ABUNDANT
AFRICA

Our decade to shape the African century

kairos

(n.) the perfect, delicate, crucial moment; the fleeting rightness of time and place that creates the opportune atmosphere for action, words or movement. [1]

Abundant Africa

Abundant Africa partners with the global movement:

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More details on an issue.

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Deeper debate around a crucial issue.

Abundant Africa

Abundant Africa is published by:

A huge thank you to all who have contributed to this report. Being a collaborative report not all the contributors endorse everything in the final text. We ask for grace from both collaborators and readers. This is the start of a journey of discernment together. We hope you will join future discussions as iron sharpens iron.

Abundant Africa

Africa stands at a pivotal point in its millenia-old history – the foundations we build now will influence our continent's future. This is our kairos moment.

This paper is a declaration of hope. Like Joshua and Caleb we see the abundance of our Promised Land and, despite the giants that terrify many into unbelief, we bring a positive report to our people. If together we choose courage to lead, and obedience to God, Africa will one day be known as the abundant continent.

The paper is also designed to help start a conversation around how we shape the future of Africa. The audience is primarily for African Christian leaders in the church and society. But we welcome all to engage. The contents are the work of a number of authors, influenced by a series of consultations and conversations held in different regions of Africa to try and capture some of the important thinking on our continent.

A number of different organisations and movements have also contributed to this in the hope that together we can start to discern some common narratives, language, collaborative movement-building actions and policy priorities. Tearfund has been the coordinating partner but the contents reflect each group in some unique way. We have focused on priority areas that can be best influenced by the churches and Christian leaders as part of a broader movement.

Africa is a huge continent, with many cultures and contexts, and so this paper can only be the start of our conversation - a rough puzzle outline that will allow other leaders to join the table and slot in their piece of the puzzle. Together, as we share what God has given us, the picture will become clearer.

We hope that you will be inspired to join us as together we discover the clarity of God's vision for Africa. We trust that joint vision will lead to action as we build an Abundant Africa.

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Executive Summary

The 21st century will be the African century. Our population is growing and youthful. Our cities are expanding.

We are in the midst of a technological revolution. But the natural, human and spiritual resources that God has blessed Africa with have been plundered by outside forces or captured by the elite few.

We face multiple crises of poverty, inequality, biodiversity loss and the climate crisis. We have a short window - a kairos moment - in which to turn from well-worn, broken paths and choose a better story for ourselves and for the world.

But what story will we tell? Some say that Africa is failing, doomed to chaos and poverty and reliance. Others say that Africa is rising, but as a slave to a narrative of greed, power, violence, individualism and extraction, to the benefit of just a few. We see another way - a courageous choice to turn from these two single stories and tell a new story, one created by the agency and voices of all African citizens: an Abundant Africa.

An Abundant African economy could be built upon shalom, upon African values of innovation, freedom and relationship. It could reduce poverty and inequality, honour human dignity, care for creation - and in so doing be an economy that will lead the world.

Throughout history, such change has come not from elite leaders but from movements for change. Africa is facing a generational transition. Every generation has a role to play in working together for an Abundant Africa. The younger generation in stepping into leadership. The older generation in stewarding our values, telling us stories of what has been and mentoring the leaders of today and tomorrow.

Today's church should be working towards the sacred mission of building God's kingdom and growing the movement, through:

1. Building agency: Growing the agency of every African to be a leader.

2. Developing narratives: An Abundant Africa story will emerge from the blending of the voices of a million prophets.

3. Creating accountability: Imperfect people, holding each other to account and influencing others to change.

We believe that there are seven key shifts that need to be realised to take Africa closer to the reality of shalom:

1. From valuing growth to valuing wellbeing: If we do not measure wellbeing, how will we know shalom when we see it?

2. From dependence to innovation: We long for innovation founded in relationships - built on our diversity, committed to community and empowering our youth.

3. From extraction to caring for creation: We seek to restore the wholeness of people and the health of the earth.

4. From sprawling slums to lifegiving cities: We look to the new Jerusalem as the model for the cities we want to raise and restore. Inclusive. Creative. Sustainable.

5. From decisions by centralised elites to decisions by active communities: We have an opportunity to equip an active citizenry to engage in decision making, to lay claim to the stories of their own lives.

6. From self-interest to ethical leadership: We long for leaders and citizens characterised by integrity and accountability.

7. From division to connection: We seek healing for the past. We look to the future, to a bigger 'us', to a larger African identity.

We have suggested ideas for the church, for governments and for the African Union - recognising the need for multiple actors to play their part and that these are first ideas and steps towards making an Abundant African economy a reality.

This is the invitation: to listen together, to share stories, and to nurture the emerging green shoots of hope that bring us closer to an Abundant Africa.

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Learning about peacebuilding in Nigeria.
Credit: Tom Price/Tearfund

A vision for an Abundant Africa

Open your spirit to this kairos moment
Recognise the invitation to build a new
collective vision
To care for each other and all of creation
And to live in ways that sustain shalom

We are co-creators in this tale of
redemption
It is time to liberate ourselves from the
stories that have imprisoned us
Time for the pens to exchange hands
As we write ourselves into existence

No longer a single story
No longer two dimensional
But layered and complex
Paving our own path as we walk

It is time for a new African story
That a time may come that they will look
upon Africa and call her blessed

Excerpt from Abundant Africa
by Thandi Gamedze

The African century

What stories will be told of the 21st century? Will we recognise them for their familiar, well-worn paths; or for the courageous, lifegiving choices that we made?

This is the African century. What we decide to do will leave its mark on history, and it begins with understanding where we are now.

We are growing. The number of people on our continent is predicted to double by 2050, and then double again by 2100, to over four billion people. By the end of this century, two out of every five people in the world will be African. Many of them will live in the largest mega cities ever built. By 2100, 13 of the 20 biggest cities in the world are likely to be in Africa,[2] with Lagos, Kinshasa and Dar Es Salaam taking the top three spots. Lagos alone is predicted to have close to 90 million inhabitants.[3]

We are young. Africa is becoming the world's youngest continent. Populations of young people on all other continents have peaked while ours continues to grow. Our youth population is expected to have doubled by 2055 to around 450 million.[4] Africa will be bursting with youthful energy and innovation.

We are blessed. Africa holds 65% of the world's arable land; 30% of its mineral reserves, including around 90% of the chromium and platinum in the world; 12% of the world's oil reserves; and 40% of the world's gold. Africa is also home to the largest reserves of cobalt, diamonds and uranium on the planet. Africa is the richest continent[5].

We are in a technical revolution. Africa's rapid population growth is happening in the context of the fourth industrial revolution. New smart technologies are disrupting ways of working; traditional understanding of which skills are required to be successful; and the barriers to entry into previously elite industries. This has the potential to rapidly amplify innovation and change, for good or bad.

As Africa grows and innovates, so we will shape the wider world.

The African century

Some of the world's most unequal countries are in Africa. Masaki, one of Dar es Salaam's wealthiest suburbs, is a mix of precisely organised streets, neatly cut trees and swimming pools. On the other side of the road is the chaotic clutter of tin roofs that make up Msasani, a less affluent part of the city. Children growing up on either side of the divide have vastly different opportunities. **Credit:** Johnny Miller. http://thecitizentz.storylab.africa/divided-histories-divided-opportunities/

But we also face multiple crises.

Africa is cursed by poverty. After centuries of exploitation and underdevelopment, half of the world's 750 million people stuck in poverty live in Africa, mainly in war zones and ungoverned spaces, where the ascent out of poverty is an enormous challenge. The COVID-19 pandemic has fuelled the first ever Africa-wide economic recession, which is expected to push a further 50 million people into extreme poverty by the end of 2021.[6] If present trends continue, by 2030 around 90% of all people living in extreme poverty will live in Africa.[7]

We don't meet challenges on an equal footing. Five of the six most unequal countries in the world are in Africa.[8] Inequality prices the poor out of markets, slows economic growth, raises the potential for crime and conflict, and exacerbates inequalities in power and decision making. Women, in particular, are less likely to be able to stay in school or be formally employed. The risk of dying during childbirth[9] or experiencing gender-based violence remains far too high.[10] The world's richest 22 men own more wealth than all the women in Africa.[11] The greater the inequality in a society, the more likely it is to shift from democracy to plutocracy.[12]

Africa is fragile. We still struggle with poor quality institutions that undermine our development and facilitate instability and corruption. Conflict and instability – legacies of slavery and colonialism – persist in many places and at many levels. Africa is home to six of the eight most fragile nations in the world.[13]

God's creation is dying. The COVID-19 pandemic is a vanguard of two environmental crises that exacerbate other threats and jeopardise our survival: the climate emergency and a massive loss of biodiversity.

The earth is rapidly warming as a consequence of increasing carbon emissions. We are on track for a devastating warming of 3°C by 2100,[14] despite almost universal commitment in the 2015 Paris Agreement to aim to keep warming to 1.5°C. African nations are badly affected by climate change despite most contributing very little to the problem of carbon emissions.

Africa is home to around a quarter of the world's biodiversity[15] – but this rich abundance that all of life relies on is in a steady decline. Between 1970 and 2016, an estimated 65% of Africa's biodiversity was lost.[16]

The speed of changes is rapid and only drastic action will allow us to conserve enough of nature to sustain life – including our own. Viral pandemics, and other environmental and humanitarian crises, will threaten us more frequently if climate change and biodiversity loss are not slowed.[17] This endangers everyone, but especially people living in poverty and future generations.

> **"The speed of changes is rapid and only drastic action will allow us to conserve enough of nature to sustain life - including our own."**

We cannot rely on traditional economic models. They are founded on a paradox: the more we succeed in economic development, the more we fail our environment.[18] If our environment fails, our economy and life itself will follow. Africa cannot follow Western or Eastern economic models without overstressing the already damaged natural world and endangering the wellbeing of our children and grandchildren's generations. Economic growth is essential to beat poverty in Africa, but growth needs to be designed so that it is good for both people and the environment.

How do we understand our present and our future?

Some say Africa is rising as the increase in young people joining the workforce drives growth and we replace China as the world's workshop. Others say that Africa is failing and if nothing changes it could become a major poverty trap, with starvation and migration, that exports instability to the rest of the world. Whichever way it goes, the scale of events on the continent will ensure that this will be the African century. The choices we make in Africa will shape the world.

A shining and tragic historical legacy

The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church has sustained Ethiopian culture, spirituality, architecture and biodiversity since 328AD. Churches are surrounded by sacred forests which are viewed as a symbol of heaven on Earth. **Credit:** Kieran Dodds

Africa has been central to global affairs since its earliest recorded history. Early Egyptian civilisation transformed agriculture, science, art and writing, and became a foundational influence for later Mediterranean civilisations, creating architectural and archaeological masterpieces that still captivate us thousands of years later. Egypt is a significant nation in the Old Testament scriptures and was a refuge for Jesus and his family when they fled from Herod.[19] Ethiopia was a great kingdom by the 1st century, converting to Christianity by the 4th century AD and maintaining an influential indigenous church until today. North Africa played a crucial trading role during the reigns of the Greek and Roman Empires. Timbuktu (in present-day Mali) founded one of the world's first universities in 989AD and became a world leader in the book trade and a centre for scholarship as a result. The architectural wonder of Great Zimbabwe from the 11th century tells of a people who traded as an economic equal amongst great nations of the world.

Our people have also thrived. Mansa Musa, a ruler of Mali, is still considered the wealthiest man to have ever lived, bringing Solomonic organisation, governance and prosperity to West Africa between 1280 and 1337AD. **The San people**, the oldest people group on earth, have for thousands of years lived at peace with nature in a symbiotic relationship with creation.

Despite this important history, Africa is now recovering from over half a millennium of external oppression and exploitative trade.

Slavery led to the abduction of around 20 million African citizens over 400 years[20] – stealing human potential and disrupting culture. Half of Africa's population is estimated to have been abducted or killed in the accompanying conflict.[21] The worst affected regions still show the impact of the slave trade even centuries later.[22] Former slave trade areas are more likely to be divided, experience violent conflict, and have less developed political structures.

Colonialism artificially carved up the continent, creating arbitrary boundaries and destroying cultures. It undermined local governance systems and created an extractive economy for the benefit of non-African nations and powers, leaving Africans with centralised power structures and poor institutions, and without our plundered resources. Colonialism lasted for around 100 years, traumatising generations of people through its violent repression and undermining of African identity. It only ended in the lifetimes of Africans still alive and working today.

Post-colonialism and the Cold War continued to have an impact on Africa as former colonial powers worked to exert their influence through divisive tactics including monetary control, military pacts, assassinating 'unfavourable' leaders and sponsoring coups against newly elected free governments. Former colonisers' interests distorted Africa's economic development, as they encouraged industries that facilitated the processing of raw materials for export.[23] On top of this, many nations were disrupted by the flow of ideology and weapons that came with the Cold War. The USA and USSR supported opposing sides in civil wars or propped up corrupt dictators for geopolitical reasons. This led to further divisions on the continent and left large quantities of military hardware and trained soldiers in its wake.

Structural adjustment programmes, imposed by the IMF and World Bank from the 1980s, led to extreme free market policies designed to control inflation and generate foreign exchange to pay off debts. Reductions in social spending and state institutional capacity, with growth in commodity exports and overseas imports, often led to increased unemployment, poverty and inequality in Africa.[24]

Much of the African under-development, corruption, division, political instability and armed conflict we see now are a direct result of deliberate colonial and post-colonial policies and practices.

A Joseph kairos - a decade to build foundations for the African century

This is a kairos moment for the continent. A critical moment of opportunity for action to bring change. We have to act now to pioneer an Abundant African economy that will be good for both people and the environment. If we miss this moment it will have serious consequences for generations to come.

For Africa, this kairos moment has strong parallels to the story of Joseph in the Bible.[25] When God spoke to Joseph through Pharaoh's dream, Joseph had seven good years to prepare before the seven years of famine. Today, Africa has around 10 years to build foundations that ensure that the growth of the youth demographic,[26] and the expansion of its cities, have a positive impact on the continent, while mitigating the worst effects of climate change.[27] The decisions we make now will impact Africa's coming century, in the same way Joseph's planning in the years of plenty created a pathway for survival during the famine. If we don't take advantage of this timeframe we and our descendants could suffer in the long term. If we use this decade to prepare effectively we will, like Joseph, be able to feed our people even in the midst of a dark environmental crisis.

Global influence – Africa as a light to the nations

Like Joseph, timely action in response to an opportunity will allow us to feed the people of Africa and build the economies of our nations. There is also potential that, like with Joseph, our surplus will be able to feed and influence the rest of the world. The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the fragility of traditional economic systems as it swiftly catalysed the largest global economic recession since the Great Depression. The financial systems that made many aid-offering nations wealthy have been driving the ecological crisis. Traditional economic systems have been shown to be vulnerable and are unlikely to survive the coming environmental emergencies without significant shocks.

A new type of Abundant African economy that simultaneously reduces poverty and inequality, honours human dignity, and nurtures the environment, could also be an economy that will lead the world. Africa has many advantages when it comes to innovating and pioneering new sustainable economic practices.

Africa has fewer large corporations, communities and governments with huge investments in dirty industries that would oppose climate-friendly changes than more developed nations. Old, expensive polluting technology can be leap-frogged, with investments going directly into clean and sustainable technology. The need for resource-hungry, centralised systems of control can be bypassed using technology and local governance networks.

At a time when many other nations are turning to nationalism and away from multilateral organisations, Africa is implementing cross-border, inclusive political ideas, such as the African Union (AU) establishing new institutions and an African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

> **"Today, Africa has around 10 years to build foundations that ensure that the growth of the youth demographic, and the expansion of its cities, have a positive impact on the continent, while mitigating the worst effects of climate change."**

Africa's young people are open to new ideas and have the energy to implement them. Many of them are people of faith. The church in Africa is the new locus of world Christianity. We know from both scripture and history that God often uses the marginalised to bring change, or the weak things of the world to shame the strong. Joseph himself was a young man, a slave and a prisoner, yet God used him to save Egypt and the world around it. If young Africans, filled with God's Spirit, are able to hear his voice, envision a different story for the future, and have the courage to make different choices, then an Abundant African economy becomes the logical option to develop Africa. Africa could lead the rest of the world by living out a practical model that solves both poverty and the environmental crisis.

The kairos choice

To make the kairos choice, we first need a new African story for the African century. Neither the Africa Rising story, connected to the present world economic system that is driving both inequality and environmental destruction; nor the Africa Failing story, which depends on outside charity to save Africa from itself, will help Africans build a movement that can fundamentally change the continent. To achieve that we need a new story.

COVID-19: Turning crisis into kairos

Churches have responded quickly to COVID-19 with spiritual support and disaster relief. Here leaders promote good practices and improved access to hygiene kits in Burkina Faso. **Credit:** ODE

COVID-19 has affected every country on the continent since the first case in Africa was confirmed on 14 February, 2020.[28] Churches have been quick to respond to the immediate threat with spiritual help and disaster relief. But the health, financial and governance impact on the continent will be huge and set back many of the victories of the past. We need to recognise this is a crisis moment on our journey towards kairos: like when Joseph lost his status as head of Potiphar's house, went to prison, and began an even deeper process of preparation for his coming kairos with Pharoah. It is in pain and lament that God prepares our character and resilience. It is in the dark that we turn to him to experience renewal and revival.

Pandemic preparation

Every crisis disrupts culture and institutions and creates liminal spaces where change becomes possible – for good or bad. How the church responds to this crisis will seed the type of recovery we get. But right now the church is like a championship-winning football team refusing to leave the changing rooms: well organised to pray, worship, disciple and care for its own team members, but not ready to run onto the pitch in front of the crowds!

> **"The COVID-19 crisis is a time to display God's love in service, but its deeper significance could be as a season of preparation."**

Not ready to follow our dreams and take the risk to create the infrastructure and systems needed to build nations and shape godly economies. Joseph was able to hear the vision from God. With Potiphar, he showed himself able to manage a household. In prison, he learned to depend on God and use his gifts to administrate and build an institution. So when his kairos moment came, he was ready to steer Egypt through times of feast and famine. The COVID-19 crisis is a time to display God's love in service, but its deeper significance could be as a season of preparation: a metaphorical prison moment to sow into growing our capacity to organise and build beyond our home bases. A moment to send our team out onto the pitch to actually play. We will need this greater organising capacity to deal with the crises and opportunities to come.

An African story for the African century

Africa has over 3,000 ethnic groups speaking more than 2,100 diverse languages and living in varied lands from the evocative plains of the savannah to ice-tipped mountains, sandy deserts and tropical rainforests. Yet in that diversity we are united by our oral traditions.

Africa is a continent of storytellers. Yet there are only a few single stories being told.

In 2009 literary giant Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie gave what has become one of the top 25 most shared TED talks in history.[29] In it she expounds the danger of a single story: a story that shows a people as one thing, over and over, "until that is what they become".

Chimamanda says, *"It is impossible to talk about the single story without talking about power. There is a word, an Igbo word, that I think about whenever I think about the power structures of the world, and it is 'nkali'. It's a noun that loosely translates to 'to be greater than another'. Like our economic and political worlds, stories too are defined by the principle of nkali: How they are told, who tells them, when they're told, how many stories are told, are really dependent on power."*

The danger of the "single stories" we have been told about Africa is that they create stereotypes. Chimamanda warns us that, "the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story."

A single story can break the dignity of a people. Many powerful leaders and institutions have vested interests in telling a particular single story. Hlumelo Biko believes that: "In Africa, perhaps much more than elsewhere, society is shaped almost completely by the elite's experience of reality."[30] Stories shape economic realities, even when faced with the hard facts of market forces. Economic fluctuations have been shown to be substantially driven by popular narratives.[31]

Two of the most prevalent single stories told about our continent are of Africa Failing or Africa Rising (see side box). These narratives give elites power and benefit them. Chimamanda tells us that, "Power is the ability not just to tell the story of another person, but to make it the definitive story of that person."

Yet the tides of history are rarely turned by a handful of elite leaders, but rather by the emergence of a movement for change.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie gave a TED talk on the danger of a single story.
Credit: alamy.com

A third way - a generative story

We need a generative story that places power and agency with all the people of Africa. This narrative comes to life as each of us brings our story, our piece of the puzzle. One of the tragedies of colonialism was that many Africans internalised the stories of their inferiority. Rev. Frank Chikane, a famous anti-apartheid leader from South Africa, says the greatest crime of colonialism was the killing of the African soul.[32] This liberation hero believes that freeing the colonised mindset of Africans will be more difficult than political liberation.

This freedom lies in us telling our stories. We are not victims of history. Africa is a continent of storytellers. When each of us tells our story, we demonstrate our power and agency. By finding our voices we publicly reshape our soul. When our stories join to become part of a greater narrative, then the continent becomes powerful. A new narrative can stand against the injustice inherent in the single stories and will shape the economy.

Movements are united and motivated by resonant stories that weave our histories, strengths and challenges into more complex plots than simply rising or failing. Generative stories help us to create, to open up possibilities, and to draw us into relationship with one another.

> **"We are not victims of history. Africa is a continent of storytellers. When each of us tells our story, we demonstrate our power and agency. By finding our voices we publicly reshape our soul."**

A movement of a million prophets and storytellers aligned around common values will show us a vision and way to walk together. Our stories will repair broken dignity and enlarge our common identity. Our stories will drive and build our Abundant African economy.

Some single stories

For too long, the world has been in the business of telling single stories about Africa.

Africa Failing

This story has many versions, but it is essentially a repetition of the story told by the first colonisers: Africa is wild, Africa is dangerous, Africa is hopeless, and Africa belongs to those who take it.

Without outside help, Africa is headed for disaster and ruin as it is overwhelmed by population growth, conflict, migration and starvation.

In this narrative, no agency is attributed to African citizens. Africans are victims of our history and geography and are doomed to continue to be exploited by neo-colonial forces. The forces against us are so strong that our fate is inescapable. African citizens are unwise, lazy and uneducated and, when given agency, make bad choices. This single story is not true.

Who does it benefit? This narrative plays to those who want to keep Africa weak. It helps those who need to save Africa by enlightening "the savages". It helps those who want to steal from Africa. A weak Africa is necessary for powerful forces to succeed in looting the riches of the continent and exploiting the people of the continent. If there is no hope for change then outside intervention, selfish accumulation and top-down control can be justified.

Africa Rising

This narrative is based on some of the positive economic growth data emerging from Africa between 2000 and 2014. *The Economist* wrote in its "Africa Rising" cover story: "After decades of slow growth, Africa has a real chance to follow in the footsteps of Asia." Africa could take over manufacturing that is becoming less profitable as Asian wages rise.

> **"Elite consumption has increased along with inequality and corruption. A rising Africa makes the elites rich and keeps most Africans poor."**

Africa Rising is, on the surface, a story of hope about a growth in wealth, stature and power for the continent. It celebrates the expansion of the global economic empire into Africa, grafting the continent onto the lowest rung of the global financial system.

The Africa Rising vision varies depending on whether it is told from the perspective of the USA, Europe or China. Either way, in this narrative we measure success according to the values of those who oppressed and exploited Africa in the past.

Again, in this story there is little agency given to the citizens of Africa. Instead, it is the invisible hand of the markets that will exploit the natural resources of the continent to grow GDP, concentrating and controlling wealth, as Africa "catches up" with other continents.

It is based on the same global systems that have caused inequality and the environmental crisis – it's a narrative of greed, power, violence, individualism and consumption without constraint. This single story is not true.

Those that gain from it are the beneficiaries of the global financial system, the African elites who control the income from natural resource extraction and the small middle class who facilitate these transactions. The economic growth celebrated by Africa Rising has not contributed to job creation and is driven by mineral and agricultural exports. Economic growth in Africa hasn't increased wellbeing on the continent as much as it has expanded wealth and wellbeing elsewhere in the world.[33] Elite consumption has increased along with inequality and corruption. A rising Africa makes the elites rich and keeps most Africans poor.

An Abundant Africa narrative dares to dream of creating an economy and civilisation based on the values of relationship, freedom and social innovation.

This story moves away from the dominant global civilisation based on profit, control and technological progress. It moves beyond the extractive dream of Africa Rising and the doomed chaos of Africa Failing. It points to a cohort of dreamers who, like Joseph, are able to clearly hear the voice of God, believe in their own agency, and effectively execute a vision to build systems and institutions that can implement their dreams. This narrative will benefit the people and natural environment of Africa, and the rest of the world.

This narrative is built upon Jesus' promise of shalom.

Shalom and abundant life

Jesus tells us in John 10:10 that "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it abundantly."

The abundant life that Jesus promises is in stark contrast to the death and chaos of the Africa Failing narrative or the unequal distribution of prosperity promised in the Africa Rising story. Instead, his promise is for an abundant life that brings a deep state of wellbeing and rest, or shalom, based on healthy relationships between God and people, between different people, between people and the rest of creation, and in our relationship with ourselves. We experience his shalom as God's kingdom becomes a greater reality in Africa and communities start to reflect his justice and righteousness, as it is in heaven.[34]

> **"[Jesus promises] an abundant life that brings a deep state of wellbeing and rest, or shalom, based on healthy relationships between God and people."**

God's original design for earth is Eden – a place of perpetual fellowship with God, but also of harmony and peace within families and between human beings and the environment. A state of abundance and of wellbeing. This state is promised again through the concept of shalom, which encapsulates peace, harmony, wholeness, completeness, prosperity, welfare and tranquillity. True shalom exists in a wholesome integrated life across spiritual, social, cultural, economic, political and emotional spectrums.

In the story of Joseph we see the partial restoration of shalom beginning to overcome the curse from Genesis 3. Partnering in obedience with God, Joseph is able to remove hunger through wisdom; restore relationships with his family through forgiveness; and remove inequity through his righteous actions. However, as we outline further on, even Joseph fell far short of the abundant life we find in Christ.

Mobile phones have revolutionised communication and business in Africa - the mobile phone industry contributes 8% of Africa's GDP. African innovations such as mobile money have changed the way people save and spend. **Credit:** alamy.com

The new story of Abundant Africa is based on the restoration of shalom that we find in obedience to Christ. It's a story in which African Christians defeat the curses of the past through the death and resurrection of Christ on the cross. A story where all Africans, Christian or not, will benefit from an increasingly restored Africa, a continent characterised by God's shalom where everyone is able to experience wholeness and peace. Even more than Joseph, when we share in the fullness of Christ and each person is able to operate with agency, we see tangible signs of shalom manifesting.

Economy of life

To create this, we need to build an economy of life. This is founded on an affirmation of the sufficiency of the abundant life God provides, enough for the needs of all, while also ensuring that life itself is not threatened by our economic activity.

This economy of life is in direct opposition to contemporary economics that start with an assumption of scarcity and, in many cases, deliberately create scarcity or encourage overconsumption to drive profit. Both the stories of Africa Failing and Africa Rising are founded on a foundation of scarcity.

Historically, African culture centred on an abundance mindset, a unitary holistic worldview that emphasised living in harmony with all creation, negating the need to accumulate individual wealth. This was not measured just by access to material abundance, but in an abundance of time, relationships and leisure. This was disrupted and replaced by scarcity thinking with the arrival of the colonial cash and labour economy.[35] There are, however, many elements of abundance thinking in African cultures that can be reclaimed.

Our **African values**, nurtured across generations and stewarded by our elders, align closely with the underlying biblical foundations of a shalom economy of life. At the heart of the Abundant Africa narrative are innovation, freedom and relationship (ubuntu). An Abundant African economy of life does not rely on endless growth and consumption to overcome scarcity, but instead organises around these values to ensure multifaceted abundance for the greatest possible number of people and natural systems, without straining the foundational abundance of the natural world.

Innovation - co-creators of Africa

Africa is a place of innovation and creativity. *"Africa always brings forth something new"* is a phrase with origins dating back to Aristotle and Pliny the Elder. Early African civilisations introduced ground-breaking technologies to the world. Yet much of this innovation has been crushed during slavery and colonialism. Like Joseph, Africans need to dare to dream despite our circumstances, especially when the dreams are God-given. Innovation and creativity must be reclaimed in the cultural, theological and economic spheres for an Abundant Africa to be a reality.

An Abundant Africa will be created by the agency of all African citizens as we respond to the creation mandate of Genesis, and co-create Africa in obedience to the Spirit of God. Again, this is in stark contrast to the lack of space for African agency in the Africa Failing and Africa Rising narratives.

In Africa we have seen leaders, both African and foreign, who have come to oppose abundant life and instead steal, kill and destroy, like the thief Jesus speaks of in John 10. Even Joseph went beyond God's call and fell into this trap.[36] Joseph assigned the best land of Egypt to his family, raising the question of favouritism. He bought land from the destitute for the Pharoah at what was likely an extremely low price, and even enslaved people when they were at their most vulnerable. As the Israelites prospered, it laid the foundation for resentment from the Egyptians, ultimately leading to the Israelites' future enslavement. Even if we begin with good intentions, we must be careful not to become thieves in our generation.

> **"An economy of life is in direct opposition to contemporary economics that start with an assumption of scarcity."**

Jesus calls us to listen to his voice and follow him. He will give us life in abundance. We do not put our trust in markets, leaders, military might or control. Our salvation will not come from leaving Africa and escaping to other places of perceived hope. Instead, our loving God is at the centre of our story. We are not doomed to fail or driven to produce, but he calls us into the most empowering of all relationships – to be co-creators with Christ. Like Eve and Adam tending and caring for the garden, Jesus draws us into the centre of the story with him. His Spirit empowers us to hear his voice and make choices that are both ethical and creative. He empowers us as we implement our choices. Our God is our hope and we are the people he has chosen to work through. With Christ we are each the solution to Africa's problems.

"Africa: My Home. My Future." is a continental campaign by the AACC focusing on youth and African patriotism. It aims to create a generational movement of youth with a passion to transform Africa.

Taking hold of our agency and creativity doesn't mean that we ignore our tragic history or the structural barriers that imprison many. It just means that we study our history and our context in order to find ways to learn and take innovative steps to gain freedom by countering the effects of personal trauma, institutional collapse or national crisis.

Freedom

Africa's recent history has been dominated by the struggle for freedom from colonialism and, to a lesser extent, the Cold War. This liberation struggle was a fight for self-determination and not for liberal democracy or another political system.[37] Generations of Africans sacrificed and died for freedom and independence. Consequently, freedom is a strong theme in African political thought and culture. The great biblical freedom narrative of Exodus – the Israelites being delivered from the oppression of slavery in Egypt and journeying towards the Promised Land – was often referenced to inspire Africa's "Moses-generation" freedom fighters.[38]

Creating the Africa we want can only happen by increasing the freedoms experienced by Africans. Any system that offers wealth and security in exchange for the loss of human freedom would be a betrayal of the generations that came before. We need to trust Christ to set us free from both internal captivity and external structural barriers, such as:

1. Trauma and identity: The first freedom in Africa needs to be internal healing from the effects of generational trauma. The older generation of Israelites, although physically liberated from slavery still carried Egypt in their minds as they wandered in circles in the desert. Likewise, the young students of South Africa's #FeesMustFall movement sought to express their desire and need to be decolonised. Internal freedom for the Israelites eventually came through turning away from the gods of Egypt. This was a generational transition and the new generation affirmed its identity through the circumcision of all male Israelites, a symbol of their historical foundational covenant between Abraham and God. The most important work in restoring the traumatised African soul is the rediscovery of African identity. Part of this will be through the power of the stories that we tell ourselves and one another. Our restored identity and our common generative stories play a foundational role in the restoration of relationships with ourselves and each other.

"Any system that offers wealth and security in exchange for the loss of human freedom would be a betrayal of the generations that came before."

2. Structural barriers: Much of the poverty in Africa is caused by structural injustice – often a legacy of colonialism. Scarcity was deliberately created to drive Africans off their land and into the labour economy. No amount of individual effort could overcome these barriers. Africans are capable, resilient innovators who are actively engaged in improving the condition of the continent. However, their resilience is constantly challenged by a hostile environment. Amartya Sen talks about poverty being a series of unfreedoms, limitations in people's capacity to make choices and act on those choices.[39] For Africans to co-create we need to have our agency restored by removing these unfreedoms. The church's prophetic tradition is essential to come up against these unfreedoms and to help liberate Africans from all that reduces, perverts or destroys life.
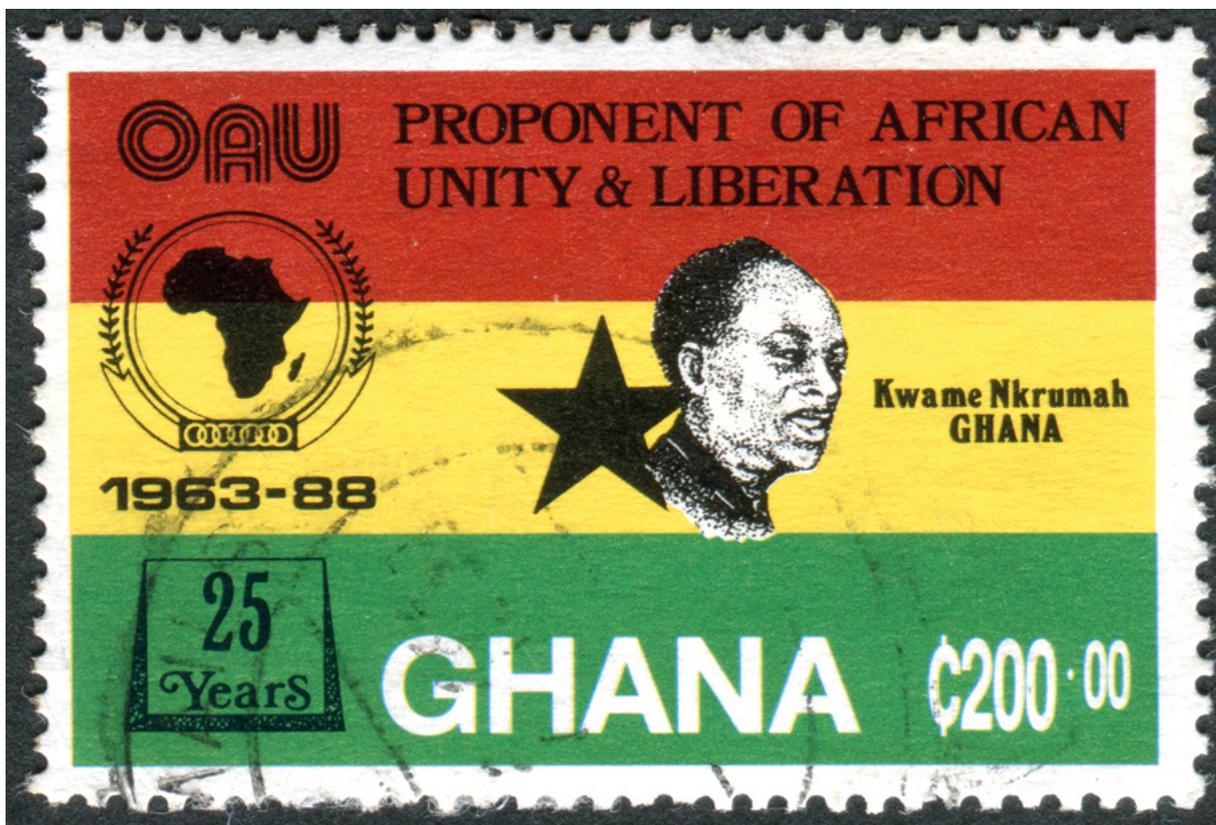
Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana was one of the fathers of Pan-Africanism and the OAU.

3. Central control: In South-East Asia (particularly South Korea, Taiwan and Singapore) highly centralised governments were able to exercise control in order to drive state-directed development plans, in partnership with the private sector, to beat poverty in a single generation. In Africa, while there is much talk of national development plans, many centralised elites use their power for self-enrichment through extractive, rather than inclusive, institutions. The Israelites in the wilderness considered returning to slavery in Egypt for the promise of food and security. At present in Africa, this trade-off is not even an option – increased elite control has impoverished people and not brought wealth (with the arguable exception of Rwanda). Africa cannot entrust its freedom to its leaders alone. There is a need for effective central government, but ultimately the people are the guardians of freedom and our governance institutions must reflect this.

We must avoid Joseph's mistake of using the power he gained in Egypt to accumulate centrally-controlled land, livestock and wealth for Pharaoh at the expense of the people. He was called by God to hold food in reserve for the country so the country would not be ruined by the famine. He did feed Egypt and the nations, but he went beyond God's call and also ended up building an empire for Pharaoh and reducing the people of Egypt into servitude. The people survived, but in many ways the country was ruined. This empire, and the power it gave Pharaoh, meant Joseph's own people were enslaved a few generations after his death and had to be liberated by Moses in order to fulfil Abraham and Josephs' dream of inheriting the Promised Land.

Ubuntu - restorative relationships

At the core of shalom is the restoration of relationships: our relationship with God, with others, with ourselves and within the ecosystem of creation. An Abundant Africa should be built around privileging relationship.

Africa's deepest value is relational. Ubuntu means that "a person is a person through other people". All humans are interdependent. We are human because we belong to, participate in and share our society. Maintaining social solidarity is a collective task.[40] Ubuntu extends to caring for the natural ecosystems of which we are a fully dependent part.[41] Its origins can be traced to the Bantu people of Southern, Central, East and West Africa, but the broader ubuntu philosophy is shared across the continent.[42]

Ubuntu implies that a person can increase their fortunes by sharing with other members of society, thereby enhancing their status within a local community. The philosophy of ubuntu gives Africans a sense of pride, ownership, sharing and caring and motivates us to become better people. Everyone is considered to be important because they belong to our community. Ubuntu means that our abundance as Africans depends on the betterment of our communities and the environment, and promoting it is therefore vital for tackling poverty, political conflicts, injustice and environmental challenges. This can be done through showing empathy for others, sharing common resources and working cooperatively to resolve common problems.[43]

Ubuntu, and its focus on communal obligations, can also form the moral foundation for accountability.[44] As we cultivate an emphasis on agency, we also need to ensure that we are accountable to our communities for our actions. Those with the most agency owe their communities the greatest levels of accountability.

Ubuntu's social solidarity expanded into political solidarity through the African liberation movements. This led to the development of Pan-African philosophy and the creation of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in 1963. The OAU became the AU in 2002.

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020/21 AU Chair, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa, called for increased solidarity and a new **social contract** to be the foundation for economic activity as we recover from the effects of COVID-19.[45]

The Spirit gives life

An Abundant African economy of life is not about rules, ideology, or presenting a blueprint for a Utopian state, but it is ultimately about relationship and obedience to the voice of God. We have identified guidelines from our reading of scripture and our context for making an Abundant Africa a reality. The Holy Spirit, the giver and sustainer of life, will have to help us use these guidelines as we struggle with the temptations of power and slipping into exploitative practices and deal with the complexities of human nature and ego. The Spirit of God will work through each of the people of Africa to create an Abundant Africa.

In co-creating an Abundant Africa we understand that, like Joshua, we "have never been this way before"[46] and so we need to focus on the presence of the Spirit of God among us to know the direction we need to travel. One of the ways we do that is by listening to one another's stories and noting the green shoots of hope that emerge as signposts of new life and bring us closer to an Abundant Africa.

"For as the soil makes the sprout come up... so the Sovereign Lord will make righteousness and praise spring up before all nations."

Isaiah 61: 11

What could an Abundant Africa movement look like?

Looking at history, it is clear that the tides often turn because of the emergence of a movement for change, united around common stories and values.

The scale of change we need for an Abundant African economy requires not just policy shifts but the wholesale transformation of lifestyles, institutions and systems.

Churches in Africa are central to this endeavour given their scale; relational networks; organising capacity; their reach to grassroots, grasstops and the elites; and trusted position in society.[47] At the centre of many successful secular movements you will find a Christian core holding the ethical heart of the movement. This Christian core needs to grow and be like yeast within dough.

People of faith within movements and public spheres can help catalyse an African epiphany – a shared moment of great clarity and revelation – through their vision and courageous imagination. Such change will require brave, selfless, values-driven leaders with a desire for change who can organise a large-scale grassroots movement and can seize opportunities that arise.

By acknowledging our history and current context, we recognise that Africa is a complex environment dealing with multifarious, interdependent problems that "can only be solved peacefully if the people who are part of the problem[s] work together creatively to understand their situation and improve it."[48]

But Africa is no stranger to powerful social movements. Movements have shaped the story of our continent - from church planting and evangelism initiatives spreading the gospel; liberation groups bringing independence from colonialism; post-independence social movements like the Green Belt Movement and Treatment Action Campaign advocating for the environment and healthcare; and contemporary youth movements like #EndSARS or #FeesMustFall challenging the status quo.

> **"Africa is no stranger to powerful social movements. Movements have shaped the story of our continent."**

Africa also has scores of less well-known movements led by inspired and courageous leaders working to improve their communities and nations. An Abundant Africa movement does not require the start of something new, but rather the identification and connection of emerging Christian movements that share common values and which are willing to work within a broader multi-sectoral movement to serve our continent.

As we face our Joseph kairos moment, these movements will need to rise up to respond to the challenges and opportunities we face.

What could an Abundant Africa movement look like?

The state of the African movement

The story of Moses and Joshua was a popular scripture narrative used by some African liberation movements to inspire hope and action in the long struggle to liberate our continent from colonialism. The story of crossing the Jordan to enter the Promised Land, continues to be a powerful narrative to explain the present state of the movement of God in Africa.

In the past 50 years Africa has experienced a political liberation and one of the greatest spiritual revivals the world has ever seen. Our liberating Moses generations have been some of the greatest generations in our history. They successfully freed the continent from captivity; shared a vision for the future; and moved us in the direction of the Promised Land. Unfortunately, like the Israelites, since liberation we have been walking in circles, lost in the desert for many hard years. We have not yet reached the Promised Land!

The leaders of the movements that are rising up now were born in the metaphorical desert and are no longer captive to the ideas and gods of Egypt. They are standing on the banks of the Jordan river and want to cross into the Promised Land, a vision of the physical manifestation of shalom. They are the heirs of the values of the movement of God during the liberation generation. In turn they will prepare the way for the next generation to inherit the fruits of the Promised Land.

A generation ready to cross the Jordan

The main preoccupation for African movements at this moment should be generational transition. Africa is ready for a generational transition in leadership as we move from the legendary Moses-like liberation leaders to a new Joshua generation that has the courage and skill to take us over the Jordan towards the Promised Land. At present, the median age of an African leader is 62 and the median age of an African citizen is 20 – that's a 42-year gap in the average age between leaders and the people they lead. In the rest of the world the average gap between the age of leaders and citizens is just 10 years.[49]

With young leaders multiplying, and older leaders often refusing to let go of power, in some cases going so far as to persecute younger leaders, we risk a forced or a failed transition. With the contextual pressures of poverty, population growth, the COVID-19 pandemic, and an environmental crisis, Africa can't afford to waste energy on generational conflict.

We are seeing movements like #EndSARS in Nigeria, #FeesMustFall in South Africa and Uganda's People Power Movement pushing back against youth repression and articulating the ideas of a new generation. Young leaders aligned with Abundant Africa are voicing their call to the AU to **"Silence the Guns – Not the Youth"** and end the brutal targeting of young people to enable their genuine participation in public life.[50] Unless older leaders actively work to engage the younger generation, it could be a matter of time until frustration spills over the borders and we have a sub-Saharan version of the Arab Spring.

The context is shifting so quickly that for change to happen some older Moses-type leaders may not be able to adapt and will be forced to stay in the desert, like Moses, never getting to enter the Promised Land. While other older leaders could be like Caleb, identifying the godly leaders of the new generation and working with them to create the Promised Land.

The older generation is essential for curating values, mentoring leaders and sharing stories of what was learned in the liberation struggle. Leaders of all generations must build bridges to ensure the generations can overcome any divisions, learn from one another, and work together towards an Abundant Africa.
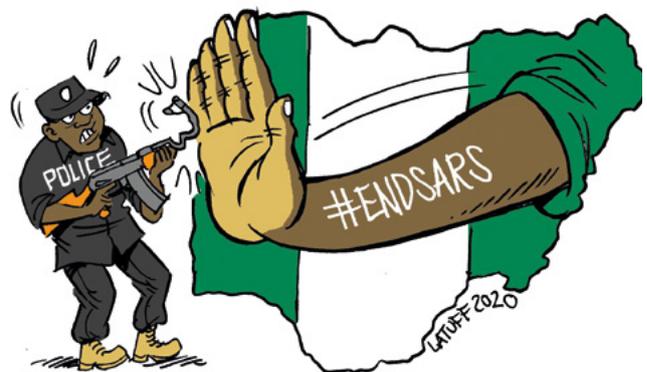
Credit: Carlos Latuff

The church at its best – the heart of the movement

A family in Kigezi district, South West Uganda, constructs a rainwater harvesting tank with the help of friends, neighbours, and the support of the Diocese of Kigezi (2013). **Credit:** Marcus Perkins/Tearfund

In today's society, a church working towards a state of shalom is by design a transformative agent, ushering in spiritual, social, cultural, economic, political and emotional abundance. It is this sacred mission that today's church should be working towards – building God's kingdom on earth where God's people exercise their full capabilities; where agency and capacity to think and create as God's sons and daughters is fully exercised; where the unity and working together embodied in the concept of ubuntu are lived out; and where human dignity is valued.

The church is more than an institution or group of like-minded people. The church is the body of Christ, his hands and feet on earth. The body of Christ takes many different forms, each with unique strengths and roles to fulfil his calling. Church bodies that have contributed to this report include: mission agencies; community-based local churches; denominational leaders; Christian NGOs; youth movements; national church alliances; and continental church alliances. Each is a unique and valued part of the body of Christ, the church.

Some of the strengths that make the church so well suited to this role include:

Theology: The ministry of reconciliation and the restoration of relationships are at the heart of the church's calling. Movements are ecosystems of diverse individuals and organisations with similar values working in alignment to achieve a particular outcome. In movements there is no hierarchical power to coerce compliance and an ideal movement is centred on relationship and equal partnership. When paired with Jesus' teaching about serving others, giving up power and embracing vulnerability, the church is uniquely placed to find ways to live this out in humility and repentance.

Trust: In Africa the church is among the most trusted institutions. This has emerged from our proximity and presence to communities and from our service to others. This trust allows us to be bridge builders and peacemakers. The church's teaching is trusted. Doors open for church leaders in a variety of spaces.

Organisation: The church is one of the most organised and widespread institutions on the continent. Multiple times a week millions of Christians meet in almost every town and village and organise community and outreach activities.[51] Even while COVID-19 has restricted larger services, small groups have been able to meet and congregations have migrated online where possible.

Diversity: The church is made up of people from almost all tribes, tongues, professions and spheres of influence. They live in relationship, cross-pollinate ideas and are discipled together as a community. Almost any institution or subculture can be accessed through the relational networks emerging from the church.

> "In today's society, a church working towards a state of shalom is by design a transformative agent, ushering in spiritual, social, cultural, economic, political and emotional abundance."

"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour."

Luke 4:18–19

The African capital city of Luanda, Angola.

To grow the movements essential to build an Abundant African economy practical mechanisms need to be identified to ensure effective collaboration.

This should be both within movements and with other key stakeholders. Many new movements are leaderless and organised via social media. They should not be controlled, but rather connected and encouraged. When grassroots organisations, regional networks, analysts and the media come together, the impact will be far greater than when groups work alone. The church in particular has an important role to play in equipping, empowering, catalysing and convening this movement for change. To do this it needs to build its own capacity to organise, as well as serve others in the broader Abundant Africa movement.

We unpack these ideas and techniques in more detail. These insights are not exhaustive, but could provide some inspiration for places to start. Most of these areas of movement building can and should be applied at a continental, regional, national, city and community level. Many can be applied within different sectors and institutions.

We need three things to build the church's movement capacity and see the restoration of shalom:

1. Building agency

The Abundant Africa story seeks to facilitate the agency of every African to be a leader. Growing this agency will be essential for success.

2. Developing narratives

The Abundant Africa story is not one that will be pieced together by a small group and imposed on the continent. Instead, it will emerge from the blending of the voices of a million prophets. To allow those stories to be told we need to have practical tools to amplify the voices of people at all levels of society and from across the continent.

3. Creating accountability

People are sinful and imperfect. There are always those who oppose change and others who will deliberately exploit for personal gain. Movements need ways to maintain internal discipline, influence change in others and hold wrongdoers accountable.

1. Building agency

📷 Boys praying at the first Global Day of Prayer in Cape Town. For two decades Christians all over the world have gathered on Pentecost Sunday for a day of repentance and prayer. **Credit:** Diane Vermooten/Media Village

1.1 Consecrating ourselves to God

Prayer and repentance

Before crossing the Jordan, Joshua called on the people to "Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do amazing things among you".[52] After 40 years of wandering in circles the impending moment of radical obedience and extreme action required a new level of repentance and holiness.

As younger Africans prepare to lead us to cross to the metaphorical Promised Land, individuals and institutions have to very deliberately examine every idea and action to determine whether they are of God for this season or whether we are still living from past ideas or sinful thoughts. Our consecration to our calling must be anchored in personal prayer and holiness and allied with corporate prayer movements that can mobilise prayer against key giants and in support of initiatives.

Discipleship and leadership development

This consecration process needs to focus on discipling leaders at every level in our movements. If we are truly going to shift from an elite centralising of leadership power to a movement where everyone is able to express their own agency and lead, as seen in the book of Acts, we need to be encouraging one another to prioritise our own spiritual formation. We must accept Jesus' offer of forgiveness and restored relationship; be filled with the Holy Spirit; and open ourselves to hear God more clearly and act in obedience. Accepting this calling will take courage. Courage was the primary ingredient the younger Joshua generation required to cross the Jordan.

Deeper discipleship helps transform our minds; deepen our spirituality; strengthen our bodies; heal our relationships; change our values; and equip us to steward our finances responsibly. A leader's character matters. Joseph didn't give in to corruption or temptation, even in the face of great power and opportunity. He prioritised personal holiness. He allowed God to deal with his personal and generational trauma, mending relationships and holding onto his calling, despite the violence, betrayal and slavery in his past.

Deeper discipleship allows us to communally internalise the values of the movement. It takes just 10% of people living aligned to common values to create a social tipping point that can change consensus and action across the rest of a society.[53]

Without this consecration we may end up recreating slavery, because we still think like slaves, even though we left the captivity of Egypt many years or generations ago. Without this work we will be unlikely to emotionally, physically or spiritually survive the rigors of movement leadership or, even worse, could lead people in the wrong direction.

> **"We must accept Jesus' offer of forgiveness and restored relationship; be filled with the Holy Spirit; and open ourselves to hear God more clearly and act in obedience."**

1.2 Gathering intelligence

When the Israelites scouted out the Promised Land, the first thing Moses did was send in 12 spies to gain information.[54] Similarly, Nehemiah's first action when arriving in Jerusalem was to inspect the city walls to get information about their state. In King David's time the sons of Issachar were known as men who "understood the times and knew what Israel should do".[55]

Governments, militaries and corporates all have highly developed structures to gain good information, yet this is something in which the church has very little formal capacity. Traditionally, the church has relied on living in proximity to the poor in order to understand the needs of the most vulnerable. This is important and a significant part of developing the church's prophetic voice. However, in order to impact broader society in an integrated way the church needs to understand societal trends, future thinking, key institutions and political shifts.

Ps Suwedi leads a home-based fellowship in Mdera, Malawi. Discipled in home-based evangelism the members of the fellowship each share their faith, in their homes, with neighbours. With God they have overcome fear in order to lead and bless their community. **Credit:** African Enterprise

We can do this by a) developing desk- and field-based research capacity, using existing capacity within civil society and by developing grassroots research capacity to empower communities to collect their own data; b) developing networks of strategically placed leaders within key institutions who are able to collect information to discern trends in their sector or field of expertise; and c) sharing key information in regular discernment spaces at community, institutional, city, national and continental levels and within different sectors.

Ultimately, the most important aspect of gathering intelligence is using it in the process of discerning God's voice. Leaders who are already listening to God in prayer and through reading the scriptures, can then include this information in their discernment process.

1.3 Connecting relationships and building peace

Movements are ecosystems of individuals and organisations with similar values working in alignment, despite their diversity, for a particular outcome. We have already shown how the church is ideally suited to play a key role in anchoring and catalysing important relationships at all levels. Achieving peaceful collaboration requires deliberate effort to ensure that the church lives out its values through restored and whole relationships. But we will also need to grow our technical skills by building networking and peacebuilding capacity. This can range from using tools such as social network analysis[56] to map and understand our networks, to training people in mediation, diplomacy and peacebuilding. These skills are needed to bring peace in fragile states and to help the ongoing African integration process. We examine peacebuilding in more detail in **shift 7, on pg. 52** of this report.

1.4 New organisational wineskins for new wine

Africa needs strong institutions to ensure that visions and policies are actually implemented. Institutions, unlike individuals, are able to ensure that core movement values and skills are sustained over a period of time. Institutions that successfully transition to engage in a contemporary environment drive economic growth.[57] This is crucial for Africa as we lack a range of efficient institutions that can share power. In contrast, institutions that don't transition are often a barrier to change, extracting from, rather than serving, society.

Extractive institutions need to be disrupted to be realigned as new wineskins according to new movement values and a new external environment, using tools of accountability **(see pg. 34)**. If they fail to realign they may need to die and be replaced by new institutions to hold the new wine the Spirit is bringing to an Abundant Africa.

This is also true for the church. God will challenge us to organise ourselves differently for the new ways we must serve a changing external environment. Churches have traditionally shown excellence in organising at national, regional and global levels through councils of churches, evangelical alliances and allied movement structures such as the Lausanne Movement. These collectives are brilliant at building networks and speaking prophetically into key moments. But to be ready for new wine they need a major injection of resources, and some redesign, to ensure that they can translate their relational and theological capital into real organising power and support grassroots movements to deliver real change on the ground.

> **"Africa needs strong institutions to ensure that visions and policies are actually implemented. Institutions, unlike individuals, are able to ensure that core movement values and skills are sustained over a period of time."**

At a **grassroots** level, tools like Church and Community Mobilisation (CCM)[58] and self-help groups[59] are being used by churches and empowered communities to set their own agendas and organise themselves to act at a local level. A movement's greatest power comes from organising at a grassroots level, and the success of these tools and the structures they birth show that communities are starting to lead. However, many local churches are still struggling to reach out and serve the communities outside of their congregations.

Emissions rise from the towers of the SASOL plant in Secunda, South Africa, the world's largest emitter of greenhouse gases from a single site. Activists are focusing on lobbying SASOL as a keystone institution that could shift the whole industry if it changed or shut down. **Credit:** Waldo Swiegers

Churches readily disciple people, but we rarely consider a deliberate focus on discipling organisations/institutions and the complex systems that form between them. When an institution has enough good people open to change and the Spirit of God, they can play a significant role in instilling good values in the institution and guiding its institutional culture. **Keystone institutions** are institutions that play a unique and crucial role in the way the broader system functions and they are especially important for discipleship.

New digital technologies, alongside the massive adoption of cellphone technology in Africa, mean that many institutions can be redesigned to be more inclusive and less restricted by geography. It is now possible for a movement to develop a digital backbone that will provide systems support for collaboration and communication between institutions in ways previously thought impossible.

1.5 Resourcing

The vision to create an Abundant Africa will require resources, both human and financial, on a scale far greater than anything we have seen on the continent before.

We need to let go of the manna of wandering in the desert and embrace the more settled sowing and reaping of the Promised Land. God can shift our economy and allow us to be more self-sufficient as we operate in an economy of life.

"We need to let go of the manna of wandering in the desert and embrace the more settled sowing and reaping of the Promised Land."

The first step will be to destroy the idols of empire that we often worship**.** The Israelites created and worshipped the golden calf made from the plundered wealth of the Egyptian empire as one of their first acts after liberation. They were still in slavery to the economic system of their past. Some in our liberation generation captured or aspired to systems of wealth derived from the old oppressive state and extractive markets. We cannot look backwards to captivity to find the resources to build anew. In particular, we need to tackle some forms of prosperity theology that encourage this, with finances extracted from poor congregants for the luxury of elite pastors. This is the church equivalent of an extractive colonial economy and won't bring freedom.

We need organising systems for collaborative fundraising. A family that eats together stays together. There is an increase in donors looking to give funding to coalitions of organisations that are able to achieve larger objectives than they would be able to if they operated alone.

Resources need to be managed as much as possible at a local level. Centralised funds provide opportunities for corruption and place decision-making power in the hands of a small elite unaware of local conditions. Instead we need an ecosystem of locally controlled funds that can work together while giving decision-making power to local leadership and accountability to local communities.

Churches in particular need to rethink how they grow their faith in terms of the size and source of the budgets they manage. We pray big dreams for Africa but fail to prepare the resources needed to execute those dreams. In order to create an Abundant Africa our vision needs to grow from thousands and millions of dollars, to billions and trillions of dollars. This increased vision cannot rely on donations and won't be spent on the church but rather on mission. This will require innovation, excellent governance and extreme levels of courage.

2. Developing unifying narratives
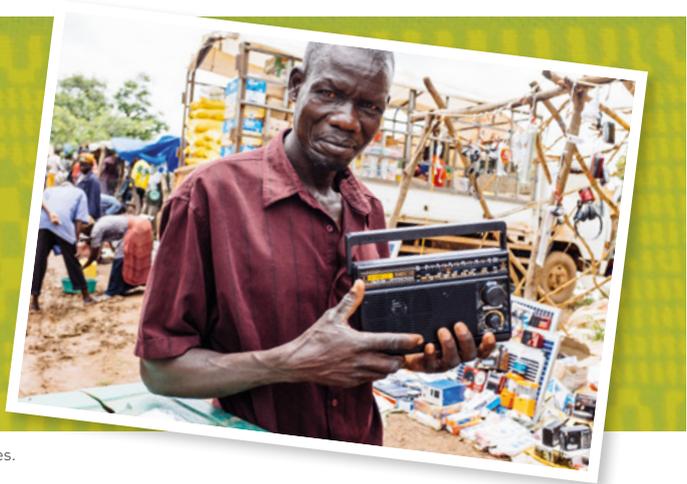
📷 Radio is a powerful medium in Africa for the sharing of stories and shaping of narratives.
Credit: Andrew Philip/Tearfund

At the heart of this report is our call for a new, generative Abundant Africa story that places power and agency with all the people of Africa. Movements are united and motivated by resonant stories, which can be woven into unifying narratives. These narratives can help role players align their values and strategies, even if they don't directly work together. This helps with communication, reduces competition, increases alignment and creates opportunities for work on joint ventures.

American activist and writer Jim Wallis talks about how a narrative is like a flag. The flag must be pulled to the top of the flagpole and then everyone who can see it and owes allegiance to that flag will leave their own spaces, and gather at the base of the flagpole. There they meet together and can start to build relationships, expand their vision and take action together.

Sharing the narrative is the first step in building a community of like-minded people. This community doesn't have to always work on the same thing, but should at least be strategically aligned – like when Nehemiah sought to build the Jerusalem wall by asking people to work separately on their distinct sections.[60] To inspire this common dream we need to figure out how to design our flag (identity and vision) and then how to build the flagpole (messaging platforms) on which to fly the flag.

2.1 A new collective identity

The stories we share will explain our vision and be infused with our values. The stories we tell ourselves both reflect and shape who we are. With God we establish our identity in light of his story to create a larger understanding of "us" and to help us corporately throw off the shackles of past slavery.

When Joshua led the Israelites over the Jordan, before they could possess the Promised Land, they had to spend time in Gilgal where the male members of the community were circumcised – confirming the entire community's **common identity** as God's people and as a reminder of their foundational covenant with him. This removed the reproach of Egypt, after years of slavery and walking in the wilderness.[61] Reaffirming their common identity was essential to remove the mental barriers of the past and forge the unity needed for the complex and disciplined strategy required to take the Promised Land. The forming of this identity delayed their taking of the land and was extremely intimate and painful, but it was an important step of sacrifice and obedience.

The church can help call out the true identity of Africa and wrestle with our identities and loyalties, allowing us to see our broader communal identity as we choose to obey God and unite around shared values expressed in our stories. This larger sense of identity can and should include Africans

📷 A contextual biblical theology is the essential foundation for African churches to develop an authentic African identity, vision and praxis. Consequently contextual theological education and training, that meet the needs of communities in Africa, have become a priority for many churches and denominations. Theologians gather at the 2019 Consultation on Theological Training in Africa.

of other faiths. It should also engage deeply with political ideologies such as Black Consciousness, Pan-Africanism and decolonialism. While our faith plays an important role in shaping our identity, it's essential that our broader identity as Africans should be able to include as many people of goodwill as possible.

The church can lead in creating intimate spaces that include all citizens and institutions and where we can make the sacrifice of time and pain as we wrestle with our identities. This could include: theological seminars to discuss identity in the context of biblical and cultural values and stories; Bible studies and discussion spaces in every congregation; the inclusion of identity narratives in rite of passage celebrations such as baptisms, confirmations, marriage ceremonies and funerals; and engaging other faith groups, cultures and institutions in dialogue to ensure that African Christian narratives and identities can form part of a broader African identity.

2.2 A common vision for an Abundant Africa

"Where there is no vision, the people perish" — Proverbs 29:18

The consequences of a lack of vision are shown powerfully in the Exodus story when only Moses, Joshua and Caleb were able to see the value of entering the Promised Land. The lack of shared vision among the Israelites led them to walk in circles in the desert for 40 years. When building a movement, without hierarchical power to coerce people's behaviour, **a common vision**, alongside shared identity, is what can hold diverse people together. This shared vision will become a key part of the Abundant Africa stories we tell one another.

If the church is doing discipleship well and building relationships as part of its ministry of reconciliation then, by listening to God and listening to other leaders, it can start to play the role of creating space for discerning and articulating vision. We are often focused on the near future, but it's important that we also begin to consider a vision for different scenarios for at least 30, or even 100, years into the future.

A couple in Malawi planting a tree during their wedding day as part of the Green Anglicans one tree, one couple holy matrimony campaign. Planting trees has been incorporated into a variety of life rites of passage celebrations such as marriage, baptism, confirmation, birthdays and even Valentines day! **Credit:** Green Anglicans

Common vision has the powerful effect of aligning different parties into a space where collaborative synergistic action is possible. But shaping nations is a political and contested space that requires massive relational capital and wisdom to hold together. God is giving pieces of the jigsaw puzzle to different people and organisations and they need to find a space where they can place these down and together link the pieces until a larger picture emerges. The church needs to step into this space to serve and help bring disparate parties to a place of possible alignment. When small fires are brought together they can burn with a raging ferocity.

Future scenario thinking can help churches plan and strategise together to have an impact on broader society over the long term. Future scenarios take key information about a region or sector, use computer models for analysis, and then predict several possible long-term scenarios depending on the environmental variables or choices made by people in the system. These scenarios are high-level and academic, but can be communicated in ways that connect with the popular imagination in order to give some evidence-based insights to broader social conversations. They can be strengthened using information gathered from church knowledge and research structures.

The roll-out of **vision development processes** in communities and institutions will be crucial to help citizens understand their purpose and to motivate them to organise. These processes can often emerge from peacebuilding processes; once a pressing crisis has been dealt with, the urgency for change can motivate communities to create and pursue a longer-term vision to deal with the underlying problems that caused the crisis. Where institutions, cities or regions have found a common vision, these processes can feed into multi-stakeholder organisational change processes. Skilled facilitators need to be identified, and others trained, so that these processes can be scaled as key drivers of the Abundant Africa movement.

2.3 Preparing prophetic voices

If we are going to see a movement of a million prophets and storytellers rising up to contribute their voices to the Abundant African narrative, we will need to draw together different types of leaders from all walks of society in order for a well-rounded voice to emerge. Each of these groups will need unique support to hone and amplify their voices.

Artists are the vanguard of all the great movements in history. They are able to communicate ideas directly to people's hearts. Artists can't be told what to do, but will end up shaping and influencing the narrative as much as institutional or local leaders. Their mandate won't come from who they represent, but rather from who they end up drawing into the movement.

Thought leaders are informed opinion leaders in their field of expertise. Their mandate comes from their specialisation. They are trusted sources who move and inspire people with innovative ideas; turn ideas into reality; and know and show how to replicate their success. Over time, they create a dedicated group of friends, fans and followers to help them expand their ideas into sustainable change, not just in one company but across an industry, niche or entire ecosystem.[62]

Community narratives emerge from grassroots organisations. The stories and desires of grassroots communities can influence thought leaders and artists to communicate more representative ideas. These stories can shift the societal narrative when community leaders are given the right platforms to speak from.

Marginalised voices often are able to speak truth about the real impact of policies and actions on society. They experience the pain first-hand every day. By providing training on how to engage media, offering protection from retaliation and opening access to media platforms, leaders from marginalised communities can be significant in reshaping society in a way that benefits all.

The Tree of Life sculpture was made from decommissioned weapons as a prophetic artistic statement for peace. In the mid-90's Mozambicans were encouraged to hand weapons over in exchange for items like ploughs. Artists include: Cristovao Canhavato, Hilario Nhatugueja, Fiel dos Santos and Adelino Serafim Mate. **Credit:** David Rose/Christian Aid

2.4 Messaging platforms

We live in a world of increasing media complexity as the transition to digital platforms and the rise of social media changed the world forever. This communication revolution has had a huge impact on movements: it has facilitated leaderless movements like the one that led to the fall of governments in the Arab Spring; it has allowed minorities and subcultures to organise around previously unacknowledged issues; and it has amplified the voice of younger generations able to bypass the formal media. It has also led to the increased polarisation of ideas and a resultant rise in extremism and anger. Our movements need to learn to use these social media platforms to mobilise people, while also cultivating complementary organising capacity in the physical world.

Media platforms provide a specialised communications space curated by a movement. Digital media platforms allow for conversation and narratives that are not just told from the top, but which are enriched by the voices of people from a variety of contexts. The media helps form a story and bring communities together to effect change.

Media coalitions are made up of organisations set up for general media work serving particular audiences, but find some resonance in a mutual primary narrative. They can share content and push it out to audiences who wouldn't normally engage with movement media platforms.

Community mobilising, even in the era of social media, is often still the best way to spread a message. Trusted community leaders, like church pastors, and organisers talking to neighbours and friends can have a huge impact.

"**Without prophetic vision, people abandon restraint, but those who obey the Law are happy.**"

Proverbs 29:18

Busy market in Bohicon, Benin, West Africa.

3. Creating accountability

Holding the powerful accountable. Young environmental activists from Fridays for the Future and Extinction Rebellion protest against climate change outside the South African Parliament. **Credit:** Miles Giljam

People are sinful and imperfect. We all fail at some stage, even if we have good intentions. There are always people who oppose change, and others who will deliberately exploit people and opportunities for personal gain. Movements need ways to maintain internal discipline, influence change in others and hold wrongdoers accountable.

A number of the areas mentioned under building agency, such as discipleship and the development of appropriate institutions, will play an important role in creating accountability, in addition to the areas outlined below. You can also read more in **Shift 6: From self-interest to ethical leadership on pg. 50.**

> "Christians have an opportunity to unite with a voice that prophetically declares truth to challenge injustice, and a pastoral voice for healing and unity."

3.1 Advocacy and activism

Advocacy and activism are movement techniques that are effective when working for change from outside an institution of power.

Advocacy is about "seeking with, and on behalf of, the poor to address underlying causes of poverty, bring justice and support good development through influencing the policies and practices of the powerful." Christians have an opportunity to unite with a voice that prophetically declares truth to challenge injustice, and a pastoral voice for healing and unity.

It is critical that any advocacy be done alongside, not simply on behalf of, the poor, oppressed and vulnerable. No policy should be decided by any representative without the full and direct participation of members of the groups affected by that policy. Such advocacy requires that we first organise by:

a. Building continental coalitions around key advocacy topics in order to create spaces for grassroots activists to influence national and continental policy, to establish narratives, and to help align local efforts for greater impact.

b. Supporting activists being threatened by violence or arrest for legitimate activism or advocacy.

c. Developing capacity-sharing structures and training for emerging grassroots activists.

d. Creating legal capacity to challenge injustice through the court system.

The Malawi Creation Care Network marched around the country against plastic pollution in support of a legal challenge to outlaw the manufacture of thin plastic bags. Thin plastic bags are now illegal in Malawi! **Credit:** Martijn Baudoin/Unsplash

Young activists gather in Malawi for an intensive bootcamp on movement building run by Tearfund's Global Advocacy Team. The training builds capacity and connects activists for collaborative action. **Credit:** Tearfund

3.2 Clear demands and a concrete plan

To keep ourselves accountable we need to be clear about our plans and demands. This report is a start in creating a conversation around a set of clear demands and some suggestions for where concrete plans can be made, even though these plans must remain flexible to adjust to contextual changes or the addition of new partners.

This clarity aligns implementation approaches, even in the absence of coercive leadership. Sadly the church often struggles with execution, especially collaborative execution. We must honour our stirring sermons and brilliant theology, but must also focus on formulating and delivering clear advocacy demands and concrete, workable project plans. This will probably require inviting leaders from business, politics and civil society into our planning and execution teams. We will need to shift some cultural expectations and let go of some control to do this, but the new skills will help deliver the movement's objectives.

3.3 Culture of review and measurement

We need to develop a culture and systems of review and measurement to ensure that we are constantly learning and improving our practices. Too often the church has been guilty of declaring victory and moving on without actually measuring success or only showing success through anecdotal stories. We have to be brutally honest with ourselves, our congregations and our donors to be able to have the moral authority to demand similar accountability from government and other sectors.

Preparation and persistence as we move

When Noah obeyed God and started building the ark he was widely ridiculed. Yet he persisted against the odds, and eventually, when faced with the crisis of rain, his preparation paid off. Much of movement building is understanding what is needed in the future and preparing in line with that vision, even if you are ignored and ridiculed, so that when a crisis happens or the wave of the Spirit moves, you are well positioned to catch the wave and partner in what God is doing.

> **"If we are faithful and courageous then we may be blessed to see the shifts needed for our dreams of an Abundant Africa to become a reality."**

Operating in these cycles of preparation and change takes persistence. One cycle is rarely enough to secure our objectives. We are dreaming about building a movement to change a continent – that usually happens over multiple generations. Think again of Moses and Joshua. After every success or failure, preparation must begin again. And the cycle must be repeated over and over. We need to connect to the work of our spiritual mothers and fathers, persist in our own work and raise up the leaders who will complete our work once we are gone.

If we are faithful and courageous then we may be blessed to see the shifts needed for our dreams of an Abundant Africa to become a reality.

Successful movements drive change across what society expects, what the law allows and what the economy incentivises.

We seek to bring change to social norms, legislation and its enforcement, and the flows of money across our continent. We believe that seven strategic shifts are needed to take Africa closer to the reality of shalom.

We recognise the need for multiple actors to play their part in the shifts towards an Abundant Africa. The primary audience for this report is the church, and so we speak firstly to ourselves. The ideas we have suggested are intended for both Christian leaders serving in secular jobs, such as business or education, as well as the church's many institutional forms (local churches, movements, national and continental alliances, NGOs, and many more). We have, however, also gone further, and made recommendations for national governments, and for the AU, as representative civil structures outside the church that are directly responsible to us as citizens. In the future we recognise the need to more deeply engage other stakeholders, such as business and civil society, in seeing an Abundant African economy come to life.

The United Nations' (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), outlined in its 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the AU's Agenda 2063 together form a global and a continental strategy for sustainable development, as well as spaces for governments and churches to act. Both agendas are implemented through National Development Plans. SDG Councils[63] are multi-stakeholder bodies that oversee the implementation of sustainable development plans; the church can engage with these councils to influence national and regional change.

We consulted widely when generating these ideas, but, as a result of circumstances, access and necessity, ultimately leaned more heavily on input from thought leaders from a variety of backgrounds and movements than on genuine grassroots consultations. These ideas are therefore not an exhaustive list, but the first step in a collaborative journey of discerning and following God's voice together. Some of the proposed ideas are new, but many draw on learning and practices from around the world. Some are initial changes while others will take longer to become reality, and some need further detailed analysis. No one actor can do them all, but if they can start conversations, ignite partnerships and stimulate action we are certain that the experience of journeying together will sharpen our thinking and strengthen our best practice.

The skyline of the city of Nairobi, Kenya.

Seven shifts for an Abundant Africa

1. From valuing growth to valuing wellbeing

How will we know shalom when we see it? We need to start with the end in mind: what gets measured gets implemented. We need measures that look beyond GDP to embody our values of the wellbeing of communities and our natural world.

2. From dependence to innovation

Our broken economic and education systems tell stories of dependence and lost opportunities. They fail our young people, our greatest source of creativity and energy. We long for innovation founded in ubuntu relationships - built on our diversity, committed to community.

3. From extraction to caring for creation

Our land carries our birth and our culture, our history of extraction from the ground and from the people who live and depend on it. We seek to restore the wholeness of people and the health of the earth.

4. From sprawling slums to lifegiving cities

Most of our cities have not yet been built. Those that have are divided between the mega-rich and the destitute. We look to the new Jerusalem as the model for the cities we want to raise and restore: cities that are inclusive, creative and sustainable.

5. From decisions by centralised elites to decisions by active communities

Africa's future will be determined by the agency of each of her citizens. We are in a season of disruption. This is an opportunity to equip an active citizenry to engage in decision making, to lay claim to the stories of their own lives.

6. From self-interest to ethical leadership

The greatest in the kingdom of God is the servant. We long for leaders and citizens characterised by integrity and accountability. We seek to expose and undo the legacy of corruption and build a culture of openness at every level.
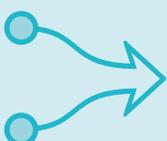
7. From division to connection

Conflict and discord threaten every shift that we seek. But ubuntu is a powerful force. We seek healing for the past. We look to the future, to a bigger 'us', to a larger African identity.

1. From valuing growth to valuing wellbeing

We need to start with the end in mind. At the early stages of the African transformation, we have the opportunity to redefine productivity and find new ways of measurement in line with African values and dreams for the future. We seek to move beyond GDP to metrics that truly capture shalom, the wellbeing of people and the planet, so our governments and leaders deliver what is truly needed and promised.

> **"What gets measured gets managed - even when it's pointless to measure and manage it, and even if it harms the purpose of the organisation to do so."**
>
> Peter Drucker

For almost 80 years, growth worldwide has primarily been measured purely in terms of GDP – a tool developed and adopted in the era of World War II. GDP counts the value of goods and services produced in a country, so more is better, even if it comes at the cost of trust and social cohesion. GDP measures income, but not equality, growth or destruction, and ignores social cohesion, health, happiness, spirituality and the natural world. It usually ignores unpaid work (therefore excluding many women) and the informal economy, which three in five people around the world rely on for their income.[64] Measuring GDP alone drives greed, inequality and exploitative extraction from both people and the planet.[65]

Measuring GDP can be understood as a measure of the Genesis 3 curse: a combination of the back-breaking work required to produce from the land and the unrelenting extraction of value from the creation we were given to protect. The ultimate measure of restoration is to measure the state of shalom – justice and peace: the abundant life that Jesus promised us.

The pandemic-driven recession has reinforced what we knew: we are far from shalom. But as we rebuild, how will we know shalom when we see it? We need to be able to explain and measure what it looks like when we see God's kingdom come in our communities, institutions, cities and nations.

This requires new ways of measuring development success that align with our cultural and theological values and focus on the wellbeing of citizens and the planet, rather than an economic bottom line.[66] These should align with the AU's fifth aspiration on values and ethics.[67] Recently, there have been some attempts to create alternative tools to measure development, including (but not limited to) the Human Development Index[68], 17 **Sustainable Development Goals**[69], the Inclusive Development Index[70] and Bhutan's Gross National Happiness Index,[71] which has been adopted by other countries, such as New Zealand, when it announced a new budget in 2019 to help local communities prosper.[72] Local measurement approaches have been also developed, such as the Standard of Living Index[73] and the Light Wheel,[74] which measures change in all aspects of a person or community's wellbeing.

We need a monitoring tool that learns from these but which is shaped by African citizens rather than governments or institutions. We seek a tool that speaks to the African worldview of development, which looks at the whole person and not just the acquisition of wealth.[75] Focusing on data collected by citizens would help them assess progress and engage duty bearers in progressive discussions about delivering what is needed and what has been promised. We aim to develop a People's Abundance Index to enable church communities to assess progress and take localised action to advocate for change and see shalom realised in their communities.

Uganda has established Natural Capital Accounting, a standardised approach to measuring and valuing the stock of natural assets, such as forests, wetlands and land. It provides information about natural capital wealth as well as income and other benefit flows. GDP only focuses on income and not wealth. This helps inform key policies and plans in Uganda for long-term sustainable growth and prosperity. **Credit:** Tearfund

Abundant ideas for valuing wellbeing

We therefore call on…

Church and movement leaders to join the Abundant Africa coalition in developing a People's Abundance Index to enable citizens to monitor wellbeing and development at local, national and regional levels. This will equip us to discern and measure shalom together, and to hold national and regional actors to account. As part of this, leaders should host annual multi-stakeholder engagement discussions with governments.

Governments to include citizen-generated data in metrics and decision making. Data generated by citizens has been promoted in the context of SDG tracking[76] and monitoring of COVID-19 infections.[77] There are examples where governments have supported citizen monitoring,[78] but for the most part, governments use only their own data. We need them to support and use in-depth citizen-driven monitoring of wellbeing and development because this will strengthen decision making by providing timely data from contexts that decision makers may not have access to, and will enable them to align their decisions with the needs of local communities.

Governments to include the value and costs of natural and social capital in their budgeting processes. Waste and pollution are often excluded from budgeting; the costs of negative impacts are pushed onto society, future generations and the environment. Including these costs in budgeting is a key interim step in the journey away from GDP as the primary measurement standard.

The AU to incorporate wellbeing measures and citizen-generated data into two-yearly reports on the implementation of Agenda 2063 and the implementation plan that follows its First Ten-Year Implementation Plan (2013-2023). Where possible this should be integrated into the national development plans of member states. Valuing wellbeing is glaringly absent from the AU's Agenda 2063; there are many goals for achieving the Africa we want, but no way to measure this holistically. Incorporating these measures would enable the AU to use its influence to champion better measurements of wellbeing and shalom among national governments, investors and business.

2. From dependence to innovation

We long to move from poverty to dignified livelihoods for all. Education that is inclusive, nourishing and helps young people prepare for their future. Work that is creative, purposeful, beneficial and justly compensated. But our current economic and education systems hinder the ability of citizens to participate fully and to innovate in response to emerging challenges and opportunities. We need to support and invest in models that foster innovation, inclusion and communities.

Africa has been perceived and approached as dependent on others for its survival. Our continent receives more foreign aid than any other. In recent decades, Africa has been very reliant on global foreign direct investment, but this is expected to drop by between 25-40% due to the COVID-19 pandemic[79] and is unlikely to improve within the next few years. This has accelerated the need and opportunity to look within our continent and our communities to create an innovative economy that benefits the environment and people of Africa.

Our economic development has emphasised dependence on big business and government to create jobs. This has fuelled the Africa Rising narrative but has not translated into reality. The highest unemployment rates in the world in 2019 were in sub-Saharan Africa.[80] Over 20 million jobs may be lost in sub-Saharan Africa due to COVID-19.[81] And in just two decades, Africa expects to have 450 million people added to its working population.[82]

This booming population of young Africans could become a source of energy and innovation in the decades to come – but existing broken systems limit the potential of "Africa's greatest resource".[83] Our education fails to create independent young people or prepare them for the reality of the jobs available. Africa has the world's highest growth rates in the numbers of young people, and the highest rates of educational exclusion. One in five children are not in school; this escalates to one in three youth.[84] The demand for school places is predicted to grow from 60 million to 106 million in the next decade.[85] Africa would need to build ten, 10,000-student universities each week for the next 12 years to meet the demand for tertiary education.[86]

This cannot be achieved by building traditional schools alone. We need also to invest in online education, which is affordable and growing in scope.

This shift should be accompanied by an overhaul of the antiquated rote educational approach, which leads to those who remain in school often learning very little due to low educational quality. We need a new academic model to match learning, skills and capacities with current and future opportunities in the local economy.

Even when young people do get a good education they often find there are no jobs for them. Young people represent more than 60 per cent of those unemployed across the continent;[87] every year around 10 million young people join the workforce but only 3.1 million new jobs are created. Where unemployment is low, the informal economy is often key – as high as 65 per cent of all employment in countries like Nigeria and Tanzania.[88] But governments often still ignore investing in it, favouring big business instead. Small- and medium-sized businesses often focus on retail, rather than innovation and the creation of products and solutions.

Historically, innovation has been dependent on elite institutions such as universities and centres of excellence. There is a growing trend in Africa for innovation hubs,[89] which are business incubation centres that cater to established mid-level formal businesses. But both of these ignore and exclude the capacity of ordinary citizens innovating within the informal economy and their communities. To truly shift from dependence to innovation, Africa also needs a strong grassroots-based innovation approach, supported through policy and funding, which creates businesses that provide jobs to young people.

Members of the Awada Shaba Church self-help group gather in front of their church in Ethiopia. Churches can provide the physical, social and online infrastructure needed for communities to come together to innovate for an abundant economy.
Credit: Aaron Koch/Tearfund

Dependence syndrome can be caused by the breakdown of relationship, especially when this breakdown happens through systems of subjugation and control, like colonialism or dictatorship. We need God to restore our relationships and interdependence with other people and the environment, and our true identity as co-creators with Him. This will break our dependence on others and allow us to fulfil the creation, or innovation, mandate given to us by God.

"Our education fails to create independent young people or prepare them for the reality of the jobs available."

If the release from dependence requires the restoration of relationship then true innovation is not about the individual, it's about communities coming together to innovate for the common good. This innovation could extend beyond science and technology to other spheres, including social arrangements and governance. It should align with the AU aspirations of development that is prosperous (Aspiration 4) and people driven (Aspiration 6), and the SDGs for education (4), decent work (8) and innovation (9). African innovation should be centred on the community - not the individual pursuit of wealth so often seen in the West, which has destroyed the environment - and therefore embedded in ubuntu relationships to retain the value of diversity with a commitment to the common good.

Abundant ideas for innovation

Churches
Churches are able to tackle dependence syndrome by restoring relationships and identity. But they also have space, infrastructure, and relational networks with youth groups, government and businesses on which to build a strong innovation foundation. They can:

Support and establish community innovation and business hubs as vibrant local spaces for information and capacity sharing, entrepreneurship, innovation and business activation. These hubs should be simple service points to access free tools such as internet access, training, legal support, financial services and mentoring – with a particular focus on young people and women. There are existing examples of innovation hubs, but none that resemble this community model that includes all the components of: centring on and strengthening networks of community relationships; building the capacity of individuals and families within communities; pioneering family or community businesses and cooperatives; and generating income opportunities. Churches should partner with local government and businesses to pilot these, ensuring they avoid elite capture by being formulated on communities' needs and indigenous knowledge.

Create partnerships to scale up existing best practice in early childhood development, church schools and universities. The church in Africa has often played an important role in education in the absence of a strong state system. Churches should seek partnerships with government and the private sector to scale these models, where possible using church buildings and land. In the past, the church has been elitist in some spaces; these models should seek instead to be inclusive. They should move from rote learning to focusing on methods that enhance critical thinking, learning and problem solving to elevate entrepreneurship and innovation; natural strengths of African youth.

Develop financial instruments and institutions that allow the church to engage in large-scale development at both local and institutional levels. Whether setting up banks; impact funds; enterprise income; or microfinancing systems, this will allow the church to align broader financial structures with its shalom development values. This can be measured through the quadruple bottom line of financial returns, social returns, environmental returns and spiritual returns.

13 pastors have formed a cooperative business farming vegetables and fish together in Mossurize in Mozambique. They were inspired after church community mobilisation was incorporated in their theological training by Kubatsirana, a Christian ecumenical organisation. **Credit:** Kylie Scott/Tearfund

Governments
National governments can set the right processes and create enabling environments. They can:

Include young people and women in decision-making processes around economic policy and implementation particularly at a city or local level.

Develop technological infrastructure, establish a flexible integrated curriculum and train teachers for online education,[90] to create opportunities for secondary and tertiary students who are unable to access traditional educational institutions. Young people who are unable to access quality formal schooling will be able to self-teach online if they are given access to technology; internet data; and a space to learn.[91] If they are not given access to these essential tools then the digital divide will expand inequality even further. The migration online has been accelerated by COVID-19 lockdowns and the forced shift towards online education caused by school closures. The church can become a partner in providing opportunities for blended learning using church infrastructure to gather self-guided learners and provide support for self-guided learning.

African Union
The African Union can make real its vision for releasing our continent's greatest resource by:

Calling on all African nations to establish an ecosystem of locally-controlled 'future funds' to build strong, inclusive and sustainable economic opportunities for youth and safeguard future generations. These should be funded by governments and development partners.

> **"Land is an important aspect of Africa identity. African soil carries our stories, our birth and our culture."**

Researching and promoting cooperative business models. Historically these have failed when governments have driven the agenda, bringing disparate community members together without the necessary foundation of trust. But Africa has many successful cooperative models built on strong relationships in families, extended families, clans, tribes and villages. The AU should establish a unit to research and resource best practice on all types of cooperatives, in partnership with faith-based and civil-society organisations, including community innovation hubs.

"So they will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified. They will rebuild the ancient ruins; they will restore the places long devastated; they will renew the ruined cities, the desolations of many generations."

Isaiah 61: 3b -4

Members of the Pentecostal Assemblies of God, in Ogongora Uganda, gather to learn and organise.
Credit: Layton Thompson/Tearfund

3. From extraction to caring for creation

We see the interplay of connection and extraction throughout our history and across our land. At this moment, when the climate crisis threatens us all, we recognise that we have not done enough to care for the wellbeing of people or the natural world that God made and on which we rely. People are an integral part of the natural world. As we rebuild from the COVID-19 pandemic we have an opportunity to reset our health systems and our relationship with the natural world – so that the whole of creation can flourish.

Land is an important aspect of Africa identity. African soil carries our stories, our birth and our culture. It has also been the site of death, of dispossession and of disconnection. Our deeply held value of ubuntu has been affronted by centuries of exploitation of people and the rest of creation for financial gain.

In Eden our original purpose was to tend a garden fed by rivers. We lived in harmony with nature, and in Genesis 1, we see that God declared all creation to be very good. After the Fall, these relationships were broken, but God's work is restoration. He partners with us to care for, not extract from or destroy, all creation – from the soil to every person who lives and tends it.

Who owns and benefits from land, and natural resources both on land and in the ocean, is critical to creation flourishing – and is often disputed. Control of land was a key pillar of colonialism in Africa. In the 21st century this pursuit has continued in a different form as foreign investors and governments seek to acquire resource-rich African land. How much land? The lack of records and transparency makes it difficult to know,[92] but for a sense of scale, in just five years nearly 2.5 million hectares of agricultural land from just five African countries were transferred in large-scale acquisitions.[93] This is happening in the context of persistent land and border disputes, often driven by a complex interplay of historic disagreements, trauma, cycles of violence, cattle raiding, and competition for natural resources. Over 20 million people across Africa are separated from their land, living as refugees or Internally Displaced Persons.[94]

And yet the land continues to hold deep spiritual meaning and economic significance. Seven out of ten Africans depend on agriculture for their livelihoods.[95] But the life-giving quality of the land that our growing population relies on is under threat. Ecosystem destruction from human activities takes many forms. Deforestation. Mining. Extraction of fossil fuels. The result is fragmentation, biodiversity loss and degradation of the land that God made and we depend on – often while exploiting local communities.

The climate crisis is already exacerbating these threats. In 2019 in Mozambique, the strongest storm to ever hit Africa left 374,000 people in need.[96] Flooding in 2020 affected six million people in East Africa, destroying homes and livelihoods.[97] The dry seasons across the Sahel are getting longer, threatening a thousand-year-old tradition of pastoralism that over 20 million people rely on.[98] The climate crisis threatens us all, but it affects people living in poverty the most. African nations have contributed the least to the climate crisis, and yet there are already 86 million internal climate migrants in sub-Saharan Africa.[99]

These and the COVID-19 virus[100] are just the first pangs of a growing environmental crisis. They show the gap between lived reality and our goals for prosperity (Aspiration 1), health and wellbeing (SDG 3), responsible consumption and production (SDG 12), and climate action (SDG 13). As we build back better from the pandemic, we have an opportunity to reset exploitative practices and find ways for all of creation - people and planet - to thrive.

Abundant ideas for caring for creation

We therefore call on…

Churches to model and teach inclusive and sustainable land use and management. Churches could play a significant role in caring for the environment as they own considerable land in cities and rural areas. Some churches have been implicated in land grabs under the colonial system and have often promoted a Western approach that encourages utilitarian use of land. These are areas that need to be approached with repentance and humility, but in leading by example the church could be a powerful voice in shaping land use in the future, both culturally and ecologically. Church land should become sites for modelling and teaching sustainable land practices based on sustainable agriculture principles, like the Foundations for Farming scheme.[101]

Governments to invest in local community health systems that are low-cost and create dignified local jobs. Good community health systems have played a key role in limiting the spread of COVID-19 in Africa.[102] At the same time, the pandemic has highlighted that we have not done enough to invest in the wellness and wholeness of people. We need a healthcare system that integrates communities and faith-based organisations as key trusted and influential contributors.[103] These systems should be low-cost and low-carbon, improving health through reducing waste and pollution, and creating dignified jobs and strengthening local economies.[104]

Governments and the AU to promote and implement secure, inclusive and equitable land-tenure systems for community lands and individual plots. Legally recognised indigenous and community lands have been shown to be better at decreasing deforestation rates, reducing emissions and actually storing carbon.[105] Ensuring the rights of communities and families living in informal settlements and slums creates a sense of belonging and makes them less susceptible to corruption or exploitation. Increasing the efficiency and transparency of land administration services through new low-cost global positioning systems is a key step in empowering communities.[106] It's not enough to recognise the rights of land ownership; laws and regulations that recognise ownership by local communities, indigenous peoples and women need to be implemented so they can benefit from Africa's land.

The Green Church Movement in Zimbabwe joined the Friends of the Environment for the 2018 Walkathon to raise awareness on the importance of trees and forests and to attempt to plant 120 000 trees. The 154 km walk from Cross-Dete to Binga, in Matabeleland North Province, attracted more than 250 walkers. **Credit:** Green Anglicans

Governments to incorporate nature-based solutions into national development plans and climate plans[107] and to invest in the restoration of ecosystems. The five-yearly review cycles of these legislated plans enable citizens and local communities to monitor and engage as active champions of the environment they depend on. This will help facilitate green investment and set countries on a path to a low-carbon and sustainable future.

> **"Church land should become sites for modelling and teaching sustainable land practices based on sustainable agriculture principles."**

Governments to deliver on their commitment to allocate 10% of public expenditure to agriculture.[108] There should be a clear budget line dedicated to sustainable agriculture and at least 10% of the annual agricultural budget allocated to sustainable agriculture to facilitate the prioritisation of sustainable production and support to smallholder farmers.

Governments to end subsidies to harmful extractive industries (especially carbon extractives) as a first step to radically reducing their impact. Our economic recovery cannot be built on industries that pollute the environment and exploit people. We should shift towards nurturing industries, such as renewable energy, which create dignified green jobs.[109] Where it is necessary to mine, governments must ensure that environmental and social restitution leaves the area twice as healthy as when the extraction began.

4. From sprawling slums to lifegiving cities

The AU has put forward a vision of cities where humans thrive (Aspiration 1).[110] Cities have the potential to be ecosystems of the services and support that enable human connectedness, dignified living and economic activity and innovation. But they are often divided, unequal and unsustainable. As our cities grow and new ones are built, we have an opportunity to develop an inclusive urbanisation agenda that brings life to communities and the environment.

African cities are the fastest growing in the world; their populations are expected to double by 2050.[111] Children born in Kampala today will see their city double by their 13th birthdays.[112] Most African cities have not yet been built. This is a huge opportunity to build inclusive, innovative, climate-smart cities with space for communities and all citizens to thrive. And in so shaping our cities, we can shape our nations.

But there are risks in Africa's urbanisation agenda. African cities already have massive divides between the mega-rich and the destitute, who often live in slums. Cities are not developing infrastructure fast enough to support their current, let alone their future, residents. Young people are attracted to cities for education and opportunity – but many will arrive to no prospects of employment. As urban growth outstrips government capacity and budgets, most growth is, and will continue to be, in unregulated, unplanned slums. Cities therefore present both an opportunity and a major threat: runaway urbanisation can increase poverty and inequality.[113] The financing gap in infrastructure in Africa is between $68 and $108 billion annually.[114] This is the challenge: to create lifegiving cities for rapidly growing populations using limited financial resources, without incurring new debt or further jeopardising the environment.

The building of cities can be an important physical demonstration of shalom. In the Bible life begins in a garden, but it was always the plan that our experience of shalom will be in a city. After the restoration that comes through Christ, the Bible ends in a garden city built with elements that were present in the original garden.[115] Another city in the Bible, Babel, was built for the glory of powerful men and led to division. By building cities collaboratively we can display the glory of God by including all his people, especially "the least of these". The new Jerusalem described in Revelation 21 is the model of the city we want to build.

> **"African cities are the fastest growing in the world; their populations are expected to double by 2050. Children born in Kampala today will see their city double by their 13th birthdays."**

We need to rethink the way cities are designed and the purposes they serve, to envisage and implement cities of the future that create inclusion and which are sustainable at every level (in line with SDG 11 for sustainable cities and communities). An inclusive urbanisation agenda includes: dignified and affordable housing; access to clean energy and clear water;[116] accessible public transportation solutions that reduce spatial gridlocks and carbon emissions; circular waste management systems; and the rethinking of public spaces to create freedom of movement, integrate lifegiving common natural spaces and draw communities together. Churches have organised communities and land in most city neighbourhoods – including slums. They can become the leadership and gathering space for community organising to happen.

Abundant ideas to create lifegiving cities

No city is the same; each requires a contextualised approach. We have therefore focused here on how transformation should happen, rather than the specifics of what those changes are, in calling on:

Churches, communities and governments to establish urban labs to co-create alternative visions of cities as inclusive spaces. These urban labs should be collaborations between local governments, churches, civil society, academia, artists, businesses and the informal sector to dream together, hear stories from communities, and learn from best practice in planning new cities and retrofitting existing ones. This will foster social capital in our cities through strengthening community networks and ownership. These labs are necessary in all **urban centres**, but should be prioritised in fast-growing cities like Lagos, Kinshasa and Dar Es Salaam.

Churches, civil society and governments to support the development and scaling up of innovative construction technologies and inclusive construction processes. Low-income families need affordable construction materials and non-specialist methods so they can build and improve their homes incrementally as the finances become available. Materials should be locally available and sustainable to prevent huge carbon emissions resulting from the construction of our new and fast-growing cities.[117] Governments and banks should create legal and financing frameworks that enable and support wide-scale use of emerging sustainable construction materials and processes. Churches and civil society should help develop and support **housing associations** to scale **construction** at a local level.

Please don't tow the goats! African cities are the fastest growing globally due to population growth and rural urban migration. Many cities have a distinctive mix of rural and urban culture. **Credit:** Steve Goddard/Tearfund

Churches to support and legitimise emerging grassroots urban movements, which informally shape their urban spaces and are often the only champions of the rights of the urban poor. These movements usually operate outside of municipal planning rules and are often opposed by business, government and those in formal housing. This opposition ranges from exclusion from participation to threats to urban organisers' lives. Churches should use their legitimacy to support and empower these movements and connect them with more formal institutions.

Church networks to ensure urban theological and practical training is expanded to theological institutions, Christian universities and lay training to equip the church to deal with the growth of cities theoretically and theologically, and give them tools to act.

Churches and civil society to facilitate fair partnerships to create sustainable waste and energy services. Where local government has failed, local communities should lead in the provision of services and creation of dignified jobs. These fair partnerships should include and clarify the roles of communities, informal workers, businesses, governments and civil society.

Governments to include communities living in slums in all decisions regarding their housing development. This extends to slum upgrading and housing decision-making processes, in line with the "right to the city" embedded in the UN's Right to Housing, which promotes equal participation in decision-making processes and access to benefits for all people living in urban areas.[118]

5. From decisions by centralised elites to decisions by active communities

The AU's 2063 Agenda envisions a continent with good governance and democracy, where institutions are at the service of their people (Aspiration 3) and development is people-driven (Aspiration 6). These principles of inclusive decision making and participation are echoed in the constitutions and national laws of all 54 African countries – but there is a gap between what's written and what happens on the ground. We are in a season of change, with new technology and challenge to hierarchical systems; this is a moment to empower citizens with the tools and connections to engage in the decision making that shapes their lives.

Our history is characterised by centralised and authoritarian colonial governments, and in many places the liberation governments that replaced them have continued old elitist governance practices. African society historically has a tiny middle class with a powerful elite and a large percentage of relatively powerless citizens. Elites are driving corruption and making decisions that are self-serving rather than for the benefit of their nations.

When governments or leaders consult as merely a box-ticking exercise, they break their social contract with the people they claim to serve. And yet, citizen participation in Africa is often meaningless, or non-existent. Most citizens do not feel they have a voice in government processes[119] with some groups particularly side-lined, such as young people, women and rural communities. Freedom for civil society and activists is weakening across the continent; over the past 10 years, governments in 27 countries have restricted the participation of civil-society groups in political processes,[120] harming the delivery of essential services for African citizens. While the last decade seemed to be on a trajectory of improving governance, by 2015 that growth was slowing and in 2020 it declined for the first time in a decade.[121]

This is a season of disruption. Crumbling traditional hierarchical systems are scrambling in the midst of change. New technology is allowing communities to collaborate more easily and new systems to develop that are based on the involvement of all citizens. People, particularly youth, are responding to closing civil-society space with alternate forms of participation, such as the #FeesMustFall movement in South Africa, the 2019 demonstrations in Sudan, and the #EndSARS campaign in Nigeria.

We know that we need to move from decisions made by centralised elites to active democratic communities, particularly including those most likely to be left behind like women, young people and ethnic minorities. This is vital for achieving the global goals of reduced inequality (SDG 10), particularly for women (SDG 5), and justice and strong institutions (SDG 16). Meaningful participation goes beyond just public consultation; it is about people being able to take part in the processes, decision making and activities that affect their daily lives.[122] Meaningful participation increases the legitimacy of processes and their outcomes,[123] reduces conflict and cost delays, creates trust between governments and citizens, and strengthens goodwill for future decisions.[124] It is a mainstay of democracy that the government is of the people, by the people and for the people.

The book of Acts gives a good example of a community making decisions together. No longer just hearing God's voice through a handful of leaders; now God's Spirit is present in all his people. The church in Acts shows us how we can all hear and discern God's voice, taking co-responsibility for his creation and his mission

In an increasingly polarised ideological world it is more important than ever that we emphasise our togetherness. Decentralising power is an issue that can be supported in different forms across the political spectrum: the left emphasising cooperation and grassroots engagement; and the right emphasising freedom from government control and family. This should start at a local level, where it is about relationships with people we know, and not through debates about ideology or stereotyping perceived enemies.

We believe in the community cry, "Nothing about us without us". We propose devolving as much power as possible to the people so they can determine their own lives through participation, planning, budgeting, implementation and tracking at a community level. An active citizenry must be equipped with the tools, models and collaborations to engage in decision making.

Churches are often the most distributed, organised grassroots institutions in Africa. Women's church groups, like this one in Nazare, Angola, have been shown to be successful in organising the community and engaging successfully with local government. **Credit:** Tom Price-Ecce Opus/Tearfund

Abundant ideas to grow decisions by active communities

We therefore call on…

Churches to identify keystone institutions[125] locally, in cities and nationally for deliberate discipleship or disruption. Churches should do this through united advocacy, by supporting individual members who work in these institutions, and by investing in organisational development teams.

Inclusive institutions should be helped to remain true to their core values, implement development objectives for the public good, and prevent capture by extractive forces. Extractive institutions must be disrupted to either change or be replaced with new inclusive institutions. Where none exist, inclusive institutions should be established by churches.

Churches to build the capacity of church and community members to participate as legitimate stakeholders in the governance system. These should model transparency and inclusion, particularly of women, the elderly, young people, people with disabilities, Internally Displaced People, and refugees. Churches are one of the most organised and widely spread grassroots organisations in sub-Saharan Africa,[126] and are trusted by both communities and governments. This makes them well placed to use social accountability mechanisms such as the African Monitor's Citizens Report and Tearfund's Bridging the Gap Report to build the capacity of citizens to identify issues in their community and unite them to demand accountability beyond elections from their duty bearers.

Governments to integrate digital strategies to engage citizens in direct democracy for inclusive decision making. Digital technologies are changing the landscape of citizen participation,[127] presenting new opportunities for countries with limited resources and capacity. National and local governments can directly poll citizens on specific policy issues, particularly given the high uptake of digital technologies among young people in Africa. These online systems need to be integrated with physical relational spaces that are open to all (such as markets, co-working spaces, incubators and art studios) and curated in ways that encourage the emergence of new voices while connecting leaders from all walks of life.

Governments to measure civic participation in national and local policy processes as part of the performance management mechanism of the state and its leaders in the same way that budget expenditure is monitored.

Governments to create national and local multi-stakeholder dialogues, which rebalance power between citizens, the state and business, and make them mutually accountable to each other. The SDG Councils being set up in many African countries could serve as such platforms. Churches could still play a key role in this as they are often trusted by both local communities and national governments.

6. From self-interest to ethical leadership

We long to move from leadership and citizens characterised by dishonesty and corruption to being known for integrity and accountability. We know that we need to rethink the function and ethos of leadership across all tiers and that this will require a strong will and commitment across sectors – starting in the church.

Many parts of Africa struggle with corruption, from senior government leaders to everyday transactions. This removes large amounts of money from the system that was earmarked for life-transforming services such as education and healthcare. It is a barrier to economic development, frustrating the lives of ordinary citizens by slowing down business and creating barriers to essential services. It erodes trust and destroys relationships.

Over half of Africans think that corruption is getting worse in their country and that their government is not doing enough to tackle it[128]. People living in poverty are twice as likely to pay a bribe as the wealthy.[129] Being forced to pay bribes for essential services means that vulnerable families have less money for basic necessities, such as water, food and medicine.

But there is hope for change: more than half of citizens think that, despite the fear of retaliation, ordinary people can make a difference in the fight against corruption.[130] An end to such self-interest requires a shift towards a holistic, **values-based leadership** approach.

Christ died to forgive our sin. When we repent of our corruption we are restored in our relationship with God and our relationship with ourselves. Holiness theology is a rich theological source (particularly from the East African revival) of teaching for citizens.

The greatest in the kingdom of God is the servant.

Churches are often trusted as moral, independent voices of truth and accountability within Africa. Our theology and moral teachings can underpin core leadership values and our discipleship work can help leaders put their values into action. There have been times when it has been enough to just speak truth to power,[131] but that alone is usually not sufficient. We cannot just preach; we must also act.

The Ghana chapter of the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship was joined by retired Chief Justice Georgina Theodora Wood to launch a campaign against corruption. Dubbed "Unashamedly Ethical", the campaign seeks to mobilise companies and individuals to make a public declaration to develop a culture of ethics.

> **"Over half of Africans think that corruption is getting worse in their country and that their government is not doing enough to tackle it. People living in poverty are twice as likely to pay a bribe as the wealthy."**

There is much that needs to be done to expose corruption, and to challenge and advocate against illicit financial flows, extractive and exploitative trade deals and investments, and corporate tax evasion. These are the "hidden" corruptions that continue to drain resources from the continent. We propose strengthening accountability structures at all levels of society and building a culture of integrity, transparency and accountability in government and the private sector. This will move us towards the **AU aspirations** of good governance (3) and strong values and ethics (5), and the global goals of reducing inequality through ending discrimination (SDG 10) and seeing peace, justice and strong institutions (SDG 16).

Abundant ideas for ethical leadership

As first steps towards achieving this, we call on:

Churches and Christian leaders to lead by example through:

Repentance: Of past corruption and greed within church leadership.

Discipleship: Engaging and countering corrupt theologies of money and bad financial practice in the church. Implementing leadership programmes for church leaders, particularly young leaders, and engaging institutions to help them establish institutional discipleship processes.

Practice: Modelling values-driven leadership at all levels and creating a culture of ethical practice, social contribution, non-discrimination and social impact. This should include signing up to **ethical frameworks** such as Unashamedly Ethical Commitments,[132] the African Council for Accreditation and Accountability,[133] and the Bench Marks Foundation principles[134] for guidance and accountability.

Advocacy: For churches, governments, civil society and business to sign up to ethical frameworks. These accountability mechanisms are a key first step towards achieving good governance at all levels and limiting the ability of elite leaders from accumulating wealth at the expense of people living in poverty.

> **"We long to move from leadership and citizens characterised by dishonesty and corruption to being known for integrity and accountability."**


A sign in Uganda discourages corruption. **Credit:** John Appleton/Tearfund

Governments to make payments by companies to governments public, as part of the companies' annual reports, so people can hold them to account for how they used the money.

Governments and businesses to adopt open hiring and contracting practices to ensure transparency, including making documentation and data clearer and easier to analyse.[135]

The AU to establish an independent AU Common Good Protectorate with the power to investigate and monitor all trade, aid, land leasing and resource concessions to ensure they are in the interests of the common good. There is currently nothing like this that goes beyond just stopping these illegal practices to actively ensuring that our systems are based on inclusion and shalom, and that the benefits reach those who need it most.

7. From division to connection
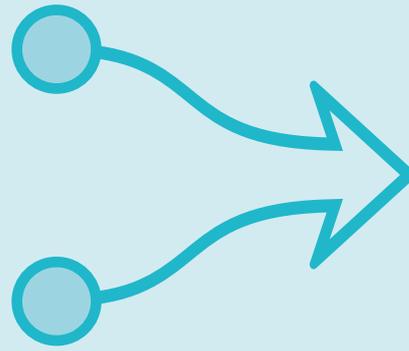
Conflict and division take many forms, have long histories and currently threaten every shift towards shalom that we seek. But ubuntu provides the foundation for relationship, connection and a stronger Pan-African identity. The church can play a key role in healing trauma, transforming conflict and mediating peace. Governments and the AU need to make reality their commitment to silence the guns.

Instability is one of the major drivers of poverty in Africa. It is one of the biggest obstructions to achieving the AU's 2063 Agenda and the SDGs, particularly peace and justice **(Aspiration 4** and SDG 16), equality for and an end to violence against women (SDG 5) and an integrated Africa **(Aspiration 2)**. Far greater investment needs to be made in peacebuilding so we have a stable foundation on which to build an Abundant Africa.

Africa has been a battleground for global forces during slavery, the colonial era and the Cold War. While this external interference is decreasing, it has left a major impact on the continent. The civil wars fuelled by these influences still affect politics in many African countries today.

Division and conflict can take many forms: civil war, rioting, intercommunal fighting, and gender-based violence. It has diverse, often interconnected, drivers such as: historic trauma and grievances from slavery, colonialism and the Cold War; food insecurity; poverty; competition for national resources; tribalism; and extremist violence, in some instances inspired by the rise of Islamic radicalism.

These dynamics have far-reaching implications for national and regional stability, and for the other six shifts we seek. Even if we can measure shalom, we will not see it without peace and connection. Broken infrastructure and education systems reflect a broken social contract between past, present and future generations.[136] Police and security forces brutality target the young. Disasters – both social and environmental – damage our unity. Climate extremes threaten to increase conflict,[137] intensifying competition over increasingly scarce resources and driving displacement and migration. African cities and nations lack the resilience to deal with major disasters. As systems struggle, political stability and good governance are eroded. During crises like the COVID-19 pandemic, accusations of corruption follow and spread.[138]

Senior leaders from the Catholic, Protestant and Muslim faith groups in Burundi met in Feb 2020 to prepare for their upcoming elections. Facilitated by More than Peace and Tearfund, they engaged around the election cycle, election observation and peacebuilding while forging a community to work for peaceful elections.

Conflict is not the only source of disconnection; those citizens most geographically distant from trading centres are likely to be the poorest. Once again, women, people with disabilities, youth and the marginalised are disproportionately affected.

This can all lead to tension among different groups – but also to solidarity. Despite all this, Africa is still experienced as one of the most hospitable and relational continents in the world. This underlying ubuntu is a powerful force of connection. It includes a symbiotic relationship between people and the environment. The liberation struggle built on this ethic by developing ideas of political solidarity where an injury to one is an injury to all.

But there remains a need for a bigger "us". Sometimes ubuntu has been limited to tribal or family bonds. National identities have often divided the continent despite being based on arbitrary lines dictated by European rulers at the Berlin Conference in 1884-5. We can still celebrate other identities but these should be expanded to a larger African and global consciousness.

Regional and global integration are more essential than ever before. This goes both ways: globalisation and new technology bring ideas, events and development agendas from around the world that can easily influence Africa. Nations like China, Russia and the UK are seeking to grow their reach in Africa.

Seven shifts for an Abundant Africa

But we are also seeing the growing influence of the AU, the Economic Community of West African States, the East African Community, and the Southern African Development Community. And we are beginning to see Pan-African thinking (a movement which started in the 1960s to expand our identities beyond tribal or national) become a reality, with continental institutions like the Pan-African Parliament and initiatives such as the AfCFTA and AU passports.

Peace and abundance are not achieved by one approach, one time; they require ongoing cultivation, and may take years, or even decades, to bear fruit.[139] Peacekeeping on the continent has often focused on crisis management and the maintenance of "negative peace" (absence of conflict) rather than positive peace, which would include the absence of structural violence and the presence of justice and shalom.[140] A long-term transformation towards an Abundant African economy is part of ushering in positive peace.

Churches can be agents for reconciliation and peace, and generous responders in times of crisis. Relationship is central to the gospel: we were created for it and Christ's work on the cross reconciles us with God and each other. Churches can help foster relationships between local communities and governments, strengthening understanding of cultural, social and economic needs and norms, and improving accountability.[141] Churches can be sacred places of inclusion, where people that are marginalised (for physical, economic, ethnic, cultural or other reasons) can find a place to be accepted and loved and belong to a community. Through all this we take steps to recover our identity and lifegiving stories as we seek an Abundant Africa.

Abundant ideas to grow connection

As first steps towards long-term peace, we therefore call on:

Churches to develop pastoral capacity to help heal trauma in communities and individuals and recovery of their identities and stories. Many Africans bear deep trauma from generations of violence. This trauma increases the prevalence of violence and reduces communities' capacity to plan for the future. Trauma must be healed, or we risk it being transmitted to the next generation of Africans.

Churches to set up mediation teams, observer groups and diplomatic networks in key locations across the continent. Mediators, observers and diplomats should be trained and deployed in all major regions of the continent to help understand and transform conflicts. Working with information from early warning systems, these teams will ideally prevent violent conflict, but can also play an important role in managing and resolving tension and violence during and after conflict situations. Where religious extremism is a cause of division or violence then the church should lead dialogues to build bridges and dispel stereotypes.

Churches to join civil society in deploying election monitors and observers for all elections on the continent. Our democratic institutions and processes need to be protected as key institutions on the continent. Elections can be marked by fear and violence. Monitors can act as peacemakers; not only observing but also mediating election-related conflict.

Churches to use their relationships to foster track two (or backchannel) diplomacy. The church in Africa is already highly integrated through its own councils, institutions and missional relationships. It can facilitate track two diplomacy, bringing together unofficial representatives from two nations, especially non-state actors, to build trust and discuss solutions, in ways that wouldn't be possible in formal diplomatic spaces.[142]

Governments to proactively engage with churches and civil society as part of an integrated emergency response to deal with disasters, migration and peacebuilding. Churches and faith-based organisations are often uniquely placed to support the most vulnerable – but their role is often overlooked.[143] They can play a transformative role when governments proactively engage to integrate them into state and foreign emergency response plans and longer-term developmental processes that may emerge from an emergency.

Governments to implement the agreements and commitments adopted by the AU on "Silencing the Guns". The original 2020 deadline has passed; we cannot continue to delay. Governments must make these commitments a reality, particularly by making financial resources accessible to support and promote youth-led peace initiatives and development, while holding neighbouring countries accountable for breaches of peace.

The AU to support an end to the unfair and unjust profiling and targeting of young people in national security operations and protect people's rights (enshrined in the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights) to peacefully and constructively call for change without being endangered.

Call to action

<u>This is the invitation:</u> to listen together, to share our stories, to organise our movements and act to see shifts towards shalom.

We have never been this way before. Our beloved African continent is facing a Joseph kairos moment that will define the lives of our descendants for generations to come. We have a limited 10-year timeframe to sow seeds and build strong foundations, but together we can define the outcomes of the coming African century.

This is the invitation: to listen together, to share our stories, to organise our movements and act to see shifts towards shalom.

This report includes many ideas. It is not perfect or complete – we invite our readers to bring their God-given pieces of the jigsaw puzzle to the table so that a clearer picture of an Abundant Africa can emerge.

There is too much work here for one person, organisation or even denomination to do. Much in this report has already started and needs support. Other areas will need pioneering. We invite you to connect with Abundant Africa to learn from others and find others with the same heart to collaborate on what you have already been called to do.

Choosing priorities to focus on will be different in each place and space. But we will trust the Spirit of God for signs of new life emerging from the desert that we can follow. Together we will nurture the green shoots of hope to bring us closer to an Abundant Africa.

Connect with Abundant Africa:

**www.abundant.africa/connect
      /abundantafrica
info@abundant.africa**

"Those who sow with tears will reap with songs of joy."

Psalm 126 [144]

Women of Simayiwa 1 Village, Salima District, Malawi.
Credit: www.alexbakerphotography.com

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Notes

"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly."

John 10:10

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