

FORBES

ENTREPRENEURS

VALENTINA DA LUZ GUEBUZA

The Millionaire Princess

Valentina da Luz Guebuza, daughter of the president of the Republic of Mozambique, Armando Guebuza, is a major player in the growing Mozambican economy. At just 32, she heads the family company, Focus 21, representing the new rising class of entrepreneurs: young, professional and wealthy.

BY EMANUEL NOVAIS PEREIRA

In 2006, the Mozambican president's youngest daughter took the leadership of the family's company—Focus 21 Management and Development, Ltd (Gestão e Desenvolvimento, Lda). The company, which focuses on business consulting, engineering, logistics and the mining sector, is currently valued at more than \$5 million. "There is an ongoing specialized financial reassessment of assets such as buildings, land, interests in diverse areas such as agribusiness, ICT and logistics in Mozambique," says Guebuza.

Guebuza's involvement in the company dates back to 2001 when her father changed the company's shareholder structure. Both her brothers, Armando Ndambi Guebuza and Mussumbuluko Armando

Guebuza, also joined Focus 21.

The Guebuza family business was born almost two decades ago. In recent years, it has established partnerships with companies such as Star Times, targeting the market for cable television, and Cervejas de Moçambique (Beers of Mozambique).

At Star Times Media, in which Focus 21 holds a 15% interest, Valentina Guebuza serves as the chief executive officer. The company was launched a year ago in Mozambique with the majority shareholder being the Chinese Star Times International. With an investment of more than \$88 million, the joint venture aims to become the market leader in cable television in Mozambique, a country that faces the challenge of migrating from analogue to digital by 2015.

The national and foreign press also highlights business partnerships

established between Focus 21 and Mozambican state-owned enterprises, such as the Portos e Caminhos de Ferro de Moçambique (Ports and Railways of Mozambique).

The professional profile of the three young entrepreneurs and their relationship with the heads of state of Mozambique and Angola must help.

During her childhood, Guebuza liked "to play with dolls and play ball" with other kids in Maputo, where she grew up. She adds that she had an education based on the principle

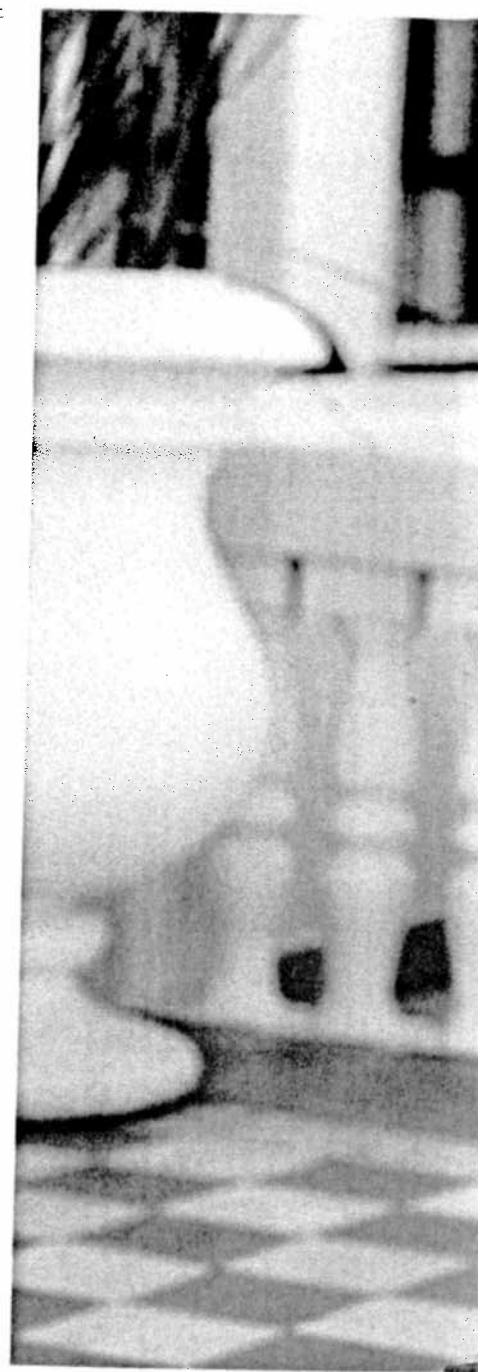


PHOTO BY AL FAYANZ/GETTY IMAGES



of responsibility and helped the family with household chores, such as washing dishes and cooking. For Guebuza, the education she received from her parents was important in the development of her personality. In her interview with FORBES AFRICA she appeared to be an extremely modest person.

"Today, I understand what my parents always told us, that the family is the foundation of our stability; emotionally and professionally," she says, adding that she always had a

"very good" relationship with all her family members.

When she graduated in civil engineering, Guebuza had no idea that she would play an active role in the business world.

"I always wanted to be independent and I fought for it. In 2001, I started working in a restaurant. I also did secretarial work and when I was in my last year of university I started an internship at a consulting firm in civil engineering, where I gained practical experience in my field," she says.

With her ingression into the leadership of Focus 21, Guebuza had to put on hold the Masters degree she was doing as she says the family business takes up all her time. She says she works "24/7".

"I do not know if I am an enterprising person, but surely I have to bring in results to the group I

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manage. So I must split myself in two, losing nights thinking about solutions and projects that add value to our market and also to bring positive results for the company," she says.

Being the youngest daughter of the president, Guebuza is a symbol of success in a society mostly made up of young people. She was born during the period in which Mozambique was no longer under Portuguese colonial rule, yet had plunged into civil war. The 1980s were particularly striking in the life of the entrepreneur, who still remembers the trips around the country under military escort as well as the numerous power outages.

Given her youth, Guebuza has been associating with organizations that attempt to promote entrepreneurship and employment among young Mozambicans. In the social field, this is one of the major topics to which she has dedicated herself. Low-cost housing for families is another one of her passions.

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In 2010, she became involved in the Business Fair, held in Maputo. The initiative's main objective is to promote "a space where young entrepreneurs can exchange ideas and experiences".

That same year, Guebuza received an invitation to join the New Leaders for Tomorrow forum, held by the Swiss organization Crans-Montana. From the relationships established with the organization, she joined the Africa Foundation 2.0 in 2011, which connects young African leaders from 40 nations to design strategies for integrated social development for the continent.

Another sign of media recognition that Guebuza has gathered at the international level was her participation in the last G20 meeting, held in Paris in October. Only 15 African Foundation 2.0 members were invited.

With an annual growth of 7.5%, Mozambique seems to be one of the most promising economies in Africa. The enormous agricultural potential, in parallel with natural resources such as gas or coal, have placed the watchful eyes of investors on the young African economy.

"Over the next 10 years, I see my country being given

The Next Isabel dos Santos?

Often, journalists compare Guebuza to the Angolan entrepreneur, Isabel dos Santos, daughter of the president of Angola José Eduardo dos Santos. According to FORBES, she is worth at least \$170 million and is considered to be the most powerful and richest woman in her country and among the richest in Africa. She was described by the Portuguese newspaper Público as: "...a good business woman, extremely dynamic and intelligent, also a professional and friendly."

Since 2008, she has held interests in telecommunications, media, retail, finance and the energy industry, both in Angola and in Portugal. Her commercial interests include oil, diamonds and shares in the Angolan cement company, Nova Cimangola.

more weight in terms of decisions to be taken globally," she says.

As a "dissatisfied" person and one who likes to live each day in an "intense" way, Guebuza believes that these are times of "great enthusiasm" for Mozambique. She is proud of the importance that her nation is beginning to gather on an international level and expects that the country's economic success will result in the improvement of Mozambique's social indicators.

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