.

The AfDB's 2020 lending programme for South Sudan, valued at US$20.6mn, focuses on social and agriculture sectors and multisector/governance sectors. Bukenya says, "None of these operations are likely to be impacted by COVID-19 if the pandemic is contained within six months, as planned activities will be conducted as scheduled. If the virus lasts beyond six months, preparation of for new projects included in the 2020 lending programme, preparation of project completion reports and project implementation activities, will all be affected."

South Sudan's government has, to date, managed the pandemic well, and by May, the country had reported 655 confirmed cases, with eight deaths in a population of 10.98mn. COVID-19 was a major influence in the April decision by OPEC and OPEC+, of which South Sudan is a member, to cut oil output by 9.7mn barrels per day.

The government remains positive. Eng. Awow Daniel Chuang, Undersecretary at the Ministry of Petroleum, says the oil price war and pandemic have affected the country's economy and investment prospects. He says the country will continue to ensure oil market stability. The ministry has embarked on a reform programme to make it more transparent and attractive for investors. ■

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