



ABUNDANT AFRICA

Our decade to shape the African century

Africa stands at a pivotal point in its history – the choices we make now will influence our continent’s future and shape the wider world.

It’s time to tell a new story about Africa, one created by the agency and voices of all African citizens. It’s time to reimagine and grow a movement for change.

It’s time to act courageously on seven strategic shifts that bring us closer to the reality of shalom across Africa.

This is our kairos moment.

The African century



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

The 21st century will be the African century.

We have many opportunities:

We are growing. By the end of this century, two out of every five people in the world will be African and Africa will host the largest megacities ever built.

We are young. Africa is becoming the world's youngest continent. Our youth population is expected to have doubled by 2055 to around 450 million.¹

We are blessed. Africa's deep wealth of natural resources makes us the world's richest continent.

We are in a technical revolution. New smart technologies are disrupting how we work and accelerating innovation.

But we also face multiple crises:

Africa is cursed by poverty. After centuries of exploitation and underdevelopment, half of the world's 750 million people living in poverty are in Africa. This proportion is growing² and has been compounded by COVID-19.

We don't meet challenges on an equal footing. Five of the six most unequal countries in the world are in Africa³, and women are disproportionately affected by inequality.

Africa is fragile, home to six of the eight most fragile nations in the world.⁴

God's creation is dying. The climate emergency and a massive loss of biodiversity threaten our survival.

We cannot rely on traditional economic models that are founded on economic growth at the expense of the environment and future generations.

Whether good or bad, the scale of events on the continent will ensure that this will be the African century. The choices we make now will shape our story and the world.

[explore in more detail](#)

A Joseph kairos - a decade to build foundations

This is a kairos moment for the continent. A critical window for action to bring change, which has strong parallels to the story of Joseph in the Bible.⁵ When God spoke to Joseph through Pharaoh's dream, Joseph had seven good years to prepare before the seven years of famine. Today, Africa has around 10 years to build the right foundations to secure our future. To release, not stifle, the growth of youthful energy and creativity, so its growing youth demographic has a positive impact⁶; to co-create lifegiving ways to build our growing cities; and to mitigate the worst effects of the climate crisis.⁷

Africa is uniquely prepared to pioneer something new: an Abundant African economy that reduces poverty and inequality, honours human dignity, and nurtures the environment. This could be an economy that will lead and bless the world. To make this kairos choice, we first need a new African story.

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A shining and tragic historical legacy

Africa has been central to global affairs since its earliest recorded history. Egypt, Great Zimbabwe, Mali - African civilisations have created architectural wonders, centres of scholarship and prosperous societies that have captivated and shaped the world.

Despite this, Africa is now recovering from over half a millennium of external oppression and exploitative trade from slavery, colonialism, post-colonialism, the Cold War, and structural adjustment programmes.

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

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A new story - Abundant Africa



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

We are a continent of storytellers. Africa's 3,000 ethnic groups speak more than 2,100 diverse languages - but are united by our strong oral traditions. Stories shape economic realities⁸ and can make or break the dignity of a people.⁹

But what stories will we tell for this African century? Some say Africa is failing; it is wild, dangerous and hopeless, and it belongs to those who take it. Others say that Africa is rising; wealth, stature and power are growing - but this is ultimately a story of extraction, individualism and greed, for the benefit of just a few. Neither of these dominant narratives has given agency to the citizens of Africa, but instead they have empowered the elites.¹⁰

We see a new way, a generative story that places power and agency with all the people of Africa. Telling our stories will bring freedom. When each of us tells our story, we demonstrate our power and agency. When our stories join to become part of a greater narrative, the continent becomes powerful.

A movement of a million prophets and storytellers, aligned around common values, will give us a vision and way to walk together. The Abundant Africa narrative dares to dream of creating an economy and civilisation based on the values of relationship, freedom and social innovation, rather than the dominant global civilisation based on profit, control and technological progress. Our stories can drive and build our Abundant African economy.

This narrative is built upon Jesus' promise of shalom.

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Shalom and abundant life

This shalom is an abundant life that brings a deep state of wellbeing and rest, based on healthy relationships between God and people, between different people, between people and the rest of creation, and in our relationship with ourselves. We experience his shalom as God's kingdom becomes a holistic reality across all spheres in Africa - spiritual, social, cultural, economic, political and emotional - and as communities start to reflect his justice and righteousness.¹¹

The new story of Abundant Africa begins with African Christians defeating the curses of the past through the death and resurrection of Christ - yet it is a story where all Africans, Christian or not, will be able to experience wholeness, peace and operate with agency.

To create this, we need to build an economy of life. Unlike other narratives, this is founded not on endless growth and consumption to overcome scarcity, but rather on the abundance of life from God who provides enough for the needs of all, while also ensuring that life itself is not threatened by our economic activity.

At the heart of this economy of life are our African values, nurtured through generations, stewarded by our elders, and aligning closely with the underlying biblical foundations of shalom. These include:

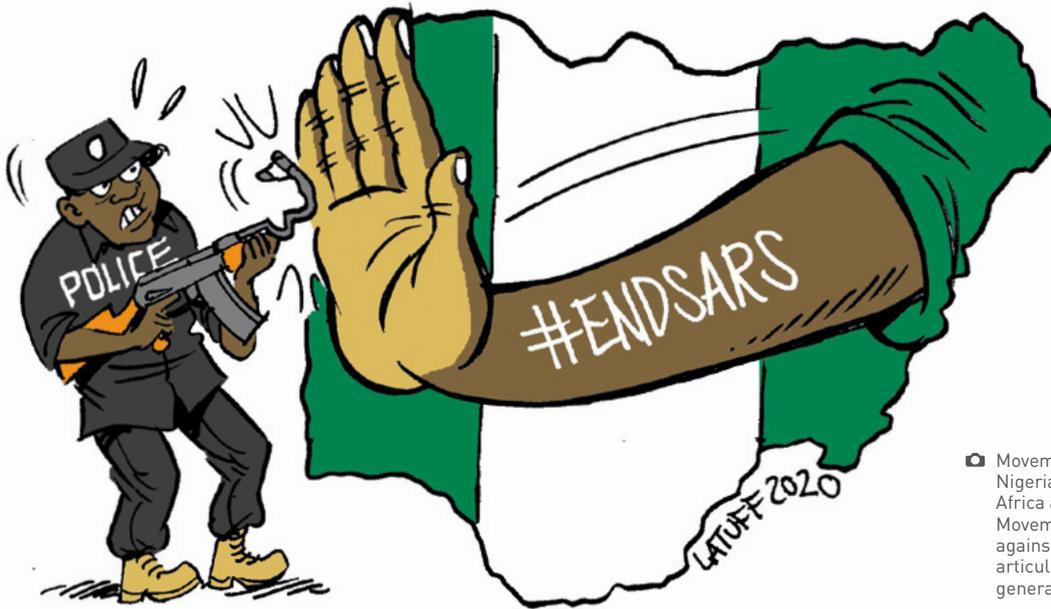
Innovation: Africa has always been a place of creativity. Much of this was crushed during slavery and colonialism - but by reclaiming our creation mandate we will see that, with Christ, we are each the solution to Africa's problems.

Freedom: Freedom is a strong theme in African political thought and culture, but we need to work to increase freedoms for all Africans. We need to trust Christ to set us free from the internal captivity of trauma and loss of identity; as well as the unfreedoms of external structural barriers and control by centralised elites through extractive institutions.

Ubuntu: Africa's deepest value is relational. Ubuntu means that all humans are interdependent and our abundance depends on the good of our communities and the environment. Promoting it is vital for fighting poverty, political conflicts, injustice and environmental challenges and for increasing accountability.¹²

This is not about rules or ideology, but relationship and obedience to the voice of God. From scripture and our context, we have identified guidelines for seeing an Abundant Africa become reality. We "have never been this way before"¹³, so we must look for the green shoots of hope that emerge as signposts of new life and trust that the Spirit of God, giver and sustainer of life, will work through each of the people of Africa to create an Abundant Africa.

What could an Abundant Africa movement look like?



📌 Movements like #EndSARS in Nigeria, #FeesMustFall in South Africa and Uganda's People Power Movement are pushing back against youth repression and articulating the ideas of a new generation. **Credit:** Carlos Latuff

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

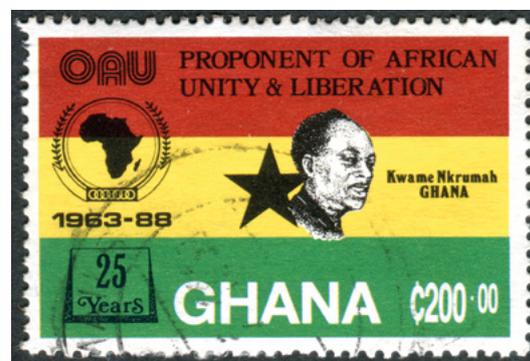
The scale of change we need for an Abundant African economy requires not just policy shifts but the wholesale transformation of lifestyles, institutions and systems. This will begin with a renewing of our minds, by telling our stories.

Churches in Africa are central to this endeavour given their theology, diversity, scale, relational networks, organising capacity, cross-society reach, and trusted position in society.¹⁴

Africa has already been shaped by powerful liberation movements, with many great Moses-like leaders fighting for freedom. However, like the biblical Israelites, since liberation, Africa has been walking in circles in the wilderness. We are free, but have not yet reached the Promised Land. We need to imagine how an Abundant Africa movement could take us out of the desert, over the Jordan River and into the Promised Land where we can experience shalom.

“Africa is no stranger to powerful social movements. Movements have shaped the story of our continent.”

To do this Africa needs a generational transition in leadership, from the Moses-like liberation leaders to a new Joshua generation, born in the metaphorical desert and not captive to the ideas and gods of Egypt. Their courage and skill will lead us into the Promised Land, but leaders of all generations are needed - to build bridges to overcome generational divisions, learn from one another and work together towards an Abundant Africa.

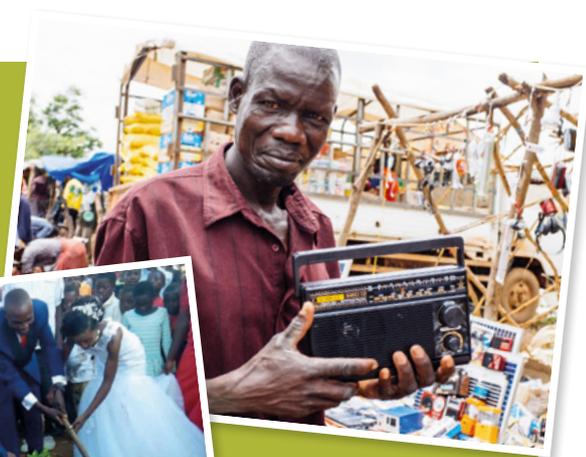


📌 Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana was one of the father's of Pan-Africanism and the OAU.

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Practical steps to grow the movement

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



1. Building agency

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

The growth of our agency begins as we consecrate ourselves to God through prayer, repentance, discipleship and leadership development. This prepares us to cross the metaphorical Jordan into our Promised Land. Without this consecration we will be unlikely to survive the rigours of movement leadership or, even worse, could lead people in the wrong direction back to Egypt!

To deeper discern God's voice together we must also gather intelligence to understand the needs of the most vulnerable in our society. We should live in proximity to people in poverty; grow our community research capacity; and engage strategically placed leaders within key institutions. Information should be shared in regular movement gatherings.

Strong movements are ecosystems held together by deep restored relationships. We must invest in and grow our technical skills for connecting relationships and building peace.

To sustain these skills, and our common values, we need new organisational wineskins to build strong inclusive institutions that can actually implement visions sustainably. This means strengthening national and continental church networks and grassroots community structures; learning to disciple keystone institutions to bring reformation; and pioneering digital systems that allow collaboration between institutions.

Creating an Abundant Africa will require resourcing on a scale far greater than anything we have seen before. We need to tackle theology that extracts money from poor congregants; organise systems for collaborative fundraising; and manage resources at a local level as much as possible. Churches must grow their faith in terms of the size and source of the budgets they manage.

2. Developing narratives

The Abundant Africa story will emerge as the voices of a million prophets - people from across the continent and at all levels of society - are blended and amplified. These narratives can help those in the movement align their values and strategies, even if they don't directly work together. Sharing our stories is often the first step in building a community of like-minded people.

The stories we share will explain our vision and be infused with our values, while reflecting and shaping who we are. With God we can establish a new collective identity in light of his story to create a larger understanding of "us" and to help us corporately throw off the shackles of past slavery. The church can lead in creating intimate spaces that include all citizens and institutions, where we can make the sacrifice of time and pain as we wrestle with our identities.

Alongside shared identity, a common vision can hold diverse people together. We should consider envisioning different scenarios for at least 30, or even 100, years into the future. Tools such as future scenario thinking and vision development processes can help communities plan and understand their purpose.

For storytellers to contribute their voices to an Abundant African narrative it's essential to prepare prophetic voices. We need to draw together different types of leaders from all walks of society - including artists, thought leaders, community leaders and marginalised voices - for a well-rounded voice to emerge.

📷 **Above left to right:** A couple in Malawi planting a tree during their wedding day as part of the Green Anglicans one tree, one couple holy matrimony campaign. Planting trees has been incorporated into a variety of life rites-of-passage celebrations such as marriages, baptisms, confirmations, birthdays and even Valentine's Day! **Credit:** Green Anglicans

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

Practical steps to grow the movement

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



Stories need messaging platforms in order to be heard. Digital media has transformed movements. We must learn to use social media platforms to democratise communications; build media coalitions with a shared narrative to mobilise people; while also cultivating complementary community-organising capacity in the physical world.

3. Creating accountability

Movements need ways to maintain internal discipline, influence change in others and hold wrongdoers accountable. A number of the areas described under building agency, such as discipleship and the development of appropriate institutions, will play an important role in creating accountability.

Advocacy and activism directly creates accountability by organising for change, alongside those affected by injustice, from outside a powerful institution. This can be done by: building continental coalitions around key advocacy topics for grassroots activists to influence national and continental policy; supporting activists being threatened by violence or arrest; developing training for emerging grassroots activists; and creating legal capacity to challenge injustice through the courts.

To keep ourselves accountable we need to have clear demands and a concrete plan and we must develop a culture of review and measurement to ensure that we are constantly assessing and improving our practices.

Preparation and persistence

Building agency, narrative and accountability will take preparation and persistence. Much of movement building is understanding what is needed in the future and preparing in line with that vision, so that when something happens you can catch the wave. Operating in these cycles of preparation and change takes persistence. One cycle is rarely enough to secure our objectives. It may take generations and, like with Moses and Joshua, others will complete our work once we are gone.

However, if we are faithful and courageous then we may be blessed enough to see the shifts needed for our dreams of an Abundant Africa to become a reality!



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

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Seven shifts for an Abundant Africa

We believe that seven key shifts need to take place in order for Africa to achieve a reality of shalom and that multiple actors need to play their part.

Learning from successful movements, we seek change across what society expects, what the law allows and what the economy incentivises. We have suggested ideas for both Christian leaders serving in secular jobs and the church's many institutional forms, as well as for national governments and the African Union (AU), as structures outside the church that are directly responsible to citizens. We have consulted widely in generating these ideas, but recognise they are at best the first step in a collaborative journey of discerning and following God's voice together.

“We aim to move beyond GDP to metrics that truly capture shalom for the wellbeing of people and the planet.”



1. From valuing growth to valuing wellbeing

We need to start with the end in mind. At the early stages of the African transformation, we have the opportunity to redefine productivity and find new ways of measuring it in line with African values and dreams for the future. We aim to move beyond GDP to metrics that truly capture shalom for the wellbeing of people and the planet. New metrics will help our governments and leaders deliver what is truly needed and promised. We invite church and movement leaders to join the Abundant Africa coalition in developing a People's Abundance Index, so together we can assess progress and advocate for shalom to be realised in our communities. We ask our governments and the AU to use citizen-generated data in their measurements and decision making so we can assess progress and hold duty bearers accountable.

[explore in more detail](#)

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

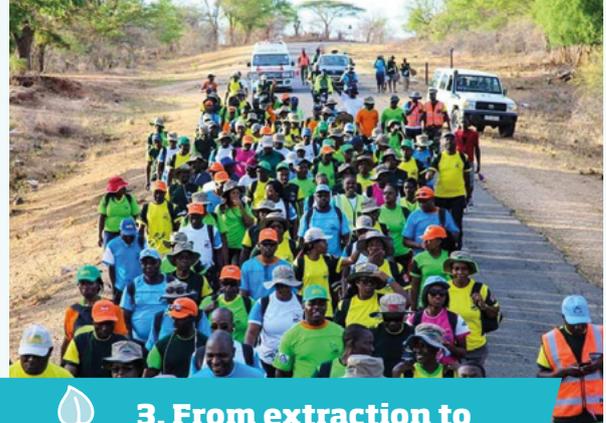
Seven shifts for an Abundant Africa



2. From dependence to innovation

We long to move from poverty to dignified livelihoods for all. Education that is inclusive, nourishing and prepares young people for their future. Work that is purposeful, beneficial and innovative; and founded on our ubuntu relationships through building on diversity, with a commitment to the common good. Our current economic and education systems are broken; they perpetuate dependence and they fail our young people. We see an opportunity for the church to lead in supporting and establishing community innovation and business hubs; vibrant local spaces for information and capacity sharing, entrepreneurship, innovation and business activation - with a particular focus on young people and women. We call on churches and governments to invest in and scale up inclusive education systems, including a digital infrastructure and curriculum that elevates entrepreneurship and innovation. We need governments and the AU to support and invest in business models and processes that foster innovation, inclusion and community values.

[explore in more detail](#)



3. From extraction to caring for creation

Across our history and our land, we see the prevalence and impact of extraction from the ground and from the people who live and depend on it. With the growing threats of the climate crisis and biodiversity loss, we recognise that we have not done enough to care for the wellbeing of people or the natural world that God made and on which we rely. As we rebuild from the COVID-19 pandemic we have an opportunity to invest in local community health systems and to reset our relationship with the natural world so that the whole of creation can flourish. We particularly focus on the land, which carries deep spiritual meaning as well as economic significance. Churches should model and teach inclusive and sustainable land use and management. We need governments and the AU to implement secure, inclusive and equitable land tenure systems, recognising ownership by local communities, indigenous peoples and women. We call on governments to incorporate solutions that protect and restore nature into national development and climate plans, deliver their commitments to invest in agriculture, and end subsidies to harmful extractive industries.

[explore in more detail](#)

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

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

Seven shifts for an Abundant Africa



4. From sprawling slums to lifegiving cities

Cities have the potential to be ecosystems for the services and support that enable human connectedness, dignified living, and innovation. But they are often divided, unequal and unsustainable. As our cities grow and many new ones are built, we look to the new Jerusalem as our model for an inclusive urbanisation agenda that brings life to communities and the environment. Churches, communities and governments should all play a role in establishing urban labs to collaborate on alternative visions of cities as inclusive spaces, and in supporting the development and scaling up of innovative construction technology and inclusive construction processes. Churches and church networks should support emerging grassroots urban movements, expand urban theological and practical training, and work with civil society to facilitate fair partnerships to create sustainable waste and energy services. Governments should include communities living in slums in all decisions that affect their homes.

[explore in more detail](#)



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

Africa's future will be determined by the agency of her citizens. Most African citizens do not feel they have a voice in government processes¹⁵ - with some groups particularly side-lined, such as young people, women and rural communities. But we are in a season of disruption, with new technology and challenges to hierarchical systems. This is a moment to empower citizens with the tools and connections for meaningful engagement in the decisions that shape their lives. Churches should identify local and national keystone institutions for deliberate discipleship, if they are inclusive; disruption, if they are extractive; or establishment, if they don't exist. Churches should build the capacity of church and community members to participate as legitimate stakeholders in governance systems. Governments should integrate digital strategies, create national and local multi-stakeholder dialogues, and measure civic participation in national and local policy processes as part of the performance management mechanism of the state and its leaders.

[explore in more detail](#)

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

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

Seven shifts for an Abundant Africa



6. From self-interest to ethical leadership

We long for leaders and citizens characterised by integrity and accountability. Corruption is a barrier to economic development, destroys trust and relationships, and frustrates the lives of ordinary citizens. We know that we need to rethink the function and ethos of leadership across all tiers and that this will require a strong will and commitment across sectors - starting with the church. Churches and Christian leaders should lead by example through repentance of past corruption and greed, discipleship, modelling values, driving leadership and advocacy. We call for greater accountability of business and governments, through transparent hiring and contracting practices and making payments from companies to governments public. The AU should show leadership through establishing an independent AU Common Good Protectorate with the power to investigate and monitor all trade, aid, land leasing, and resource concessions to ensure they are in the interests of the common good.

[explore in more detail](#)

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

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



7. From division to connection

Conflict and division take many forms, have long histories, and currently threaten every shift towards shalom that we seek. But ubuntu is a powerful force, providing the foundation for relationship, connection and a larger African identity. Peace and abundance are not achieved by one approach, one time; they require ongoing cultivation and may take years, even decades, to bear fruit.¹⁶ These are first steps towards long-term peace. We call on the church to develop pastoral capacity to help healing of trauma and recovery of identities and stories. Churches can play a role in transforming conflict and mediating peace through deploying mediation teams, observer groups, election monitors, and using their relationships to foster diplomacy to build trust and discuss solutions. Governments should proactively engage with churches, faith-based organisations and civil society as part of an integrated emergency response to deal with disasters, migration and peace building. Governments must turn the AU "Silencing the Guns" commitment into reality. The AU should support an end to the unfair and unjust profiling and targeting of young people in national security operations, protecting people's rights to protest peacefully and constructively call for change without being endangered.

[explore in more detail](#)

Join the Abundant Africa movement

This paper is a declaration of hope. Like Joshua and Caleb, we see the abundance of our Promised Land and, despite the giants that terrify many into unbelief, we bring a positive story to our people.

Abundant Africa aims to help start a conversation around how we shape the future of Africa. It has been written for African Christian leaders in the church and across society, but we welcome all to engage and bring their God-given pieces of the jigsaw puzzle to the table so that a clearer picture of an Abundant Africa story can emerge.

There is too much work here for one person, organisation or even denomination to do. Much in this report has already started and needs support. Other areas will need pioneering. We invite you to connect

with Abundant Africa to learn from others and find others with the same heart to collaborate on what you have already been called to do.

Together we will nurture the green shoots of hope to bring us closer to an Abundant Africa. We hope you will join us on this journey.

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A huge thank you to all our [contributors](#)

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