

# Backing Africa's Bold: Ms. Tusekile Kibonde on Risk, Resilience and Rewriting Trade & Investment Narratives

**From underwriting risk to unlocking opportunity, Ms. Kibonde, the African Trade & Investment Development Insurance's (ATIDI) Resident Underwriter in Tanzania, is helping reshape how Africa attracts investment, grounded in confidence rather than caution.**

On a busy morning where policy meets possibility, Tusekile Kibonde speaks less about insurance and more about belief.

"Risk," she says, "is often misunderstood. In Africa, it's not just something to avoid but something to understand, manage and embrace."

Ms. Kibonde plays a key role at ATIDI, working at the intersection of finance and development to help businesses and governments navigate uncertainty in some of the continent's most dynamic markets. Yet her impact extends far beyond transactions and balance sheets.

## A career shaped by curiosity

Ms. Kibonde's journey into trade and investment insurance was not straightforward. Like many professionals across Africa, she found her path by asking questions that other people weren't asking: Why are investors and international lenders hesitant about Africa? What makes one market perceived "too risky" while another attracts capital with ease?

Those questions ultimately led her to the world of trade credit insurance and investment risk, tools that, while often operating behind the scenes, play a decisive role in determining whether projects move forward or stall.

She says, "The main goal of our work is about facilitating progress. We reduce uncertainty thus we unlock investment. And when capital flows in, then lives across Africa are transformed."

## Making the invisible visible

Organizations like ATIDI rarely make headlines, yet their footprint is evident in the infrastructure projects, energy deals and cross-border trade that underpin economic growth.

Ms. Kibonde is among a growing group of African leaders working to demystify this space.

"There's a perception that what we do is complex and difficult to under-

stand," she says. "But in reality, our work has a direct impact on everyday lives - through jobs, access to electricity and availability of essential goods."

It's a story she tells with conviction, one grounded not only in data but in tangible lived impact.

## Case Study: De-risking a nation's ambition - Tanzania's SGR

Few projects capture both the promise and complexity of Africa's development journey as vividly as Tanzania's Standard Gauge Railway (SGR).

Built to connect key economic corridors and modernise the country's transport network, the SGR is more than just infrastructure. It is a critical enabler of trade, linking producers to markets, reducing the cost of moving goods and accelerating regional integration.

Projects of this scale rarely come without concerns. Their size, complexity, performance risks and long implementation timelines often make stakeholders cautious—sometimes slowing progress or delaying critical decisions. This is where ATIDI stepped in.

Working with local and international partners, ATIDI issued Surety Bonds that provided key stakeholders including the government and financiers, the confidence in the contractor's ability to deliver the project. By mitigating performance risk, ATIDI helped sustain momentum and ensure that the project moved forward.

For Ms. Kibonde, the significance of such interventions goes beyond the deal itself.

"It's easy to focus on metrics such as the size of a project like investment spent and the kilometers of track," she says. "But what truly matters is the impact these projects have on our country."

For a trader in Dar es Salaam, it means faster access to inland markets. For a farmer, it translates into lower transportation costs and post-harvest losses. For businesses, it ensures more reliable and efficient supply chains.

In short, it reshapes how an economy moves.

Projects like these send a powerful signal: that with the right structures in place, large-scale African infrastructure is not only possible, but it can also be achieved with confidence. "That's the shift we're working towards," Ms. Kibonde explains. "Reframing the narrative from 'too risky' to one of 'well-managed risk'."

## Case Study: Powering progress - Strengthening Tanzania's energy network

Beyond transport, ATIDI has also been supporting Tanzania's energy sector, including projects like the National Grid Stabilization Project, implemented across various parts of the country.

"These efforts have helped improve the reliability of power—something

that makes a real difference to businesses, public services and people's everyday lives. Reliable energy is the backbone of economic activity," Ms. Kibonde says. "It supports industrial growth, improves productivity and ultimately improves quality of life."

For ATIDI however, the impact goes beyond any single project. It is about supporting Africa's development in a holistic and sustainable way - bringing together risk mitigation, strong partnerships and long-term strategic thinking. By working closely with governments, financial institutions and the private sector, ATIDI helps develop solutions that reduce the cost of doing business, facilitate projects implementation and ensure long term sustainability.

In Tanzania, this approach has supported a wide range of initiatives—from infrastructure and energy to housing and financial services and demonstrates how sharing risk can unlock opportunities across the economy. "It's not just about one project or one transaction," Ms. Kibonde explains. "It's about creating an environment where transformational investment can grow steadily and sustainably."

## Reframing Africa's story

For Ms. Kibonde, one of the biggest challenges—and opportunities—is narrative.

Too often, Africa is framed through a lens of risk alone. But she argues that this perspective is incomplete.

"Yes, there are risks," she says. "But there is also resilience, innovation and immense opportunities. The question is whether we are willing to look beyond the headlines."

ATIDI doesn't just insure against downside—it helps enable upside, supporting projects that drive industrialisation, trade integration and sustainable growth.

## Looking ahead

As global dynamics continue to evolve and Africa's role in international trade continues to grow,

Ms. Kibonde envisions a future defined by a growing confidence in the continent's potential.

"We're moving from being seen as high-risk to being recognised as high-potential," she says. "And that shift is powerful."

This vision is grounded not in abstraction, but in tangible outcomes - businesses that grow, communities that thrive and a continent increasingly shaping its own economic destiny. For Ms. Kibonde, the goal is clear: "To ensure that perception never thwarts opportunity."

## Closing Perspective

From transport infrastructure to energy systems and beyond, these projects underscore ATIDI's role in supporting key sectors across the economy. Through both government-led and private sector initiatives, ATIDI's non-payment and investment de-risking solutions help build confidence, mobilise investments and support sustainable economic transformation.

As a pan-African organisation with a physical presence in Tanzania, ATIDI remains closely connected to the markets and communities it serves, enabling it to respond effectively to local needs while delivering solutions with continental impact.

## About ATIDI

The African Trade Insurance Agency (commonly known as African Trade & Investment Development Insurance - ATIDI) was founded in 2001 by African States to cover trade and

investment risks of companies doing business in Africa. The organization notably provides Political Risk, Credit Insurance and Surety Insurance.

Since inception, ATIDI has supported USD93 billion worth of investments and cross border trade into Africa. It is rated A/Stable by Standard & Poor's and A2/Stable by Moody's, which reflects the organization's robust financial position and strong risk management practices. In recognition of its growing impact, ATIDI was named the Development Finance Institution (DFI) of the Year at the 2025 African Banker Awards.



Tusekile Kibonde is a finance and investment professional with 20+ years' experience structuring large-scale transactions across Africa. As Resident Underwriter at ATIDI, she has supported over USD4 billion in infrastructure deals and mobilized more than USD800 million in reinsurance capacity in the region.