

2 MyNetWork



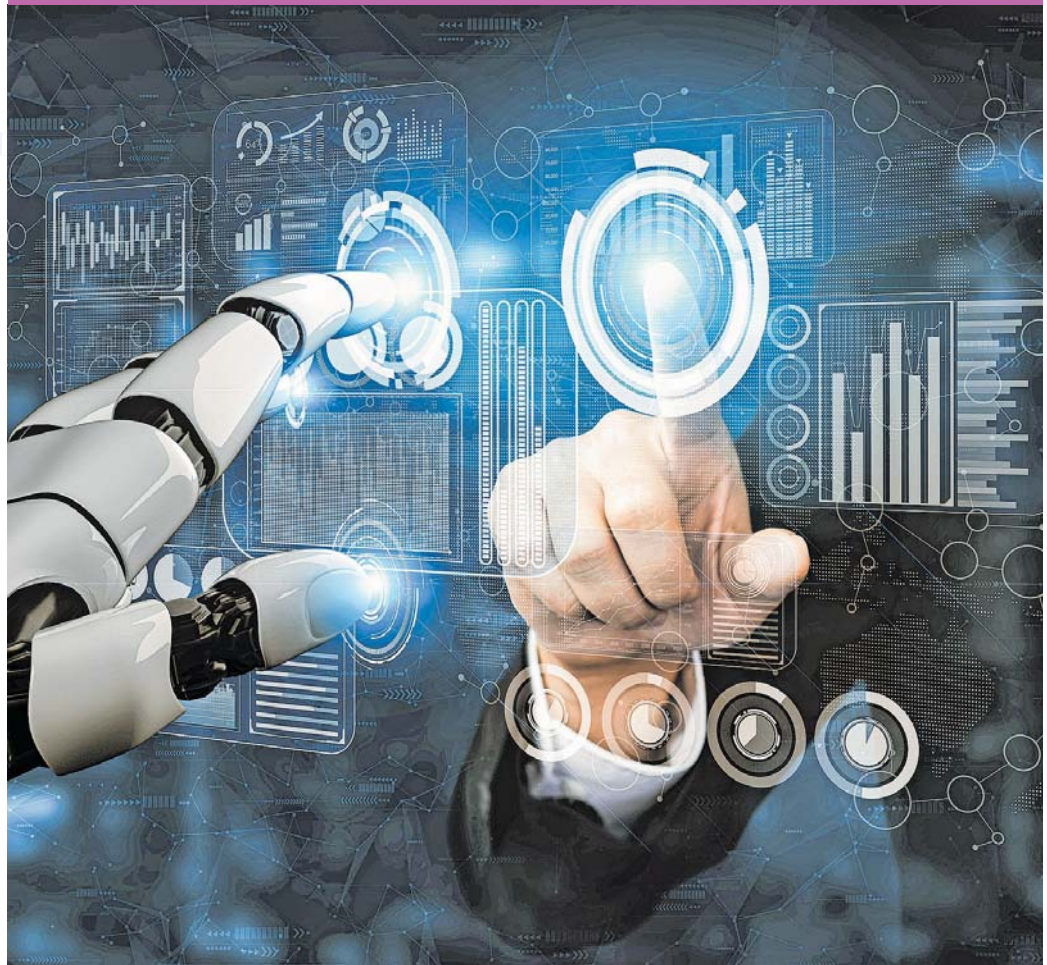
PitchSide Marion Serenge hesitated to follow in her father's football steps, but is now on her way to the U-17 World Cup **P.6**



Showbiz Emmy-nominated Sara Mitaru on her return to music after four-year hiatus **P.2**

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AI OVER TIME: LOOKING TO THE FUTURE



The youth express speculations on the potential of technology to subsequently achieve general intelligence **P.4&5**

MyNetWork Show Biz

Thomas Bosire

1. You've had an impressive career, including being the youngest and first Black woman in Africa to hold two United Nations ambassadorial positions. Can you tell us more about these roles?

As the youngest black woman to hold two UN ambassadorial positions, I've used my platform to drive social change. I spearheaded the Africans Act campaign and worked on projects with organisations like UN-Habitat. We aimed to shift the narrative surrounding Africa and showcase its artistic vibrancy. Art and social responsibility are inseparable. Despite the accolades, I hope my legacy will be the stories my music tells, resonating with listeners long after the titles are forgotten.

2. Can you share some highlights from your international performances?

I was in New York and I got to play in front of people like fashion designer Donna Karan at the prestigious Urban Zen; and sharing the stage with artistes like Femi Kuti, Marcus Miller, and Grammy Award-winner Ladysmith Black Mambazo. I have lent my voice to a project which Stevie Wonder was also involved in. Being an African woman and commanding at such a level just shows how far we have come and how much we have to offer.

3. Can you tell us about your first big song and how it came about?

It was written by my music producer and husband, called "You Said". I had been singing, but not on the popular space. He was the one who said that that was what I ought to have put my feet into. I had just been



Emmy-nominated Sara Mitaru's stellar more-than-a-decade dalliance in music

Sara Mitaru is a renowned Emmy-nominated musician, and accomplished songwriter. Born into a musical family in Nairobi, Sara's journey in music began at an early age, leading her to become one of Kenya's most celebrated artistes. Sara has performed at prestigious venues worldwide, collaborated with international stars, and used her platform for significant humanitarian efforts.

Her latest single, "Kele" featuring Nigerian artiste Johnny Drille, marks her triumphant return to the music scene after a four-year hiatus. The song, which means "Can I be your girl" in Pidgin, has already garnered attention in 10 different countries. With a career spanning 15 years, Mitaru's activism work includes spearheading the Africans Act campaign to highlight famine in East Africa, which saw responses from artistes like Coldplay. She was the first female musician to perform live before heads of states during an African Union summit in Addis Ababa.

singing live shows. He wrote the song, Bien lent his voice and it just blew up.

This song was a turning point when it was released about ten years ago; around 2014. If it's in your purpose, God will make a way. It's a case of being surrounded by people who believe in you.

4. What genre is your music, and how would you describe your approach to song-writing?

I sing Afropop. I can also perform and sing other genres. It's never about the genre but how good the song makes people feel, according to my husband. For me, it's not about the genre but the emotional impact of the song. This focus on emotion and connection is evident in every note I sing.

People inspire my music. I have a song about one of my relatives who has dementia. Can you imagine, you have loved someone for sixty years only for them to forget your name; how terrible is that? Being able to tell stories from different perspectives is what drives me.

5. As an artiste who has achieved so much, what are your remaining goals and aspirations?

I feel like I haven't even started. I constantly feel like I have so much to learn; I haven't scratched the surface of what I feel I would like to do musically. I'm grateful for every moment and every opportunity, as each one means something, a lesson.

6. Your music career has expanded into writing for films. Can you tell us about your recent work with Netflix features?

I just finished working on two Netflix features as a songwriter. This is something I am excited about. I was in a team but—being listed as a songwriter, which has not been done before—you don't usually hire songwriters. The two features were "Volume" and "Disconnect 2. Storytelling is at the heart of a good song; being able to paint a good picture that is relatable and makes people feel a certain way. This experience has opened up a new avenue for me to combine my love for music and narrative in a different medium.

7. What challenges did you face in your career, especially when transitioning to the global stage?

My biggest challenge has always been inside of me. Truly believing there's something bigger in you that you're supposed to do in this world. The realm of possibility opens up in a way that is shocking when you own the truth about what you carry. That war is really the biggest obstacle. I was always my greatest enemy... have always been my greatest enemy.

8. You and your husband host a monthly show called Ash. How did this start, and what impact has it had on the local music scene?

"Ash" started with just eight people in a coffee shop. The story behind it was that nobody was calling me to sing at their gigs, so my husband suggested we do our own thing. I came up with an idea to perform a happy, sad, and angry song. Those eight people had a ripple effect and then, before we knew it, we had a database of 1000 people. We started inviting artistes, and the events became fully-booked. The whole point was to introduce a songwriter to write Ash. It's become a platform for both established and up-and-coming artistes to showcase their talent and connect with audiences in an intimate setting. It's been amazing to see how it's grown and the collaborations it has sparked.

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Sara Mitaru-Kimanthi performing on stage.
PHOTO | FILE

The Hustler



A China plot comes about as Safara feels hustled by Rich Li

BY MIKE SAFARA

My Kenyan “u-celebrity” as MaK Sudi, making fun of the ‘O’one on IG and ‘X’ (why did Elon change it from Twitter? It sounds like a blue movie website) didn’t last long.

Two reasons: because the protests were soon to end with a peaceful protest concert in the park; and also because the nature of social media “haikubali...”

In other words, while ‘Makmende’, the Kenyan Superhero (the first meme *manenos* to ever go viral, by the way, that it was even broadcast by MacKenzie of CNN back in mid-2010s), ‘Mak Sudi,’ my anti-super-villain character only lasted as a fad in that first week of July.

That did not stop me dreaming of becoming an “Influencer,” and making money off content creation. After all, if 20-year-old Gen Zees can do it, why not me; Mike Safara, a man with 39 solid years of life under his belt?

They say if you can picture your “hustle” and want it badly in body, mind and soul, the Universe will conspire to conjure up your vision for you. So, two Sundays ago, I got on my knees beside my bed – in the flat whose rent was due two days before – and asked the Lord to “please let me be an influencer in the near future, and create content for cash...”

They say the Lord works in mysterious ways, and none could have been more so than Zhang Li, the owner of the Gang Dong China Mall, calling me on Monday morning to ask that I drop by his “office”.

Clearly, Zhang Li had no idea that my moment in the sun was already at social media sunset; and I wasn’t going to tell him that.

Mike Safara



I put it in quotes because that office of his is little more than a back-room store, stuffed with unopened boxes of all things, from plastic toys to cheap combs, never mind that the man is a multi-millionaire.

“Your *Big Men* (sic) want to live like tycoon off the blood, sweats and tears of common manna-nyin-chi,” Li had once told me. “They refuse to be *ham-bro* serve of the peoples. Is why China is strong and why...”

He had let the sentence diplomatically drift away...

“I see you are back from Zhuhai, rafiki Li,” I greeted the “mall mandarin,” me a bit dusty and sweaty from a boda boda ride where the guy had used a shortcut through a long path full of red dust, to my chagrin.

“I see you have become important guy on the Kenyan Internet,” the little man smiled. “Mac Cow

Soodi?”

I said: “I am impressed. I didn’t know you had time to keep up with Kenyan trends, sir?”

“China wakati, it true,” Li said: “But my daughter show me Macau Soodi on phone, I say I know the guy!”

“And you said I must meet this new Kenyan star first thing Monday morning,” Mr Li, “I chuckled out. “Thaz why I like you, Maiklo,” Li said, laughing heartily. “You always have *verrr* good jokes...”

Then getting down to business, Zhang Li told me that in a week’s time, some Chinese investors were coming down to Kenya. He had hired a white consultant called Michael Fossel to explain the macro-economics of Kenyan investment, and he wanted me to be the ‘micro-economic’ guy, with my ‘new power’.

Clearly, Zhang Li had no idea that my moment in the sun was already at social media sunset; and I wasn’t going to tell him that.

“Sure,” I said, “you know I’ve tried all hustles – Air BnB, hail taxi services, mall salesman... I am an expert in failing forward, whatever that phrase means.”

“I have booked Seven in Mombasa for two week for the seminar,” Li chirped. “Owner Seven long friend of mine for many a year, and general manager Tuva is very professional guy. All expenses paid.”

“How many guests are coming to Kenya for this business seminar, rafiki Li?”

“And how much are you paying me for those...?” I did finger arithmetic, “15 working days, sir?”

“500 American dollars,” Zhang Li said, without skipping a beat.

“I will do it for 1,500 dollars, sir,” I said. “That’s just 50 dollars per person from China.”

“Five fifty.”
 “1200 dollars?”
 “Six hundred.”
 “A thousand dollars.”
 “Six fifty...”
 “Okay, nine hundred dollars.”
 “Seven hundred...”

We eventually settled on 750 dollars because the mean millionaire wouldn’t even agree to \$800.

That’s a lousy 25 dollars a Chinaman, or a total of Sh96,180 for two weeks work, or Sh6,412 daily, or Sh3,206 per businessperson daily for 15 days of work from hard-driving taskmaster Mr Zhang Li.

The man was so used to haggling over everything, that it simply did not occur to him how badly I needed that cash – a third of which would go to rent, another third to Neo’s fee balances, leaving me with just Shs 32,060 to live on for 31 days (*hio sixty bob hapo muisho tutoe tu, tununuwe Nation, ama?*)

Then, because this is the luck of a “safara,” that very first Tuesday of July there are all those “Maandamano” chaos, and tycoon Zhang Li calls me on my phone that evening, and says “Solee Safala, but because fear of riots, my China peoples they are cancel the seminar. Mombasa al-so verr bad. Poli!”

I went to bed, fighting back a hustler’s tears, like I am nine instead of 39. No prayers this night.

Next morning, I see a foreign number calling, and when I answer, a loud American voice booms: “It’s Michael Fossel, the macro-financial consultant hired alongside you by our mutual Chinese pal.”

“He is called Mr Zhang Li,” I said formally, “and our payments have gone down the protest toilet...”

“It’s a turdy time, namesake,” this Fossel said, “but I managed to pull some chestnuts out of the fire.”

“What does that mean?” I asked.

I could hear the smile in the man’s voice as he said: “You and I and Mr Li’s daughter, Karen, are gonna go next week to a placid place in Lamu called Jana House and we’ll figure out how to digitally sell stuff. On-Live shopping, etc. Miss Li is good at it, y’know, the way Asians are tech smart? They’ll beat us to AI.”

(Here, I assumed by ‘us,’ he meant Americans).

“Then we will move onto Malindi for another week, Safon Gardens, and do a demo there, ‘n have fun.”

Fun for me is money, so I said: “That’s all cool, but if the Chinese chaps aren’t coming, who’s paying us?”

“It’s still Zhang,” Fossel said. “You get your full sum, I get just a third of what we’d agreed on if seminar was on – just 5,000 bucks – and together we teach his daughter Karen Li, she’s just 29, all she asks to know.”

I wasn’t listening, because number 4 had shocked me! The mzungu consultant was getting over Shs 44,000 a day for his consultancy service, whilst I was to be paid just over twice that sum for a fortnight.

“It’s a take it or leave it deal, Mike,” Michael said. “Lamu, or bust.”

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Movie Review



FURIOSA: A MAD MAX SAGA

BY MICHAEL OCHIENG

Where: Prime Video, Apple TV
Genre: Action, Adventure.

Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga roars onto the screen, a relentless symphony of dust, metal, and heart-pounding action. George Miller, the visionary behind the *Mad Max* franchise, once again takes us on a wild ride through the scorched wasteland, and this time, it’s Furiosa’s turn to shine. Miller’s mastery lies in his ability to create a world that feels both familiar and utterly alien. The sun-baked desolation, the rusted machinery, and the frenetic car chases, all are dialled up to eleven! The camera work is kinetic, capturing every bone-rattling collision and desperate escape.

Anya Taylor-Joy steps into the iconic role of Furiosa, and she owns it. We witness her evolution from a haunted, one-armed captive to a fierce warrior with a purpose. Taylor-Joy brings vulnerability and grit, making Furiosa more than just an action hero. Her chemistry with the equally impressive ensemble cast Chris Hemsworth as a charming rogue, and Yahya Abdul-Mateen II as a mysterious wanderer is electric.

Beneath the explosions and tyre-squealing madness, Furiosa surprises with emotional resonance. We learn about Furiosa’s past, her scars, and the fire that drives her. It’s a story of survival, revenge, and redemption. Miller doesn’t shy away from the human cost of this brutal world, and it hits hard. When Furiosa stands tall, battered but unbroken, we cheer for her triumphs and mourn her losses.

Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga isn’t just a movie; it’s a visceral experience. It’s a love letter to practical effects, to storytelling that transcends dialogue, and to the power of resilience. While it doesn’t quite match the narrative perfection of *Fury Road*, it’s a worthy addition to the franchise. So buckle up, hold on tight, and let the fury flow.

Witness Furiosa’s legend unfold a beacon of hope in a world gone mad.

Artificial intelligence (AI) has recently been hailed as a tool that can be used to make things simpler and life much easier.

Though we are still far from experiencing its full potential, some tech-forward young Kenyans talk about how they are applying the current versions of AI in their day to day.

BY MICHAEL OCHIENG

In the annals of technological progress, the evolution of artificial intelligence (AI) stands as a testament to human ingenuity and relentless pursuit. While achieving true general intelligence remains speculative, our journey toward it is marked by exciting discoveries, ethical considerations, and the promise of a future where AI systems can reason, learn, and adapt like humans. As we embrace these speculations, we must tread carefully, ensuring that our creations serve humanity's best interests.

Let us embark on a journey through time, tracing the emergence of AI; from its nascent beginnings to the present day, where it shapes our lives in ways unimaginable just a few decades ago.

1950s: The Birth of AI. In the 1950s, computing machines were mere calculators, giant abacuses crunching numbers. Yet, amidst vacuum tubes and punch cards, visionaries like Claude Shannon birthed the idea of intelligent machines. Enter Theseus, a remote-controlled mouse that navigated labyrinths and remembered its path, a humble precursor to AI's grand odyssey.

2000s: The Rise of AI Fast-forward to the 21st century. AI, once a whisper, now roars. The last two decades witnessed a seismic shift. Picture a graph: AI's initial performance languished below human capabilities, but then it crossed the zero line. Suddenly, machines outshone us in handwriting recognition, language understanding, and image categorisation. Our phones wield AI like a wizard's wand, transcribing our speech and deciphering our photos.

2020s and Beyond: The Uncharted Frontier as we stand on the precipice, what lies ahead? Quantum leaps in AI await, neural networks that dream, algorithms that compose symphonies, and robots that ponder existence. The future beckons, and the architects, hold the blueprint.

As we brace ourselves, the saga of artificial intelligence continues, a symphony of silicon and soul. However, Artificial intelligence could spell the end of humanity. Elon Musk warned at the world's first summit on AI safety. The billionaire said he believes the technology poses an "existential risk" because it will be the

The quest for general intelligence



Tracy Muthoni, 23. Intern at Multan Production (A Film Industry) shared her input on AI to My Network. PHOTO | POOL

first time in history that humans will have faced anything more intelligent than themselves. We speak to four futuristic individuals embracing speculations on the evolution and potential to achieve general intelligence.

Derick Pambah, 23.

Service Desk Intern, IT department, Nation Media.

Artificial intelligence (AI) is the capability of machines or computers to autonomously think and generate various solutions. It mirrors human intelligence, which encompasses our thought processes, decision-making, and problem-solving abilities. However, AI lacks the emotional component inherent in human intelligence. While humans are naturally creative and can innovate without extensive data analysis, AI excels in scalability, accuracy, and processing large volumes of data swiftly to provide solutions within set timeframes.

Computer science is a comprehensive field, and AI is a significant part of it. Having studied Bachelor of Science in Computer Science, which includes AI as a fundamental course, at Machakos University, I can attest to its importance. For those interested in AI, whether as researchers, programmers, or enthusiasts, computer science provides essential knowledge. It's the foundation for understanding AI's problem-solving capabilities, especially when dealing with vast amounts of unstructured data. This data requires structuring and analysis to derive solutions.

AI encompasses various learning methods, such as supervised, unsupervised, and reinforcement learning, each playing a crucial role in the field. In supervised learning, models are trained with labeled data to predict outcomes, such as distinguishing between wine and spirit bottles based on colour. Unsupervised learning involves teaching the model to identify patterns in unlabelled data and group them accordingly. Reinforcement learning uses random data to teach the model to recog-



Wynne Onkoba, 23. Graduate from Machakos University with Bachelor of Sciences in Telecommunication and IT gave his input on AI to My Network. PHOTO | POOL

nise patterns from previous data sets and apply this knowledge to new, similar data. These methods enable AI to learn and make accurate predictions.

Artificial intelligence (AI) is revolutionising various fields, with cybersecurity being significantly impacted. As AI advances, it enhances our ability to protect against cyber threats. In cybersecurity, AI models are trained to detect and predict hacking patterns, preventing breaches by identifying suspicious activities. These models, trained on vast datasets, can recognise potential traps and malicious links, safeguarding users from social engineering attacks on platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and via emails. Companies like Cloudflare are at the forefront of combating hacking, while VPN (virtual private network) providers leverage AI to support security. Additionally, AI-powered Chatbot on social platforms and within companies can monitor conversations for malicious intent, intervening before any harm reaches users. AI's role in cybersecurity is crucial, offering proactive defense mechanisms against an ever-evolving digital threat landscape.

Nichole Ochieng, 23.

Intern at Lafey Construction



Derick Pambah, 23. Service Desk Intern, IT department, Nation Media shared his views on AI with *My Network*. PHOTO | POOL

acts. The process starts with conceptualisation and scriptwriting, then moves to planning, shooting, editing, and culminates in marketing and distribution. My exposure to film equipment has been transformative; I've developed an appreciation for lighting and familiarised myself with advanced gear lighting equipment like 2.5k and 1.8k lights, along with diverse camera setups. It's a fulfilling experience for those who are passionate about filmmaking.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has significantly impacted the film and production industry by enhancing visual effects (VFX), streamlining pre-production tasks, and improving efficiency. AI tools automate processes like script analysis, budgeting, and scheduling, allowing filmmakers to focus on creativity. It also aids in marketing by analysing data to optimize release schedules and audience targeting.

AI's role in visual effects has revolutionised filmmaking, enabling the creation of complex scenes that were previously impossible. AI algorithms can analyse and classify objects in a scene, streamlining the addition of VFX elements. This not only saves time and resources but also improves the quality of films. AI-driven tools can generate computer simulations of faces, allowing for realistic scenes without risking actors' safety. Moreover, AI assists in spotting irregularities in motion capture and facial recognition, ensuring smoother animations. The integration of AI in VFX is altering dramatically the way filmmakers bring their visions to life, offering new creative possibilities and reducing production costs.

The future of AI in visual storytelling is assured to transform the industry, offering new dimensions of creativity and engagement. AI will enable the creation of personalised, immersive narratives that resonate emotionally with audiences. AI-driven storytelling will enhance media through interactive experiences, where viewers can influence the narrative, and through advanced visual effects that bring stories to life in unprecedented ways. As AI technology advances, it will open up new possibilities for storytelling, making it more dynamic, personalised, and ethically conscious. The integration of AI in visual storytelling is not just about generating images or videos; it's about crafting narratives that deeply connect with viewers on an emotional level.

Wynne Onkoba, 23.
Graduate from Machakos University with Bachelor of Sciences in Telecommunication and IT

In campus, I led the Google Developer Students Club. Many sought programming skills, yet few pursued AI and machine learning. The public's understanding of AI's applications in Kenya is limited, highlighted by Citizen TV's Swahili segment in Machakos. Meanwhile, Western countries advance rapidly in AI. Currently, we're shifting from



Nichole Ochieng, 23. Intern at Lafey Construction Company gives her input on AI for *My Network*. PHOTO | POOL

narrow AI to general AI. In Kenya, we're still grasping AI's essence and its potential applications across various sectors. Despite concerns about negative impacts, AI's benefits are vast. It's transforming the IT industry, particularly for UI/UX (User Interface/User Experience) designers. My last four years have been different from the first two; coding has evolved. Previously, it involved extensive research and integration of others' work. Now, with AI models like Codex and GPT (generative pre-training transformer), I can generate code in seconds. This ease of access to information and rapid development is restructuring our approach to building and innovation.

The initial observation is the prevalence of narrow AI, which are computer models designed for specific tasks requiring human intelligence, primarily in text processing. This AI extends to medicine and robotics. However, narrow AI has already introduced negative impacts, such as the potential loss of human skills and employment. In Western countries, supermarkets employing AI have replaced human workers, affecting families and individuals striving to support their loved ones. The advent of general AI could amplify these effects, making it crucial to address the displacement of human la-

bour by AI technologies. The second concern is social disruption. Decades ago, AI's impact was minimal, but it has since significantly influenced Western cultures. Africa is still catching up with AI advancements. Western societies have integrated AI for years, leading to cultural shifts and societal changes. Recently, Mark Read, CEO of WPP (Wire and Plastic Product Company) was the recent target of AI deep fake scam. Even though the scam was unsuccessful, it prompted a review of AI model construction policies due to the proliferation of deepfakes. This incident underscores the urgent need to address the ethical implications of AI in society.

We've witnessed significant advancements in AI, ensuring robust data models. However, AI lacks self-awareness and the ability to make ethical decisions autonomously. While we can't predict every scenario, we can design AI models within specific parameters to prevent misuse. For instance, surveillance AI in China aids police in monitoring cities for safety but could also be misused for privacy invasion. Thus, it's crucial to create AI models with clear boundaries to ensure they serve beneficial purposes without overstepping ethical limits.

Company

Artificial Intelligence significantly enhances our efficiency. In my field of study, civil engineering, if I require a design, I no longer need to dedicate hours to it. Instead, I simply run my program, and it's completed for me. This not only boosts efficiency but also ensures precision in tasks that are beyond human capability. A well-programmed system effectively eliminates the margin for error. For instance, in 3D printing, if this feature is included, it will greatly improve efficiency. Additionally, the use of prefabricated components that can be assembled on-site will undoubtedly be beneficial.

I recently watched a documentary on self-driving vehicles, which highlighted a prevalent application of AI. The documentary featured a scenario where an autonomous vehicle had to choose between hitting a human or a post. The vehicle opted to hit the post, but the system was flawed, causing it to repeatedly hit posts and become unresponsive to reprogramming. This incident was both intriguing and unsettling, as it demonstrated machines making irreversible decisions beyond human control. It was a sobering reminder of the importance of rigorous testing

and ethical considerations in AI development.

From my upbringing, I've been instilled with the value of hard work. However, the greatest challenge lies in decision-making. We are programmed to perform tasks as humans, but where do we draw the line between right and wrong in AI? AI determines right and wrong based on the data it's given, but humans are guided by emotions, which can lead us down different paths. The emotional aspect presents a significant challenge. Moreover, the world is constantly changing, and these rapid changes pose additional difficulties.

So, a little later, let's consider the integration of AI into our daily work, particularly in the engineering field. If we develop robots capable of performing tasks currently done by humans, and we program them to do so effectively, it could potentially result in job displacement. This is a con-

cern that we should address as we move forward with technological advancements.

It is certainly a moderate approach. We must embrace it, as it's becoming universal. I understand the need to find new ways to integrate it into our systems so that we can co-exist with it, not oppose it. It's designed for that purpose, but there are fundamental principles that we, as humans, must first grasp before we can teach these to the models. And while it may replace certain functions, there will always be aspects that require the human mind and perspective.

Tracy Muthoni, 23.
Intern at Multan Production (in the film industry)

As a final-year student at the University of Nairobi, I pursue a Degree in Bachelor of Arts in Literature and Performing Arts, specialising in Film Studies. Film, to me, is storytelling through visual

MyNetwork Pitchside



In her blood Marion's father played for Harambee Stars, Tuger FC and AFC Leopards

Making Kenyan football history despite initial doubt

BY TOTO AREGE

Forward Marion Serenge, 16, is currently a form four student at Archbishop Njenga Girls High School in Kakamega County.

She was among the eight students who made history with the Kenya Under-17 girls' team, qualifying for the 2024 World Cup for the first time in the history of Kenyan football.

Starlets achieved a remarkable 5-0 aggregate victory over Burundi on June 16 this year, securing their place in the upcoming World Cup in the Dominican Republic, scheduled to take place from October 16 to November 3, 2024.

Serenge notably contributed with two goals in that match.

In keeping with the notion that the apple doesn't fall far from the tree, Serenge has followed in her father's footsteps in pursuing a career in football.

Her father, Fred Serenge, is a former Kenya International who represented prominent clubs such as AFC Leopards and Tusker FC in the Football Kenya Federation Premier League (FKF-PL).

Take us on a journey through your football career.

My football journey started during my high school years under the guidance and influence of my father.

It all began when I decided to join the football team in my second year

of high school, where my dad is also the school head coach.

Initially, I had reservations due to the physical demands of the sport and my fear of getting injured. The thought of actively participating in football hadn't crossed my mind at that point.

Despite my initial concerns, I eventually embraced football wholeheartedly and now find myself on the brink of making a mark on the global football stage.

Watching my father coach my peers at Njenga Girls during evening matches sparked a fire within me to pursue the sport. And the rest, as they say, is history.

If it weren't for football, what other path do you think you would have taken?

Given my strong affinity for drama festivals, I could have explored a career in dancing and acting.

Which football competitions do you feel you performed exceptionally well in?

I gave my all during the Chapa Dimba na Safaricom Tournament in Kakamega County last year, where I was honoured as the Most Valuable Player.

Additionally, I was part of the Talanta Hela Under-19 team that competed in Spain for the Costa Daurada Cup earlier this year.

Our team finished as the runners-up in a closely contested match

Marion Serenge of the Junior Starlets celebrates after scoring one of her braces against Burundi in the U-17 World Cup Qualifying Match at Ulinzi Sports Complex, Nairobi. PHOTO | CHRIS OMOLLO



This opportunity is crucial, and I remain optimistic that scouts from elite clubs worldwide will take notice of our performances. It is now time to showcase Kenyan football to the world.

How did it feel scoring for the national team?

In the third qualifier round, where we triumphed over Ethiopia with a 3-0 aggregate victory, I received encouraging messages from dad before the match.

Despite not scoring in that match, my dad urged me to make him and the nation proud by sticking to the coach's instructions. In our next match, against Burundi, he also wished me well. I promised not to let him down and scored two goals. The feeling was out of this world. I achieved what my dad did not achieve as a player.

Both dad and mum were in attendance for our final match against Burundi at Ulinzi Sports Complex in Nairobi to cheer me up, and this was encouraging.

Balancing academics and co-curricular activities is undoubtedly challenging for a Form Four student preparing for the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education exams. How do you manage your time effectively for both?

There is time for everything in life. While our days are consumed by academic pursuits, our evenings are reserved for training on the field to maintain physical fitness.

Education and career are equally important, and I have to create time and balance both.

I am grateful for the initiatives supported by the Ministry of Sports and the Ministry of Education, which have been instrumental in facilitating this balance.

Has your family played a significant role in your career development?

I view my family's involvement in my football journey as a series of interconnected experiences. My younger sister, Queensly Mumasi, who is in fifth grade, has also developed a keen interest in football and plays as a striker.

My elder brother, Kevin Amwayi, excels as a striker for Kakamega Homeboyz in the FKF-PL and has been a tremendous source of inspiration for me. I look up to him for guidance and motivation.

Our mum, Maximila Shikanga, pursued a different sporting path, having played rugby for Kabras Women RFC before retiring five years ago, but she has been there for me. My family cheers me on during our home matches.

My father has been my role model, mentor, and coach. I looked up to his prime playing days and always harboured a desire to emulate him; although I hesitated to follow in his footsteps, initially.

What is your favourite meal?

Fries and chicken.

Who is your football role model?

I hold Brazilian International Striker Ceyser da Silva Ferreira, who plays for Manchester United in the Women's Premier League (WPL), in high esteem.

Additionally, my father serves as a source of inspiration and guidance in my football journey.

Aside from playing as a forward, in what other positions can you excel?

I can play as a right or left winger, striker, or center-forward.

Beyond academic pursuits and football, how do you spend your time?

I enjoy swimming, shopping, dancing, and traveling.

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CORRECTION



In a story published in My Network on July 12, 2024, on PitchSide, where the interview subject was Ulinzi Sharks handball player Sarah Wasike (with ball in hand in the photo above), we erroneously used the photo of another player in action with her during a match in the past.

We sincerely apologise to Sarah Wasike for the mix up in the images published in the story about her stellar sporting achievements.

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