

Kimberly, CEO of Team Africa Rising, explains how African cycling is evolving, the barriers young riders face, and what the UCI 2025 World Championships could mean for the continent's future

Cycling has long been a male-dominated sport, from roads and mountains to the boardrooms. Women often are confined to racing and podium presentations.

The landscape is shifting from teams and brands to governing bodies, governments, and industrial innovation. In Africa, one of the leading voices in this shift is Kimberly Coats, the CEO of [Team Africa Rising](#) (TAR).

[Kim](#) stands out as one woman driving the development of professional cycling across the continent. As CEO of TAR, her work has earned her two major awards, including being voted "*Cycling Women of the Year*" by Bikbiz in 2022.

Since 2007, TAR, formerly known as Team Rwanda Cycling, has supported the professional development of cycling across the continent, enabling dozens of young male and female athletes to achieve their dream of progressing to the professional level.

The not-for-profit organization assists clubs, federations, coaches, race organizers, and mechanics across the continent. TAR works with UCI in South Africa as a liaison between up and coming talent. Its multi-year plan includes development of a Velodrome Complex in Benin.

"Benin is doing well, we want to do something that helps children, I don't care about money or status; I just want kids on bikes," She said

Team Rwanda's most prominent cyclist is Adrien Niyonshuti, now the coach of the Benin national cycling team, qualified to represent Rwanda in the cross-country mountain bike race at the 2012 Summer Olympic Games in London.

Talking to Rwanda Dispatch, Kim's pride in Adrien's achievements was clear. She spoke of the respect he has earned across African cycling and her admiration for his success is evident.



"We prepared Adrien for the Olympics with the goal of him becoming the first black African to finish and excel in the mountain bike." Her voice lifted as she added.

“And guess what, we did it,”

Adrien is the only black African to have won the Best African Jersey at the Team Qhubeka race in South Africa.

For a closer look at Adrien’s journey and achievements, you can watch video here: youtube.com/watch?v=TCMN99btdRs

With Rwanda set to host UCI 2025 World Championships the first time the event is going to be held on African soil from September 21-28. Kimberly believes competitions could mark a turning point for the continent.

“It’s great for Africa because it will allow more African names to compete than before, she said. “Rwanda always hosts good events. I’ve no doubt it will be a success, well run and professional.”

Benin will have ten riders; an increase of seven more compared with last year’s championships in Zurich, Switzerland. Kim sees this as a positive sign, offering countries that have never fielded large teams the change to do so.

Yet she is clear about the risks, “if Africans do not do well, it will look as though we don’t have serious athletes. I hope Algerians, Moroccans, Eritreans and others finish well. The worst outcome would be if African riders are given the chance to compete, but are not prepared.

I’m very hopeful looking at things in a very different lens I’m hopeful Rwanda will do great, I won’t change it for anything but also I’m very realistic, because the World Championships are one week, I’m more worried about the next ten years, I want the championships to be a catalyst for more investments for the future of African cycling, and I hope it happens.



Kim is optimistic about Rwanda’s prospects but realistic about the bigger picture. “The World Championships last one week. I’m worried about the next ten years,” she said. “I want the championships to be a catalyst for more investment in African cycling. I hope this is the start not the end.”

She called for greater support from both governments and businesses. “African talent is legitimate, it’s worth the investment. We need more Rwandan companies

and others across the continent, to look back at the sport. Governments must also step up., because cycling is a legitimate sport that deserves support.”

Kim warned that the shortage of races across Africa is holding back cycling development, noting that more races are needed but require money. She explained that the lack of regular competitions has also affected Rwandan riders, who have not raced since the Tour of Rwanda. “You don’t learn how to race unless you race,” she said.

On the opportunities for emerging talent, Kim pointed to growing international interest. Teams such as Canyon/SRM and German’s BikeAid are already recruiting African riders. Among them are Rwanda’s Eric Muhoza, junior talent Jonathan, and a young Beninese cyclist backed by BikeAid.

However, Visa restrictions and defections remain a serious challenge. “Teams are committed to African cyclists, but visas are a huge problem. Defections make it worse. The more riders leave, the harder it becomes for others.. Riders leave because they lose hope in the system and that is a real problem.”

The picture for women cycling is more encouraging. In 2009, only four African countries registered UCI ranking points for women. But last year, that number had risen to 21. “It shows how much the sport has grown and that federations are now investing in women’s cycling,” she noted.

In Benin, Kim emphasized, men and women are treated equally. “That is what needs to happen. In Benin, women have even been more successful than men in winning races,” she said. “But there is still a long way to go. The more we see black women whether African, American or European getting these opportunities, the faster the sport will grow for women in Africa,”