



## Leadership at the Centre of Africa's Investment Story

For many years, Executives in Africa has been an active participant **at AFSIC- Investing in Africa**, using the forum to track capital flows, understand investor priorities, and anticipate the leadership capabilities required to deliver successful investment outcomes across the continent. In this interview, **Sarah FitzMorris of Executives in Africa** shares her perspectives on the biggest opportunities driving growth and investment in Africa, the outlook for African leadership, and how Executives in Africa is supporting organisations and investors to build the leadership needed to succeed across African markets.

***Can you tell us about the work your organization is doing across Africa and the key sectors or initiatives you're most focused on right now?***

Executives in Africa specialises in placing senior leadership and C-suite executives across African markets, with a particular focus on financial services, healthcare, energy, and manufacturing. What distinguishes our work is that we don't operate as traditional recruiters; we function as business consultants who diagnose strategic challenges first, then find the leaders capable of delivering specific business outcomes.

Currently, we're heavily focused on three areas: energy transition, agriculture, and industrialisation. These sectors are seeing significant capital deployment, both from institutional investors in energy and agriculture and, increasingly, from family offices making long-term, generational bets on African industrialisation.

Our philosophy is simple: talent is infrastructure. The quality of leadership directly impacts funding outcomes and long-term returns. We work closely with investors and boards to ensure the right executive talent is in place before, or alongside, capital allocation, because even the best strategy fails without leaders who can execute in complex, evolving markets.

***What do you see as the biggest opportunities driving growth and investment on the continent today, and how is your company positioning itself to take advantage of these?***

The energy transition represents enormous opportunity, particularly distributed energy solutions and battery storage systems that address Africa's infrastructure gaps. Healthcare infrastructure and financial inclusion through technology are equally compelling, especially as regulatory environments mature and create conditions for sustainable growth.

We have positioned ourselves at the intersection of capital and talent. When investors evaluate African opportunities, talent quality is often their biggest risk factor. We work upstream in the investment process, helping funds and companies to build leadership teams that can execute in complex, multi-market environments. Our Africa-specific experience means we understand which leadership capabilities translate across markets, and which require deep local expertise.

The biggest challenge is that traditional executive search approaches do not translate to African markets. Executives cannot be parachuted in based solely on technical credentials or prior brand-name experience. Cultural intelligence, adaptability, and the ability to build authentic relationships matter as much as functional expertise, yet these capabilities are rarely assessed rigorously.

We have adapted by developing assessment frameworks that explicitly evaluate these critical but often overlooked traits: resilience, authenticity, and cultural agility. We also invest heavily in understanding each market's unique business culture. What works in Lagos differs fundamentally from Nairobi or Johannesburg, not just logistically, but in leadership styles, decision-making processes, and stakeholder management.

Our role is to ensure clients make the best possible appointment for their specific business requirements and market context, rather than simply hiring someone they already 'know and trust.' Comfort-based hiring often leads to costly mistakes. Our independent approach, and 17 years of systematic candidate assessment, enable us to distinguish between executives who interview well and those who will actually deliver results on the ground.

### ***How do you see the role of African leadership and innovation shaping the continent's economic future?***

The leaders of African businesses are absolutely the key to shaping the continent's economic future. They are founders and executives solving real problems on the ground, not waiting for perfect conditions or external solutions, but building with what is available and innovating out of necessity.

What we are seeing is a generation of leaders who are taking concepts long accepted as 'the norm' and completely redesigning them for African realities: distributed energy systems that bypass failing grids, mobile-first financial services that reach the unbanked, and healthcare delivery models that work without extensive infrastructure. This is not about copying what works elsewhere; it is about fundamental adaptation and creative problem-solving.

These leaders operate with a level of resourcefulness and resilience that is rare in more mature markets. They are comfortable with complexity, skilled at navigating uncertainty, and adept at building businesses where infrastructure, capital, and talent are constrained. This capability, building despite obstacles, is what will drive the continent's economic transformation.

The quality of Africa leadership therefore matters enormously. When African businesses are led by executives who truly understand their markets, can execute in ambiguity, and combine global best practice with deep local insight, sustainable growth and genuine value creation follow. Leadership quality is the continent's ultimate competitive advantage.

***You've been involved with AFSIC for a number of years - how has the platform supported your work or helped connect you to meaningful opportunities in Africa?***

AFSIC has been invaluable for understanding where capital is flowing and what investors are prioritising. The conversations here enable us to anticipate leadership needs 12- to 18 months before they become urgent. When we By understanding investment theses and strategic priorities, we can advise our clients more effectively on the leadership capabilities required to execute successfully.

Beyond business development, AFSIC creates a community of people who genuinely understand African markets. These relationships have led to board introductions, strategic partnerships, and collaborative opportunities that extend well beyond traditional recruitment mandates. It is a platform that recognises talent and leadership as central to investment outcomes, which aligns perfectly with our philosophy.

For more information on how Executives in Africa supports investors and organisations to build high-impact leadership teams across the continent, contact Sarah FitzMorris at [sf@executivesinafrica.com](mailto:sf@executivesinafrica.com) or visit [executivesinafrica.com](http://executivesinafrica.com).

**About AFSIC – Investing in Africa:**

**AFSIC – Investing in Africa** has become perhaps Africa's most important annual investment event. AFSIC is wholly focused on accelerating Africa's economic emergence by matching investment opportunities in Africa transforming Africa's business, trade and investment environment, sustainably growing Africa's economy at a continental scale.

**About African Investments Limited:**

**African Investments Limited**, operates two multi award-winning digital platforms, the African Investments Dashboard ([www.africaninvestments.ai](http://www.africaninvestments.ai)), connecting global investors with curated, high-quality investment opportunities across Africa, and the Africa Business Opportunities Dashboard ([www.businessopportunities.ai](http://www.businessopportunities.ai)), which matches business, trade and investment opportunities across Africa covering all business objectives, products, sectors and countries in Africa.

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