AFRICA'S PREMIUM DIGITAL ENTREPRENEURIAL RESOURCE PLATFORM

my story MAGAZINE

ISSUE 24

FROM VISION TO GLOBAL ENTERPRISE:

THE MAN BUILDING A PAN -AFRICAN BUSINESS EMPIRE

MICHAEL LESLIE BARTLETT-VANDERPUYE

PRESIDENT & GROUP CHAIRMAN
M&C GROUP (GLOBAL)

PORTRAITS OF INFLUENCE; WOMEN, POWER AND THE PROMISE OF FOREIGN POLICY

GILLIAN DARKO

THE STRATEGIST WHO BUILDS HER INFLUENCE BEYOND FINTECH

AFRICA'S CAPITAL MARKETS MUST LEARN TO PRICE VISION TOO

BY DR. MAXWELL AMPONG

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Publisher's Note

PORTRAITS OF INFLUENCE: THE PEOPLE SHAPING AFRICA'S NEXT CHAPTER

There are moments when a magazine issue becomes more than a publication. It becomes a statement about the people, ideas and stories we believe deserve to be remembered.

For My Story Magazine, Issue 24, that statement is Portraits of Influence.

At the heart of this edition is Michael Leslie Bartlett-Vanderpuye, an entrepreneur whose vision extends across property, real estate, commodities, logistics and other areas of enterprise. His journey represents a new generation of African business leadership—one that sees opportunity beyond a single industry and understands that building a lasting enterprise requires vision, adaptability and the courage to think globally.

Michael's story is not simply about the businesses he is building. It is about the ambition behind them: the pursuit of a global enterprise rooted in African opportunity, with the potential to create value across markets and industries.

But influence extends beyond entrepreneurship.

For this edition, we partnered with The Women's Ledger to present Portraits of Influence: Women, Power and the Promise of Foreign Policy—bringing the experiences and perspectives of remarkable African women in diplomacy and international relations into the conversation.

Their stories remind us that power is not expressed only through companies, capital or commercial success. It is also exercised through diplomacy, representation, negotiation and the ability to shape how Africa engages with the world.

Together, these stories reflect our broader understanding of influence.

It can be an entrepreneur building a global enterprise. It can be a diplomat opening doors between nations. It can be a woman breaking barriers and creating space for those who follow. It can be a professional redefining an industry or a leader whose decisions quietly create opportunities for others.

This is what My Story Magazine seeks to document—the people behind the achievements, the journeys behind the titles, and the vision behind the success.

Issue 24 is therefore more than a collection of profiles. It is a portrait of ambition, leadership and possibility.

As publisher, I believe that stories are a form of legacy. Businesses evolve, positions change and institutions transform, but a well-told story can preserve the lessons of a journey and inspire the person who has not yet begun theirs.

With Portraits of Influence, we are continuing our commitment to documenting the Africans who are not simply participating in the continent's transformation, but helping shape what comes next.

Welcome to Issue 24.

Welcome to Portraits of Influence.

Nana Akwasi Bonsu
Publisher, My Story Magazine

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Inspired minds:

The Importance of Reflection by Mimi Elbernard Nelson Eshun

Busy leaders often underestimate the value of slowing down.

In environments where speed is celebrated and constant activity is mistaken for productivity, taking time to pause can feel counterintuitive. Yet some of the most important strategic insights do not emerge in meetings, presentations, or moments of urgency. They emerge when leaders create space to think.

Reflection allows leaders to step outside the immediate demands of the business and examine what is really happening. What worked? What did not? What assumptions influenced the last decision? What are we learning from our customers, our people, and the market? More importantly, are we still moving in the direction we intended?

Without reflection, leaders can repeat patterns simply because they are familiar. They can remain busy solving the same problems without questioning why those problems keep returning.

Reflection creates perspective. It helps leaders distinguish between symptoms and root causes, recognize emerging opportunities, and make better decisions with greater clarity.

Strategic leadership is not only about knowing when to act. It is also knowing when to pause.The strongest leaders intentionally create space in their schedules to think, review, question, and anticipate. They understand that stepping back is not a retreat from leadership. It is part of leadership.

Your calendar should have room not only for execution, but also for reflection.

Because sometimes the best decision you can make is to stop long enough to think differently.

Reflection improves decisions.

I am Mimi Elbernard. I help leaders turn vision into structured, executable strategy.

MIRIAM UDUACK MENSAH

Broadcast Journalist | Media Personality | Communications Strategist | Producer | PR Professional | Social Impact Advocate

Miriam Uduack Mensah, popularly known as Mimi Kay, is a Ghanaian broadcast journalist, television host, communications strategist, producer, public relations professional and social impact advocate whose career brings together media, strategic communications, women and girls' empowerment, event production and professional development.

For Miriam, communication has always been about more than simply delivering a message. It is about telling stories, starting meaningful conversations and using her voice to create impact. Through the platforms she has built and the work she continues to lead, she has championed women's advancement, helped strengthen brands and created opportunities for young people to grow.

BROADCASTING & TELEVISION

Miriam is a Morning Show Host on The AM Club on MX24 TV, where she engages audiences on current affairs, politics, governance, lifestyle, social development and the issues that affect everyday life in Ghana.

Her approach to interviewing is thoughtful and engaging. She asks questions that go beyond the surface, creating room for guests to share not only their views but also the experiences and human stories behind them.

THE STORY BEHIND HEY GIRL RESCUE MISSION

There are two main reasons I started Hey Girl.

The first is personal. I am a teenage mother. I had my child when I was 16. When I look back at that period of my life, I realise that I was fortunate in ways I may not have fully understood at the time. I had my mother. I had my brothers. I had a family that stood by me, helped me raise my child and, most importantly, gave me the space and support to find my way back to the dreams I had for myself.

But that is not the reality for every girl who becomes a mother as a teenager.

One of the things that concerns me most about teenage pregnancy is what happens after the child is born. We rightly spend a lot of time talking about prevention, but we do not talk enough about what happens to the girl afterwards.

Does she return to school? Does she get the chance to pursue her dreams? How does she rebuild her confidence? And who helps her understand that becoming a mother at a young age does not mean that her own life has to come to an end?

Unfortunately, many girls never get the support they need to answer those questions.

The second reason came from what I began to see as I grew older. I met young mothers who had given birth but could not even leave the hospital because their families were unable to pay their medical bills. I also encountered communities where girls faced intense pressures around relationships, sex and motherhood.

In some environments, becoming a mother at a very young age is almost normalised. It can even be presented as something a girl is simply expected to accept.
At the same time, young girls today are growing up in a completely different environment. They are navigating social media, peer pressure, relationships and a constant need to fit in or prove themselves. Sometimes, all of that pressure can influence them to make choices they are not yet ready to make.

That made me realise that Hey Girl could not be only about teenage mothers.

It also had to speak to the girl who has not become a teenage mother.

It had to be about prevention, education and mentorship, but also about building confidence. I want girls to have access to the right information and the kind of guidance that helps them make decisions with their future in mind, rather than simply responding to pressure from friends, relationships or society.

At its core, Hey Girl is about helping girls see beyond their present circumstances. I want them to understand that one mistake, one difficult experience or one chapter of their lives does not have to define who they become.
Sometimes, what a girl needs most is someone to remind her that she still has a future – and to give her the support and tools to pursue it.

Gillian Darko

THE STRATEGIST WHO BUILDS HER INFLUENCE BEYOND FINTECH

As African finance undergoes a profound transformation, a new generation of leaders is emerging—people who are not content with simply building companies, but are also determined to shape the conversations defining the continent's economic future. Gillian Darko belongs firmly to this generation.

A lawyer by training, Gillian has built an impressive career across some of the world's leading financial and professional institutions, including PwC and J.P. Morgan, before moving into Africa's fast-growing fintech

ecosystem through JUMO and, later, Yellow Card.
Today, her work is focused on the decisions that accompany the growth of ambitious companies. But her influence extends well beyond her formal responsibilities. Through industry forums, thought leadership and public speaking, she has become part of important conversations around innovation, regulation and the financial infrastructure Africa needs to sustain its economic transformation.

Her voice is now heard at platforms such as Forbes Africa, CNBC Africa, the Africa Financial Industry Summit (AFIS) and the McKinsey Africa Roundtable.

She did not build this platform overnight.

BUILD YOUR PLACE WITHOUT WAITING FOR IT TO BE GIVEN TO YOU

Before returning to Ghana, Gillian spent much of her professional life in the United Kingdom. She began her career at ICE Futures Europe before joining PwC, where she advised major global financial institutions including Goldman Sachs, HSBC, Citigroup and UBS on strategic issues.

She later continued her career with J.P. Morgan Asset Management, gaining experience in an environment where decisions are made at the highest levels of global finance.

In 2020, she made a defining decision: she returned to Ghana.

After several years in the United Kingdom, coming back to the continent meant entering a professional environment that was familiar in some ways but very different in others. Networks had changed. Business cultures were different. There were new relationships to build and new expectations to navigate.

Rather than relying solely on the credentials she had accumulated abroad, Gillian chose to prove herself through results.

That approach has remained central to the way she works.

Upon her return, she became General Manager, Market Operations (Africa) at JUMO and was subsequently appointed Chief Executive Officer of JUMO Ghana. These roles gave her the opportunity to bring her experience from major international financial institutions into direct conversation with the realities of African markets.

At Yellow Card, she initially served in a dual role as Chief of Staff and Director of Strategy before becoming Group Vice President, Strategy.

Her responsibilities have included corporate strategy, market expansion and the development of partnerships that support growth across multiple regions. Her work has taken her beyond Africa, with projects spanning Latin America, Asia and the Middle East.

At its core, however, she describes her role simply: figuring out how to grow companies.

WHERE FINANCE, TECHNOLOGY AND AFRICA MEET

Much of Gillian's work today sits within the rapidly evolving world of stablecoins and virtual assets.

For Africa, this is more than a technology story. It is increasingly a question of how businesses move money, settle international transactions and participate in the global economy.

Stablecoins, particularly digital assets designed to maintain a stable value against currencies such as the US dollar, are creating new possibilities for cross-border payments, supplier settlements and the preservation of value. They offer a technological response to some of the challenges that traditional correspondent banking systems have struggled to solve efficiently.

Yet the technology itself is only one part of the equation.

The regulatory frameworks, infrastructure and institutional foundations supporting this ecosystem are still being developed. A relatively small group of experts is therefore helping shape an industry whose decisions today could influence African commerce for decades.

Gillian is increasingly part of that conversation.

She is also one of the relatively few women participating prominently in these discussions—a position she takes seriously. For her, representation is not simply about occupying a seat at the table. It is about contributing to the systems being designed and ensuring that the people shaping Africa's financial future reflect the diversity of the continent itself.

Since 2025, Gillian has published several opinion pieces exploring stablecoins, digital-asset regulation and the economic sovereignty of African countries. Her position is clear: sustainable innovation cannot thrive without appropriate regulation and infrastructure designed around the realities of African markets.

Her ideas have also taken her onto major industry stages, where policymakers, investors and business leaders gather to debate the future of finance.

She has appeared at the Forbes Leading Women's Summit, spoken on CNBC Africa and participated in events including GITEX Africa and the Africa Financial Industry Summit. She has also served on the steering committee of AFIS.

In 2026, her growing influence within the sector was recognised when the Ghana FinTech Awards named her FinTech Personality of the Year (Female).

LEADERSHIP AS SELF-AFFIRMATION

For Gillian, leadership begins with something deceptively simple: refusing to believe that success requires you to become someone else.

Throughout her career, she says she has sometimes been described as “aggressive” simply because she expresses her ideas with confidence. It is a label she believes women are still too often given when they demonstrate ambition, authority or certainty.

Over time, she stopped apologising for those qualities.

Instead, she began to see them as part of what has helped her progress.

That same philosophy extends beyond the boardroom.

Gillian has a strong interest in fashion and does not subscribe to the idea that professional credibility requires the erasure of personality. For her, style is another form of self expression—no different from the way she communicates her ideas or approaches major decisions.

Her interests, however, extend well beyond fashion.

Art, interiors and design also feature prominently in her thinking. She is interested in the way physical spaces influence emotions, behaviour and human interaction. Even her appreciation of food and cooking is rooted less in the recipe itself than in the experience of

bringing people together.
For Gillian, hospitality is about creating an environment in which people feel comfortable and valued. It is about the sequence of a dinner, the details that often go unnoticed and the thought behind the experience.

In many ways, she approaches hospitality in the same way she approaches markets: as a form of design in which people remain at the centre.

MAKING ROOM FOR THE NEXT GENERATION

Her commitment to expanding opportunities for women is also reflected in her involvement with Women in Payments Africa and Women in FinTech & Innovation Ghana.

Through these organisations, Gillian seeks to make careers in financial technology and related fields more visible to young women. More importantly, she wants them to understand that professional success does not require them to surrender their identity.

That message sits at the heart of her broader approach to leadership.

Gillian Darko's ambitions now extend far beyond the operational responsibilities attached to her title. Through her writing, public speaking, industry engagements and work with professional organisations, she is building something larger: a platform from which she can influence how Africa thinks about finance, technology and economic development.

Her journey from international finance in the United Kingdom to the centre of Africa's fintech conversation has given her both perspective and proximity to a rapidly changing industry.
But perhaps her most significant influence lies in the example she represents.

She is building a career on expertise, ambition and self-definition—and doing so without waiting for permission to occupy the space she believes she has earned.

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SHAPING NARRATIVES, INFLUENCING POLICY: A NEW VOICE IN DIPLOMACY AND WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP

Auguster Boateng

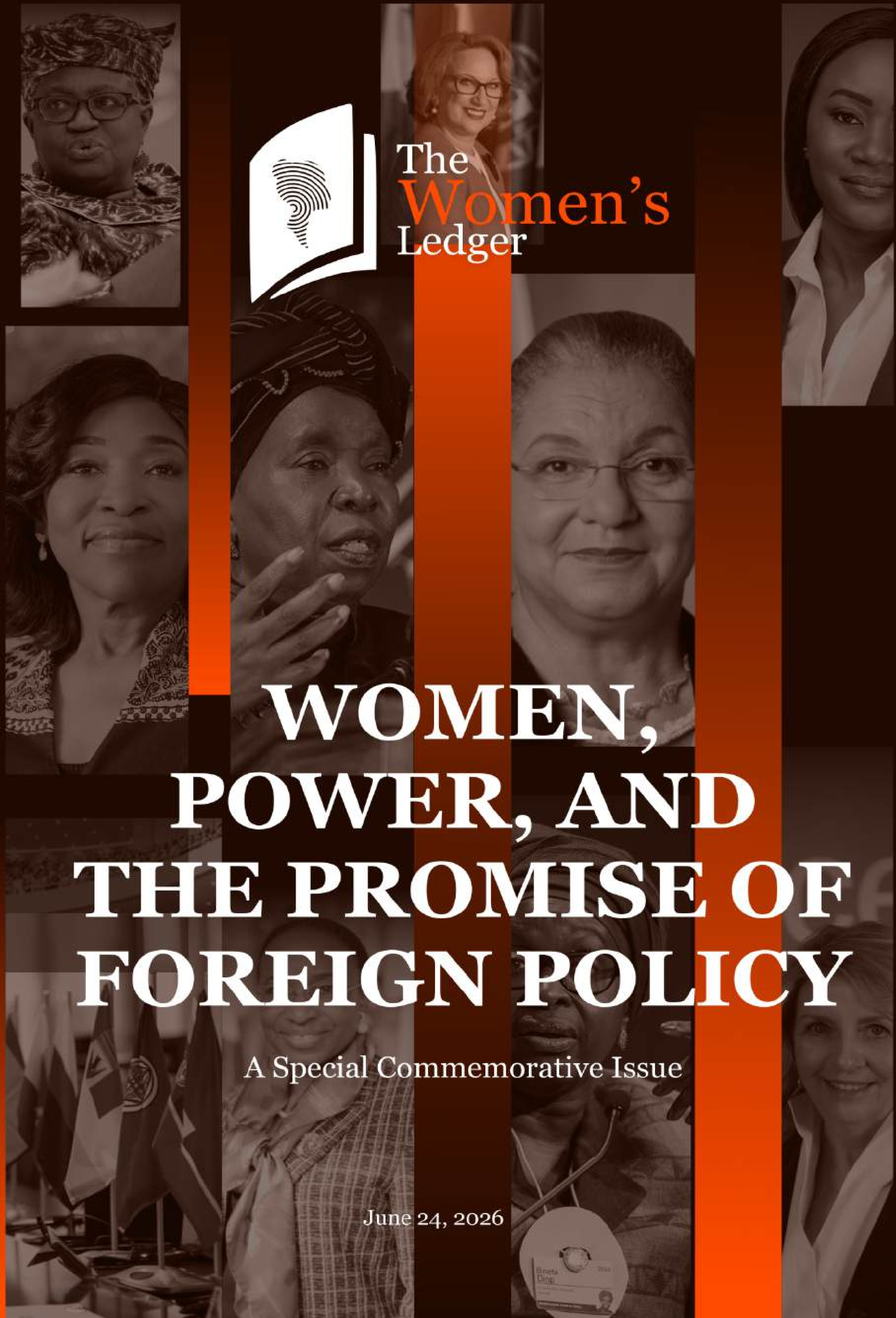
Founder, The Women's Ledger

Auguster Boateng is a professionally trained journalist, gender advocate and emerging voice in diplomacy, with a professional background in International Relations and Diplomacy.

Her work focuses on policy, storytelling and women's leadership. With more than 15 years of experience across journalism, communications and gender advocacy, she has become increasingly interested in the relationship between the stories societies tell, the policies institutions make, and the women who shape both.

That interest is now taking form through an interconnected body of work. Through Global Gender Solutions, she is building a platform for gender policy, research and strategic advisory for gender-responsive outcomes; through She. Media, she is creating space for women's stories and experiences to be told with depth and context as evidence for policy change; and through The Women's Ledger, she is building a living record of African women whose leadership and institutional contributions deserve to be remembered. Each serves a different purpose, but together they reflect one larger ambition: to influence policy, shape narratives and ensure women are part of Africa's transformational memory.

As she builds a career in diplomacy, she is bringing these strands of experience with her. From understanding institutions and policy, to telling stories and preserving history. Her work is ultimately driven by a simple belief: women should not only be present in the rooms where decisions are made; their ideas, leadership and contributions should also be recognised, documented and carried forward.



The Women's Ledger

WOMEN, POWER, AND THE PROMISE OF FOREIGN POLICY

A Special Commemorative Issue

June 24, 2026

DRIVING GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT DIPLOMACY

Amina J. Mohammed

Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations

Few African women have influenced international policy as profoundly as Amina J. Mohammed. When the world needed a single document to anchor its development ambitions for a generation, Amina J. Mohammed helped write it.

As Special Adviser to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on post-2015 development planning, she led the process that produced global agreement on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals themselves: arguably the most consequential global policy framework of the early 21st century. Currently serving as Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, she stands at the center of global efforts to advance sustainable development, climate action, and gender equality.

Born in the United Kingdom and raised in Nigeria, her career began far from diplomacy's marble halls. She started out working on the design of schools and hospitals in Nigeria, before moving into public service, where she advised three successive Nigerian presidents and, in 2005, was charged with coordinating $1 billion a year in debt- relief funding toward the Millennium Development Goals.

She went on to serve as Nigeria's Minister of Environment from 2015 to 2016, steering the country's climate action agenda, before being appointed the UN's fifth Deputy Secretary-General in 2017, chairing the UN Sustainable Development Group, which coordinates development work across more than 160 countries.

Across nearly four decades in public service, Mohammed has become a fixture at the intersection of African policymaking and global multilateral diplomacy, named Diplomat of the Year by Foreign Policy magazine and one of the most influential figures on gender policy worldwide

BREAKING THE CONTINENTAL GLASS CEILING:

Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma

First Woman Chairperson of the African Union Commission (2012 - 2017)

Few African women have shaped the architecture of continental diplomacy the way Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma has. In July 2012, she was elected Chairperson of the African Union Commission.

The first woman, and the first Southern African, to lead the AU or its predecessor, the Organisation of African Unity, in the institution's history.

Her election broke an unwritten rule that major African powers do not put forward candidates for AU leadership, triggering a contested vote that ultimately divided along Anglophone–Francophone lines before she secured the post.

Her path there ran through nearly every major portfolio in South Africa's post-apartheid government. A trained medical doctor who spent over a decade in exile during the anti-apartheid struggle, she became Minister of Health under Nelson Mandela, then served ten years as Minister of Foreign Affairs under Presidents Thabo Mbeki and Kgalema Motlanthe: a tenure during which she helped broker peace and stability in Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo, and represented South Africa at the founding of the African Union itself in 2002.

As AU Commission Chairperson from 2012 to 2017, she championed Agenda 2063, the AU's 50-year blueprint for an integrated, prosperous Africa, and made women's economic empowerment a cross-cutting theme of all AU programs.

She also worked to reduce the bloc's dependence on donor financing. She later returned to South African cabinet life, serving as Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs and then as Minister responsible for Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, before stepping back from frontline politics.

She now serves as Chancellor of the University of Limpopo.

ADVANCING AFRICA'S VOICE IN INTERNATIONAL LAW AND OCEAN GOVERNANCE

Dr. Sylvia Ama Adusu

Judge, International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS)

Ghana's first woman and Africa's first woman elected to the Tribunal.
Dr. Sylvia Ama Adusu stands among Ghana's most accomplished international legal experts, with more than three decades of experience in public international law, treaty negotiations, international dispute settlement, and maritime governance. Trained as a lawyer and international relations scholar, she holds a PhD in International Law from the University of Lancaster and has served as Chief State Attorney and Head of International Law at Ghana's Attorney-General's Department, where she advised the Government of Ghana on complex international legal matters and represented the country before regional and international judicial bodies.

Throughout her distinguished career, Dr. Adusu has played a pivotal role in shaping Ghana's engagement with international law. She served on the Ghana Boundary Commission, contributed to maritime boundary negotiations, participated in Ghana's extended continental shelf submissions, and was involved in major international legal proceedings, including the Ghana–Côte d'Ivoire maritime boundary dispute. Her expertise in the law of the sea, ocean governance, and peaceful dispute resolution has earned her recognition across Africa and beyond.

In June 2026, Dr. Adusu made history when she was elected as a Judge of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS), becoming the first African woman to serve on the Hamburg-based tribunal. Her election marked a significant milestone for Ghana, Africa, and women's representation in international adjudication.

Today, her career stands as an example of how legal expertise, diplomacy, and public service can shape global governance and strengthen the international rule of law.

ADVANCING GENDER EQUALITY ON THE GLOBAL STAGE

Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka

Executive Director of UN Women (2013 - 2021) and First Woman Deputy President, South Africa (2005 - 2008)

Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka has spent four decades of her career ensuring that women's voices are represented in international decision-making. In 2005, she became the first woman to serve as Deputy President of South Africa, at that point the highest-ranking woman in the nation's history, a role in which she oversaw national programmes to combat poverty and ensure the benefits of economic growth reached the poor.

Her route to that office ran through some of South Africa's toughest portfolios: she served as Minister of Minerals and Energy from 1999 to 2005, where she drove a "use it or lose it" mining-rights reform that broke the grip large mining firms held on the country's mineral reserves, after earlier stints as a Member of Parliament and Deputy Minister of Trade and Industry.

In 2013, the UN turned to her to lead its global gender-equality agency. As Executive Director of UN Women from 2013 to 2021, with the rank of Under-Secretary-General, she devoted the role strengthening global advocacy on women's political participation, economic empowerment, and ending violence against women and girls.
She also launched the HeForShe campaign with Publicis and Ogilvy, recruiting men and boys globally as advocates for gender equality. She has since mediated peace talks between the Ethiopian government and Tigrayan forces,and continues to chair her own Umlambo Foundation, supporting leadership and education across the continent.

She transformed women's rights from a social issue into a strategic international policy priority

AFRICAN UNION LEADERSHIP :

Minata Samate Cessouma

Former AU Commissioner for Political Affairs

Minata Samaté Cessouma has built a career in the rooms where Africa's hardest peace and governance questions get decided.

From 2014 to 2015, she directed the Joint Coordination Mechanism supporting the UN/AU Hybrid Mission in Darfur (UNAMID), contributing through negotiation and mediation to one of the continent's most complex peacekeeping operations.

She brought that experience to the African Union Commission itself, where she was elected Commissioner for Political Affairs from 2017 to 2021, a role in which she played a key part in preventing electoral crises, addressing humanitarian challenges, and promoting good governance, the rule of law and human rights across the continent.
In 2021, member states re-elected her, this time nearly unanimously, with 45 of 46 votes as Commissioner for Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social Development, a post she held until early 2025, overseeing the AU's response to pandemics, migration policy and social development programming.

A career diplomat with more than thirty years of experience in international relations, governance, and peace and security, the Burkinabé ambassador has also served as her country's envoy to Ethiopia and Rwanda and as Permanent Representative to the AU.

In 2025, she joined the board of Nutrition International, and in 2026 was elected Chair of the African Leaders Malaria Alliance.

GHANA'S GLOBAL DIPLOMATIC POTLIGHT

Shirley Ayorkor Botchwey

First African Woman Secretary-General, Commonwealth of Nations

In 2024, Shirley Ayorkor Botchwey became the first woman from Africa, and the first Ghanaian to lead the Commonwealth of Nations, an organisation of 56 member states spanning every inhabited continent.

She was elected the seventh Secretary-General of the Commonwealth at the 2024 Heads of Government Meeting in Samoa, assuming office on 1 April 2025.

She arrived there after seven years as one of Ghana's most consequential foreign ministers. As Minister for Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration from January 2017, she chaired the ECOWAS Council of Ministers from 2020 to 2022, steering the regional bloc's response to security crises and democratic transitions, and played a key role in the passage of UN Security Council Resolution 2667 in 2022, which unlocked financing for African Union-led peace operations, a landmark moment achieved during Ghana's seat on the Security Council. She also helped secure UN Resolution 2634 on piracy and maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea, and was instrumental in shaping Ghana's "Year of Return" and "Beyond the Return" diaspora initiatives.

A trained lawyer who began her political career as a Member of Parliament representing one of Ghana's most populous constituencies for four consecutive terms, she has built her diplomatic instincts the unglamorous way, through deputy ministerial portfolios in foreign affairs, information and trade before ever holding the top job

PEACE AND SECURITY DIPLOMACY

Bineta Diop

Chairperson of the African Union Commission as Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security (2014 - 2025)

Before African institutions had language for "women,peace and security," Bineta Diop was already building the architecture for it.

In 1996, she founded Femmes Africa Solidarité in Geneva to promote women's leadership in conflict prevention and resolution across the continent,and went on to contribute directly to the landmark UN Security Council Resolution 1325 in 2000, the first resolution to recognise the disproportionate impact of conflict on women and their right to participate in peace processes.

Her fingerprints are on some of Africa's most important rights instruments.

She helped develop the Maputo Protocol, adopted in 2003, and played an instrumental role in the AU's 2003 adoption of gender parity within the Commission's own leadership, making it, at the time, the first intergovernmental body in the world to enshrine gender parity in its statutes.

She has personally facilitated peace talks for the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement in Burundi and the Sun City Agreement during the DRC peace negotiations.

From 2014 to 2025, she served as the African Union Chairperson's Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security, and in 2011 was named to the Time 100 list of the world's most influential people. In March 2026, on International Women's Day, she received the African Women Impact Award in Lagos, marking thirty years of institution-building that reshaped who gets a seat at Africa's peace tables.

A VOICE OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN AFRICAN DIPLOMACY

Chido Mpemba

Special Advisor to the African Union Commission Chairperson

At 33, Chido Mpemba became the youngest diplomat ever appointed to an African Union Commission Chairperson's cabinet.

A milestone for a continent where young people under 35 make up more than 870 million of its population across 55 member states. She served as Special Envoy on Youth to AUC Chairperson Moussa Faki Mahamat from November 2021 to March 2025, leading the youth dimension of Agenda 2063 and shepherding youth-focused policy decisions through the AU's 55 governments.

Her path there was anything but conventional diplomacy.

She spent seven years as a banker at Standard Chartered, rising to senior manager and leading a risk-digitisation program covering 15,000 clients and $70 million in exposure, before a pandemic-era career break led her into public service. As Youth Envoy, she launched a listening tour across more than 30 countries, engaging directly with young people on intergenerational dialogue, while planting over 200 fruit trees along the way to offset her own carbon footprint and support food security.

In 2025, she was appointed Special Advisor to the new AUC Chairperson H.E. Mahmoud Youssouf for the 2025-2028 term, on the portfolio of women, gender and youth, the first woman in his cabinet, while also co-chairing the WHO Commission on Social Connection alongside former U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy

KWABENA ASANTE SAFO

The Builder Of Tomorrow

Long before he was known as a CEO, Kwabena Asante Safo was a young boy learning the value of a cedi the hard way. At Kantamanto, Accra's sprawling and unforgiving trading hub, he learned to count change, read people and, perhaps most importantly, understand the market.

Today, he sits at the helm of a five-business group spanning energy, mobility, construction, food and health. Yet behind the scale of the businesses lies a more interesting question: how did one man build so much, so quickly, while holding firmly to the purpose that shaped him from the beginning?

Foundations: The Making of a Builder

Kwabena Asante Safo was born on 22nd December 1989 in Asante Akyem Agogo in the Ashanti Region. His early education at Apostle Safo School of Arts and Sciences introduced him to the values of discipline, learning and community. He later attended Koforidua SDA Secondary School before pursuing a path that would ultimately define much of his professional life.

At Takoradi Technical University, then known as Takoradi Polytechnic, he studied Building Technology and earned an HND in Building Construction. The training gave him more than technical knowledge. It gave him a practical understanding of how things are designed, assembled and brought to life.

Looking back, it would be easy to draw a neat line from that classroom to the conglomerate he leads today. But his journey was anything but straightforward. Between his early days at Kantamanto and the emergence of KS Group came years of experimentation, setbacks, reinvention and calculated risks. Some ventures worked. Others did not. Each, however, left something behind.

The Ventures Before the Empire

Before KS Electricals, there was Sanyakwa Company.

With his background in construction and an emerging interest in design, Asante Safo ventured into interior decoration and design. Sanyakwa did not become the lasting enterprise that some of his later businesses would, but its lessons were not lost. He carried the experience into Star 3D Construction Ltd, where his appreciation for design and interiors continues to influence how projects are completed—not simply how they are constructed.
Then came 2018.

That year, he registered KwabeSafo Enterprise, a modest lighting and electrical items business at Achimota Old Station. The idea was straightforward: create easier access to reliable electrical products for homes and businesses.

What began as a small shop gradually evolved. It was transformed and eventually rebranded as KS Electricals, which would become the flagship business of the group and the foundation for a much larger ambition in clean energy.

There is a common thread running through these early ventures. He did not simply abandon one idea when another appeared. He carried the knowledge, relationships and experience from one chapter into the next.

Nothing was wasted. Every experience became raw material for what followed.

A Philosophy Disguised as a Business Plan

At first glance, a lighting and electrical company, a construction firm, a car dealership, an organic food business and a pharmacy might seem like unrelated ventures.

For Asante Safo, they are not.

What connects them is a belief that has remained consistent since his early days in construction: the environments people live in—and the lives they build within them—should be sustainable, healthy and functional. Business, in his view, should solve real problems rather than simply generate profit.

That thinking pushed KS Electricals beyond traditional electrical products and into solar power systems. More recently, the company introduced GLONEV solar-powered air conditioners, offering households an alternative cooling solution that can reduce dependence on the national grid and fossil fuels.

The same thinking extends into mobility. Through KS Autotech, the group has moved into hybrid Chinese vehicles, positioning itself within Ghana's emerging transition toward cleaner and more efficient transportation.

Then there is KS Organic Farms & Foods, which brings organically grown produce to consumers, and KS Health Shop, a holistic traditional medicine pharmacy that extends the group's interest in wellbeing beyond the home and into personal health.
Individually, each business can be explained as a response to an opportunity in the market. Together, however, they reveal something deeper.

They are different expressions of the same philosophy: sustainability is not simply something to attach to a business. It is the reason for building the business in the first place.

Buildings That Carry His Name Without Saying So

If Star 3D Construction represents the clearest connection between Asante Safo's technical training and his entrepreneurial journey, its projects tell that story better than any résumé could.

Among the company's notable projects is the subcontracting work on the Ghana Satellite Earth Station, its first satellite project. There is also the Apostle Kwadwo Safo Museum & Mausoleum, a landmark commission that demanded more than technical competence. It required sensitivity, precision and an understanding that the building would become part of a larger legacy.

The company has also delivered the Kantanka Automobile Building at Achimota, the Kantanka Hospital at Taifa and the Kantanka Herbal Pharmaceuticals

Research Centre at Gomoa Mpota.

The projects span very different areas—heritage, industry, healthcare and research—but they share a common demand for quality and purpose.

Viewed together, they also reflect the wider philosophy behind the group. A hospital serves physical wellbeing. A research centre advances knowledge. An automobile facility supports industry and mobility. A museum and mausoleum preserve memory and legacy.

For someone who began his professional journey in interior decoration and building construction, the portfolio demonstrates not only range, but an enduring interest in creating spaces that serve a larger purpose.

The Man Behind the Businesses

For all the ground his companies cover, Asante Safo's own life remains closely connected to family, faith and community.
He is a married man and a devoted family man. He also serves as a pastor at the Kristo Asafo Mission of Ghana's New Achimota branch. Beyond his formal responsibilities, he personally supports more than 20 students through their education.

For him, these commitments are not separate from his business journey. They are part of it.

That sense of responsibility can be seen in the details of his community work. In one instance, streetlights were donated to a community in the Volta Region that had reportedly lived without reliable lighting for more than a century. Electrical products have also been donated to the school where he began his own education, while books have been provided to basic school pupils.

There is a difference between giving because it is expected and giving because you understand the specific need. Asante Safo's approach appears to lean toward the latter. His philanthropy is often personal, targeted and connected to places and people that have played a role in his own journey.

What Comes Next

At 36, Kwabena Asante Safo is at a stage where this profile feels less like a conclusion and more like a progress report.

By his own account, the pipeline of new ventures is far from empty. And if the pattern of the past decade is anything to go by, his next move may come from another problem he believes deserves a practical solution.

His journey has already taken him from trader to designer, builder, energy entrepreneur and mobility pioneer. Along the way, he has ventured into food and health, building a business ecosystem that is increasingly connected by a single idea: creating better ways for people to live, work and thrive.

From the trading stalls of Kantamanto to a five-business group, Kwabena Asante Safo's story is therefore not simply about how much he has built.

It is about why he keeps building—and what he believes those buildings, businesses and ideas should ultimately make possible for others.

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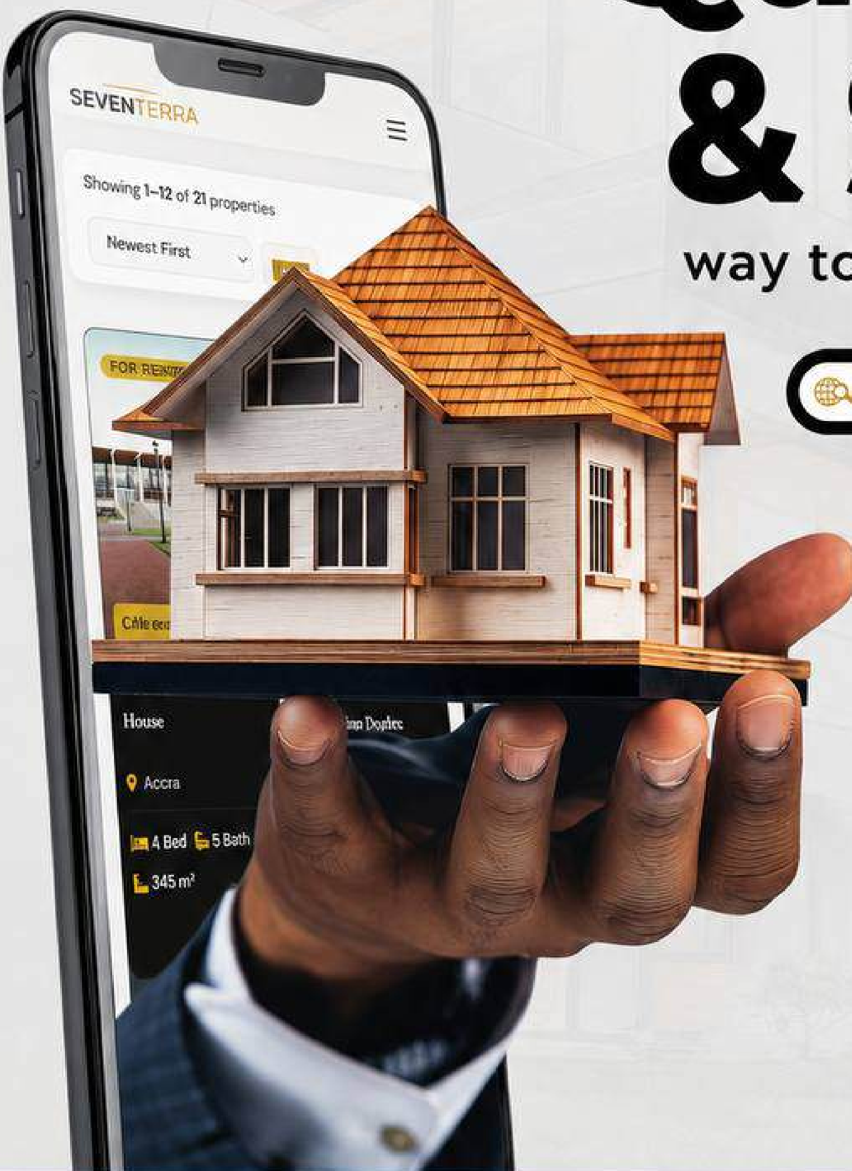

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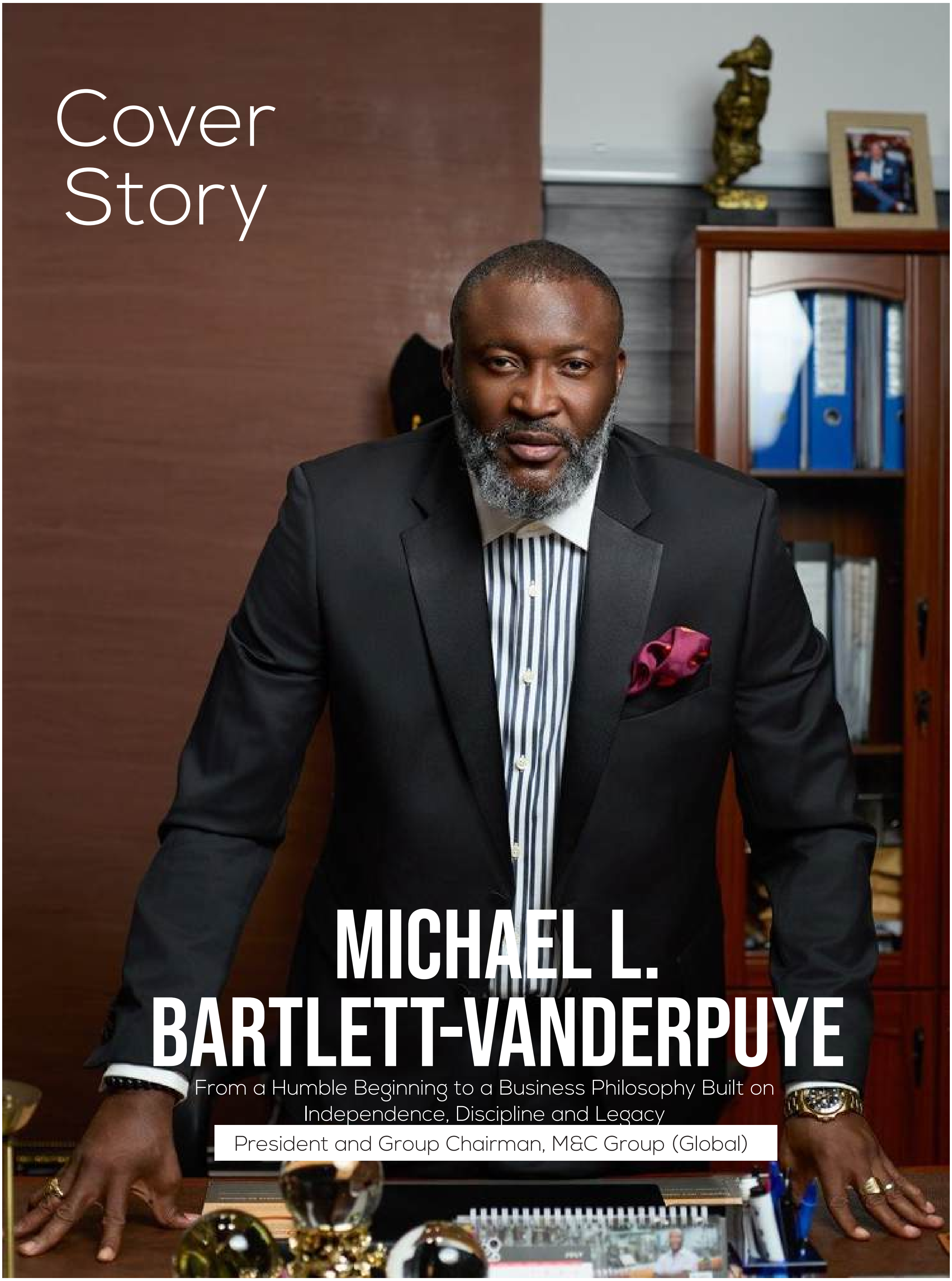

Cover Story

MICHAEL L. BARTLETT-VANDERPUYE

From a Humble Beginning to a Business Philosophy Built on Independence, Discipline and Legacy

President and Group Chairman, M&C Group (Global)

The Boy Behind the Name

Long before Michael L. Bartlett-Vanderpuye became a businessman and Group Chairman of M&C Group, he was a boy growing up around Jamestown and Mampurabi. His story does not begin with boardrooms or polished offices. It begins with a modest upbringing, a strong sense of independence and an environment that taught him early how to find his own way.

Michael describes his family background with honesty. He was neither poor nor wealthy, but Achimota later exposed him to people whose circumstances were very different from his own. That contrast widened his understanding of life and, eventually, of opportunity.

He was the only child in his immediate family for more than a decade before his younger brother was born. In the wider family system of his childhood, however, cousins were treated almost like siblings. Even so, his experiences at Achimota were formative. Boarding school placed him among people considerably older than himself, and he believes those relationships helped shape the way he communicates and relates to people today.

He attended Achimota

Primary and Achimota School before university. Athletics became his preferred sport. Running suited him because everyone stayed in their lane—a small detail that, in retrospect, fits the independent streak that would become central to his personality.

He was also outspoken and, by his own admission, stubborn. He held leadership positions at school, including house prefect and sanitation prefect, while also developing a reputation for being energetic and occasionally troublesome. Those years taught him about authority, relationships, competition and consequences.

The Turning Point

His teenage years brought a defining disruption. While he was in his first year of secondary school, his parents divorced. Michael says the experience took a heavy toll on him.

The separation changed the support structure around him at a time when he was still finding his footing.

He describes it as being at sea while the waves are against you. At that point, he realised that circumstances could either define him or become the reason he decided to build something different.

School became an important stabilising force. His housemaster noticed what he was going through and kept him engaged in school activities, including science and mathematics preparation. That structure gave him something constructive to focus on.

The experience also strengthened a belief that had already been forming: he did not want his future to depend entirely on working for somebody else. In his view, employment gives another person control over your time, while building your own enterprise gives you greater control over your time and resources.

That idea eventually became more than a personal preference. It became a philosophy. Michael believes entrepreneurship should not be confined to people who own companies. A doctor, lawyer, teacher or academic can all think entrepreneurially by understanding how their knowledge can create value beyond a salary.

The Business Mindset

For Michael, education and professional expertise are only part of the equation. The other part is knowing how to turn knowledge into value. He points to professionals who spend decades becoming highly skilled but never develop the business side of what they know. A doctor may wait until retirement before opening a clinic. A teacher may spend years teaching without turning accumulated knowledge into books, courses or other intellectual property. A professor may have enormous expertise but little financial independence.

His point is not that everybody should abandon employment. Rather, he believes people should begin building an entrepreneurial mindset while they work. A side business, an investment, a useful network or an asset can become part of an eventual exit strategy.

The same thinking shapes his approach to branding. A brand should not exist merely for attention; it should generate value. An event centre, for example, can become an ecosystem of vendors and services that strengthens the owner's brand and creates recurring income.

For him, the question is always practical: how do you make what you have work for you?

Exposure, Research and Blind Copying

Michael considers exposure essential for young entrepreneurs. Travelling and experiencing other cultures can teach people how consumers behave, how businesses operate and how markets are structured.

But exposure, in his view, is useful only when it produces learning. He is particularly critical of entrepreneurs who copy visible business models without researching the conditions underneath them.

One person succeeds selling jeans, and suddenly several others want to sell jeans. Someone opens a small food business, and before long a number of similar businesses appear in the same area. Instead of asking what complementary product or service could create a different opportunity, people often reproduce exactly what they have seen.

Michael believes research should come before imitation. Understanding a market can reveal regulatory, ownership and partnership risks that are invisible from the outside. His example of doing business in China illustrates the danger of entering a foreign market without understanding its rules.

The lesson is simple: do not copy the appearance of another person's success while ignoring the research and structure that made the business possible.

Mentorship and Strategic Networking

He sees mentorship as another major gap in the entrepreneurial environment. Some young people treat experienced businesspeople as competitors instead of teachers, while some experienced professionals do not make enough time for those coming behind them.

Michael believes networking should begin with value. A young entrepreneur might meet a professional and later ask a genuine question about taxation, regulation or a business problem. That simple exchange can become the beginning of a meaningful relationship.

He also believes entrepreneurs must learn to identify the right people in a room. At a property fair, for instance, it makes little sense for every property company to spend the entire event talking to other property companies. The real opportunity may lie with buyers, investors and complementary businesses.

He prefers to call businesses strategic partners rather than competitors. One company may have the property while another has the client. Connecting the two can create a win-win outcome.

At the same time, he warns entrepreneurs to be careful with sensitive information. An idea should be presented in a way that establishes credibility without unnecessarily surrendering the details of its implementation.

Ultimately, he sees social capital as a business asset. The value of a network becomes visible when an entrepreneur knows whom to call for knowledge, opportunity, introductions or help.

The Reality of Starting From Nothing

Michael is candid about the part of entrepreneurship that is rarely visible online: the struggle.
He remembers setting up an office in East Legon and having people assume that he was working for somebody else because they could not imagine that the business was his. What people see after success is the office, the title and the confidence. They do not see the nights when an entrepreneur cannot sleep, the proposals that receive no response or the mornings when there is no clear business waiting.

He says an entrepreneur can send thousands of proposals before one opportunity finally breaks through. Then, when the business begins to succeed, people who once ignored you may suddenly remember that they knew you.

Michael's response is not to become bitter. It is to become focused. He believes every entrepreneur has to learn which voices deserve attention. Some people will support you; others will resist you for reasons that have little to do with your actual work.

Failure, too, is part of the process. Losing money should become a lesson, not a reason to quit. The next decision should be better because of the previous mistake. The journey, he argues, is built step by step.

From the Bedroom to the Boardroom

Michael's own experience reinforces his warning against confusing appearance with progress. He recalls starting with limited resources and, at one stage, working from his room.

That beginning informs his criticism of entrepreneurs who spend heavily on offices simply because they want to look established. His view is that a business should grow into its infrastructure. An expensive office cannot rescue a weak business model.

The same principle applies to personal presentation. Michael says he can enjoy luxury when he can afford it, but he does not believe success requires constant display. He is comfortable being seen in ordinary situations and does not feel the need to prove his status.

He makes a distinction between being called successful and considering oneself blessed. The first is an external description; the second is a personal perspective.

As income rises, he warns, lifestyle can rise even faster. A better car, a bigger office, a more expensive address and elaborate social spending can consume money that should have been invested into the business.

His advice is direct: live within your means, have a plan and discipline yourself.

Work, Education and the Decision to Build

After university, Michael entered employment, including a period in banking. That experience reinforced his desire to build rather than simply administer other people's money.

He noticed that appearances could be deceptive. Some customers who looked extremely ordinary had substantial balances, while others who appeared wealthy did not necessarily possess the financial strength people assumed. The experience strengthened a lesson that runs through his entire philosophy: appearance is not the same as value.

He later worked across areas including accounting, marketing and packaging and logistics, while also pursuing additional education and professional courses. He does not dismiss academic qualifications, but he questions the habit of collecting certificates without practical experience.

In his view, further education becomes more useful when it is combined with real-world exposure. Experience gives academic knowledge context.

His career also exposed him to mining advisory work, property and other commercial opportunities, helping him understand how different industries connect and how relationships can create opportunities across sectors.

M&C Group, Media and the Meaning of Visibility

M&C Group represents a major chapter in Michael's business life, yet he remains cautious about equating visibility with success.

He distinguishes between what he calls social-media businessmen and private businessmen. Social media can be a powerful business tool, but attention can become dangerous when it replaces substance.

A company may appear everywhere online, attract bloggers and dominate events while its internal systems remain weak. Another business may receive little public attention while quietly building assets, customers and reliable operations.

Michael believes the brand should speak through results.

He is also critical of public claims that are not supported by evidence. If a business leader says that they have funded or mentored large numbers of young entrepreneurs, he believes there should be credible evidence of the outcomes. The media, in his view, has a responsibility to ask harder questions instead of simply repeating promotional claims.
His standard is straightforward: show

the work.

He also believes social media must be handled carefully. A strong public image can become a liability if the underlying business does not match it. Branding should therefore be connected to reality, not used to disguise weaknesses.

The Wider Economy and the Responsibility to Build

Michael's concerns extend beyond individual businesses. He sees unemployment as one of Ghana's most serious economic challenges and believes the private sector must play a much larger role in creating sustainable employment.

His argument is that the country continues to produce large numbers of graduates while formal employment does not expand at the same pace. That imbalance creates pressure on individuals, businesses and government.

He believes policy should encourage productive businesses to expand rather than focus only on punishment when companies face liabilities. In some cases, he argues, structured arrangements could allow businesses to invest in employment and growth while meeting their obligations over time.

The larger point is that a growing private sector creates jobs, develops skills and strengthens the wider economy.

For Michael, entrepreneurship therefore has a social dimension. It is not simply about personal wealth. A business that survives, employs people, develops suppliers and creates opportunities contributes to society beyond its founder.

Money, Legacy and Faith

As Michael's business life developed, his understanding of money shifted from simply making it to managing it. He warns against allowing higher income to automatically produce higher consumption.

Once people become accustomed to expensive lifestyles, it can be difficult to return to simpler habits. That is why he stresses financial freedom, discipline and planning.

He is sceptical of status symbols that create the appearance of wealth without creating actual value. A costly address does not necessarily mean a person owns assets. An impressive car does not prove that a company is financially healthy. The question is what remains after the display.

This long-term thinking connects directly to his idea of legacy. Michael says he wants to leave something that reaches beyond his children—to his grandchildren and future generations.

That ambition has its roots in his own upbringing. The disruption of his parents' divorce could have become a permanent limitation, but he chose to turn it into motivation. He also recalls receiving help from people who were not members of his immediate family. In his account, strangers opened doors at important moments.

Faith therefore remains central to his worldview. He believes prayer matters, but he does not separate prayer from work. A person must still do the job, honour responsibilities and use difficult seasons as preparation.

For Michael, the waiting period between a vision and its fulfilment is part of the training. Challenges build the capacity required to handle opportunity when it arrives.

He describes himself as happily married and the father of two children, a son and a daughter. Away from business, he enjoys jazz, reggae, lovers rock and older music from the 1980s and 1990s. He also speaks about becoming more deliberate about the company he keeps as he grows older.

That, too, is part of maturity: knowing what deserves your time and being able to say no without guilt.

The Name and the Man

The name Bartlett-Vanderpuye carries a family history of its own. Michael explains that he has two English names, Michael and Leslie, while Bartlett comes through his father's side of the family. According to the family history he shared, the Bartlett name was connected to an architect, or what earlier generations might have called a draftsman, who trained an ancestor. The name was subsequently adopted into the family line.

The Vanderpuye name belongs to a wider coastal family history, with different branches carrying variations and distinctions of the name.

Yet Michael does not believe the family name explains his achievements. A name may open a door, he says, but it cannot walk through the door for you.

That distinction is central to his philosophy. He does not want young people to treat family connections or social status as substitutes for work. He believes many of the opportunities that shaped his journey came through relationships with people he encountered along the way.

In that sense, his name is part of his identity, but it is not the explanation for his success.

A Message to the Next Generation

Michael's message to young entrepreneurs is ultimately a call for patience, research, discipline and personal responsibility.

Start somewhere. Do not wait until everything is perfect. Failure will happen, and some money will be lost, but each mistake should leave you wiser.

Research before entering a market. Learn from people who have gone ahead of you. Travel when possible and use exposure to understand how other societies operate. Build networks with intention. Protect sensitive parts of your ideas. Do not copy blindly.

Do not confuse social-media visibility with business success. Do not spend money simply to look successful. Build systems before you build an image.

And do not be discouraged by the people who laugh at your vision.

Michael remembers what it felt like when people questioned whether his business was really his. He remembers the uncertainty of starting with limited resources and the periods when there was no obvious path forward. Yet he kept building.

The thread running through his story is clear: control your time, understand the value of relationships, live within your means, develop a business mind wherever you work and think beyond yourself.

Most importantly, build something that can outlive you.

The boy who learned early to find his own way eventually became the man who built his own path. His story is not presented as a straight line. It is a story of family disruption, education, mistakes, work, opportunity, relationships and faith.

What distinguishes it is not the claim that the road was easy, but the conviction that difficulty can become a teacher.

For Michael L. Bartlett-Vanderpuye, success is therefore not only about what he can enjoy today. It is about what he can build, sustain and eventually leave behind.


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Family Gallery

EFIA SHEMONA

Identity, Leadership, Purpose and a Legacy in the Making

For Efia Shemona, the journey has never been about a crown alone. Her story brings together British-Ghanaian identity, 17 years of ballet training, professional leadership, pageantry, entrepreneurship and a growing commitment to community impact. In this conversation with My Story Magazine, she reflects on the experiences that shaped her, the responsibility that comes with representation and the legacy she hopes to build between Ghana and the UK.

Growing Up & Identity

I was born and raised in the UK, but Ghana has always been a very present part of my identity. My connection to Ghanaian culture came predominantly through my mother, who raised me, my grandmother and the wider family environment I grew up in. From family gatherings and traditions to the values instilled in me from an early age, there was always a strong sense of knowing where I came from.

My great-grandfather, Nana Adjei Ababio II, was the Krontihene of Oyoko in Koforidua, New Juaben. As I have grown older, learning more about my family history has made me even more intentional about maintaining that connection to my heritage.

My mother and grandmother, in particular, have played important roles in shaping the woman I have become. Through them, I learned the value of hard work, resilience, respect and family, as well as the importance of carrying yourself with purpose.
Another defining part of my formative years was dance. I trained as a ballerina for 17 years and later had the opportunity to tour with artists as a professional dancer. Dance gave me an incredible creative outlet, but it also taught me discipline from a very young age. Training consistently, performing and working professionally taught me about commitment, confidence, resilience and the ability to perform under pressure.

Interestingly, leadership is something other people seemed to recognise in me before I fully recognised it in myself. At different stages of my life, dance teachers, family members, friends, coaches, mentors and, later, managers described me as a natural leader.

Looking back, I can see how those experiences connect. My Ghanaian heritage gave me grounding, dance developed my creativity and discipline, and my professional journey gave me the opportunity to turn those qualities into leadership.

Today, I see myself as a combination of all those worlds. I am proudly British-Ghanaian, creative and ambitious, with a strong sense of responsibility towards the people and communities around me.

Education & Personal Development

Education has always been important to me, and I went on to university, graduating with an undergraduate degree in Business Management. Studying business gave me a strong academic foundation and helped me understand leadership, management, strategy and the way organisations operate. At the same time, I would say that my development has been shaped just as much by real-life experience as by formal education.

Today, my professional career is within operations and logistics, where I manage a team of approximately 65 people. That responsibility has taught me things that simply cannot be learned from a textbook.

Managing such a large and diverse team requires communication, organisation, emotional intelligence, problem-solving and the ability to make decisions under pressure. It has also taught me that being a leader and being a manager are not necessarily the same thing. Management can be a position you are given; leadership is something you demonstrate through your actions.

My creative background has also had a significant influence on how I approach professional life. After training as a ballerina for 17 years and working professionally as a dancer, discipline became part of my mindset very early. In dance, you learn that talent can only take you so far. Consistency, preparation and a willingness to keep improving are what ultimately make the difference.
I have carried that mentality into my education, career, pageantry, entrepreneurship and community work.

When I look at my journey now, business, dance, management, pageantry and philanthropy may appear to be completely different worlds, but to me they are connected. Each has developed a different part of me and helped give me the confidence to step into spaces I may once have thought were beyond my reach.

I do not believe personal development ever really ends. I am still learning, still evolving and still discovering what I am capable of.

The Miss Ghana UK Experience

Miss Ghana UK was much more than a beauty pageant for me. It became a journey of identity, confidence, discipline and purpose.

Finishing as 1st Runner-Up and receiving the People's Choice Award was an incredible achievement, but what meant even more to me was the platform the experience created.

Pageantry pushed me outside my comfort zone. It taught me the importance of preparation, consistency and believing in yourself, even when you are being judged or compared with others. You have to learn to remain focused on what makes you different rather than allowing competition to make you question yourself.

The People's Choice Award was particularly special because it represented the support of people who genuinely connected with my journey.

One of the biggest lessons I took away was that a crown or title should never be the final destination. The real question is: what are you going to do with the platform once the competition is over?

For me, that is where the real work began.

.Impact & Social Projects

This is probably the part of my journey that means the most to me.

I am a founder of Larbi Legacy, which focuses on supporting disadvantaged children and communities in Ghana, particularly through education and practical initiatives that can create sustainable, long-term impact.

During our recent work in Ghana, we supported the GGEM Impact School Tour in the Volta Region, reaching approximately 200 students. We also made a donation to Nyamedua Children's Home, supporting around 50 children, and delivered the Kayayo Dignity Project in Darkuman, providing sanitary and hygiene products to approximately 150 women and girls.

For me, however, charity cannot simply be about giving people something today and returning the following year to give them the same thing again. I want to help create systems that eventually allow communities and organisations to become more self-sufficient.
That is why our next phase is much more ambitious.

Through the Larbi Legacy Impact Tour 2027, we are working towards building and equipping libraries and IT facilities for schools in Ghana, alongside educational programmes, mentorship, community initiatives

and continued support for children's homes.

My long-term vision is sustainability. Success, for me, would be seeing the organisations and communities we support eventually reach a point where they no longer need continuous aid from us because we have helped provide the tools, facilities and opportunities they need to progress independently.

Ambassadorial Roles & Representation

Representation carries responsibility.
Whenever I represent Ghana, I am conscious that I am representing something much bigger than myself. Ghana has an incredibly rich culture, history and identity, and I want young people, particularly those growing up within the diaspora, to understand that their heritage is something they can be extremely proud of.

I also do not believe an ambassador should simply appear at events or carry a title. There should be substance behind the position.
The values I try to embody are integrity, discipline, humility, authenticity and service.

I want young women to look at my journey and see that femininity, ambition, intelligence, leadership and compassion can exist together. You can enjoy fashion, beauty and glamour while simultaneously sitting in serious rooms, leading teams, building businesses and making a genuine contribution to your community.
Most importantly, representation should open doors. If my platform grows, I want the opportunities I create for other people to grow with it.

Vision for the Future

I genuinely feel like I am only at the beginning.
The next chapter is about turning the visibility and relationships I have built into something sustainable.
A major focus will be expanding Larbi Legacy and developing the 2027 Impact Tour, particularly our plans to create educational facilities and IT access for children in Ghana. I want Larbi Legacy to develop beyond individual donations into an organisation capable of creating measurable, sustainable projects.

Professionally, I also want to continue developing as a leader and entrepreneur. I have several ambitions within business and would eventually like to build brands and projects that operate internationally.

Over the next five to ten years, I want my work between the UK and Ghana to become increasingly connected. I see myself creating opportunities, building partnerships and using the experience and networks I have developed in the UK to contribute to projects in Ghana.

Ultimately, I do not measure success purely by recognition, money or titles. I want to be able to physically point to something and say, "That exists because we decided to do something."

Whether it is a library filled with children reading, an IT unit giving a student access to technology, a young woman gaining confidence through mentorship, or a business I have built from an idea, that is the kind of legacy I want to create.

A Message to the Next Generation

My advice would be simple: do not put yourself under pressure to have your entire life figured out.

Sometimes we look at other people's achievements and compare their chapter ten with our chapter two. Social media makes that even harder because we constantly see people's successes without seeing the rejection, uncertainty, sacrifice and work that happened beforehand.

Confidence is not something you suddenly wake up with. You build it by continuously keeping promises to yourself, doing things that scare you and proving to yourself that you are capable.
I would also tell young people not to be afraid of starting small. You do not need thousands of followers, huge amounts of money or everybody's approval to make an impact. Start with what you have, where you are, and allow it to grow.

Stay disciplined. Stay teachable. Ask questions. Surround yourself with people who challenge you to become better.

And never allow rejection to convince you that something is not meant for you. Sometimes rejection is redirection, and sometimes it simply means not yet.

Most importantly, remember that your purpose does not have to look like anybody else's.

You do not need a crown to have a voice, and you do not need a title to make an impact. That is what Beyond the Crown means to me.

Mamoru: The Quiet Guardians of Ghana's Digital Gold Rush

In a glass-walled office in Accra, a treasury manager watches a screen that keeps moving against her. She needs to move the equivalent of two million dollars in Bitcoin before the market closes, but every time she places a slice of the order on a public exchange, the price ticks away from her, like a shop owner raising prices the moment he sees you reaching for your wallet. By the time the trade fills, she has lost more to "slippage" than most small businesses spend on rent in a month. This is the invisible tax institutions and high-net-worth traders across Africa have quietly paid for years: the cost of being seen.

It is exactly this problem that Mamoru was built to solve. And this year, its Ghanaian arm, Mamoru Digital Ghana Ltd, did something that very few virtual asset companies in the country can claim: it earned the trust of the regulator itself.

A Name That Means What It Does

Mamoru is a Japanese word that means "to protect." It is also the name of a global digital asset financial services group headquartered in New York, built by veterans of technology, market making, and venture capital, with operations across Africa, Asia, and the Americas. Its core promise is deceptively simple: give large traders a firm, locked-in price for Bitcoin, Ethereum, and stablecoins, executed privately, before they commit a single dollar. No slippage. No leaked strategy. No surprises. In an industry built on speed and noise, Mamoru made its name by being discreet, deliberate, and boringly reliable, which, in finance, is the highest compliment there is.

The company is a registered Money Service Business under Canada's FINTRAC, runs a 24/7 institutional OTC desk, and settles trades in local currency across more than twenty markets, from the Ghanaian cedi to the Kenyan shilling to the Brazilian real. It is, in essence, plumbing: unglamorous infrastructure that lets money move safely between the world of crypto and the world everyone else lives in.

The Ghana Chapter

But infrastructure only matters if regulators believe in it. And in Ghana, belief has to be earned, one document, one presentation, one uncomfortable question at a time.
In December 2025, Ghana's Parliament passed the Virtual Asset Service Providers Act (Act 1154), formally bringing crypto businesses under the supervision of the Bank of Ghana and the Securities and Exchange Commission for the first time. It was a watershed moment for an industry that had operated, until then, largely in the shadows of ambiguity. The SEC responded by opening a Virtual Asset Sandbox, a controlled, twelve-month proving ground where a select group of companies would be allowed to pilot their products under direct regulatory supervision, before Ghana finalizes the rules that will govern the industry for years to come.

The first cohort, announced in March 2026, included eleven companies. In August 2026, the SEC nearly doubled that list, admitting nine more firms into the sandbox, among them, as one of only a handful of companies cleared to pilot a virtual asset trading platform, Mamoru Digital Ghana Ltd.

Being admitted into the sandbox is not a formality. It is Ghana's regulator saying: we have looked closely, and we trust you enough to watch you work.

That admission did not happen by accident. It followed months of quiet groundwork: regulatory filings, compliance documentation, an AML and KYC programme built from the ground up, engagement with the Data Protection Commission, and a live presentation to the SEC's Deputy Director-General defending Mamoru's model line by line. It is the kind of work that never makes a headline on its own, but without it, there is no headline to make.

The Woman Behind the Ghana Desk

Leading that effort on the ground is Awura Abena Amponsah, Executive Director and Country CEO of Mamoru Digital Ghana. She has spent her career at the intersection of compliance and market-building, from operations at Yellow Card to co-founding her own ventures, and today she is the translator between Mamoru's global infrastructure and Ghana's regulatory reality. Her job is to make sure that a company built in New York, and a regulator built on caution, can understand and trust each other. In a sector where many companies still treat compliance as an afterthought, hers is the desk where it comes first.

Why This Matters Beyond Crypto Twitter

It is easy to dismiss digital assets as speculation for the terminally online. But look closer, and the stakes are far more grounded. Ghana sits at a crossroads: a fast-growing, mobile-first fintech sector, a currency that has weathered real volatility, and a diaspora sending billions of dollars home every year through channels that are often slow and expensive. Stablecoins and digital assets are already moving quietly through that landscape, whether regulators watch or not. The sandbox is Ghana's attempt to bring that activity into the light: to learn from it, and to protect ordinary people from the parts of it that are genuinely risky.

Companies like Mamoru sit at the center of that experiment, not disruptors racing to outrun the rules, but institutions trying to prove that digital assets and sound regulation can coexist. Every trade that runs cleanly through the sandbox becomes a data point the SEC will use to write Ghana's eventual rulebook.

Full Circle

Back in that glass-walled office, the trade finally goes through, not on the open market, but through a private request for quote. One locked price. One quiet confirmation. No footprint left behind. It is a small, almost invisible moment. But it is exactly the kind of moment Mamoru, and the small, determined Ghanaian team steering its local desk, was built to protect.

That, perhaps, is the real story behind the name. Not a flashy disruption, but a promise kept, one trade, one filing, one regulator's trust, at a time.

FROM TEMA TO TRANSFORMING LIVES: THE POWER OF LOVE STORY

How **Maame De-Heer** turned humble beginnings, migration and opportunity into a growing movement for women and girls

Long before Power of Love Canada became an organization, there was a young girl in Tema, Ghana, with a simple belief: when people come together to help others, meaningful change is possible.

For Maame De-Heer, that belief took shape during her student years at Tema Parents Association School, where she founded a student club called Power of Love. There was no grand plan at the time, only a desire to serve, connect people and create opportunities for others. Yet that small beginning would eventually cross an ocean and grow into a Canadian nonprofit organization impacting more than 200 women and girls in Canada and beyond.

Tema was where Maame first learned that you do not need significant resources to make a difference. Sometimes, all it takes is the willingness to begin with what you have.

When she later migrated to Canada, she carried that vision with her. Building a new life meant navigating education, professional opportunities, community and belonging, but Canada also gave her access to experiences and networks that expanded what she believed was possible.

In 2021, the idea she had started as a student became Power of Love Canada (POLCA), a Black-led community organization focused on leadership, education, health, mentorship and economic empowerment, particularly for women, girls, youth and underserved communities.

What began as an idea gradually became a platform for people.

Through initiatives in leadership development, mentorship, professional development, mental health and wellness, workforce readiness and community engagement, POLCA has created spaces where women and girls can build confidence, develop relationships and gain access to opportunities that may once have seemed out of reach.

One of its signature initiatives, the Rising Women Leaders Program, supports emerging women leaders through mentorship, professional development and leadership learning. Participants have reported growth in areas such as confidence, self-advocacy, networking, career clarity and decision-making. In July 2026, POLCA celebrated the graduation of its second cohort.

For Maame, however, graduation is only the beginning. Her vision is rooted in multiplication: when one woman gains confidence, knowledge and access, she can use those gains to influence her family, workplace and community—and eventually open a door for someone else.

That philosophy has shaped POLCA's growing focus on masterclasses, mentorship, programs for girls, wellness initiatives and opportunities that connect emerging leaders with established professionals, institutions and decision-makers.

Access is central to Maame's work. She understands that it is difficult for a young woman to imagine herself in a room she has never been invited into. Sometimes, transformation begins simply because someone opens the door.

The organization's growth has also been built on partnership. Community organizations, educational institutions, public-sector stakeholders, mentors, volunteers and funders have all played a role in helping turn the original vision into sustainable programming. For Maame, every grant represents trust, every partnership carries shared responsibility, and every volunteer is an investment in someone else's future.

Alongside building POLCA, Maame has continued to grow professionally and academically. Her experience spans public health, policy, research, academia and community development, including work within the Government of Canada. She is pursuing doctoral studies in public health, focusing on health policy and leadership, and has also taught in university settings, contributed to research and publications, and spoken publicly on leadership, opportunity and community development.

In 2026, she added another milestone to her journey when she took the TEDx stage to share ideas about impact and the ripple effects of individual action.
Her contributions have also earned recognition, including a Humanitarian Impact Award and a 40 Under 40 honour.

Yet Maame sees recognition as secondary to the work itself. The awards may carry her name, but the impact belongs to a much larger community of volunteers, mentors, partners, supporters, team members and participants who have helped bring the Power of Love vision to life.

At its heart, Maame's story is one of transformation—from receiving opportunity to creating it.

A girl in Tema started a student club. Years later, an immigrant in Canada turned that early idea into an organization helping women and girls find their voices, strengthen their leadership and access opportunities.

Canada gave Maame room to learn, build and grow. Her response has been to create stepping stones for others.

For the young woman searching for her first mentor. The newcomer learning to navigate an unfamiliar professional environment. The girl who has never seen someone like herself in a leadership position. The emerging leader looking for a network or simply someone to affirm that her voice belongs in important rooms.

That is the deeper story of Power of Love Canada.

It is not simply about how far one woman has come. It is about how many people she intends to bring with her.

From a student club in Tema to a growing movement in Canada, Maame De-Heer's journey is a reminder that significant change can begin quietly. Sometimes it starts with one idea, one act of service or one person willing to believe that something can be better.

And sometimes, that beginning becomes powerful enough to transform lives.

There is power in opportunity. There is power in community. There is power in opening a door for someone else. And, above all, there is power in love.

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Africa's Digital Backbone: WHERE WE STAND AND WHAT MUST CHANGEA LEADERSHIP BRIEF ON DATA CENTRES, CONNECTIVITY AND AI READINESS

BY: DR. KWAME A. A. OPOKU

FOUNDER & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, AFRICAN AI GOVERNANCE INDEX (AAGI) | FOUNDER,AFRICA 2050 GOVERNANCE SUMMIT | FUTURIST & GLOBAL KEYNOTE SPEAKER

A farmer in northern Ghana requesting an AI-powered weather forecast triggers a data request that crosses two oceans, four national borders, and three legal jurisdictions before a single prediction reaches his phone. The round trip takes seconds. The structural dependency it reveals will take decades to undo unless African leaders act with urgency now.

Africa's digital infrastructure is at an inflection point. Submarine cable capacity has multiplied. Data-centre investment has crossed the $3 billion mark. Fifteen countries have published national AI strategies.

In April 2025, 54 African Union member states adopted the African Declaration on Artificial Intelligence in Kigali. The building blocks are falling into place. But the gaps between policy and infrastructure, between coastal capacity and inland access, between strategic ambition and operational reality remain enormous.

This article maps where Africa stands on three pillars of its digital backbone: connectivity, data centres, and AI readiness and outlines what must change.

Connectivity:
The Cables Have Landed. Now What?

The completion of the 2Africa submarine cable system in late 2025 is the single most important connectivity event in Africa's history. At 45,000 kilometres, it is the world's longest open-access submarine cable, connecting 33 countries through 46 landing points with capacity of up to 180 terabits per second more than every existing submarine cable serving Africa combined. The economic impact could reach $36.9 billion in GDP contribution within three years.

Africa now has 77 cable systems active or under construction.

That number was essentially zero in 2001. But cable capacity at the coast does not translate to broadband in Bamako or Bujumbura. Three hundred million Africans live more than 50 kilometres from a fibre connection.

Only 0.4 per cent have fixed-broadband subscriptions. Average internet penetration across the continent is 50 per cent, a dramatic improvement from 30 per cent in 2020, but still 16 points below the global average. In Central and Eastern Africa, rates sit closer to 30 per cent.

Mobile remains the dominant access point. In Nigeria, 74 per cent of web traffic comes through smartphones.

Sub-Saharan Africa's smartphone adoption is expected to hit 87 per cent by 2030. The mobile-first approach has worked for payments (M-Pesa) and basic internet access. It cannot carry the weight of AI workloads, cloud computing, or enterprise applications that demand low latency and high throughput. Terrestrial fibre, 4G/5G expansion, and affordable last-mile solutions must be scaled urgently.

Data Centres: Concentrated, Underpowered, and Foreign-Owned.

Africa hosts 223 data centres across 38 countries less than two per cent of the global total.

South Africa holds 56, Kenya 19, Nigeria 17. Those three countries control 41 per cent of the continent's data-centre estate. The market was valued at $3.49 billion in 2024 and is expected to reach $6.81 billion by 2030. McKinsey estimates the five largest markets will grow from 400 megawatts to between 1.5 and 2.2 gigawatts of installed capacity within the same timeframe, requiring $10 to $20 billion in fresh investment.

The concentration creates two problems. It leaves most of the continent without local compute infrastructure, forcing data to travel thousands of kilometres for processing. And it means most African data is stored outside African jurisdictions. The continent generates less than four percent of global AI training data and holds roughly one per cent of global data-centre capacity.

Most government, financial, and health data sits on servers in Frankfurt, London, or Virginia beyond the authority of African courts and regulators.
The energy constraint is the binding one. Six hundred million Africans lack reliable electricity. Nigeria's grid provides roughly four hours of daily power in many areas. Data-centre operators compensate with diesel generators, expensive and dirty.

Kenya offers a countermodel: its grid is 60 per cent renewable, and a planned 100-megawatt geothermal-powered data centre, backed by a $1 billion investment from Microsoft and G42, could eventually reach one gigawatt.

Morocco is building a 500-megawatt renewables-powered AI complex. South Africa leads in solar integration. But across most of the continent, energy remains the primary bottleneck.

AI Readiness: Ambition Without Infrastructure Is Just Aspiration.
At least fifteen African countries now have national AI strategies. The AU Continental Strategy outlines fifteen recommendations for member states. The Kigali Declaration commits to a $60 billion Africa AI Fund. These are meaningful signals.

But Africa's AI compute capacity is roughly one per cent of the global total. Without local compute, African researchers cannot train models on African data in African languages.

They remain dependent on systems built in Silicon Valley on datasets that do not reflect African realities. Talent is equally constrained.

Engineers are emigrating. University programmes are underfunded. The few centres of excellence, Google's AI lab in Accra, IBM's lab in Nairobi are exceptions that prove the rule. AI readiness requires four components working together: compute, data, talent, and governance. Africa is making progress on governance. The other three remain critical weaknesses. A strategy without infrastructure is a wish list.

What Must Change
The window for action is narrow. Here is what African leaders in government and the private sector must prioritise:

Energy first. No data-centre strategy works without a parallel energy strategy. Fast-track renewable procurement, reform grid regulation, and structure power-purchase agreements that make digital infrastructure viable. Kenya's geothermal model, Morocco's solar-powered AI campus, and South Africa's hybrid energy approach should be studied and adapted across the continent.

Fibre inland. Submarine cables deliver bandwidth to the coast. What happens next is an inland infrastructure problem. Incentivise private-sector fibre deployment through tax reform, spectrum allocation, and infrastructure-sharing mandates. Cut the number of Africans living 50-plus kilometres from broadband by half within five years.

Regional hubs over national vanity. Not every country can justify a standalone hyperscale data centre. Build five to seven regional hubs; South Africa, Kenya, Nigeria, Egypt, Morocco, possibly Côte d'Ivoire and Ethiopia with cross-border agreements and shared capacity.

Enforce sovereignty. Pass data-protection laws, then fund the regulators who enforce them. Harmonise rules through the AfCFTA. Operationalise the Kigali Declaration's AI Fund with clear governance and disbursement timelines.

Measure everything.
Policymakers cannot fix what they cannot see. Continental -scale measurement tools like the African AI Governance Index (www.aagi.africa) gives leadersdata-driven visibility into infrastructure gaps, policy implementation, and readiness trajectories. Without local measurement, Africa plans its digital future using borrowed data.

The Bottom Line
Africa's internet economy could add $180 billion to GDP. The 2Africa cable alone may contribute $36.9 billion. Data centres could unlock $20 to $30 billion in value-chain revenue by 2030. AI could generate trillions in economic

impact across agriculture, health, fintech, logistics, and governance.
Or none of it materialises. If grids remain broken, fibre stays coastal, data keeps leaving the continent, and AI strategies gather dust in filing cabinets, Africa will not catch up.

It willfall further behind in a race where position determines access to models, markets, and sovereign capability. The digital backbone is the physical, legal, and human infrastructure that determines whether Africa's 1.4 billion people participate in the AI era as owners or as data sources for someone else's economy. The cables have landed. The capital is available. The policies exist.

Kwame A. A. Opoku is the Founder and Executive Director of the African AI Governance Index (AAGI), Founder of the Africa 2050 Governance Summit, a Global Keynote Speaker and Futurist. What is missing is execution at scale and the political will totreat digital infrastructure with the same urgency as roads and power plants.

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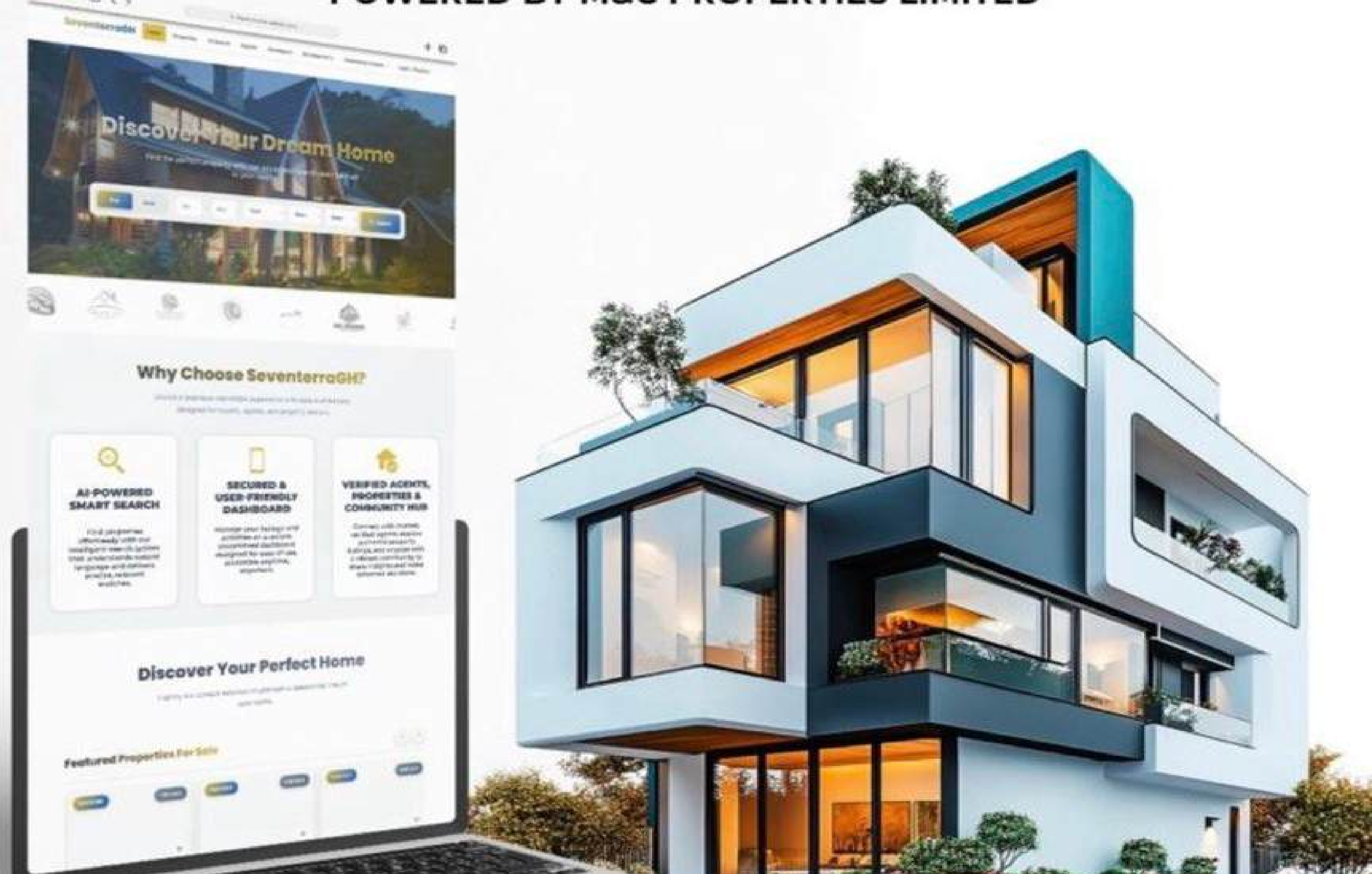

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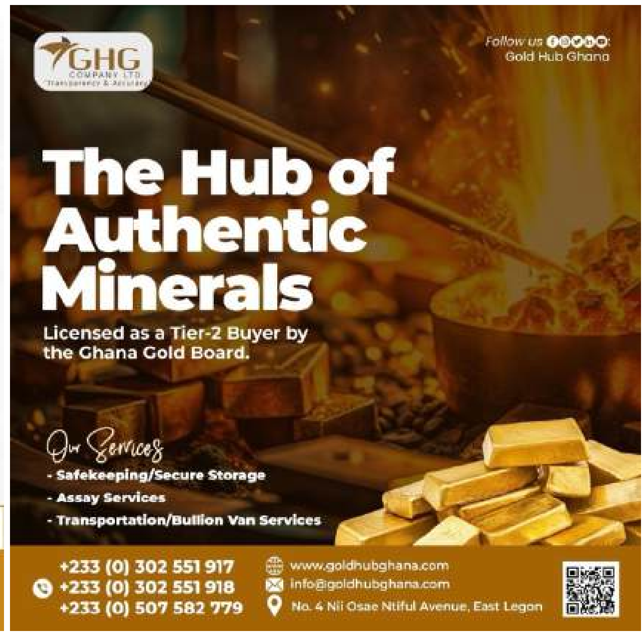

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M&C MANAGEMENT CONSULT LIMITED

Management Consulting | Project Development | Business Advisory

M&C Management Consult is the Group's flagship consulting business. It provides business and financial consulting services to individuals, private companies and public-sector organisations. Its expertise covers finance, oil and gas, engineering, manufacturing, mining, agriculture and related economic sectors.

The company provides management consultancy, feasibility studies, project financing, project implementation and contract management. Its stated focus is helping clients improve performance, develop sustainable businesses and execute commercially viable projects.

M&C ENERGY LIMITED

Energy | Oil & Gas | Renewable Energy

M&C Energy operates within the energy sector, with a particular focus on oil and gas products, services and storage. The company also identifies renewable energy development as an area of opportunity.

Its activities are positioned around supporting oil and gas companies involved in exploration and production while providing operational, technical and supply-related solutions. The company seeks to build partnerships within the energy industry and contribute to the development of energy solutions across the sub-region.

M&C LOGISTICS AND TRADING LIMITED

Commodities | Food Trading | Mineral Trading | Import & Export

M&C Logistics and Trading is focused on minerals and food commodity trading. Its portfolio includes commodities such as agricultural products, sugar, edible oils, coffee and grains, alongside precious minerals.

The company combines commodity sourcing with distribution and international trade capabilities, with an emphasis on moving products efficiently from source markets to customers across the sub-region.

LEVAN FOODS

Food Processing | Food Commodities | Distribution

Levan Foods is a food commodity business and subsidiary of M&C Logistics and Trading. The company operates in the production, processing and distribution of agricultural and food products.

Its activities include sourcing food products from trusted suppliers, processing raw materials under controlled conditions and distributing finished products through established channels. The company's portfolio includes a variety of grains and processed food products.

M&C PROPERTIES LIMITED

Real Estate Development | Property Management

M&C Properties is the Group's real estate development and property management company. The company focuses on residential and commercial property development, property ownership and strategic property management.

Its stated objective is to make housing and home ownership more accessible while creating value through the acquisition, development and management of strategically positioned properties.

SEVEN TERRA GH

Digital Real Estate Marketplace | Property Technology

SevenTerragh is a digital real estate platform powered by M&C Properties. It connects real estate agents, property owners, developers and prospective buyers through a centralised online marketplace.

The platform is designed to improve property visibility and accessibility while facilitating property listings, searches and transactions. Its features include verified user accounts, advanced property listings, AI-powered search filters, a real estate community hub and industry news updates.

M&C Group South Africa Pty

International Business Development | Advisory | Precious Metals

M&C Group South Africa serves as part of the Group's international expansion, with a focus on creating value for businesses and organisations operating across the African market.

The company is positioned to support clients with complex business challenges and leverage the expertise of M&C Group's international offices and networks.

M&C Group Asia — Hong Kong / Guangzhou, China

International Trade | Investment | Management Solutions

M&C Group Asia provides access to a range of management and investment capabilities, including real estate, asset management, securities, investment management and tailored business solutions.

Based in the Hong Kong/Guangzhou corridor, the company is positioned as an important link between the Group and Asian markets, with ambitions to extend its services across Asia, the Middle East and beyond.

MNCSB Trading DMCC — UAE

Gold Trading | Precious Metals

MNCSB Trading DMCC is the Group's UAE-based precious metals trading business. The company operates under the Group's logistics and trading structure and is presented in the corporate profile as a gold trading company.

Its focus is on precious metals trading, international partnerships and connecting African mining opportunities with global markets. The company emphasises transparency, compliance and responsible trading practices.

GHG Company Limited

Minerals Trading | Precious Metals | Mining Supply Chain

GHG Company Limited operates within the minerals and precious metals sector. The company positions itself as a trading and sourcing platform connecting mineral producers, refineries, jewellers, traders and other market participants.

Its activities include the sourcing and supply of minerals while seeking to promote responsible and sustainable practices within the mining and minerals value chain.

MGL Logistics and Supply Limited

Global Procurement | Logistics | Industrial Supply

MGL Logistics and Supply specialises in procurement, sourcing, storage and transportation of commercial and non-commercial goods and equipment.

The company provides procurement solutions across sectors including health, education, general industry, security and other commercial activities. Its model combines global sourcing capabilities with logistics and distribution to meet clients' procurement requirements.

M&C Gold and Precious Metals Refinery

Gold Refining | Precious Metals | Secure Storage | Export

M&C Gold and Precious Metals Refinery is positioned as a modern gold refinery serving dealers, traders and financial institutions. The company's operations encompass gold refining, precious metals processing, secure storage, transportation and export.

The refinery emphasises security, operational efficiency and responsible handling of precious metals, with the objective of serving both local and international markets.

MGL Securities and Telecommunications

Technology | Telecommunications | Network Security

MGL Securities and Telecommunications operates in technology, communications and security solutions. Its activities include solar power systems installation, telecommunications infrastructure, network security, video surveillance, data services and wireless solutions.

The company also provides voice-over-internet-protocol services and security systems, with a focus on protecting communications, data, assets and people.

M&C Gold and Precious Metals Refinery LLC — Virginia, USA

Precious Metals | Global Supply Chain | Refining & Export

The Virginia-based M&C Gold and Precious Metals Refinery LLC extends the Group's precious metals operations into the United States.

The company focuses on the supply and distribution of precious metal products to global markets, supported by technology and quality standards. Its activities include precious metals analysis, processing, secure storage, transportation and export.

M&C Gold Metals Refinery — Italia S.R.L.

Gold Trading | Precious Metals | International Supply

Registered in Italy, M&C Gold Metals Refinery Italia S.R.L. serves as another international arm of the Group's precious metals business.

The company focuses on precious metals trading and international supply, with access to licensed global producers and dealers. It also facilitates the supply of gold and other precious metals to markets including Ghana and other international destinations.

M&C Gold and Precious Metals Refinery — Hannover, Germany

International Precious Metals Trading | Processing | Logistics

Based in Hannover, Germany, this company focuses on international precious metals trading and related services.

Its activities include sourcing, product analysis, processing, storage, transportation and export. The company is positioned around precision, trust, ethical business practices and reliable international delivery.

A Diversified International Business Network

Together, these companies form a diversified M&C Group platform spanning consulting, energy, commodities, food, real estate, procurement, logistics, technology and precious metals. The geographical footprint extends beyond Ghana into South Africa, Hong Kong/China, the United Arab Emirates, the United States, Italy and Germany, giving the Group an international structure for connecting African opportunities with global markets.

The corporate profile describes the individual companies as independently registered entities operating within defined areas of specialisation, while remaining committed to interdependence within the wider Group.

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Africa's Capital Markets must learn to price Vision too.

Dr. Maxwell Ampong

Every entrepreneur in Ghana knows the question.

"Do you have three years of audited accounts?"

It is a fair question. Investors deserve evidence. Banks must manage risk. Regulators have a duty to protect capital. No serious business leader should argue otherwise.

Yet there is another question we ask far less often: can this company become strategically indispensable? At least no one has asked me or anyone I know at home before. Only over the pond.

But that may well be the more important question of our current time.

Across much of Africa, investment decisions remain anchored in historical performance. Audited financial statements, collateral, operating history and cash flow projections dominate boardroom discussions. These are essential indicators of financial discipline and corporate governance. They tell us whether a business has been responsibly managed.

What they do not always tell us is whether a business is capable of shaping the future. This distinction matters because economies are transformed not only by companies with impressive histories but by companies with extraordinary possibilities.

The challenge for African capital markets is therefore not whether to reward profit or vision. It is whether we have developed the tools to recognise both. For I believe both are important.

For decades, business education taught a relatively straightforward relationship between performance and value. Companies that generated stronger earnings, improved efficiency and sustained profitability deserved higher valuations. Competitive advantage was measured through market share, operational excellence, cost leadership and product differentiation.

Those principles remain true. But I believe they are no longer sufficient.

Today's global capital markets increasingly place a premium on strategic positioning, ecosystem leadership, technological capability and future market dominance. Investors are no longer evaluating only what a company has achieved. They are also assessing what it is capable of becoming.

This explains why companies with modest current earnings sometimes command extraordinary valuations while highly profitable firms with limited growth prospects often struggle to excite investors.

The market on the other side is not abandoning financial discipline. It is attempting to price the future. The distinction is subtle but profound. It is bold, but necessary and ultimately rewarding.

When investors believe a company is building a dominant platform, creating a new market or solving a problem at unprecedented scale, they often provide capital long before those ambitions are fully reflected in financial statements. That capital, in turn, enables further investment in technology, talent, research, acquisitions and market expansion. Strategy begins influencing valuation, and valuation begins reinforcing strategy.

In other words, valuation itself becomes a strategic asset.

Africa cannot ignore this evolution.

Our economies urgently need businesses capable of expanding beyond national borders, building globally competitive technologies and creating entirely new industries. Yet, many of our financing systems remain designed primarily to evaluate yesterday's performance rather than tomorrow's potential.

Consider the experience of many entrepreneurs seeking capital in Ghana. The conversation often begins and sometimes ends with audited accounts. There is nothing inherently wrong with this. Historical financial performance provides valuable evidence of governance, operational discipline and management capability.

The problem arises when historical evidence becomes the ONLY meaningful evidence.

Bear with me here. Imagine two businesses.

The first has operated profitably for five years. Its financial records are impeccable. Its governance is sound. But its market is mature, its growth prospects modest and its strategy largely defensive.

The second business has existed for only eighteen months. It lacks a lengthy financial history but possesses proprietary technology, a capable management team, early customer traction and a business model capable of scaling across Africa under the African Continental Free Trade Area.

Traditional investment frameworks often favour the first company almost automatically. Every sector leader talks of our economy being one of transformation. Well, transformational economies cannot afford to behave like this.

This is not an argument against prudence. It is an argument for better judgement. Broader judgement might be better phrasing but you get my point.

Venture capital emerged globally because traditional finance recognised a simple limitation that history alone cannot identify every future market leader. Banks specialise in evaluating collateral and repayment capacity. Venture investors specialise in evaluating uncertainty. Both perform essential functions within a healthy financial ecosystem.

The challenge in many African markets is that we often attempt to evaluate innovation using frameworks originally designed for commercial lending. As of now, go to leading venture capital firms and they'll still seek the three-year audited accounts and an arm and a leg. But that is not what they exist to do.

So, I propose what I call the Vision Discount.

The Vision Discount occurs when genuinely innovative businesses receive less capital than they deserve because markets lack effective mechanisms for evaluating strategic potential. Unable to distinguish between credible ambition and unrealistic optimism, investors frequently default to historical performance alone.

The result is predictable.

Capital flows comfortably towards certainty while transformational ideas struggle to secure early backing.

Ironically, by the time many innovative businesses accumulate the operating history required by conventional investors, they have already sought funding elsewhere, significantly reduced their ambitions or disappeared altogether.

That should concern all of us.

Africa does not suffer from a shortage of entrepreneurial ambition. Africa suffers from a shortage of institutions capable of pricing entrepreneurial possibility. This is where our investment philosophy needs to evolve.

Alongside financial due diligence, investors should begin conducting what I describe as a Vision Audit.

A Vision Audit does not replace audited accounts. It complements them. It asks different questions.

Is the problem sufficiently important?

Does the business possess a genuinely differentiated solution?
Is there credible evidence of customer demand?
Can management execute consistently?
Does the company demonstrate strong governance despite its youth?
Can the business scale regionally or globally?
Does its strategy create a defensible competitive position?

None of these questions ignores profitability. Instead, they recognise that future profitability often depends on strategic positioning established long before exceptional earnings appear.

The most successful investment ecosystems do not choose between financial discipline and strategic imagination. They evaluate both with equal seriousness. The irony is that as good as the read may be, I must self-audit and admit that intuitional and commercial financiers in Ghana do ask these questions. It's just that the answers, no matter how good, still end up in a Vision Discount.

This has particular relevance for Ghana.

As policymakers seek to industrialise the economy, deepen capital markets and position Ghana as a regional commercial hub, access to growth capital will become increasingly important. Banks alone cannot finance economic transformation. Neither can government.

Private capital must play a far greater role. But private capital follows confidence.

Confidence depends not only on audited financial statements but also on credible leadership, strategic clarity, governance standards and the ability to articulate a compelling long-term vision.

In many respects, communication itself has become a strategic capability. Companies no longer compete only for customers. They compete for investors, talent, strategic partners, regulators and public trust.

Businesses capable of clearly communicating where they are going often attract opportunities unavailable to businesses that merely explain where they have been.

That is not marketing. It is strategy.

Of course, vision without execution is dangerous.

Markets have every reason to be sceptical of exaggerated claims unsupported by evidence. The world has witnessed enough failed start-ups and inflated valuations to justify healthy caution. But scepticism should never become intellectual rigidity.

The question should not be whether a company has an inspiring vision. The question should be whether that vision is credible, measurable and supported by disciplined execution.

That is a far higher standard than simply asking for three years of audited accounts.

Profit will always matter. To me, to everyone in the sector. It keeps the lights on.

Indeed, in the long run, every successful business must justify its valuation through sustainable value creation. Markets eventually demand performance.

But performance rarely begins with profit. In my opinion, it begins with strategy.

The businesses that redefine industries first identify opportunities others overlook. They assemble exceptional people. They build capabilities competitors cannot easily replicate. They establish trust, attract capital and execute relentlessly.

Profit is the outcome.

Vision is often the starting point.

As Africa competes for global investment, entrepreneurial talent and technological leadership, our capital markets must become sophisticated enough to recognise this sequence.

Three years of audited accounts should remain an important part of investment decisions. They reveal discipline, governance and operational consistency.

They should not become the entire conversation.

The economies that lead the next generation of growth will not abandon financial discipline. They will expand it. They will deepen its meaning.

They will develop institutions capable of evaluating not only what entrepreneurs have built, but what they are capable of building.

Profit proves yesterday's execution. Vision shapes tomorrow's valuation. The most successful markets understand that both deserve disciplined scrutiny. And I can't wait for Ghana, Africa, to catch up.


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