

# Pindula

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## Strive Masiyiwa

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**Strive Masiyiwa** (born 1961) is a Zimbabwean born entrepreneur, and philanthropist. He is the founder and chairman of **Econet Wireless International** a global telecommunications group. In 2002, Masiyiwa made it to the Time Magazine List of Most Influential People, and in March 2014, he was selected to Fortune Magazine's list of the "World's 50 Greatest Leaders". He is one of Africa's most influential figures and a champion for the power of technology to improve people's lives. In January 2018 he was named the first billionaire in Zimbabwe by Forbes Magazine. [Strive Masiyiwa Becomes Zimbabwe's First Billionaire](#)

Strive Masiyiwa



Strive Masiyiwa

Born

[Zimbabwe](#)

Residence

South Africa

Nationality

Zimbabwean

Education

Morehouse College

Occupation

- Entrepreneur
- Engineer

Years active

1980 to present

Organization

- Econet Wireless International
- [Econet Wireless Zimbabwe](#)

Spouse(s)

[Tsitsi Masiyiwa](#)

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## Personal life

Strive is married to [Tsitsi Masiyiwa](#)

## Background

Strive Masiyiwa was born in 1961 in Zimbabwe. His family moved to Zambia when he was 7 years old and settled in a town called Kitwe. His mother was an entrepreneur and his father first worked in nearby mines and later joined the family business. By the time he was 12 years his parents could afford to provide him with a coveted European education, he was sent to a private school in Edinburgh Scotland.

After graduation in 1978, he went back to his country of birth, intending to join the anti-government guerilla forces to liberate Zimbabwe from colonial rule. Strive was advised by senior officers that they were about to win the war and needed people like him to help build the country. He returned to school in Britain, graduating with a degree in electrical and electronic engineering from the University of Wales in 1983. He worked briefly in the computer Industry in Cambridge England but soon returned to Zimbabwe in 1984.<sup>[1]</sup> Upon his return, Masiyiwa worked for Zimbabwe Posts and Telecommunications Corporation from 1984 to 1988 as senior engineer, then principal engineer.

## Retrofit Engineering

Masiyiwa is said to have started Retrofit by accident, that is without any intention to get into entrepreneurship. He had decided to build himself a house and after finding out that it would cost him twice the loan he had been granted by his employer, he decided to build the house himself. His employer, however, told him that he could only get the loan if his house was built by experienced builders. While still employed by PTC, Masiyiwa set up [Retrofit Engineering](#) in 1987 and started looking for work to get the experience to build his own house. Zimbabwe happened to be in a period of a construction boom and he quickly built a team of 100 and decided to focus on electrical contracting. He gave up his job 2 years later.<sup>[2]</sup>

## Abduction by the CIO in 1990

In 1990 while coming from the Mozambican embassy in Harare, Masiyiwa was clandestinely escorted back to his office by a car that was moving slowly behind him as he walked. Men from the car abducted him at gunpoint when he got to his office and took him to a secret detention center.<sup>[3]</sup>

Even though he was taken to a secret detention center, Masiyiwa has said that the men told him he was being arrested and taken to the [Central Intelligence Organisation](#) headquarters.<sup>[2]</sup>

Masiyiwa has said he prayed for his safety and later that night he was released.

## Indigenous Business Development Centre (IBDC)

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For a full article on the [IBDC, go here](#)

Masiyiwa played a key leadership role in the founding of IBDC, in the early 90s. The IBDC was set up to support the building of business by black business people who faced challenges such as access to capital. Retrofit benefited from the IBDC.

## Founding Econet Wireless

In 1994 Masiyiwa resolved to start a mobile operator and approached Dr. [Nkosana Moyo](#) the CEO of Standard Chartered Merchant Bank Zimbabwe with a business plan to source funding. Standard Chartered was happy to fund the business.<sup>[4]</sup>

Masiyiwa then approached PTC his former employer with a proposal for a joint venture in the mobile operator in which TelOne would own 51% and Masiyiwa, 49%. PTC rejected and instead told him that they had a monopoly on telecommunications in the country. PTC also told him mobile telephony was a passing fad, which would never amount to much.

Masiyiwa challenged PTC's monopoly in the high court, supreme court, constitutional court and then back to the lower courts. The court war would last 5 years, with Masiyiwa eventually being awarded the mobile telecoms license in 1998.

Econet Wireless became one of Zimbabwe's most valuable companies about 12 years later. Econet Wireless International, the parent holding company of Econet Wireless Zimbabwe now owns various telecommunications & renewable energy companies globally.

For an account of the court battles in Masiyiwa's own words, please [read this article](#).

## Exile

Masiyiwa left Zimbabwe in March 2000<sup>[5]</sup> to live in South Africa on a self-imposed exile. At that time Zimbabwe was entering a decade of economic depression. Masiyiwa has said of the decision to leave:

*I personally did not have a happy relationship with the government - I decided that I was better off relocating and working from South Africa.*<sup>[6]</sup>

In February 2018 it was reported that [Mnangagwa Government Invited Strive Masiyiwa To Return Home](#) and participate in The National Dialogue forum draft programme which was organized by the National Economic Consultative Forum (NECF).<sup>[7]</sup> However reports had indicated that Masiyiwa was yet to confirm his presence. Masiyiwa was anticipated to present on “The role of innovation and entrepreneurship in the new Zimbabwe”.

## As Publisher of the Daily News

When Zimbabwe's only independent newspaper and largest daily paper, [DailyNews](#), was having problems in the early 2000s, Masiyiwa rescued it becoming the largest shareholder in [Associated Newspapers of](#)

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[Zimbabwe](#) (ANZ), (publishers of the Daily News).<sup>[8]</sup> In a crackdown on the media, the paper was shut down by the government in September 2003 for 'operating illegally'.<sup>[9]</sup> During that time, Masiyiwa said in an interview with the BBC:

*I am also the publisher of the Daily News, Zimbabwe's only independent newspaper. The government recently shut down the paper.*

*So that might give you an idea of the nature of our relationship with the government in Zimbabwe. They don't appreciate that you don't shoot the messenger.*

*We reflect what is happening in society. To shut down the newspaper does not take away the problems which we've been reflecting.*<sup>[6]</sup>

The DailyNews was eventually relaunched in 2011 but by that time Strive Masiyiwa had sold his stake.<sup>[8]</sup>

## Philanthropic Work

### Econet Development Foundation

The EDF, a foundation with initiative running at the sole discretion of Masiyiwa invests in Education for orphans and the underprivileged children, Entrepreneurial development, Environmental protection, Business Leadership, Agricultural Development, HIV and Aids and eHealth<sup>[10]</sup>

### Capernaum Trust

In 1999 Strive and his wife Tsitsi Maramba established a Trust called Capernaum. It is a charity that supports orphans and vulnerable children, pays school fees, provides school uniforms and gives scholarships. It pays for over 40 000 students of that 3 000 university students in the United States of America, South Africa, and Australia.

### Christian Community Partnership Trust

Strive and Tsitsi are also co-founders of Christian Community Partnership Trust (CCPT). It provides financial support for church and church organizations working with least evangelized areas in rural areas in Zimbabwe.

### The [Joshua Nkomo](#) Scholarship Fund

The Joshua Nkomo Scholarship Fund was named after the late Zimbabwe Nationalist. The fund awards scholarships to exceptionally intelligent Zimbabwean children.



## **The National Healthcare Trust of Zimbabwe**

This trust provides financial support for medical drugs, human resources and transport in the event of a health crisis.

## **Ambassador Andrew Young Scholarship**

In February 2013 they established a fund named after Ambassador Andrew Young a former United States ambassador to the United Nations. This is a \$6.4 million dollar scholarship fund that sends African students to attend the Morehouse College in the United States.

The Joshua Mqabuko Nkomo Scholarship Fund, Capernaum Trust, Christian Community Partnership Trust and The National Healthcare Trust of Zimbabwe are all part of Higher Learning Foundation. this is an umbrella organization for all the charity efforts of the Masiyiwa. Their religious beliefs motivate their philanthropic work. It is Strive and Tsitsi Masiyiwa's belief that, since Econet Group does business in many African countries and making money from these places that they give back to communities in which they do business. [\[11\]](#)

## **Organisations he's involved with**

Masiyiwa is involved in one way or the other, with the following organization He is currently involved in the following not-for-profit organizations:

- Rockefeller Foundation (New York Trustee)
- Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) (Board Member/Vice Chairman)
- Carbon War Room (Founders Council)
- Yookos Trust (Trustee)
- United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USA – Member of the Committee on Conscience)
- Archbishop Desmond Tutu's e-Health Ambassadors Programme
- Hilton Humanitarian Prize ( USA- Member of the International Jury)
- Morehouse College (Board of Trustees)
- Global Business Coalition for Education (Founder Member)
- Council on Foreign Relations (Global Advisory Board Member)
- Africa Progress Panel (Panel Member)
- Advisory Board for the Sustainable Energy for All Initiative (Advisory Board Member)
- Institute for Pan African Strategies (Board Member)
- The B Team (Inaugural Member)
- Grow Africa (Co-Chairman)

## **Personal life**

Masiyiwa is married to Tsitsi Maramba and the couple has 6 children.

## **Awards**

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- In 1998 he was named Zimbabwe's manager of the year as well as an entrepreneur of the year.
- In 1999 he was 10 most Outstanding Young Persons of the World.
- Time magazine in 2002 named him in its global business influentials' list <sup>[12]</sup>
- In 2010 was the winner of builders of modern Africa.
- In 2011 was 25 leaders of Africa's Renaissance.
- In 2011 was 20 most powerful business people in African according to(Forbes Magazine – 2011)
- In March 2014 Masiyiwa was named one of the "World's 50 Greatest Leaders" by Fortune<sup>[13]</sup>
- In April 2017 he received an honorary degree from the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University

## Endorsing [Emmerson Mnangagwa](#)

Strive Masiyiwa told CNBC Africa that he believed that Emmerson Mnangagwa was sincere in the things he wanted to do. He also called for the removal of sanctions saying they were unjustified.

## About Pindula

Pindula is a place to find information about local things on the internet. We do it a lot like Wikipedia, except everything is hyper-local. We started work on Pindula because we needed something like it. There's so little useful information about local things online and we're working to change that

To join the Pindula community of editors, please go to <https://contribute.pindula.co.zw?> or just get in touch with us on **WhatsApp: +263 77 770 7852**.

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