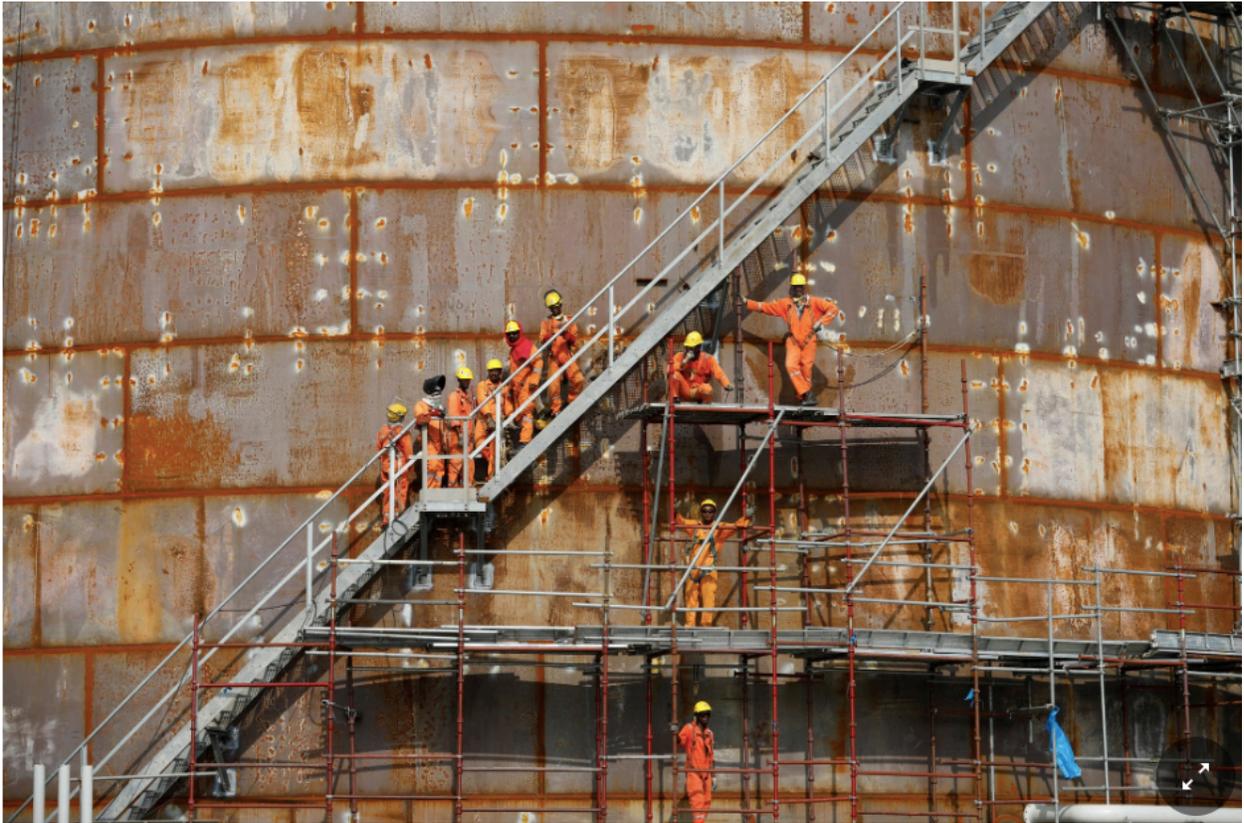


12.20.18



Africa's richest person, Aliko Dangote, is undertaking his most audacious gamble yet. Mr. Dangote is building a [\\$12 billion oil refinery](#) on 6,180 acres of swampland that, if successful,— could transform Nigeria's corrupt and underperforming petroleum industry. It is an entrenched system that some say has contributed to millions languishing in poverty and bled the "[giant of Africa](#)" for decades.

Planned as the world's largest refinery, Mr. Dangote's project is set in a free-trade zone between the Atlantic Ocean and the Lekki Lagoon, an hour outside the city center. The site employs thousands, and upon completion — Mr. Dangote says in 2020; some analysts suggest [more likely in 2022](#) — should process 650,000 barrels of crude oil daily. That's enough oil to supply gasoline and kerosene to all 190 million Nigerians and still have plenty to export.

Another 900 Nigerian engineers and technicians are being [trained abroad](#) for jobs at the refinery. Mr. Dangote, whose net worth is [estimated at \\$11.2 billion](#), has had to build a port, jetty and roads to accommodate this project, along with new energy plants to power it all.

Which means that even though Nigeria is Africa's largest oil producer, petroleum for everyday [use must be imported](#). This has spawned fuel importers and diesel traders who have grown extremely wealthy. [Nigeria's government subsidizes fuel imports to keep pump prices low, and](#) this has contributed to Nigeria's well-documented culture of [petroleum industry corruption](#).

“The failure to produce refined products over the last 25 years has created a huge architecture of graft and corruption around everything,” said Antony Goldman, the co-founder of the London-based Nigeria specialists ProMedia Consulting.

“A refinery that actually works and can meet Nigeria's refined product requirement? It's a game changer,” Mr. Goldman added. But change, no matter how positive, is potentially destabilizing. “These are not people who relinquish things without a fight,” Mr. Goldman said of Nigeria's fuel import merchants.

As his refinery nears completion, Mr. Dangote says he will soon focus on his [next dream](#), owning Britain's Arsenal football team. “Once I have finished with that headache, I will take on football,” he said. “I love Arsenal, and I will definitely go for it.”

12.18.18



In the village of Cook's Bay, on the remote side of the remote island of Erromango, in the remote South Pacific nation of Vanuatu, 1-month-old Joy Nowai was given hepatitis and tuberculosis shots delivered by a flying drone on Monday.

“I am so happy the drone brought the stick medicine to Cook's Bay as I don't have to walk several hours to Port Narvin for her vaccines,” her mother, Julie Nowai told a Unicef representative. “It is only 15 minutes walk from my home.”

Even paradise can be tough on vaccinators. Vanuatu is an archipelago of 83 volcanic islands. Many villages are reachable only by “banana boats,” single-engine skiffs that 12-foot waves sometimes roll over or smash into cliffs. Other villages are at the end of mountain footpaths that become bogs when it rains, which it does a lot.

https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/17/health/vanuatu-vaccines-drones.html?rref=collection%2Fsectioncollection%2Fworld&action=click&contentCollection=world®ion=stream&module=stream_unit&version=latest&contentPlacement=10&pgtype=sectionfront

12.17.18



Congo's Health Ministry says a newborn baby called Benedicte is the youngest survivor of what is now the world's second-deadliest Ebola outbreak.

The baby, who was admitted to an Ebola treatment center six days after birth, has recovered from the virus, medical officials say. Congolese are calling her the “young miracle.” The baby's mother, who also had Ebola, died in childbirth, the ministry said. “This is my first child,” said the child's father, identified only as Thomas. “I truly don't want to lose her. She is my hope.”

[In video footage shared by Unicef](#), Benedicte is shown in an isolated treatment area, cradled in the arms of health workers in protective gear or cuddled by Ebola survivors, called “nounous,” who can go without certain gear such as masks. The survivors are crucial with their reassuring presence, the ministry said.

Health experts have said the Ebola outbreak, the 10th in Congo, is like no other: Residents also face the threat of attack from armed groups and resistance from a wary population in a region that had never before faced an Ebola outbreak. Tracking the contacts of Ebola patients remains a challenge in areas controlled by rebels.

In October, [rebels killed at least 15 civilians](#) and abducted a dozen children in an attack in the center of the latest outbreak, Congo's military said. Congo is set to hold a presidential election on Dec. 23, with unrest brewing. The latest assessment by the World Health Organization, released on Thursday, calls the circumstances “unforgiving.”



12.13.18



A Hotline for the Broken-Hearted and the Poison-in-Hand

The hotline is thriving on the backs of a generous brigade of citizens brought together by a deeply rooted culture of volunteerism, stepping forward to help ease the load of Sri Lanka's [vast mental health problems](#) after a three-decade civil war that ended in 2009. About a half-dozen volunteers at a time staff

the hotline, in a small house down a nondescript alley. Sitting at their makeshift cubicles, they field about 90 calls a day.

One of the first counselors to come on board was Munas, 57, a marriage counselor and chairman of a mediation board in Kegalle city. He and his wife, a science teacher, have five children. Twice a month, he leaves home at 4:45 a.m. and walks to a bus station for the three-hour ride to Colombo.

One of Mr. Munas's most difficult calls was with a 30-year-old ethnic Tamil woman from a corner of the country devastated by the war. Relatives had stopped her from jumping with her infant daughter in front of a train, and they dialed the hotline. Her husband was an abusive alcoholic and she had painful kidney problems, she said. She couldn't see a way to keep going. But Mr. Munas was able to persuade her to try.

When the call was over, he took a break. "I drank a glass of water, walked for about 10 minutes to empty my head," he said. "Then I came back." At the end of his day, Mr. Munas boards the bus again, for a commute that will deliver him back home past midnight.

Asked what brings him to make the long journey all these years, his eyes glistened, his face brightened. From the pocket of his immaculate Chinese-collared shirt, buttoned to the top, he pulled out a business card. On the back was a verse of the Quran: "Saving one life is like saving the whole of humanity."



Five weeks after a pastor in the Netherlands started what seemed like a fairly ordinary church service, that service is still underway, a sort of pious filibuster relay that involves hundreds of people and shows no sign of stopping.

Bethel Church in The Hague is trying to prevent the deportation of an Armenian family that was denied asylum after almost nine years in the Netherlands, despite claims that they would be in danger if they returned to their homeland.

The church and its parent denomination, the Protestant Church in the Netherlands, are taking advantage of a Dutch law that, under most circumstances, prevents the authorities from conducting operations in a place where a religious service is being held. Their strategy is deceptively simple: Shelter the immigrant family in the church, and make sure a service is always being held.

“There are already more than 450 different priests, pastors, deacons, elders from around the country, every denomination, wanting to be put

on the rotation to participate in this service,” Axel Wicke, Bethel’s pastor, said in an interview on Thursday.

The Tamrazyan family — two parents and their three children, ages 21, 19 and 14 — have said that they left Armenia after receiving death threats over the father’s political activism. The people working with the family declined to say what political causes he was involved in, or who might want to harm him; the organization Freedom House rates Armenia, a small nation in the Caucasus, [as “partly free.”](#) with democratic institutions but limited political freedom or freedom of expression.