

# THE INCREDIBLE RISE OF AFRICAN RUGBY

Key facts and figures





When it comes to the biggest rugby nations, it would be easy to assume that the most fanatical supporters would be found in the old guard of England, New Zealand, and South Africa. But few countries can rival the passion and energy of African rugby.

## AFRICA RUGBY'S NEW PASSIONATE FRONTIER

In a continent known for great footballing nations, the oval ball has been Africa's best-kept secret for decades, and the love affair continues to blossom. **Rugby is the fastest growing sport in Africa**, and the popularity of the sports discipline is booming all over the continent, which has one of the fastest-growing fan-bases in the world since 2013.

### Rugby Africa, World Rugby's African association

Rugby wouldn't have taken off in African countries without the hard work and dedication of Rugby Africa, World Rugby's African association.

In the space of 15 years, tremendous strides have been taken by both the association and its national federations to develop the sports discipline in the continent. **In 2002, only six countries including Morocco, Tunisia, Zimbabwe, Ivory Coast, Namibia and South Africa were playing rugby regularly. Today, Rugby Africa has 38 union members.**

**In 2017, growth in player registration in the African nations (excluding South Africa) was 66%**, against an overall global increase of 27%. Between 2016 and 2017, countries with the quickest growth in total number of players were Mauritius, Nigeria, Namibia, South Africa and Madagascar, which is a perfect illustration of the real passion for rugby across Africa.

Although few may know this, **the country has more rugby clubs per capita than any other country with 160 clubs in the capital Antananarivo alone.** Crowds for their international matches can top 40 000 people, and kids play rugby in the streets, dreaming of becoming the next national hero.

## ■ PHENOMENAL POPULARITY

- **Fan sizing**  
Africa, one the fastest-growing fan bases with an increase of 30+ million fans since 2013
- **Fan sizing in South Africa**  
More than 9 million fans
- **Rugby followers in South Africa**  
More than 13 million fans

## ■ INCREASING NUMBER OF PLAYERS

- **Registration growth**  
+66% in 2017 against an overall global increase of 27%
- **Registration growth in Senegal**  
From 2012 to 2017: +292%
- **Registration growth in Nigeria**  
From 2012 to 2017: +282%
- **N° of clubs in Madagascar**  
The country alone has 520+ clubs

## ■ TOP 14 AFRICAN COUNTRIES

where the average penetration of rugby fans calculated is 35% versus a global average of 23%

- |                  |               |
|------------------|---------------|
| 01. South Africa | 08. Zimbabwe  |
| 02. Nigeria      | 09. Uganda    |
| 03. Madagascar   | 10. Senegal   |
| 04. Kenya        | 11. Tunisia   |
| 05. Cameroon     | 12. Namibia   |
| 06. Morocco      | 13. Botswana  |
| 07. Zambia       | 14. Swaziland |





## AFRICAN CHAMPIONS

**Out of 105 countries playing rugby competitively in the world, one-third are African countries.**

**In Kenya, the Men's 7s team were recently ranked as high as 7 in the world in the top ten** and regularly competes near the top of the world game. Ghana is now ranked 9 in 7s rugby - and are undefeated in XVs against their traditionally stronger local rivals Togo and Benin.

**Rugby talents are everywhere on the continent**, and France is already starting to tap into the concept and have recruited and nationalized African players from former territories such as Abdellatif Boutaty, «The Tiger of Atlas.»

### 2018 is a pivotal year for African champions

Organized in several African cities, the **Rugby Africa Gold Cup** served as a qualifier for the 2019 Rugby World Cup in Japan, this year. Namibia's team who won over Kenya secured its place at the world's third-largest sports event. On the 18th of August, they received **the new perpetual trophy** unveiled at the International Sports Press Association (AIPS) congress in Brussels, in May 2018. Kenya's team who will go into November's repechage tournament in Marseille could also represent the continent at the RWC 2019.

In September will be held the **Africa Rugby 7s tournament**. The tournament will act as a qualifier for the 2020 Olympics. This time, only one African country will represent the continent at one of the biggest sports events in the world.

## WOMEN IN RUGBY

**In Africa, there is an important women's representation in the rugby sphere.** Rugby Australia has recently appointed their new CEO who became the first female chief executive of a major Australian Rugby code. But did you know that **3 African rugby unions are chaired by women**, and Rugby Africa's general manager is also a woman?

**In 2017, Rugby Africa had the highest percentage of female participation of any other region (46%) in the world.** As of today, more than 20% of rugby players are women and girls in Africa.

### ■ GLOBAL RANKING

- **Men's XVs Top 50**  
8 African teams are ranked in men's XVs Top 50 rugby teams
- **Rugby-playing**  
A high percentage of African nations are recognized as "rugby-playing" (38 out of 54 countries (70%))
- **2017 World ranking Men's XVs rugby**  
Namibia is currently ranked at a lofty 23rd in the world

### ■ KEY INTERNATIONAL COMPETITIONS

- **Rugby Africa Gold Cup 2018**  
Qualifier for the 2019 Rugby World Cup in Japan
- **Africa Rugby 7s tournament**  
Qualifier for the 2020 Olympics in Japan

### ■ WOMEN'S RUGBY

- **In Tunisia and Burkina Faso**, the federations are headed by female executives – highlighting a trend towards gender equality
- **Female referees** are already officiating top-level men's matches in Africa
- **Female rugby players**  
Increased by 50% in the space of a year
- **Breakdown - Rugby players**  
+ 20% of rugby players are women and girls in Africa

### ■ KEY WOMEN'S RUGBY COMPETITION

- **2018 Africa Women's Sevens**  
Qualifier for the 2018 African Champion's title





## OFFICIAL PARTNER OF RUGBY AFRICA

In 2017, APO Group and Rugby Africa, World Rugby's African association, signed a landmark multi-year agreement appointing APO Group as the **Official Partner of Rugby Africa**.

As a leading sponsor, APO Group will be from now on associated with the ten major international competitions throughout the continent and receive an extensive range of sponsorship rights, providing exclusive and customized marketing opportunities to strengthen its reputation.

For APO Group, beyond the values rugby conveys, it can be a key catalyst for development among children, millennials, women, men and older nationals, and it deserves to be acknowledged all over the continent.

**Through this partnership, our consultancy is committed to using its expertise in media relations to bring a new dimension to the sports discipline in Africa and beyond the regional borders.** In addition to the initiatives we'll undertake to build momentum and engage and inspire new audiences, we will leverage our know-how and capabilities to put the spotlight on African rugby champions, women's rugby and help individual nations break into the world's elite.

### Raising the profile of African rugby across the globe

In 2018, APO Group signed three exclusive strategic partnerships with major international organizations aiming at enhancing the visibility of African rugby on a global scale including the **International Sports Press Association (AIPS)**, the leading body for international sports media across the world, **Getty Images**, the most trusted and esteemed source of visual content in the world, and **Kwesé Sports**, Africa's most trusted source for sports programming.



### ■ KEY PARTNERSHIPS

#### ■ AIPS, the International Sports Press Association

Objective: Heighten awareness of African rugby and engage new audiences across the world

#### ■ Getty Images

Objective: Distribution of 100+ images from Rugby Africa's Gold Cup competition to almost one million Getty customers in close to 200 countries.

#### ■ Kwesé Sports

Objective: Enhance visibility and brand equity for rugby in Africa as it continues its upwards trajectory and supports brands in deepening engagement with African rugby fans

### ■ FOR MORE INFORMATION

#### ■ Rugby Africa - Africa Newsroom

Eng: <https://rugbyafrica.africa-newsroom.com/?lang=en>

Fr: <https://rugbyafrica.africa-newsroom.com/?lang=fr>

#### ■ Rugby Africa Gold Cup - Images

<https://www.gettyimages.pt/fotos/rugby-apo-group?family=editorial&phrase=rugby%20apo%20group#license>

### ■ MEDIA INTERVIEWS

#### ■ To interview Rugby Africa's representatives

Please contact us at

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## About APO Group

Founded in 2007, APO Group is a world-leading media relations' consultancy and press release distribution service for Africa and the Middle East. Since its foundation, the company has partnered with individuals, businesses, and public institutions to establish their reputations and accelerate speed-to-market within the region and beyond. We specialize in developing cutting-edge media strategies, providing expert counselling and suites of professional services that allow organizations to step up their presence in target countries. The trust and recognition that have been granted to APO Group by global and multinational companies, governments, as well as NGOs impels the company to continuously enhance its value proposition within Africa & Middle East to better cater to its clients' needs. Amongst our prestigious clients: Facebook, Dangote Group, GE, Uber, Nokia, Mara Group, PwC, DHL, Marriott Group, Sage, Ecobank, Iflix, Jumia, Samsung, Merck, Société Générale, Oracle, Philips, Barclays, MoneyGram, Ernst & Young, Orange ...

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