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MISSION X:

Super Falcons on a historic quest for 10th WAFCON title



PROFILE

Olubunmi Atere:
Sculpting truth on human experience and nature



TOURISM

Lagos among four African cities ranked best in the world for nightlife in 2025

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Your conferment with a Doctorate, *Honoris Causa*, by the esteemed University of Nigeria, Nsukka, marks yet another milestone in a life defined by visionary leadership, service to humanity, and nation-building.

This award is a towering reflection of the profound impact that conviction, compassion, and quiet consistency can have through the actions of one individual.

Congratulations on this well-earned honour.



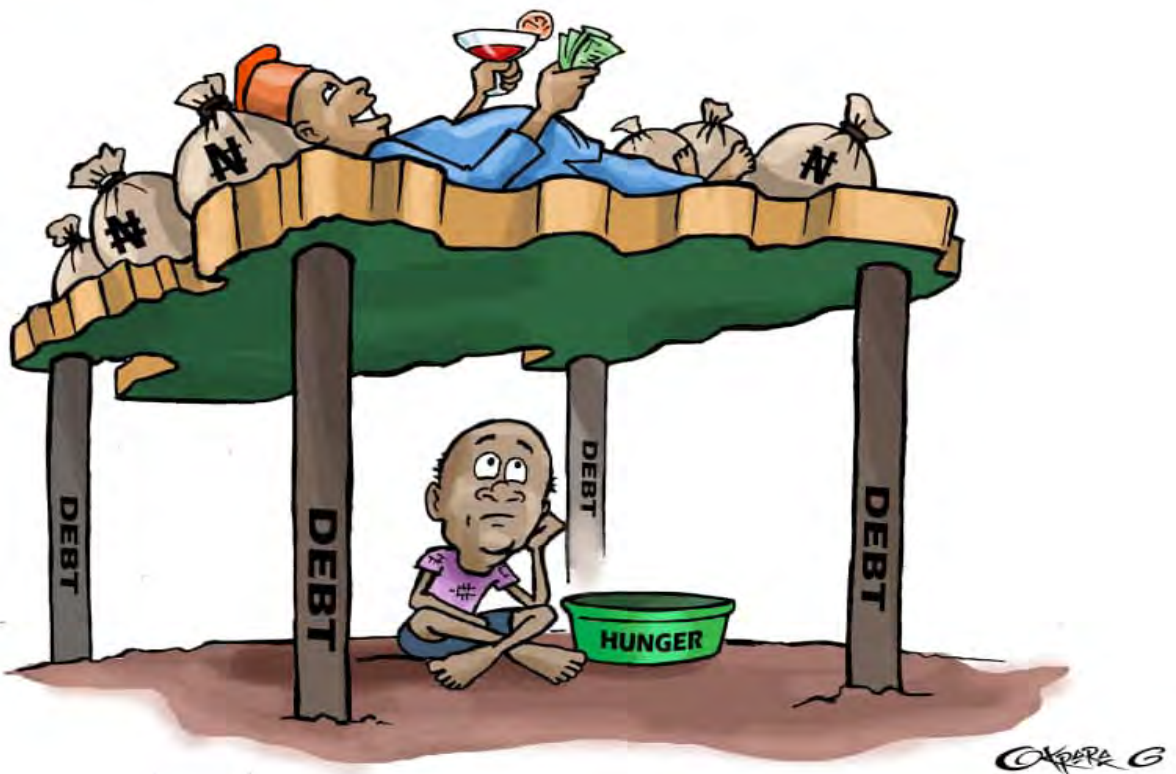
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MISSION X: SUPER FALCONS ON A HISTORIC QUEST FOR 10TH WAFCON TITLE

ANTHONY NLEBEM



Nigeria's Super Falcons are on the brink of history as they face hosts Morocco in the final of the 13th Women's Africa Cup of Nations (WAFCON) at the Prince Moulay Abdellah Stadium in Rabat on Saturday, July 26. From the first blast of the whistle, Nigeria will be all business, allowing no space for error or intimidation, as they chase a record-extending tenth continental crown.

With their eyes firmly set on the prize, the Super Falcons are determined to silence the home crowd and avenge their dramatic 2022 semi-final exit to the Atlas Lionesses.

Captain Rasheedat Ajibade has led by example and is a strong contender for the Player of the Tournament award. Forward Chinwendu Ihezuo is in the race for the Golden Boot with three goals, just one behind Moroccan skipper Ghizlane Chebbak.

Both sides are brimming with talent, with a taste for titles and fearless young stars. The motivation is sky-high, with backing from their respective governments and widespread support from the football community.

Morocco have grown stronger under Spanish tactician Jorge Vilda, who famously guided Spain to the FIFA Women's World Cup title two years ago in Australia and New Zealand. Vilda has brought structure, intensity, and flair to the Atlas Lionesses, making them even more dangerous than the side that beat a nine-woman Nigeria on penalties in the 2022 semi-finals in Casablanca.

But Nigeria's head coach, Justine Madugu, remains confident and composed. Speaking as the team departed Casablanca for Rabat, Madugu made it clear that the mission remains unfinished.



“We thank God for making it to the final. I want to assure you that we are not going to relent or take our eyes off the ball,” Madugu said. “Our focus is on lifting the trophy in Rabat on Saturday.”

The Super Falcons reached the final after a tense and tactical 1-0 semi-final victory over defending champions South Africa, sealed by Michelle Alozie’s stoppage-time screamer.

Madugu lauded his team’s discipline and mental fortitude against a battle-hardened Banyana Banyana side.

“We knew South Africa, as Cup holders, would be difficult, but we were ready for them. I’m glad our tactics paid off,” he said. “We assess every opponent and apply the approach that best suits our objective. That strategy has worked well for us throughout the tournament, and we’ll stick with it for the final.”

The Super Falcons have impressed throughout the campaign, scoring 11 goals and conceding just once (a penalty against South Africa). The squad has been buoyed by Ajibade’s leadership, Ihezuo’s attacking threat, the creative spark of Esther Okoronkwo and Jennifer Echegini, Ashleigh Plumtre’s defensive solidity, and the safe

hands of Chiamaka Nnadozie, recently crowned Africa’s Best Goalkeeper for the second consecutive year.

Saturday’s showdown is being billed as the tournament’s blockbuster finale and marks Nigeria’s second major final against a host nation in just 17 months, after the Super Eagles’ AFCON clash with Côte d’Ivoire in February 2024.

Morocco, who narrowly beat Nigeria three years ago and are making back-to-back final appearances, have proven they are no longer underdogs in women’s football.

Still, Madugu insists the Falcons are focused and unfazed by the pressure.

“We are not distracted. Our goal is to bring the trophy back home.”

Despite early doubts surrounding his appointment, Madugu has vindicated himself by applying a pragmatic, match-by-match approach, consistently tailoring tactics to each opponent. Except for their group-stage draw with Algeria (after already securing a quarter-final spot), every other opponent has exited with nothing but bruised pride and blurred vision.

Now, the final mission awaits, Mission X, as Nigeria looks to etch their name even deeper into the history books of African football.





OLUBUNMI ATERE: SCULPTING TRUTH ON HUMAN EXPERIENCE AND NATURE

ANTHONY **UDUGBA**



Olubunmi Atere, a sculptor and artist based in Lagos, Nigeria, is known for her work that delves into the depths of human experience and nature. With a background in conceptual and ceramic art, Atere's creations are a blend of memory, metaphor, and materiality.

In this interview with Anthony Udugba of BusinessDay media, Atere shares her journey, inspirations, and insights into the art world, offering a glimpse into the mind of an artist who is as rooted in her locality as she is in her truth.

Background and Inspirations

Olubunmi Atere welcomes Anthony Udugba into her studio in Lagos, introducing herself as a conceptual and ceramic artist whose work is deeply influenced by nature and curiosity. "The grounding for my work tilts toward natural elements and discoveries I've made along the way," she explains. A self-described adventurous and keen individual, Atere uses curiosity as an anchor in her creative process. "It's how I'm drawn to explore things—especially the unspoken or the uncomfortable," she says.

Her art captures experiences in nature and with people, transforming them into abstract forms that invite viewers to engage with curiosity. "I code these experiences into something that requires you to wonder," she notes. "When

you're curious, you're already open to what I'm saying. That openness allows you to see the unusual and act on it, creating a pathway to change."

Atere recounts a pivotal moment of inspiration from a visit to Bruce Onobrakpeya's gallery space in Delta State. "I was on the top floor and saw a pool of water glistening in the distance," she recalls. "I hadn't even unpacked my bag, but I ran downstairs into the bush to find it." She did find the pond, and on her way back, she picked up a seed—a keepsake she still holds. This experience ties back to her upbringing, where memory was a constant companion. "My father, a choir master and educationist, would sing songs to me to remember them," she says. "I'd sing them back to him later, like a recorder. That set the pace for my connection to memory."

Art as a Journey of Memory, Metaphor, and Materiality
Atere's artistic practice is a fusion of memory, metaphor, and materiality. "My work isn't an exact replica of my experiences," she explains. "It's a combination of what I see and feel, expressed in abstract ways that spark curiosity." She collaborates with her materials—primarily clay and ceramics—allowing them to dictate the pace of creation. "I let the material take its time before it goes out into the world," she says.

This approach shines in her series *Rhythm of Life*, where the egg serves as a metaphor for life's potential and actualization. One piece, *Faces*, reflects the step-by-step process of existence. "I use the eye as an entryway to the inner self, connected to the brain," she describes. "Abstract carvings represent thoughts and experiences—things like vegetation, homes, and farmland from my upbringing." These elements weave together her personal history and her bond with nature.

The Role of a Curator

When asked about her work as a curator, Atere compares it to a biological cross-section. "Think of cutting open a tomato to see what's inside," she says. "As an artist, you're the tomato, full of ideas and experiences. As a curator, I see the cross-section of artists, archives, and organizations. It gives me depth and context to interpret and present art." She views curatorial practice as vital for shaping narratives that resonate with society.

Storytelling through Art

For Atere, storytelling in art thrives on context. "Curatorial work provides a thread—connecting people, places, and archives," she explains. "It's not just my feelings; it's research and collective perspectives, from history to the future we're building." This depth enriches her sculptures, making them both personal and universal. "It's juicier," she adds with a smile, "and it anchors the story."

Rootedness in Locality

Atere's art is deeply tied to her Lagos roots and cultural upbringing. "I grew up in a communal setting—more cultural than Westernized," she says. "That foundation shapes my work." Her choice of materials, like clay, reflects this heritage. "Clay carries cultural essence," she notes. "It's a container for my truth." Even as her work evolves, her local identity remains steadfast, resonating with audiences both in Nigeria and abroad.

Symbolism in Her Work

One of Atere's pieces features the Sankofa symbol, an Adinkra emblem meaning "reaching back to take knowledge from the past." "It's part of my rootedness," she says. "My truth stays the same, whether locally or globally." In *Rhythm of Life: Faces*, she blends symbols like the sun and tribal patterns with personal memories, creating a narrative of interconnectedness and life's journey.

Art and Craft: Bypassing the Bias

Atere tackles the age-old debate of art versus craft with ease. "I've bypassed that bias intuitively," she asserts. "The distinction comes from functionality versus art's ability to capture more. I let technicality and intuition flow together." Clay, she argues, transcends this divide. "It's a lifelong material—cultural and universal. It captures both function and feeling, telling its own truth."





Environmental Conservation and the Artist's Role
Reflecting on her time at the Takwa Bay Residency project, Atere emphasizes artists' roles in environmental conservation. "There's no separation between us and nature," she says. "Conservation is essential—especially for artists who mediate reality through their work." At Takwa Bay, she felt the area's sacredness and history, which deepened her practice. "Seeing it firsthand lets me articulate it to others, sparking change," she adds.

Materials and Creative Expression

Atere's practice hinges on memory, metaphor, and materiality. Beyond clay, she incorporates unconventional materials like jutsak (sacking fabric) from Takwa Bay. "It represents exchange and transportation there," she explains. "I pick what speaks to my message—metal, wood, whatever's necessary." This flexibility bridges her conceptual ideas with tangible forms, inviting wonder and recognition from viewers.

The Business of Art in Nigeria

Atere sees Nigeria's art scene as vibrant and transformative. "It's energetic—old school, new school,

quirky, unconventional," she describes. "Lagos embraces that diversity." She values spaces like the Center for Contemporary Art Archives in Yaba, where she attended a workshop. "Seeing old exhibition papers took me back to the '90s," she says. "It grounds you in collective memory and your role today."

Pricing and Selling Artwork

Pricing her work, Atere explains, varies by context. "There's no fixed average," she says. "It depends on the exhibition's location, investment, and percentage shares." Her experiences—like enduring harsh conditions during a Cape Town residency—add value. "I put effort into authenticity," she notes. Exhibitions connect her with collectors and curators, amplifying her reach.

Femininity and Rebelliousness in Her Work

Atere's art balances femininity and rebellion. "The egg form speaks to femininity—versatility, comfort," she says, citing a piece titled *Fecundity*. Yet her work also confronts darker truths. "I'm intrigued by life's muckiness—things people shy away from," she admits. "I don't save face. I just be, whether it's political or vulnerable."

Advice to Aspiring Artists

For artists seeking their voice, Atere offers heartfelt advice: "Be authentic. Do it regardless—even if you're hiding at first." She encourages collaboration with materials. "Sometimes the permission you need comes from them," she says. "The art world is a choir. Sing your harmony. The balance will come later."

Conclusion

Olubunmi Atere's journey as an artist is a testament to the power of memory, metaphor, and materiality. Rooted in her Lagos upbringing, her work invites curiosity and openness, offering a pathway to understanding. Through her sculptures, she contributes a local harmony to the global choir of art, blending truth, nature, and rebellion into a singular voice.

LAGOS AMONG FOUR AFRICAN CITIES RANKED BEST IN THE WORLD FOR NIGHTLIFE IN 2025

CHISOM MICHAEL



Seventy-seven per cent of residents described the city's nightlife as "good" or "amazing". Cape Town was also ranked as the third cheapest city in the top 20 for a night out, making it accessible for both locals and visitors.

2. Lagos – 14th Place

Lagos secured the 14th position, with 79 per cent of locals rating its nightlife positively. The city's night scene has been evolving, with more inclusive underground events gaining popularity. Venues such as SweatItOutLagos and Our Group Therapy reflect this shift from traditional exclusive lounges to spaces that welcome diverse crowds.

3. Cairo – 15th Place

Cairo ranked 15th, with 79 per cent of its residents giving a positive review of its nightlife. Seventy-two per cent of locals also described it as "cheap or free" or "affordable". While shisha and caffeine remain central to social life, new cocktail bars have been opening in expat-populated districts, adding variety to the city's options for social gatherings.

4. Marrakech – 19th Place

Marrakech completed the list for African cities at number 19. Morocco-based writer Sally Kirby highlighted the city's mix of venues, saying, "The Medina is home to colourful rooftop bars, including El Fenn and Kabana, offering cocktails and majestic views over the Koutoubia Mosque. In Gueliz, you'll find lounge bars such as Baromètre, a speakeasy, and The Mix, known for its electric Gnawa nights."

Seventy-two per cent of Marrakech residents rated the nightlife positively, and the city was also named the third safest destination in the top 20 ranking.

Four African cities have been recognised among the top destinations worldwide for nightlife in 2025, according to a new ranking by Time Out. The cities of Cape Town, Lagos, Cairo, and Marrakech were included in the publication's annual list of the 20 best cities for after-dark activities, based on surveys of thousands of residents and expert reviews.

The global ranking, which featured cities such as Berlin, Mexico City, and Las Vegas, examined the evolving ways people spend their nights out, from sober-friendly collectives and late-night cafés to cocktail bars and large-scale music events.

Here is how the African cities performed on the list

1. Cape Town – 11th Place

Cape Town was the highest-ranked African city on the list. Time Out Cape Town editor Selene Brophy said the city's "party scene pulses with grit, glamour, and groove – just ask South African homegrown global stars Tyla and Black Coffee."

A NIGHT OF MARVEL MAGIC: FANTASTIC FOUR PREMIERES IN LAGOS



POWERED BY **VISA** | **Chipper**

Marvel Studios' latest superhero film, *The Fantastic Four: First Steps*, premiered to an excited Nigerian audience Thursday night, at an exclusive screening organised by Filmhouse Group, in partnership with Visa and Chipper Cash.

The event, held at Filmhouse Cinemas IMAX, Lagos, brought together celebrities, content creators, media, and Marvel fans to experience one of the year's most anticipated films ahead of its continental release on Friday, July 25.

"We are thrilled to bring Marvel Studios' *The Fantastic Four: First Steps* to audiences across Nigeria and even more energised to partner with Visa and Chipper Cash to make this global event accessible to local audiences in new and exciting ways," said Kene Okwuosa, Group CEO of Filmhouse Group at the premiere.

Speaking further, the Group CEO highlighted the longstanding partnership with Disney and Marvel Studios, stating "Tonight is a special screening and premiere for *Fantastic Four*, which is the latest addition to the MCU slate for Marvel. Disney are a studio partner of ours and we've worked on releasing the Disney slate in this market and English-speaking West Africa for a number of years now."

He added that the crowd's excitement reflects deep interest in the film and its place in Marvel's future. "The excitement that

people have for *Fantastic Four* is very evident, and the thing that's probably excited us most is the ability to be able to bring it to our audiences with one of our most formidable partners, Visa."

"We started our partnership from last year and all I can say is that it's been one of the most beneficial and integral piece of partnership that we have had. We're really grateful for our partnership with Visa."

Asked about his favorite character, he said, "My favorite character is Johnny Storm because I want to fly. Though all the other powers are really unique and very interesting, I belong to club Johnny."

Reactions from the audience

Guests at the premiere shared their reactions after watching the film, with many praising its emotional depth and family-centered plot. Udu Ogehenro, a writer, described the atmosphere, saying "I got to meet my favourite celebrities and also enjoyed a great movie experience."

Also, the movie was suspense-filled and filled with intensity that put everyone on the edge of their seat."

"When asked what her takeaway from the movie was, Oghenero said, 'I won't sacrifice my child for this world, and I won't sacrifice this world for my child. I'll recommend it to others, you will be glad you watched it.'"

Similarly, David Olaniyi said the film met his expectations for an unforgettable experience. "The movie was really hot on the unbreakable bond of family and friendship," he said. "A mother's love for her child and her world was the center piece for me. It showed a sense of family, parenthood, and it is PG friendly."

He continued, "I will fully recommend this movie for Nigerians and all movie lovers out there. It was wonderful and Marvel does always, they left a snippet for what is next to happen in the next movie. It was suspense and now I can't wait. You should go see it to know what I am talking about."

On his part, Udu Ogehenero, a writer, said "The storyline was amazing, that it was like no one left the cinema hall till the end. Everyone in the hall came from different walks of life, but we were united in enjoying how the scenes played out, and also reacted the same way. I especially loved the emphasis on love for family, and what sacrifice truly is."

Summary of the movie

Set four years after the team gains powers, *Fantastic Four: First Steps* sees Reed Richards, Sue Storm, Johnny Storm, and Ben Grimm face Galactus, a cosmic destroyer of worlds. After Galactus demands Sue's unborn child, the team refuses, launching a desperate fight for Earth.

FIRST GLOBAL STREAMING PLATFORM DEDICATED TO NOLLYWOOD 'KAVA' DEBUTS IN NIGERIA



In a landmark moment for African entertainment, the world's first dedicated Nollywood streaming platform was unveiled on Thursday, ushering in a bold era for Nigeria's film industry and for African creators everywhere.

Nollywood is the second-largest film industry in the world, yet its stories have long been underrepresented on global platforms. As demand for authentic African content continues to rise, especially among diaspora audiences, KAVA was born from a shared mission: to amplify African storytelling and create a permanent, global home for content that reflects the culture, identity, and lived experiences of its people. By combining cutting-edge technology with a powerful purpose, it offers more than

entertainment—it offers recognition, connection, and a platform where African stories are seen, celebrated, and preserved.

Powered by two industry titans - Inkblot Studios, one of Nigeria's leading studios and the first to secure landmark streaming deals with Amazon Prime and Netflix in Africa, and Filmhouse Group, home to West Africa's largest cinema chain (Filmhouse Cinemas), its leading distribution arm (FilmOne Entertainment), and production powerhouse (FilmOne Studios) - Kava is built on a foundation of deep expertise in cinema exhibition, content production, and global distribution. Together, these forces are united by a shared mission and a united vision for Nollywood's future.



Launching with over 30 premium Nollywood titles, in partnership with creators across Nigeria and the diaspora, including exclusive post-theatrical releases, and a handpicked selection of Nigeria's most iconic and compelling stories. New content will be added weekly, offering viewers a consistent stream of fresh, cinema-quality entertainment.

Viewers will find films across every genre: drama, romance, comedy, epic, thriller and more, reflecting the rich range of African storytelling and spotlighting creators across Nigeria and the diaspora.

Chinaza Onuzo, CEO of KAVA said: "KAVA is where cutting-edge technology meets cultural storytelling. We've built a world-class digital platform tailored to showcase the richness of Nollywood. For creators, it's a new economy. One that truly champions and reflects who we are - as Africans, as artists, and as a people with stories that matter."

Kene Okwuosa, CEO of KAVA said: "This is more than a platform - it's an ecosystem for African content, focusing on underserved

global demand. KAVA exists to serve audiences and also represents both a cultural leap and a commercial opportunity. We're not just streaming films - we're building the digital infrastructure for the future of African cinema. We want our audiences to feel the joy of seeing their language, their humour, their struggles and triumphs on screen. To feel seen, and like they're part of something bigger" KAVA will be available for subscription globally late August 2025.

The service will be accessible on mobiles, tablets, and Smart TVs.

Viewers can sign up for additional information and access to the platform at launch in August. Early sign ups will benefit from launch day discounts.

KAVA is a global streaming platform dedicated to celebrating Nollywood and African storytelling. With a curated selection of films, original content, and interactive features, KAVA connects African cinema to global audiences while empowering creators through transparency, access, and fair revenue models.

A portrait of Adebayo Adegun, a man with a full beard and glasses, wearing a blue suit jacket, a white shirt, and a red rose boutonniere. A patterned pocket square is visible in his jacket. The background is a dark, warm-toned gradient.

SCALING IMPACT, SHAPING CULTURE: A DEEP DIVE INTO ADEBAYO ADEGUN'S PEOPLE DEVELOPMENT PLAYBOOK

CHISOM MICHAEL



CrossTie Solutions, a fast-rising force in people development and organisational consulting, continues to redefine leadership capability across Nigeria's public and private sectors. At the centre of this evolution is Adebayo Adegun, Lead Partner and CEO — a seasoned OD Consultant and leadership trainer with over 15 years of experience delivering strategic transformation across industries.

Adegun has remained committed to helping organisations build sustainable leadership and culture. Since founding CrossTie in 2013, he has led the firm to train over 5,000 professionals, with clients including CBN, Lagos State, Seplat, Stanbic IBTC, and more.

In this interview with Chisom Michael, Adebayo shares key lessons from his professional journey, hard-won insights into the evolving landscape of leadership development, and practical, experience-backed strategies for building people systems that not only align with organisational performance but also drive long-term cultural transformation and strategic impact. Excerpts:

You have worked across both public and private sectors. What differences have you observed in how organisations approach training and development?

Working across various sectors, I have observed contrasting mindsets regarding learning. Private organisations tend to view training as a strategic investment linked to performance, retention, and culture.

They adopt data-influenced approaches and customised learning paths that align with their business goals. In the public sector, training has historically leaned more toward compliance and occasional workshops.

However, this is evolving. Many public institutions are increasingly open to practical, mindset-shifting programmes that build strategic capability. For example, through our work with government agencies, we have seen a growing appetite for development initiatives that go beyond ticking boxes.

Ultimately, private organisations lead in agility, while the public sector has the scale to drive societal change if it embraces continuous learning as a lever of performance.

Many Nigerian companies struggle with succession planning. In your experience, what are the key barriers to getting this right?

Succession often fails because companies treat it as a one-off event, not a deliberate process. Over-centralised leadership is a common barrier, especially in founder-led businesses where control is tightly held.

Another challenge is the lack of structured talent pipelines. Many firms prioritise short-term performance over nurturing long-term leadership potential. Fear also plays a role as leaders may hesitate to develop successors, fearing irrelevance.

At Crosstie, we help businesses build what we call Leadership Architecture: a model that embeds leadership development into their operating rhythm, ensuring sustainability and long-term impact.

What role do you believe leadership coaching plays in improving business performance today?

Leadership coaching has become essential for improving performance because it bridges self-awareness and strategy. Unlike conventional training, coaching is personalised and confidential. It helps leaders build emotional intelligence, improve decision-making, and stay self-aware.

I have seen coaching transform leaders from reactive managers to intentional, strategic thinkers. This shift leads to stronger engagement, clearer communication, and better execution, all critical for navigating rapid change.

You've led training for some of Nigeria's biggest institutions. What have these experiences taught you about developing senior talent?

Working with senior leaders across top institutions like TVC, First Pension, NDIC, DMO, Stanbic IBTC, and Lagos State Government has taught me that developing senior leaders goes far beyond sharing content. Senior executives rarely lack technical competence. Instead, their growth often depends on learning to influence culture, lead through people, and operate strategically. Many struggle to evolve from operational problem-solving to defining vision and values.

Another insight is that ego and legacy often get in the way. Effective development at that level requires creating safe spaces for vulnerability, accountability, and growth.

Our Senior Leadership programs at Crosstie often include simulations, coaching, and reflective exercises that push leaders to confront their blind spots and recalibrate their leadership style. When senior leaders shift their mindset, the effect on culture and performance is substantial.

Can you walk us through your approach when designing a competency framework for an organisation?

I view a competency framework as a strategic tool to align people, culture, and performance. The process starts by understanding the organisation's vision, priorities, and desired culture.

At Crosstie, we typically use the KSA framework to define knowledge, skills, and attitudes: knowledge is what an individual needs to understand or be aware of in their role; skills are the technical and behavioural capabilities required to perform; and attitudes are the mindset and behaviours that align with the company's culture.

From there, we validate the framework with leadership teams to ensure it resonates practically and culturally. Embedding it into daily operations such as recruitment, development, and performance reviews makes it a living document that defines how people grow and deliver results.

What strategies have worked best for you in aligning people development with organisational goals?

Alignment starts with clarity about where the business is headed. Every development initiative must connect to that vision. I've found that mapping critical capabilities and designing learning around them is effective, as is embedding development into everyday work, through coaching, projects, and feedback.

Culture also plays an important role. We use our 6-Dimensional Culture Framework to assess the cultural environment supporting development.





We embed learning into daily operations. That means not just workshops, but coaching, assignments, accountability, and post-training tracking tools like our CIRD (Culture Initiative Reporting Dashboard).

Finally, leadership sponsorship is essential. When leaders champion learning and link it to performance, alignment accelerates.

As someone who has managed consulting projects worth billions of naira, what lessons have you learnt about scaling impact in large systems?

Scale doesn't start with size, it starts with clarity, consistency and discipline in structure. In large organisations, a lack of alignment can quickly multiply confusion.

It is also critical to build solutions that clients can sustain independently. Early wins are important as they build belief. And without robust data to track progress, scaling becomes guesswork. Our CIRD dashboard helps us monitor implementation across multiple touchpoints, ensuring progress is visible and accountable.

Scaling involves designing systems that are clear, repeatable, and owned by people.

How do you measure the effectiveness of leadership training programmes?

I look for evidence of learning, behavioural change, and impact on strategic goals to ensure training translates into value, not just.

At Crosstie, we start with immediate feedback and knowledge assessments, but more importantly, we track agreed performance indicators like decision quality, engagement levels, and execution speed through our proprietary Training ROI Tool.

Effectiveness isn't about attendance, it's about impact. We ensure that training translates into

performance, accountability, and real organisational value, not just inspiration.

In your view, what is the most pressing people-related challenge Nigerian businesses face today?

The most significant challenge is the gap between role and readiness. Many organisations promote people for technical expertise but fail to prepare them for leadership. This mismatch affects execution and morale.

Sustainable performance requires more than functional competence; it needs intentional development structures that build leadership capability and accountability over time.

What advice would you give business leaders trying to shift from reactive HR models to strategic people management?

First, see HR as a strategic driver, not an administrative function. People are the strategy, not just implementers of it.

Second, align HR initiatives to clear business outcomes and cultural goals. Use analytics to inform decisions from hiring and development to succession planning.

Lastly, embed HR in strategic discussions. If your HR leaders are not part of growth and innovation conversations, you are missing an opportunity.

Strategic people management involves creating systems that attract, develop, and retain talent capable of realising your vision.

THE DIGITAL PROFESSIONAL FAIR: CHAMPIONING THE NEXT GENERATION OF AFRICA'S DIGITAL WORKFORCE



The digital space in Africa is a rapidly evolving landscape, presenting vast opportunities for growth, innovation, and development. With the rise of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, digital skills have become essential for accessing various industries and securing employment.

However, a significant digital divide persists, with many low-income communities facing barriers to internet access and digital literacy. Despite these challenges, Africa's digital workforce is burgeoning, with many creatives and innovators leveraging digital platforms to showcase their talents and tell African stories.

Africa's digital economy has the potential to stimulate tremendous growth, particularly among young people. According to recent studies, the continent's digital economy could reach a value of \$180 billion by 2025, driven by the increasing adoption of digital technologies and the growing demand for digital services. However, to realize this potential, Africa needs a skilled and empowered digital workforce that can drive innovation, entrepreneurship, and economic growth.

The inaugural Digital Professional Fair is a timely response to the growing need for connection, upskilling, and visibility within Africa's evolving digital economy. Convened by visionary strategist and tech



advocate Tutu Adetunmbi, the event aims to empower a generation of young Africans to take their rightful place in the digital economy. By providing access to tools, training, and visibility, the fair will democratize opportunities in the digital economy and remove barriers to entry for young professionals, students, and aspiring entrepreneurs.

In a bold move to empower and elevate Africa's digital workforce, the inaugural edition of The Digital Professional Fair is set to debut in Lagos this August, positioning itself as a flagship gathering for emerging talent, freelancers, and established professionals in the digital space.

Convened by visionary strategist and tech advocate Tutu Adetunmbi, the event is a timely response to the growing need for connection, upskilling, and visibility within Africa's evolving digital economy.

Held over three transformative days, the Fair is strategically structured to cater to distinct audiences at different stages of their digital journeys—ushering in a new era of professional empowerment, knowledge sharing, and economic inclusion.

The opening day will spotlight The Digital Career Kickstart, tailored for emerging digital talent between the ages of 18 and 24. With a focus on students, entry-level professionals, and aspiring digital creatives, this track addresses the urgent need for career guidance, foundational digital

skills, industry certifications, and access to internship and job opportunities. Through structured learning sessions, practical training, and direct recruitment pathways, participants will be positioned to confidently step into the digital workforce.

On the second day, attention shifts to The Freelancer & Founder Blueprint, curated for freelancers and early-stage entrepreneurs aged 25 to 30. This segment serves freelancers, solopreneurs, and small business owners navigating the complexities of the digital economy.

From business structuring to pricing strategies and client acquisition, attendees will gain access to high-value insights, global market entry opportunities, and interactive workshops designed to boost their growth and sustainability.

The grand finale on day three is dedicated to Scaling & Global Expansion, catering to established digital professionals and business owners aged 30 to 40 and above. This high-impact track is tailored to those already operating at scale and seeking operational efficiency, leadership development, and international growth strategies. Participants will experience executive-level masterclasses, investor networking, and cross-border partnership opportunities to help them scale beyond local markets.

Speaking on the vision behind the event, Tutu Adetunmbi shared: "This is more than a conference—it's a movement. We're building a bridge between potential and opportunity, from Lagos to the world. The digital economy is not the future, it is the now. And Africa's talent must be equipped, celebrated, and given the platforms to shine."

The Digital Professional Fair promises an immersive experience—where ambition meets opportunity, and where professionals, creators, and entrepreneurs alike can connect, grow, and thrive.

KEHINDE AJOSE ON WHY BUSINESSES MUST KEEP SHOWING UP EVEN IN HARD TIMES





Nigerian entrepreneurs face a challenging economic landscape marked by inflation, market saturation, fierce competition, and shifting consumer behaviors. Many hardworking business owners struggle to cut through the noise and gain meaningful traction.

Despite their skills and determination, countless talented individuals find themselves stuck doing great work but unable to secure customers or grow their impact. In today's harsh environment where resources are limited and attention is scarce, one fundamental truth stands firm: being good at what you do is simply not enough. You must be seen.

Kehinde Ajose, known as The Visibility Surgeon and founder of Visibility Solutions Media, insists visibility is the secret weapon Nigerian entrepreneurs need to survive and thrive. "In today's economy talent and quality are baseline requirements," he explains, "but if you're not visible, you are invisible to your market and invisible businesses don't get chosen."

A 2025 report by AMW Group reaffirms this, highlighting that brand visibility is foundational to growth and requires deliberate multichannel strategies including SEO, social media, and content marketing. Increasing brand awareness, trust, and market share through consistent visibility directly drives customer choice and revenue growth. In flooded markets, brands that fail to maintain visibility risk becoming invisible and invisibility kills opportunity.

Ajose has made it his mission to help brands and individuals move from overlooked to unforgettable. Through his agency Visibility Solutions Media, he guides clients in navigating crowded, noisy marketplaces to carve out distinct presences that generate real results. For many who come to him, the story is all too familiar: undeniable talent and hard work, yet they remain unseen and unheard.

His journey began with storytelling. Early projects like his newsletter MOVE with Kenni and the Move Achievers Compendium, a mini-magazine spotlighting trailblazers, gave him a deep appreciation for narrative's power to inspire and connect. But storytelling alone was not enough. "It became clear that without strategic visibility, even the best stories and skills stay buried," Kehinde says. "Talent is wasted if the right audience does not see it frequently and credibly."

At Visibility Solutions Media, he developed what he calls intentional visibility. Unlike the noise and random content bursts common today, this approach focuses on visibility that builds trust, influence, and income. "Visibility isn't vanity," he states firmly. "When you show up consistently and with credibility you build trust. And trust is the gateway to influence, income, and lasting impact."

The Lagos State University graduate philosophy spans diverse sectors including tech startups, fashion, media, faith-based organizations, and the creative arts. One striking example was a small, relatively unknown award ceremony that struggled for attention. Kehinde's team crafted a visibility blueprint centered on storytelling, thought leadership, and strategic stakeholder alignment. Today, that event boasts partners and recognition across Africa and beyond, a transformation from obscurity to prominence.

Another powerful success story is a little-known skitmaker who initially had no online presence. After applying Kehinde's agency's brand visibility framework, this creator now has over one million followers on Instagram and three and a half million on TikTok. This dramatic growth illustrates how tailored visibility can turn obscurity into massive audience engagement and opportunity.

Yet many talented individuals fall into misguided visibility attempts. Kehinde notes that overposting without clear direction leads to audience fatigue, while focusing on vanity metrics like likes and followers distracts from meaningful engagement and conversions. Others spread themselves thin across platforms without tailoring content, diluting their impact. Most critically, he sees many shy away from authentic storytelling that emotionally connects. These missteps combined keep brands unseen despite effort.



“Visibility isn’t just a marketing problem. It is an emotional and psychological barrier for many,” Kehinde shares. “Clients come to me defeated, feeling invisible despite pouring their hearts into their craft. Helping them build visible presence restores confidence as much as business success.”

Ajose stresses the importance of businesses showing up especially during economic downturns and crises. “Many businesses retreat into silence when times get tough,” he explains. “But that silence signals surrender to your competitors and erases you from the market’s memory. Showing up consistently during hard times tells your customers and competitors that you’re here to stay, that you remain relevant and open for business. That is how you endure and even thrive when others fade.”

With over a decade in branding and visibility, Kehinde Ajose has become a trusted voice in Nigeria and beyond. His

clients range from startups and entrepreneurs to corporate executives and celebrities. His ability to cut through clutter and build authentic, durable visibility earned him the Visibility Strategist of the Year award at the 2023 Africa Honorary Awards, an accolade recognizing both client successes and his leadership.

Above all, Ajose’s purpose is to help people and organizations become too visible to be ignored. “Moving from the best-kept secret to the first choice that is the transformation I aim for,” he says with a smile reflecting quiet certainty and passion.

In a world where attention is the ultimate currency, Kehinde Ajose, The Visibility Surgeon, is equipping brands and individuals to claim their rightful place in the spotlight. Because no matter how talented you are, if you fail to show up, you simply do not exist.

FOODAHOLIC FESTIVAL 2025: A FUSION OF FOOD, MUSIC AND LIFESTYLE

IFEOMA OKEKE-KORIEOCHA



Nigeria's culinary scene is a vibrant reflection of its rich cultural heritage, with a diverse array of dishes that showcase the country's history, traditions, and identity.

From the spicy flavors of suya to the comforting warmth of Egusi soup, every bite tells a story of resilience, tradition, and joy. With over 250 ethnic groups, each possessing unique customs and flavors, Nigerian cuisine is a tapestry of tastes and textures that reflect the nation's varied geography and history.

The Foodaholic Festival, now in its 7th edition, has become a cornerstone of Nigeria's cultural calendar, celebrating the country's love for food, music, and community.

Organised by Foodies & Spice, the culinary media brand founded by renowned food content creator Gina

Ehikodi-Ojo, the festival promises to be a truly immersive experience, showcasing the best of Nigerian cuisine, music, and lifestyle. With its growing international appeal, the festival has attracted guests from across Nigeria and the diaspora, cementing its role as a driver of cultural exchange and economic growth.

The much-anticipated Foodaholic Festival, returns for its 7th edition this December, promising a truly immersive and unforgettable experience for lovers of great cuisine, music, fashion, and fun.

The event also attracts food brands, families, creatives, and cultural enthusiasts from across Nigeria and the diaspora.

According to Ehikodi-Ojo, this year's edition will take place on Saturday, December 13, 2025, at the JJT Park, Alausa, Lagos, and will showcase an exciting range of curated



experiences that reflect Nigeria's rich culinary diversity and vibrant entertainment scene.

Speaking during a press conference to announce this year's event, she said, "This year's Foodaholic Festival is not just a food fair."

"It's a full sensory experience — a vibrant fusion of food, culture, music, and lifestyle. From our signature food court to family zones, fashion runways, and masterclasses, there's something for everyone."

The festival highlights include a sprawling food court serving diverse Nigerian and international dishes, the popular Daddy's Corner — a dedicated men's zone with games, grills, and premium experiences Sip & Paint sessions for creative expression, a live fashion runway show featuring top designers and models, a kids' playground for family-friendly fun Music performances, celebrity appearances, competitions, and giveaways, the Food Masterclass and Food Bloggers Corner for industry knowledge-sharing and networking.

Admission to the Foodaholic Festival is completely free, ensuring that everyone — regardless of background — can take part in the fun, flavor, and festivities.

The event not only celebrates our love for food and culture, but also fosters community, supports small businesses, and promotes social inclusion.

The Lagos State Government, through the Ministry of Tourism, Arts & Culture, has thrown its weight behind the festival through its official endorsement. Their support



affirms the festival's position as a key cultural and tourism event on the Lagos calendar. We are grateful to Lagos State for recognizing the impact the Foodaholic Festival has on local tourism, youth engagement, SME development, and the creative economy. With this partnership, we are excited to take the experience even further this year.

Over the years, the Foodaholic Festival has enjoyed partnerships with major players in finance, FMCGs, beverages, tech, and media — from banks and consumer brands to lifestyle companies — creating a multi-sector celebration of taste and culture.

With its growing international appeal, the festival attracts guests not only from across Nigeria but also from the UK, US, Ghana, and other countries, cementing its role as a driver of cultural exchange and diaspora engagement.

"This 7th edition will raise the bar like never before," Ehikodi-Ojo added. "We're excited to welcome even more partners and guests to this celebration of everything that makes Lagos vibrant, tasteful, and unforgettable."

“WE JUST WANTED HIM TO SPEAK”: HOW NIGERIAN PARENTS ARE FIGHTING STIGMA, COST AND SILENCE TO RAISE AUTISTIC CHILDREN

IFEOMA OKEKE-KORIEOCHA



When Kayode Yusuf's second son turned four and still hadn't spoken a word, he feared something was wrong. He didn't respond to his name, avoided other children, clung to routines, and cried for hours when they changed.

"I remember thinking, maybe he's just slow," Yusuf said. "But deep down, we I it was more."

Both of Yusuf's sons, aged six and four, had been diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Since then, he and his wife have spent nearly everything they have searching for answers: school aides, speech therapy, dietary support, and occupational specialists.

Their story is shared by thousands of Nigerian parents, many of whom gathered for the 15th Annual GTCO Autism Conference held in Lagos recently and the Clinics put together by GTCO for one-on-one sessions. It was

followed by a free consultation clinic with medical experts, psychiatrists, speech therapists, educational psychologists, behavioral analysts, and clinical consultants, who offered individualised support to families.

These parents spoke openly, some for the first time, about their struggles, fears, and lessons. For them, autism is not a trending diagnosis or a textbook case but a daily journey, often traveled alone.

The global reality and the local gap

According to a 2024 study published in *The Lancet*, autism affects an estimated 61.8 million people globally, making it one of the most widespread neurological conditions worldwide. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) further reports that boys are significantly more likely to be diagnosed than girls, with a male-to-female ratio of 3 to 1.



Yet, in Nigeria, the condition remains underdiagnosed and misunderstood. Data garnered from the Etta-Atlantic Memorial Hospital showed autism prevalence in Nigeria is estimated between 0.8 percent and 2.3 percent, though numbers are imprecise due to poor reporting systems. Furthermore, most parents describe discovering their children's autism not through structured screenings or early interventions, but through sheer parental instinct, when something just "felt off."

One parent recounted how her son, despite attending a top-tier school, couldn't hold a conversation or respond to his name. "At first, we thought it was hearing loss. But the tests came back normal," she said. "That's when we knew this was something deeper."

Another father said his son still couldn't speak at age four and required specialised attention at school. "He's a sweet boy but it's like he lives in his own world," he shared. "We pay ₦100,000 per month just so someone in class can keep an eye on him."

GTCO's 15-year commitment: From awareness to action
In a country with few public services for neurodevelopmental disorders, Guaranty Trust Holding Company (GTCO) has carved a significant niche through its Autism Conference and follow-up clinics, held annually since 2009.

At this year's edition, the Muson Centre in Lagos was filled with more than just presentations. After the conference, GTCO hosted a free multi-day consultation event with local and international specialists. Many families, for the first time in their lives, sat face-to-face with behavioural analysts, clinical psychiatrists, occupational therapists, and speech-language experts free of charge.

The conference offered lectures, direction, free screenings, and peer support, forming a rare bridge between professional care and parental reality. For Shalape Azizi, the founder of Cradle Lounge Special Needs Initiative, a non-governmental organisation, it was a full-circle moment. "Eight years ago, I came in as a desperate parent. I left that

day with a purpose," she said. "Now I return to help others walk the same path."

She added, "When I got the diagnosis for my son, no one told me what to do next. No therapy list. No community support. It was at this conference that I began to heal." "Autism is not just a family affair, it's everybody's business," said Mashudat Bello-Mojeed, a leading Nigerian child and adolescent psychiatrist and one of the speakers at the conference. "Too many people think an autism diagnosis is a death sentence, but it's not."

Bello-Mojeed also described the structural barriers that parents face, including few trained therapists, inaccessible hospitals, stigma, and widespread misinformation. "We've been raising awareness, improving education, and breaking down barriers of stigma," she said. "But now, it's time to take action."

She emphasised that awareness must be translated into tangible actions that make a difference in the lives of individuals with autism.

She pointed out that even well-meaning schools often lack basic accommodations. "When a child with autism throws a tantrum, it's not a moral failure. It's neurological. We need to educate our society to understand that."

"We sold everything just to hear him say 'I'm hungry'".

The emotional and financial cost of raising a child on the spectrum in Nigeria can be staggering. Several parents at the GTCO clinic admitted that they had emptied savings, sold land, borrowed from friends, and fallen into debt just to cover therapy costs, often ₦150,000 to ₦200,000 per child per month, not including special education fees, dietary supplements, or caregiver salaries.

One mother described using up her emergency savings and taking on multiple jobs to afford her son's speech therapy. "We paid everything we could just for him to learn to say tea or 'Capri-Sonne' when he wanted juice."



Another parent said her son only eats three foods and has to be fed manually. “He literally doesn’t eat a lot of things. In fact, when he sees an egg in his food, he’s just going to tell you, “Mummy, egg, no that is I’m not eating. And then he’s inspecting the food to be sure that you’re not hiding fish or meat inside.”

“So, most times for me to give him protein, I’m going to have to buy chicken, blend it, and then cook it inside the food so that he won’t see any crumbs in it, else he won’t eat it,” she continued. “In fact, sometimes when he tastes it, he’s just going to tell you, ‘No, he prefers to be hungry than to eat a lot of things.’”

And yet, despite the cost, many parents remain hopeful. They document their children’s progress in small victories, eye contact, new words, and peaceful play with siblings. “We don’t need perfection,” one father said. “We just want to know our child is seen, supported, and safe.”

The stigma that still silences

In addition to cost, stigma remains one of the most crushing barriers families face. Parents recalled being told by

teachers, doctors, even pastors, that their child’s behaviour was due to poor parenting or demonic influence. One mother said her own relatives accused her of being cursed. “It’s why I stopped sharing photos of my son, people judge what they don’t understand.”

At one private school, a mother discovered that her son had been left in a soaked diaper all day, unfed and ignored. “They said they didn’t know how to handle him,” she said. “They didn’t even try.”

However, experts like Bernadette Kilo, an Atlanta-based autism consultant and mother of three autistic children, aged 15, 12, and 10, urged society to move beyond judgment.

“Children with autism are not broken and don’t need to be fixed. They need to be accepted and loved,” she said.

“Punishment only adds trauma. Instead, what we need is understanding and structure.”

From Survival to Strategy: What Needs to Happen Now
As the final sessions of the conference and the clinical consultation drew to a close, the message from experts and advocates became increasingly urgent. First and foremost, they emphasised the pressing need for policy reforms that would make inclusive education and therapy services not a privilege but a national mandate.

In addition to legislative changes, they called for government-funded subsidies, which could ease the financial burden of families seeking special education and developmental care for their children.

Alongside financial support, the experts underscored the importance of establishing accessible therapy centers within every local government area, ensuring that no family is left stranded due to distance or cost. Equally essential, they noted, is specialised teacher training empowering educators to identify early signs of autism and provide classroom support tailored to neurodivergent learners.

Finally, and perhaps most critically, there was a resounding call to create employment hubs designed explicitly for autistic youth and adults, offering not just vocational assessments but also the job placements and support structures they need to thrive. In essence, what began as a conversation on awareness is now evolving into a blueprint for national inclusion.

Georgiana Kojima, a behaviour analyst, emphasised that “integration starts with education, not just of children, but of society.” “Parents must become advocates but the system must also meet them halfway,” she said. “Support groups, inclusive curricula, and national awareness campaigns must be scaled immediately.”

GTCO’s annual autism platform may not solve all the problems but for one weekend every year, it gives families something they rarely receive: recognition, resources, and real hope.

EMPOWERING AFRICAN FASHION: FASHIONEVO AND FCA PARTNERSHIP

IFEOMA OKEKE-KORIEOCHA



African fashion has long been a vibrant and dynamic industry, showcasing the continent's rich cultural heritage and creative flair. From traditional textiles and prints to modern designs and styles, African fashion has evolved significantly over the years, with many designers gaining international recognition and acclaim.

However, despite its growth and potential, the African fashion industry still faces challenges such as limited access to resources, training, and markets, which can hinder its development and global reach.

FashionEVO, a leading platform for African fashion, is set to change the narrative with its new partnership

with Fashion Connect Africa (FCA). This collaboration aims to empower youth, promote sustainable fashion development, and foster cross-border creative exchange in West Africa.

By bringing together emerging and established designers, industry professionals, and stakeholders, FashionEVO Summit & Show at Africa Creative Market 2025 will provide a platform for education, visibility, and sustainable business practices. The event will feature a curated designer runway show, masterclasses, industry panels, and other activities that will help shape the future of African fashion.

The partnership between FashionEVO and FCA is a significant milestone in the development of the African fashion industry. With its focus on collaboration, access, and visibility, this partnership has the potential to transform the industry by providing opportunities for emerging designers, promoting sustainable fashion practices, and showcasing African fashion to a global audience.

Through its 'Seed to Stage' initiative, FCA will identify, train, and support emerging fashion talents from underserved communities, providing them with the necessary resources to thrive. By working together, FashionEVO and FCA can help to reshape the African fashion narrative and take the industry to new heights.

FashionEVO Summit & Show is set to take place on September 18, 2025, during the fourth edition of Africa Creative Market (ACM) at Landmark Event Centre in Lagos, Nigeria.

This collaboration was formally introduced at a press reception held at the Polo Club in Accra, Ghana, marking a significant milestone in enhancing creative and economic ties between Ghana and Nigeria through the fashion industry.



The event featured the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Yetty Ogunnubi, Founder and CEO of FashionEVO, and Victoria Michaels, Founder and CEO of Fashion Connect Africa. This agreement reflects a mutual commitment to youth empowerment, sustainable fashion development, and cross-border creative exchange in West Africa.

Ogunnubi articulated the long-term vision of this partnership, stating, “We are not merely collaborating for a single event; we are laying the groundwork for an enduring ecosystem of opportunity. FashionEVO Summit & Show at ACM will not only celebrate African fashion but will also serve as a platform for education, visibility, and sustainable business practices.” Victoria Michaels added, “This partnership is driven by purpose. Together, we are creating access points for untapped talent in both countries, focusing on empowerment, legacy, and the reshaping of the African fashion narrative.”

A highlight of the press launch was the introduction of FCA’s ‘Seed to Stage’ initiative, a groundbreaking talent development program aimed at identifying, training, and supporting emerging fashion talents from underserved communities.

The program’s inaugural beneficiary, Lydia Okine, was recognised for receiving a six-month fashion training scholarship, two digital sewing machines, one year of rent support for her creative workspace, and an opportunity to showcase her work at the GUBA Trade and Investment Forum in Barbados.

“Lydia’s journey exemplifies the brilliance that can be found in unexpected places,” said Victoria Michaels. “The Seed to Stage initiative aims to redirect the fashion industry’s focus toward overlooked talent, providing them with the necessary resources to thrive.”



As part of this new partnership, FCA will present a dedicated ‘Seed to Stage’ segment during FashionEVO Summit & Show, featuring five emerging designers—two from Ghana and three from Nigeria—selected through ongoing community engagement initiatives. Each designer will debut a mini capsule collection inspired by street style, sustainability, and cultural storytelling, with post-show networking and mentorship opportunities planned.

The launch event, hosted by renowned Ghanaian MC and media personality Kabutey Ocansey, showcased both emerging and established designers, creating an atmosphere filled with energy and excitement.

The distinguished audience included notable figures from the diplomatic, creative, and corporate sectors, such as Juliette Bynoe-Sutherland, Barbados High Commissioner to Ghana; Kenneth Kwamina Thompson, Board Chairman of the Agricultural

Development Bank; Uzochina Molokwu, CEO/MD of UBA Ghana; Kofi Okyere Darko, Presidential Adviser on Diaspora Affairs; Catherine Ekar, Head of Private Banking and Wealth Management at FirstBank Ghana; Jane Okyere Aduachie, Acting Executive Secretary of American Chamber of Commerce in Ghana; Ivy Prosper - Media Personality and Producer; Dominique Paravicini- Entrepreneur and Editor Enjoy Accra Magazine and several other high-profile guests.

FashionEVO Summit & Show at Africa Creative Market 2025 will feature a curated designer runway show, masterclasses, industry panels, a pop-up retail boutique, a fashion installation, a student fashion competition, and an awards ceremony recognising key contributors to African fashion. The partnership between FCA and FashionEVO highlights a shared commitment to transforming the African fashion landscape through collaboration, access, and visibility.

TMUFS ABUJA MAKEUP FAIR: WHERE BEAUTY MEETS INNOVATION AND COMMUNITY



The beauty industry witnessed another landmark moment as The MakeUp Fair Series (TMUFS) successfully hosted the 14th Abuja MakeUp Fair (AMUF14) on 12–13 July 2025, at The PSI Event centre Abuja. This edition which also marked the 129th edition of TMUFS, brought together makeup & beauty brands, professionals, enthusiasts and shoppers for a vibrant weekend of discovery, networking and commerce.

TMUFS, Nigeria's premier beauty tradeshow platform continues to lead the way in connecting beauty brands to their target audience, providing a space for visibility, business growth and meaningful

customer engagement. With over 50 participating brands from across Nigeria and thousands of attendees, AMUF14 delivered a dynamic mix of product showcases, discounted deals, sampling experiences and brand storytelling.

A major highlight of AMUF14 was the TMUFS Beauty Face-Off Competition a thrilling feature that has quickly become a crowd favorite and a permanent fixture on the TMUFS calendar. The competition brought together 8 talented makeup artists who battled it out live, showcasing their creativity, speed and skill in front of an enthusiastic audience. At the end of the contest, three outstanding winners emerged and walked away



with mystery boxes filled with premium goodies from participating beauty brands, a gesture that reflects TMUFS' commitment to supporting and celebrating talent within the industry.

Speaking on the success of the event, Omolola Faleye, founder of TMUFS, said:

"The Abuja MakeUp Fair is always special. It reflects the passion and resilience of our beauty ecosystem. Each edition is about more than sales it's about experience, visibility, connection and the joy of being seen. We're grateful for every exhibitor who trusted our platform and every attendee who showed up with excitement to shop and network."

This year's edition was not only about beauty products; it was about community and creativity. One of the recurring highlights was the unwavering support from loyal exhibitors and new brands, many of whom shared heartfelt appreciation for the impact TMUFS has had on their businesses. Attendees also took to social media to describe the fair as "surreal," "well-organized," and "an unforgettable experience."

As TMUFS continues its calendar for 2025, AMUF14 stands as a testament to the brand's commitment to excellence, innovation and community-driven experiences in the African beauty space.

PREPARING STUDENTS FOR LIFE BEYOND THE CLASSROOM: RONIK'S COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATION MODEL

...as school celebrates graduating students

CHARLES OGWO



In a bold move to redefine traditional learning, Ronik International Schools has unveiled a comprehensive education model that integrates vocational training, sports development, and cutting-edge educational technology.

Chris Alabi, executive chairman of Ronik Group of Schools disclosed this during a chat with journalists when he said that the initiative aims to equip students with practical life skills, emotional intelligence, and real-world readiness, preparing them not just for examinations, but for life beyond the classroom.

Alabi said that the school is embracing innovation and the power of re-engineering with the understanding that education must not remain stagnant.

“At Ronik International Schools, we’re boldly reimagining learning, not just to prepare students for examinations but to prepare them for life.

Beyond academic excellence, we want to actually go into vocational training, sports and tech-skills acquisition, among others, so that students can while they can also learn how to do fashion design, make-ups, to be fully equipped for life ahead,” he said.

In terms of the quality of the teachers, the serial entrepreneur cum educationist said the school ensures quality learning outcomes, employs not only qualified teachers, but the administrative staff too, because everything goes in totality.

“We’re not just employing anybody as teachers, our educators must have minimum educational requirements, besides having a background in education.

“Our vision is to raise great leaders for this country, and develop the young people to achieve the goal of leadership. We are committed to nurturing well-rounded individuals,



and young children who're equipped not only with academic excellence but also integrity and a deep sense of responsibility to themselves and society," he said.

To achieve these goals, Alabi said the school has plans on ground to train and retrain the teachers. Besides, there is an evaluation metric for all staff to ensure they are upscaled.

"Academic-wise, we engage our teachers in career testing. We subject them to some tests to see whether they are actually developing themselves, or they are just staying where they are," he explained.

Adebola Olubanjo, vice-chairman/lead consultant at Ronik speaking at the end of session /graduation event for Ronik Schools, said the institution will continue to push boundaries, embracing technology, creativity and global standards to ensure that every child receives not just education, but a foundation for life.

"We made deliberate efforts to promote digital literacy, moral education, global citizenship, and collaboration.

"We are not just raising academically sound students; we are cultivating leaders who are adaptable, confident, and prepared to thrive in a world full of change and opportunity," he said.

Olubanjo explained that the school is not resting on its oars concerning

the bilingual goal, as there are plans to commence Chinese Language teaching in addition to French in the next academic session.

"Chinese Language teaching will start in the next academic session, and we are starting at primary cadre," he said.

He emphasised that the school has provided a more superior level of value to learners with the introduction of a bilingual laboratory.

"We prepare our students to have a more global outlook, it's essential for them to be able to speak and write the other international languages.

"In our language laboratory, we have facilities to make the programme a success both at the primary and secondary levels. Qualified and experienced teachers are employed to handle the programme," he said.

Chioma Okafor, the P.T.A chairperson at Ronik International School speaking at the graduation ceremony, said that the association under her leadership in its quest to drive excellence has sponsored Spelling Bees Competition to ensure the children excel in their studies.

Besides, the association is sponsoring the teachers' training in order to bring the best out of them; and are also investing in sports to groom a total child.



NIGERIA'S UNIVERSITY SYSTEM: A COMPLEX LANDSCAPE OF WINNERS AND LOSERS

CHARLES OGWO



The rapid proliferation of universities across Nigeria, driven by the National Universities Commission's (NUC) liberal licensing policy, has sparked intense debate among stakeholders in the education sector.

While the expansion aims to improve access to tertiary education and address the growing demand for university admission, it has also raised critical questions about quality, regulation, and equitable distribution of resources.

As new institutions spring up across the country, a closer look reveals a complex landscape of winners and losers, from students and private investors to faculty members and older public institutions, all navigating the changing terrain of higher education in Nigeria.

The rapid increase in the number of universities in the country has become a paradox, even as concerns over quality, funding, and the overall impact on national development arise.

Besides, the unfolding situation poses significant challenges for the labour market and societal attitudes towards education. As of Q1 of 2025, Nigeria has 270 universities; with 62 federal, 63 states and 149 private tertiary institutions, NUC report indicates.

The 270 universities are reported to have approximately 100,000 academic staff servicing over 2.1 million students, at a ratio of 1:21, which is above the global benchmark of 1:10.

This glaring gap among other issues of grave concern, are responsible for only a few Nigerian universities being highly ranked globally.

According to the Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings 2025, only 21 Nigerian universities are featured, and none are in the global top 500, with the highest-ranked institution being Covenant University, which is placed in the 801–1000 bracket globally.



With the poor showing of Nigerian universities on both the local and international scenes, even if the statistics are not flawless, many stakeholders accuse the NUC of systemic corruption and engaging in underhanded dealings during accreditation exercises.

Abdullahi Ribadu, executive secretary at NUC recently disclosed that to attain full accreditation status, that a programme must score a minimum of 70 percent in each of the four core areas, and an overall score of 70 percent or above in its entirety.

Ribadu emphasised that earning full accreditation status “does not imply that a programme has all the necessary resources in perfect measure,” but is deemed to be an “acceptable standard of performance,” with adequate room for further improvements. Regrettably, many of these universities produce graduates who lack the skills needed in a competitive job market.

Many stakeholders believe that NUC should enforce stricter criteria before approving new universities to prioritise quality over quantity.

Furthermore, a critical look at the situation in many institutions shows that lecturers manage up to 1,500 students per course, and this severely affects assimilation and dilutes education quality.

In some cases, individual lecturers manage between 1,200 and 1,500 students, which far exceeds the NUC’s recommended lecturer-to-student ratio of 1:30.

When universities proliferate without a substantive focus on quality, public trust in higher education diminishes. Hence, it is time for stringent criteria for university establishment to be put in place to ensure that new institutions meet high academic standards.

Nubi Achebo, director of academic planning at Nigerian University of Technology and Management said the rapid approval and establishment of universities has raised concerns about the impact on learning outcomes.

Achebo disclosed that while increasing access to higher education is crucial, the proliferation of universities may not necessarily translate to improved education standards.

“One of the primary concerns is the potential compromise on quality education. With more universities, there may be a shortage of qualified faculty members, inadequate infrastructure, and insufficient resources, ultimately affecting the quality of education,” he said.

Isaiah Ogundele, an educationist, said Nigeria having many universities is not a crime but what matters is the quality of learning outcomes which translates to human capital development.

“To be sincere, as long as we do not control our birth rate in Nigeria, the population will keep increasing and no provision from the government will be able to cater for such a population.

“We need more private and public universities for the development of our nation but such arrangements should be well tailored to enhance human capital development, producing problem solvers and not graduates who are looking for a white collar job that does not exist,” he said.

The human capital development index of Nigeria is put at 0.32 percent, which simply means that a Nigerian child has only about 30 percent of his/her potential in life to compete at the global level.

Employers of labour have also lamented the dearth of skilled graduates that fit to work amid poor performance of candidates that turn up for job interviews.

FUTURE-READY SKILLS: AUDA-NEPAD UNVEILS TRANSFORMATIVE EDTECH 2030 VISION

CHARLES OGWO



In a move to equip the youth with future-ready skills, African leaders have unveiled the EdTech 2030 Vision, a transformative roadmap aimed at harnessing technology to revolutionise learning across the continent.

The African Union Development Agency (NEPAD), and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) launched the draft African EdTech 2030: Vision, Plan and Policy framework for consultation and stakeholder input.

The initiative seeks to bridge the digital divide, promote inclusive education, and position Africa at the forefront of global innovation in education technology.

It envisages a future where every African learner has to access locally developed digital education by 2030, transforming the continental economic and social landscape

AUDA-NEPAD leaders unveiled the draft during the STEMtastic Adventures, Africa symposium held in Kenya.

Barbara Glover, programme officer at Integrated Vector Management Programme, AUDA-NEPAD, said, "The draft vision, plan and policy framework aim to catalyse an accelerated transformation in education for the continent: leveraging local innovation and leadership in Edtech to make Africa's education systems more inclusive, resilient

and innovation-driven, as envisaged by Agenda 2063 and the AU Digital Education Strategy."

Africa's leapfrogging opportunity

The framework developers emphasised that the framework capitalises on Africa's unique position to bypass traditional educational infrastructure constraints.

Just as mobile money succeeded in Africa before other regions due to limited traditional banking infrastructure, digital education can surpass conventional classroom-based systems because the continent is not constrained by legacy educational infrastructure.

"Schools can harness offline and mobile-first technologies to reach marginalised learners," the framework developers noted, highlighting how solutions designed for intermittent connectivity and basic smartphones can be exported globally to serve similar conditions worldwide.

With smartphone ownership among teachers exceeding 90 percent in South Africa and between 30-65 percent in Ghana, Nigeria, and Kenya, Africa possesses foundations for mobile-first educational interventions that other continents are still developing.

A comprehensive vision for 2030

The framework establishes an ambitious yet achievable vision: “Every African learner, regardless of gender, location, disability or background, has affordable access to high-quality, localised digital learning resources on reliable devices, within an inclusive ecosystem that fosters innovation and entrepreneurship.”

This means a student in rural Tanzania could access quality chemistry lessons in Kiswahili using easy to access offline capable devices, while teachers across the continent could share resources seamlessly.

African-developed educational apps could compete globally whilst serving local needs first. The harmonised environment enables a teacher in Kenya to use courseware developed in Nigeria, whilst student data remains nationally secure but contributes to continental learning insights.

Addressing critical educational challenges

The vision and plan responds to urgent continental challenges. With Africa’s youthful population, over 60 percent under age 25, projected to reach 2.5 billion by 2050, quality education becomes critical for sustained growth.

However, significant barriers persist: an estimated 30 million primary-age children in Sub-Saharan Africa remain out of school, whilst Africa will need 17 million additional teachers by 2030 just to maintain universal access.

Only approximately 40 percent of African primary schools have internet access, and UNICEF reports that approximately 75 percent of African youth lack digital skills required by modern economies.

John Kimotho highlighting the urgency of coordinated continental action, said, “It is time for a Pan-African EdTech transformation: one that turns connectivity and content investments into improved learning, inclusion, and economic opportunity for every learner.”

Strategic framework and implementation

The African EdTech 2030 vision and plan advances six strategic objectives which includes access and infrastructure, courseware development, teacher capacity, interoperability and standards, policy and governance, and data and research.

African leaders want to expand digital access via low-cost devices, solar solutions, and offline-first technologies, building on the fact that smartphone ownership among

teachers already exceeds 90 percent in South Africa and ranges between 30-65 percent in countries such as Ghana, Nigeria, and Kenya.

Besides, they want to promote locally made, curriculum-aligned, multilingual digital courseware, including successful examples such as Senegal’s Wolof-language XamXam platform serving 1.2 million users; and upskill teachers in digital pedagogy, content curation, and data use with specific emphasis on fostering positive attitudes and building confidence in using technology for learning, among others.

Implementation occurs through three phases:

Foundation building (2024-2026) develops continental policy frameworks enabling cross-border content sharing and establishes technical standards.

System integration (2026-2028) scales interoperable Digital Public Infrastructure, enabling single sign-on access to multiple educational applications whilst deploying regionally developed courseware.

Consolidation and export (2029-2030) positions Africa as a global EdTech exporter whilst launching the Pan-African EdTech Innovation and Research Hub.

The digital public infrastructure as a public good approach means teachers would not juggle multiple passwords and platforms, instead accessing integrated educational tools through unified systems whilst maintaining local language and curriculum relevance.

Call for continental collaboration

AUDA-NEPAD through this framework coordinates continental efforts by aligning policies and standards that enable open, vendor-neutral technologies; investing in digital infrastructure and platforms that scale affordably; strengthening educator and leadership capacity in digital pedagogy; encouraging local innovation through incubation, financing and partnerships; and using data-driven monitoring and governance to continually improve equity and outcomes.

“Through coordinated policy, local innovation, and equitable infrastructure, Africa can leapfrog legacy education barriers and build a globally competitive digital learning ecosystem.

“By learning from frontrunners like Kenya, Rwanda, and Mauritius and sharing lessons across borders, Africa can lead a new era in global EdTech,” Kimotho said.

7 SKILLS EVERY NIGERIAN CHILD SHOULD LEARN BEFORE 18

CHISOM MICHAEL



Parents want to raise children who can manage both school and real-life situations with ease. While academic success is important, children also need practical skills that help them stay safe, become independent, and navigate daily life.

In Nigeria, where flooding, insecurity, and economic pressures are common, certain skills can make the transition to adulthood easier.

Below are seven key skills that every child should acquire before turning 18.

1. Learn how to swim

Swimming is more than recreation. In a country with rivers, beaches, and frequent flooding during rainy seasons, it can be a life-saving skill.

Some schools offer swimming lessons, but for those without access, training centres provide structured programmes. Parents can check providers' websites for schedules and enrolment.

2. Learn how to drive

With public transport often limited and insecurity a concern, driving is a basic survival skill. By 18, the legal driving age, teenagers should know how to drive in city traffic and on highways, follow road rules, and handle emergencies such as flat tyres or dead batteries. Parents can enrol them in Federal Road Safety Corps-accredited driving schools that offer lessons on theory, defensive driving, and safety.

3. First aid training

Accidents can happen anywhere, so teenagers need to know how to clean and dress wounds, perform CPR, recognise stroke and seizure symptoms, use a first aid kit, and respond to choking, burns, and allergic reactions. Red Cross Nigeria and private health organisations offer certified training, and while some schools teach health and safety, formal certification ensures children can respond effectively.

4. Learn basic house chores

Many young adults leave home without knowing how to keep a living space clean, so every teenager should know how to sweep, mop, and vacuum, sort and wash clothes, including whites and delicates, change bed linen, wash dishes correctly, and maintain a tidy environment. These tasks develop independence and prepare them

for life away from home.

5. Cook at least 10 popular Nigerian meals

Cooking allows children to take care of themselves when living alone, so they should know how to prepare Jollof Rice, Egusi Soup, Fried Rice, Okro Soup, Beans and Plantain (Ewa Agoyin style), Yam Porridge, Spaghetti and Sauce, Vegetable Soup (Efo Riro), Moi Moi, and Akara. Learning to cook helps them plan, budget, and manage their diet, and it preserves their connection to Nigerian cuisine even if they live abroad later.

6. Learn a new language

Although English is Nigeria's official language, learning another language can create opportunities in education, careers, and travel. French is common across West Africa, Spanish is spoken globally, and German is valuable for academic and technology opportunities. Lessons can be taken through school programmes, private tutors, or online platforms such as Duolingo and Babbel, allowing children to learn at their own pace.

7. Money management and budgeting

Understanding money is crucial before adulthood, so every child should know how to save regularly, create a budget, use banking apps, differentiate between debit and credit, avoid fraud, and set financial goals. Banks such as GTBank and Sterling Bank offer teen accounts with tools for saving and tracking spending, and parents can teach financial habits by encouraging children to manage small earnings and make simple decisions about their spending.

THE SILENT STRAIN OF NIGERIAN MASCULINITY

EYESAN TORITSEJU

It's a Sunday afternoon in Ikeja. A group of men gather under a zinc-roofed kiosk, playing draughts and sipping sachets of gin as Afrobeats pulses from a nearby loudspeaker. Laughter erupts often, loud and rowdy, but beneath the noise is a quiet agreement: emotions don't belong here. There are stories, sure, of jobs lost, children sick, debts looming, but they're folded into jokes, buried beneath banter. Nobody names their sadness. Nobody cries out for help. "E go better" is the cover story, and sayo is the coping mechanism. The table shakes with laughter, but the pain never leaves. The game continues.

In boardrooms, mechanic shops, and WhatsApp groups, a similar pattern emerges: Nigerian men, from the polished elite to the gritty streetwise, learn early that silence is safer than vulnerability.

Strength, men have been taught, is measured not in emotional honesty, but in how long you can pretend nothing touches you. Consequently, beneath the sharp tailoring or oil-stained overalls, many are unraveling quietly. But unraveling, all the same.

The Unspoken Epidemic

Nigeria has one of the highest suicide rates in Africa, and men account for the overwhelming majority of completed suicides. In cities like Lagos, Kano, or Port Harcourt, the pressures of providing in a volatile economy combine with cultural expectations of stoicism. The result? A mental health crisis that goes largely undiagnosed, untreated, and buried under bravado.

According to a WHO report, over 60 million Nigerians suffer from mental health conditions, yet less than 10% receive any formal care.

The system is patchy at best. For men, the barriers aren't just structural; they're deeply psychological. To seek help is to admit weakness, and for many, their conditioning doesn't just frown on that, it forbids it.

In Nigeria, manhood is often a performance, the appearance of holding things together, no matter how heavy they get. You don't speak of vulnerable issues in real time; you narrate it later, if at all, once you've made it out the other side. Preferably with a laugh, Preferably, in retrospect.

Hustle as Hiding Place

In Nigeria's hustle economy, the male identity is stitched into productivity. From the roadside tailor in Yaba to the startup founder in Lekki, worth is measured in motion: what you're chasing, what you're building, what you're putting on the table. So men keep going. The mechanic in Mushin who jokes through a cough that won't go away, because illness is a luxury he can't afford.

The bolt driver who drives 14 hours a day on energy drinks and paracetamol, saying 'man must hustle' even when his hands shake on the steering wheel. It's also the banker in Victoria Island who downs painkillers between meetings, performing competence with tired eyes. Across classes, the script is the same: don't break. Don't stop.

They overwork, overdrink, overspend: not always to impress, but often to escape. From the weight of expectations. From the quiet ache of inadequacy.

There's no space for fragility, not at home, not among friends, not even in religious circles, where male centred prayers are for open doors and financial favour, not for peace of mind or rest. It's always breakthrough over breakdown.

Society applauds this. As, the man who 'holds it down' while breaking internally is lauded as a pillar, while the one who dares to reach out for help is often pitied, whispered about, or worse, openly mocked. Emotional language is feminized. Sensitivity is scorned. Even in elite circles, where therapy is trendier, many men treat mental health like PR, something to signal but never really sit with.

Patriarchy's Prisoners

The irony is glaring: the same patriarchal system that gives men dominance in public life often robs them of inner life. While men are handed authority, they are denied the emotional tools to wield it healthily. They become fathers who cannot listen, bosses who cannot apologize, partners who cannot be vulnerable. Power becomes a shell.

And the damage spreads, to wives, to children, to workplaces, to our streets.

Because when emotionally stunted men are tasked with leading families, firms, or nations, the result is not stability. It's volatility with a loud voice. It's unprocessed trauma turned into policy. It's the mental health crisis we don't name until it spills into violence, addiction, or collapse.

What Healing Might Look Like

The encouragement is that it doesn't have to stay this way. Across Nigeria, signs of change flicker. Somewhere in Abuja, a group of men gather weekly for unrecorded conversations about grief, pressure, and self-worth. No preaching, no posturing, just presence. In Lagos, young therapists are building clinics and content for black men, using pidgin, humour, and honesty to make vulnerable expressions less alien. Online, anonymous pages give men space to vent without judgement.

For me, my lifeline encounter came just after university, fresh-faced, working in Yaba, trying to find my way in the chaos of Lagos life. It wasn't therapy in the technical sense, but it felt close. I got introduced to a mens group. A handful of us, mostly strangers back then, would gather outside

Ozone Cinemas. We were a Christian fellowship on paper, but those meetings became something else entirely. In that unlikely corner of Lagos, I spoke honestly for the first time, not just faithfully. We shared what we couldn't say elsewhere: stress, shame, family expectations, the fear of not measuring up. It was clumsy sometimes, but it was real. And in a society where men are taught to bottle everything, even that imperfect space felt like freedom.

These are not mainstream yet, but they are crucial. The path to healing, for Nigerian men, won't begin with lectures or imported language. It will begin with listening. With reframing strength as self-awareness. With building spaces, real and virtual, where men can be whole, not just heroic.

Conclusion: From Silence to Structure

This isn't just a personal problem. It's structural. A country that does not give its men permission to feel cannot expect them to lead with clarity or love. A culture that punishes softness will keep breeding hardness: in homes, in politics, in hearts.

Mental health for Nigerian men is not a luxury. It is infrastructure. For families. For futures. For peace.

The task before us is not just to medicate, but to re educate. To dismantle the myths of masculinity that turn boys into bottlers and men into martyrs. To teach, through language, through policy, through community, that prioritizing your mental well being is not weakness. It is work. And it is overdue.

Eyesan Toritseju is a Lagos-based strategist and cultural commentator. In his writing, especially through his column, *Cosmopolitan Nigeria*, he examines how African societies confront the legacies of their past while reimagining identity, influence, and progress in the present.

IMPACT OF THE INVESTMENT & SECURITIES ACT (2025) ON OWNERSHIP AND USE OF VIRTUAL ASSETS IN NIGERIA

ADERONKE ALEX-ADEDIPE

The Investment and Securities Act (ISA) 2025 was enacted on March 31, 2025 by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu to replace the previous ISA, updating the law with provisions impacting emerging trends, global standards and recent developments in the Nigerian Capital Market.

In particular, the introduction of these provisions and changes in the ISA holds significant impact on the ownership and use of digital and virtual assets such as cryptocurrencies, tokens, amongst others.

In this newsletter, therefore, we highlight the relevant provisions of the ISA, 2025 and their impact.

1. Recognition of the right of ownership and use of Virtual and Digital Assets:

Notably, among other changes introduced by the ISA 2025 is the expansion of the scope of what the law defines as “securities”. Previously, Securities under the ISA were classified as assets which could be acquired, transferred, or traded solely in relation to bonds, stock, debentures, shares, and other traditional instruments.

However, section 357 of the ISA 2025 expands the definition of Securities to include virtual and digital assets. Therefore, virtual and digital assets such as cryptocurrencies, Non-Fungible Tokens (NFTs), digital currencies and other digital representation of value can now be lawfully owned, transferred, digitally traded and used for payment or investment purposes in Nigeria.

Similarly, the ISA now recognizes Virtual Asset Service Providers (VASPs), Digital Asset Operators (DAOPs), and Digital Asset Exchanges as capital market operators as being within the regulatory purview and oversight of the Securities and Exchange Commission (“SEC”).

2. Legal Protection for Owners, Innovators and Investors in Virtual and Digital Assets

Prior to the ISA 2025, investors, innovators, businesses and individuals who sought to deal in virtual and digital assets were skeptical about the legality of ownership and trading in digital and virtual assets in Nigeria.

Specifically, key regulators like the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), prohibited financial institutions from providing banking and financial services support to any transaction related to virtual and digital assets. This situation prevented innovators from creating new financial products and services centered around virtual and digital assets

The emergence of ISA 2025 which grants the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) authority to regulate virtual and digital asset market activities now opens more opportunity to investors and innovators to confidently create new financial products and services in Nigeria’s rapidly evolving digital economy. Consequently, investors and innovators have the assurance of regulatory protection of their investments in virtual and digital assets in Nigeria.

Furthermore, exchanges, trading platforms, brokers, and other crypto service providers must now register with the SEC and obtain the appropriate licenses before commencing operations. These entities must also implement robust anti-money laundering (AML), counter terrorism financing (CFT) and know-your-customer (KYC) measures, similar to banking and non-banking financial institutions, thereby curbing fraudulent financial activities within the sector.

3. Diversification and Expansion of the Nigeria Capital Market

Virtual and digital assets hold the potential of diversifying and expanding investment opportunities in Nigeria. The ISA 2025, has made the Nigeria capital market appealing to the younger demography who might have been significantly uninterested in the traditional capital market in Nigeria.

The statutory recognition and legalization of virtual and digital assets, introduces new investment opportunities and improves portfolio diversification by stakeholders in the Nigeria capital market.

Prior to the ISA 2025, there were no categories or classification of securities exchanges. However, the ISA 2025 now classifies securities exchanges as either Composite Securities Exchanges or Non-composite Securities Exchanges.

Composite Securities Exchanges are permitted to facilitate the listing and trading of all types of securities, products, commodities, or financial instruments while Non-composite Securities Exchanges specialize in the listing of only one type of securities or commodities (known as mono securities exchanges) or serve as an alternative trading system that brings together orders from buyers and sellers either physically or online.

This distinction accommodates virtual and digital asset exchanges because the definition of “securities exchange” was expanded by the ISA 2025, to include organized facilities which provide infrastructures for the offer, bids, and trading of virtual and digital assets for transaction purposes.

By this definition, platforms established, even if only for facilitating crypto and other digital and virtual asset transactions, including peer-to-peer transactions, are now classified as exchanges, and are now required to be registered with the SEC.

Conclusion

The ISA 2025 has significantly impacted the ownership and use of virtual and digital assets in Nigeria. The ISA 2025 provides an entry into a fully digital, integrated and all-embracing financial market.

The Act by providing a definitive legal position and regulatory framework for fintech investors, innovators and other capital market participants has resolved all controversies over the legality of investing in virtual and digital assets, therefore encouraging ownership, investment and innovation in virtual and digital assets.

TECH-DRIVEN FINANCE AND LEADERSHIP: UNLOCKING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY FOR NIGERIA'S YOUTH

TOSIN BELLO

In a country where over 60% of the population is under 35 years old, the conversation around financial inclusion and economic empowerment must include one critical component: how can technology and strategic leadership in financial services uplift a generation of young Nigerian entrepreneurs?

Across Africa, and especially in Nigeria, the financial services sector is undergoing a quiet revolution powered by technology. Mobile banking, fintech startups, blockchain solutions, and digital lending platforms are no longer on the periphery – they are central to the nation's economic future. However, beneath the tech-powered revolution in finance, lies a deeper opportunity: leveraging these innovations to spark upward social mobility for young people.

A New Financial Infrastructure for Inclusion

For decades, access to formal financial services in Nigeria has been a luxury enjoyed by only a minority. According to Statista (2025), just 49% of Nigerians aged 18–35 have access to banking services—meaning over half of that age group remains unbanked, making formal finance effectively a young-adult luxury. With over 40% of Nigerians living below the poverty line, many cannot afford bank fees or meet minimum balance requirements. Historical bank failures and opaque service charges have also fostered widespread distrust in traditional banking.

Moreover, high transaction fees, lack of valid identification documents, and poor access to rural bank branches have excluded many—particularly aspiring entrepreneurs—from formal financial systems. However, technology is beginning to dismantle these barriers. According to the Nigeria Inter-Bank Settlement System (NIBSS), mobile banking adoption surged by more than 50% between 2020 and 2024, driven largely by youth-led businesses and side hustlers in search of flexible, 24/7 financial services.

Youth-led businesses in Nigeria have significantly embraced digital financial services (DFS), but this adoption still shows room for deeper penetration. While mobile banking usage among Nigerians aged 18–35 reached around 80%. Only about 19% of SMEs accept mobile money payments, and a mere 5% consider it their most convenient payment channel (Alfred, Vanguard, 2023).

That contrast suggests that although entrepreneurs use smartphones and apps, many youth-run ventures remain hesitant to fully integrate DFS into their business models. Barriers such as infrastructure gaps—unstable connectivity,

unreliable electricity—and rising fees or unexpected charges continue to limit consistent usage.

To boost DFS penetration among youth-led businesses, targeted improvements are needed on both supply and demand sides. Banks must ensure affordability and transparency – most users don't check fees and are deterred by hidden costs – so clear, low-cost, and predictable pricing is critical. SMEs and DFS providers must prioritize financial literacy and digital education, building on programs like NITDA's Digital State Initiative to train youths in app-based budgeting, savings, and digital payment management.

Infrastructure investment – especially expanding rural internet access and stabilizing power – would address usability issues identified in underserved areas. Moreover, policy level enhancements like open-banking frameworks, better consumer-protection mechanisms, and robust agent networks can foster trust and convenience. These are key motivators to leverage for youth adoption. With improved regulation, education, infrastructure, and cost transparency, Nigeria can accordingly elevate the share of youth led businesses fully utilizing and benefitting from digital financial services. A look at young entrepreneurs – many of whom operate in informal sectors—can now open digital bank accounts, access microloans, receive payments, and build financial credibility. These tools, when paired with supportive leadership from financial service institutions, unlock new economic pathways. The message is clear: access to capital and financial infrastructure is no longer a privilege; it's a foundational pillar of inclusive growth.

Strategic Leadership Makes the Difference

Technology alone, however, is not enough. It must be deployed under the guidance of visionary project leaders who understand both innovation and local context. Effective project leadership in financial services ensures that digital solutions are not just high tech, but high impact. This includes developing customer-centric lending products for small business owners, crafting financial literacy programs for first-time borrowers, and building seamless integration between digital wallets and traditional banking systems.

Leaders in fintech and traditional banking alike must adopt human centered design towards developing digital financial services that impact lives, data-driven decision making, and collaborative partnerships with regulators and social enterprises. By aligning technology strategy with real-world challenges – like youth unemployment and lack of credit history – they can design platforms that are not only

commercially viable but socially transformative. Human-Centered Design (HCD) in digital financial services is an approach that places the needs, behaviors, and experiences of real users—especially marginalized or underserved populations—at the core of product development. Instead of starting with the technology, HCD begins with a deep understanding of people's challenges, goals, and environments, using empathy-driven research, prototyping, and continuous feedback to create solutions that are practical, inclusive, and intuitive.

In the context of digital finance, HCD helps to uncover barriers such as low digital literacy, limited access to formal IDs, and distrust of financial institutions. By designing tools like mobile banking apps, microloan platforms, or budgeting tools with users' realities in mind, developers can ensure services are not only accessible but also meaningful. For instance, an app with voice navigation and multiple local languages can empower rural users who might otherwise be excluded due to literacy gaps.

Impact of human-centered design on lives:

HCD leads to products that are more likely to be adopted and used effectively. It builds trust, encourages financial inclusion, and empowers users to take control of their financial futures—whether that means saving for emergencies, building credit, or investing in education or a small business.

Benefits for Young Entrepreneurs and Upward Mobility: For young entrepreneurs, especially in emerging markets, HCD-based financial platforms can be a game-changer. They can access microcredit without traditional collateral, use digital bookkeeping tools tailored to their needs, or receive AI-driven business insights in formats they understand. These tools help them grow sustainable ventures, build financial histories, and tap into broader economic networks.

Ultimately, HCD enables financial services to become not just tools of convenience, but instruments of social mobility, reducing systemic barriers and giving youth the financial footing to transform their ideas into livelihoods.

Stories of Change: From Hustle to Scale

Consider the journey of Ayomide, a 27-year-old fashion designer in Lagos who leveraged a mobile lending platform to secure a ₦200,000 loan. With transparent terms, a quick approval process, and the ability to repay via mobile transfers, she expanded her production capacity and hired two assistants. Within 12 months, Ayomide moved her workshop from a roadside kiosk to a small studio—and became eligible for further credit. Her story mirrors thousands of others, where project-led innovations in financial services provide the structure for young Nigerians to turn passion into prosperity.

Stories of Change: From Soil to Scale

Consider the journey of Ibrahim, a 31-year-old agripreneur from Kaduna who used a digital cooperative platform to access a ₦150,000 input loan at planting season. Through a mobile-first application, he received subsidized seeds,

fertilizer, and weather alerts tailored to his crop cycle. For the first time, he could plan harvests with data—not guesswork. By the end of the season, his maize yield doubled. Ibrahim not only repaid the loan via mobile wallet but also joined a digital market linkage program that connected him to buyers in Lagos. Within a year, he expanded from 1 to 3 hectares and now mentors other young farmers through the same platform. His story echoes across northern Nigeria—where tech-enabled agricultural finance is sowing new opportunities, one hectare at a time.

Stories of Change: From Okada to Optimization
Meet Chidinma, a 29-year-old delivery agent in Port Harcourt who turned her side hustle into a full-time logistics business after joining a mobility fintech platform. With just her bike and a smartphone, she qualified for a ₦100,000 asset-financing loan to upgrade to a fuel-efficient tricycle. The platform offered GPS routing, digital receipts, and cashless payment options—cutting her delivery time by 40% and attracting more clients. Within 8 months, Chidinma grew her daily earnings, hired two riders, and registered her business. Her growth is part of a rising wave in urban logistics, where digital micro-leases and real-time tech are helping youth-led startups break traffic barriers—and build resilient supply chains.

Stories of Change: From Chalkboard to Cloud
At 26, Blessing, a self-taught coder in Ibadan, lacked the formal credentials to land tech jobs. Then she discovered an edtech lending service that provided tuition loans for online courses. With a ₦120,000 flexible loan, she enrolled in a global coding bootcamp, paying back in small installments tied to her income. The platform did not just fund her education—it tracked her learning progress and connected her to internship opportunities. In under a year, Blessing became a front-end developer, now working remotely for a fintech startup in Nairobi. Her leap from digital learner to digital earner reflects a broader shift—where inclusive education financing is bridging Nigeria's skills gap and unlocking global careers for youth.

What Comes Next?

As Nigeria continues to embrace a digital-first economy, the intersection of technology-driven business strategy and dynamic project leadership will define the next era of financial inclusion. Financial service providers must invest not just in software, but in strategic roadmaps that prioritize empowerment. Governments and regulators, in turn, should foster an ecosystem where innovation thrives without leaving the most vulnerable behind.

The time is now for banks, fintechs, investors, and development agencies to recognize their role—not just as financiers but as architects of opportunity. With thoughtful execution and an unwavering focus on impact, the financial services sector can serve as a powerful engine of upward mobility for the entrepreneurial youth of Nigeria.

Because when young entrepreneurs rise, the nation does too.



THE HUMAN ADVANTAGE: WHY AI CAN'T TAKE YOUR JOB (IF YOU'RE DOING IT RIGHT)

BY: RACHEL ONAMUSI

Now you know the article I would have LOVED to be writing this week is about the recent scandal of two C-suite individuals caught mid-embrace on the Jumbotron at a Coldplay concert.

The entire story is just too torrid for words. But we'll wait because we need the full gist. Naturally, when the full tea spills, I'll wrap a corporate bow around my amebo and discuss the responsibilities of women in leadership positions, or maybe even how to handle reputational damage for a high visibility brand. Either way, just know we'll dissect it together because, sis????

In the meantime, let's take the more grown-up, centred route and discuss something wholesome, like the recent webinar I hosted on the 15th: "Building Trust in the Age of AI: Strategies for PR Professionals."

Now, before your eyes glaze over, let me assure you, this session was anything but dry. This was a virtual summit organised in honour of World PR Day by leading Nigerian PR firm, GLG Communications, but honestly, the discussions were impactful for anyone looking to understand and navigate personal branding in today's world.

One of the standout moments for me came when a panellist addressed the one fear that we're all nursing: that AI is coming for our jobs.

And this is not paranoia. The leaps AI has made in just the past year are enough to make anyone rethink their value in the workplace. Companies like IBM have already started automating their more mundane and repetitive tasks with bot agent.

Just a few months ago, I uploaded a photo of a cluttered room in my home and got

a design from a chatbot that, after some modifications to the prompt, was perfect for my redesign needs. So yes, AI is here. It's powerful, it's pervasive, and it's evolving faster than I ever thought possible.

The panellist's response, however, really stuck with me: "It's not ChatGPT that will take your job. It's the person who knows how to use ChatGPT better than you who will."

I would like to add an extra layer and say: it's not just your learned skills that will keep you employed, visible and thriving, it's your emotional depth and ability to understand nuance. Machines can do almost every single thing we do, faster and with greater accuracy. But your ability to harness the power of automation and then infuse humanity, thought and balance into the wireframe it provides and create a vibrant masterpiece is what will keep you ahead.

Because what AI cannot replicate - not today, not next year, not in GPT-27 - is what makes you you. Emotional intelligence, intuition and strong relational skills are no longer "nice-to-haves"; they are power tools in the age of artificial everything.

A high EQ allows you to lead teams through uncertainty, build psychological safety, and navigate those deliciously messy things we call human relationships, things that no algorithm has figured out yet. AI can generate a killer campaign strategy, but it cannot sense when your team is burned out, read the unspoken tension in a client call, or lead a difficult conversation without breaking morale.

Empathy is what tells you when a client doesn't just need data, they need reassurance. It's what guides you when

you're managing up, down and sideways, all while carrying your own personal concerns. It allows you to step into someone else's shoes and still lead with discipline and clarity.

And relational intelligence is a first-class human trait too. Life will never be all about prompts. We need people who can connect - authentically, consistently, and across cultural, generational, and digital lines. Because at the heart of every brand, every strategy, every crisis...is a human. At the front end (a need) and the back end (a solution provider). Last I checked, humans are still running the world. This is your world.

So yes, master the tools. Learn to prompt, automate, analyse. It would be foolhardy to bury your head in the sand and try to ignore AI. It is already helping to refine emails, create excellent proposals and reshape our world. Get on the bus and do it quickly. The more you use it, the better you will be at making it work for you.

But you're going to need to learn to optimise those softer skills. Get better with leadership skills. Become a leader the team respects, listens to, and wants to work for. Because when tech levels the playing field, your humanity is what becomes your competitive edge.

Let's never forget who trained the original intelligence in the first place.

Rachel Onamusi is the CEO of VN Sync, a UK-based tech company and full-service marketing firm with expertise in all aspects of media and a strong focus on digital strategy development and implementation. Dedicated to creating lasting impact, Ms. Onamusi is a sought-after speaker, thought leader, writer and frequent media contributor.

EXPLAINING BRANDING AND PROMOTION

FEYISITAN IJIMAKINWA

Consumers expect their experience with a brand to be similar across all platforms and devices. The interplay of branding and promotion plays a pivotal role in meeting these expectations. While branding involves creating a unique image and identity for your business, promotion focuses on spreading the word about your products or services. Understanding the distinction and connection between these two can significantly impact the success of a business.

Brand identity

The distinct image that a brand leaves in the mind of a consumer is known as its brand identity. It consists of the name, logo, font, colours, design, symbols, and general aesthetic of the brand.

What makes a strong brand?

A strong brand is a cohesive, memorable, and impactful presence in the market. It consists of several essential components, including brand purpose, vision, mission, values, personality, identity, voice and tone, positioning, promise, experience, story, and equity. These components work together to create a strong brand, fostering strong customer relationships and achieving sustained success in the marketplace.

Target audience

A brand's target audience is a specific group of customers that it intends to attract with its goods, services, and advertising. Similar requirements, interests, attitudes, and demographics that complement the brand's offerings define it.

Understanding Promotion

Promotion is a marketing strategy used by businesses to reach their target audience and stimulate interest in their products or services. It aims to achieve short-term goals such as increasing sales, generating interest and awareness, encouraging trial and adoption, driving traffic, and stimulating impulse purchases. The most effective method of conveying a product's value, raising awareness, sparking interest, persuading, and influencing consumers is through promotion. Promotion is a vital technique for reaching a target audience.

Examples of promotion strategies

Advertising: Paid, non-personal communication through various media channels to promote products or services. Examples include television and radio ads, print ads, online ads, and outdoor advertising.

Sales Promotion: Short-term incentives to encourage the purchase or sale of a product or service. Examples include coupons, contests and sweepstakes, samples, BOGO promotions, and loyalty programmes.

Public Relations (PR): Managing the spread of information between the organisation and the public to build a positive image. Examples include press releases, media events, community involvement, and influencer relations.

Personal Selling: Direct interaction between a sales representative and a potential customer to close a sale. Examples include in-person sales meetings, retail sales, telemarketing, and trade shows.

Direct Marketing: Personalised e-mail campaigns, direct mail, SMS marketing, and catalogues.

Digital Marketing: Using online platforms and technologies to reach and engage with the target audience. Examples include social media marketing, content marketing, SEO, affiliate marketing, and event sponsorship and events.

Guerilla Marketing: Unconventional, low-cost marketing tactics designed to achieve maximum exposure and engagement. Examples include street marketing, flash mobs, and viral campaigns.

Trade Promotions: Incentives given to retailers or distributors to encourage them to carry and promote a product. Examples include trade discounts, merchandising allowances, and trade shows.

Cause-Related Marketing: Partnering with a nonprofit organisation or supporting a cause to enhance the brand's image and appeal to socially conscious consumers.

Differences between Branding and Promotion

Short-term and long-term focus areas apply to promotion methods. The goal of short-term strategies is to get outcomes quickly, like increased revenue, rapid market penetration, inventory clearance, and engagement based on events.

Building consistent brand equity, client loyalty, and market position over time are the main goals of long-term strategy. It takes integrated campaigns, performance evaluation, resource allocation, and strategic planning to balance these tactics.

Businesses can maximise their marketing efficacy and accomplish both short-term and long-term success by combining the two strategies.

Promotion strategies significantly influence customer perception and loyalty. They build brand awareness, shape brand image, establish brand credibility, differentiate from competitors, communicate value and benefits, and encourage repeat purchases. They also enhance customer engagement, build emotional connections, provide exceptional customer experience, and maintain consistent communication.

However, excessive promotional activities can lead to negative perceptions, misleading promotions, and poorly targeted promotions. To maximise positive impacts, businesses should balance short-term and long-term goals, personalise promotions, maintain consistency, and monitor the effectiveness of promotions.

By doing so, they can enhance brand image, increase sales, build trust, and encourage long-term customer relationships, contributing to sustained business growth.

Global brands like Nike, Coca-Cola and Apple use promotion strategies to shape customer perception and foster loyalty. Nike's "Just Do It" campaign has positioned Nike as a brand associated with determination, empowerment, and athleticism, inspiring customer loyalty among athletes and fitness enthusiasts.

Coca-Cola's "Share a Coke" campaign fosters positive emotions and associations with happiness, friendship, and sharing, enhancing its brand image. Apple's product launch events create an aura of innovation, excitement, and exclusivity, demonstrating strong brand loyalty and repeat purchase behaviour.

By understanding their target audience and implementing effective promotion strategies, brands can strengthen relationships with customers and maintain a competitive edge in the market.

Branding and promotion working together

Branding is a strategic approach to creating a unique identity and perception of a company, product, or service. It aims to establish a connection with the target audience,

build trust, and convey the brand's values, personality, and promise. Promotion, on the other hand, involves specific tactics to increase awareness, generate interest, and drive sales. It includes advertising, sales promotions, public relations, and direct marketing.

Both branding and promotion are crucial components of a comprehensive marketing strategy, with branding laying the foundation for a company's perception and promotion executing marketing activities to achieve specific goals.

Last line

The success of a business depends on its branding and promotion. Both are essential components of an all-encompassing marketing strategy, cooperating to accomplish organisational goals and preserve a competitive edge. To stay competitive and relevant in your market, it is essential to assess and improve your current branding and promotion strategies.



FEYISITAN IJIMAKINWA

Feyisitan Ijimakinwa is a Reputation and Perception Management expert. He is a prolific writer and researcher who, at different times, served as Head of Corporate Communications of top brands quoted on the Nigerian Stock Exchange. A versatile communications specialist, he practiced extensively as a print journalist and was variously engaged in the broadcast media,

working on radio and television. Feyisitan continues to write on corporate communications, brand reputation and perception management, and brand intelligence, among others. He organises the 'Brand Intelligence and the Marketplace' masterclass. Feyisitan advocates a pollution free and sustainable environment

THE STUDIO DIARIES: INSIDE SAM EBOHON'S CREATIVE PROCESS

In Nigeria's vibrant art scene, Sam Ebohon is a name that commands quiet reverence.

Sam Ebohon, aged 59 and from Edo State, Nigeria, has lived a life in painting. His name resonates across West Africa's art landscape and beyond. However, what makes his work deeply magnetic is how seamlessly it fuses realism with semi-abstraction, inviting, yet mysterious, structured, yet wildly expressive.

For this special digest, we sat with the artist, Sam Ebohon, for a chat. We went beyond the canvas to explore how he thinks, works, and creates. From his late-night painting rituals and spiritual routines to his reflections on growth, blocks, and global recognition—this is an inside look at the rhythm, rigour, and revelations that define the world of Sam Ebohon.

Let's meet you.

Sam Ebohon: I am Sam Ebohon, 59 years old, from Edo State, Nigeria. I am an international professional studio artist, and to be honest, I have been painting all my life. It's more than a profession—it's my identity.



Sam Ebohon, Nigerian-born
visual artist



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Can you walk us through a typical day in your studio? What does your creative routine look like?

Sam: I am not an early riser, mostly because I work well into the night. But once I get into the studio, my day begins with a short, inward prayer—just a moment to appreciate God and life.

If I am continuing a painting, I try to return to the mood I was in my previous session. That emotional consistency keeps the piece honest. If it's a new work, I spend time experimenting with forms, ideas, or colours I believe will set the right tone. After so many years, I've developed a sort of rhythm. I also take breaks—it's important to step back, relax, and recharge before diving in again.

How do you find inspiration? Do you wait for it or chase it?

Sam: Inspiration is everywhere—it's just about recognising it. I don't wait for it to come. That's risky. If you wait around too long, you'll hit a creative wall. I see "paintable" stories in everyday encounters—things that resonate with me on a deep level. Even my older works sometimes inspire new ones. So, it's not about chasing inspiration; it's about being open to it at all times.

Your work often blends realism with abstraction. How do you approach that balance?

Sam: I started as a realist painter. Over time, my work evolved—what I now describe as semi-abstraction. I think it's just growth. But one thing has always been clear: I want every piece to have an entry point. Something recognisable, something that invites the viewer in.

Total abstraction isn't part of my language—at least not yet. It may come; it may not. What is important is that I stay true to my artistic essence. The blend of realism and abstraction is mostly intuitive. It is driven by the vibrations I get from the canvas, the subject, the colours, and myself. I have always admired artists like Picasso, Matisse, and our own Yusuf Grillo. Even in their abstraction, there's always a familiar viewpoint anchoring the viewer.

Do you start with a clear vision of the finished piece, or does it evolve?

Sam: I usually start with a pretty clear picture of what I want to create. But the process often introduces surprises. There are always unpredictable motifs that sneak in along the way. Even with those, the final piece rarely strays far from the original message I intended. It's about allowing space for the artwork to breathe without losing its soul.



Title: Digital generation | Artist: Sam Ebohon
Medium: Oil on Canvas | Dimensions: 60 x 60 in | Year: 2024



What role does your studio space play in your creative process?

Sam: The ambience of the studio definitely affects my mood. That's why I've been intentional about making it a space where creativity can flourish. It's not pristine—it doesn't need to be. I've become one with the space, so even if there's disorder, it quickly reverts to order. It's not just about my comfort either. The studio should be inviting to guests, clients, or collaborators. Music also helps me settle in. It creates a kind of stillness that allows focus to bloom.

How do you handle creative blocks when nothing seems to be flowing?

Sam: I expect creative blocks, so I don't fear them. I don't panic when they come—I have learnt how to navigate them. Sometimes I read, sometimes I make music, or I visit other artists at work. Other times, I travel with a friend or loved one. Stepping away can be the reset I need.

I also make sure not to let inspiration run dry in the first place. The key is balance—avoiding both overwork and laziness. It's in that balance that I stay ready for the next wave of ideas.

Can you share a moment that significantly shaped your career?

Sam: Winning the Caterina de Medici Painting Award in Italy back in 2009 was huge. It was my first major international recognition, and it gave me a massive confidence boost. It opened up new connections and brought new friends into my creative circle. That experience validated my work on a global stage—and that's something every artist dreams of.



Title: A patient dog
Artist: Sam Ebohon
Medium: Oil on Canvas
Dimensions: 60 x 60 in
Year: 2025

Do you use any unconventional tools or materials in your work?

Sam: My primary tools are the classics—colours and brushes. But when I'm in an experimental phase, I sometimes use specialised tools depending on what I'm exploring. I have done a few fine art experiments that turned out to be both evocative and successful. I love pushing the boundaries of my own methods.

How do you know when a piece is truly finished? Is there a sign you wait for?

Sam: The canvas tells me. I can't explain it more than that. There's a feeling, a moment when the piece speaks back and says, "That's it." When that happens, I know I have done enough. Anything more would be noise.

Sam Ebohon is not just an artist—he is a visual poet, a philosopher with a paintbrush.

His studio is not merely a workspace; it's a sacred arena where discipline meets intuition, where the past and present merge into vibrant, soul-stirring compositions.

From quiet prayers to creative bursts, from award-winning milestones to quiet reflections, Sam reminds us that great art is not just made—it is lived.



Keturah Ovio

Keturah Ovio is an Executive at Patrons Modern & contemporary African Art. She is also an engineer and Founder of Dukka, a Fintech startup providing bookkeeping and payments solutions for small businesses. Keturah is passionate about African Art and has been collecting art since her early 20s. Now, she advises, curates, and manages collections for individuals and corporate organisations looking to start or diversify their wealth management through art collecting. She strongly believes that a fine marriage exists between Art and Technology

WAFCON 2024/25 TROPHY BEFITTING PARTING GIFT FOR ASISAT OSHOALA

...as Agba-Baller bows out international duties

CHARLES OGWO



As Asisat Oshoala brings to an end her illustrious international career, there could be no better way than the Nigerian Super Falcons lifting the WAFCON 2024/25 trophy, as a perfect send-off for one of Africa's greatest female footballers.

The victory not only secured another continental title for the Super Falcons but also served as a fitting tribute to Oshoala's years of dedication, leadership, and brilliance on the pitch.

African football icon Oshoala, who is a six-time African Women's Player of the Year made the emotional decision of retirement from international duty following Nigeria's campaign at the 2024/25 Women's Africa Cup of Nations, closing a chapter marked by passion, leadership, and record-breaking performances on the continental stage.

The former Barcelona Femeni forward recently announced her retirement from international duties for Nigeria on Facebook, stressing that it was a necessary step to pave the way for emerging talents to shine on the global stage.

"At 30, with six African Women's Best Player awards, I will bow out to start a new chapter after WAFCON 2024/25," she wrote on Facebook.

In addition, she wrote, "Thank you for your unwavering support. I'm forever grateful for the love and sacrifices shared with me through this journey."

'Agba-Baller', which means "Legendary Footballer", as she is popularly known amongst her Nigerian fans has a career record of six CAF Women's Player of the Year titles spanning 2014, 2016, 2017, 2019, 2022 and 2023, making her the most decorated player in the history of African women's football.

Oshoala's relentless drive, goal-scoring prowess, and global impact have made her a role model for countless young athletes across the continent.

Born October 9, 1994, 'Agba-Baller' is a highly decorated Nigerian professional footballer, and currently plays as a forward for Barcelona FC and the Nigeria women's national team.

Oshoala previously played for English clubs such as Arsenal and Liverpool, Chinese club Dalian, and Nigerian clubs Rivers Angels and FC Robo.



Oshoala saw a massive increase in her Instagram followership which made her become the first African female footballer to have a million followers on the social media platform.

As the Super Falcons step out on Saturday, July 26 to reclaim the coveted trophy in a match many believe would be a thrilling encounter against the Moroccan women at the Stade Olympique in Rabat.

Nothing but a victory and lifting of Nigeria's 10th WAFCON trophy would be adequate and befitting a send-forth gift for the legendary female footballer.

Super Falcons must be prepared to overcome every odds including the teeming Moroccan fans, referee and the antics of their North African opponents; it will be a football war.

Victory, and the trophy is the best way to say good-bye to 'Agba-Baller' as she retires from international duty.

She won the 2015 FA Women's Cup with Arsenal; two league championships and a cup title with Dalian; and the 2019–20 Copa de la Reina and 2019–20 Supercopa de España Femenina with Barcelona.

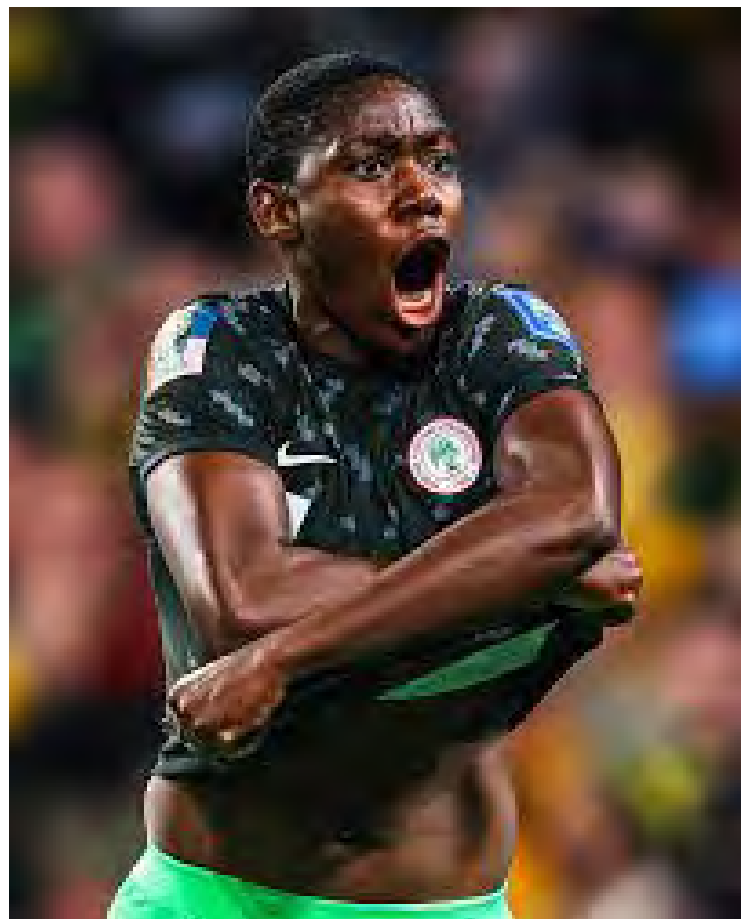
In 2019, she became the first African player to score a goal in a UEFA Women's Champions League final. On May 16, 2021, Oshoala became the first African woman to win the UEFA Champions League, after Barcelona defeated Chelsea 4–0 in the finals.

The following season, she became the first African woman to win the Primera División's Pichichi Trophy, and in August 2022 became the first African woman nominated to the Ballon d'Or Féminin. In 2024, she became the first African player to win the UEFA Champions League three times.

Oshoala was the highest goal scorer at the 2014 FIFA U-20 Women's World Cup and was named the best player at the tournament. She was also named the best player and second highest goal scorer with the Super Falcons team who won the 2014 African Women's Championship.

In September 2014, Oshoala was made a Member of the Order of the Niger (MON) by Goodluck Jonathan, the then president of Nigeria. In 2021, she was named in the Forbes 30 under 30.

In July 2023, after her group stage heroics against Australia in the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup,



WAFCON FINAL: STARS TO WATCH AS NIGERIA AND MOROCCO CLASH FOR GLORY

FAITH OMOBOYE



As the spotlight turns to Rabat's Prince Moulay Abdellah Stadium on Saturday, July 26, anticipation is at an all-time high. Hosts Morocco will lock horns with record champions Nigeria in the final of the 2025 Women's Africa Cup of Nations (WAFCON), a showdown set to be a thrilling contest of talent, passion, and history.

This will be the fourth WAFCON meeting between the two nations. Morocco famously edged Nigeria on penalties in the 2022 semi-finals, also in Rabat. Now, the Atlas Lionesses seek a maiden continental title, buoyed by their home crowd. Meanwhile, Nigeria's Super Falcons are chasing a record-extending tenth crown, having won nine of the last 12 editions.

As both teams prepare for this high-stakes battle, here are the key stars expected to shape the outcome of Saturday's final.

Nigeria: Eyes on the Tenth Crown

The Super Falcons have dominated WAFCON 2025 with their trademark confidence. They topped Group B with seven points—dispatching Tunisia and Botswana and drawing with Algeria. A 5–0 thrashing of Zambia in the quarter-finals sent a statement, followed by a gritty extra-time win over South Africa in the semis.

Rasheedat Ajibade

The Atlético Madrid forward has been Nigeria's standout performer, claiming three Woman of the Match awards—more than any other player at this year's tournament. A 2018 WAFCON winner, Ajibade's explosive pace, vision, and clinical finishing will be pivotal.

Chiamaka Nnadozie

Nigeria's last line of defence has been formidable. Brighton & Hove Albion's Nnadozie has conceded just once, a penalty against South Africa, and has showcased excellent leadership, shot-stopping, and command of her area.

Queen Esther Okoronkwo

In her WAFCON debut, Okoronkwo has impressed with one goal and four assists. Her creativity and off-the-ball movement have added a new layer to Nigeria's attacking approach.

Chiwendu Ihezuo

With three goals to her name, Ihezuo is Nigeria's top scorer. A constant aerial threat and relentless presence in the box, she could be the difference-maker.

Michelle Alozie

The Houston Dash defender sealed the semi-final victory with a dramatic extra-time winner against South Africa. Alozie's composure, athleticism, and attacking instincts make her a dual threat.

Morocco: Gunning for First-Ever Title

After finishing as runners-up in 2022, Morocco are back in the final, more experienced and resolute. Under coach Reynald Pedros, they topped Group A, edged past Mali 3-1 in the quarter-finals, and booked their spot in the final by beating Ghana on penalties.

However, concerns remain over their defence, they've conceded in every match, six goals in total, and goalkeeper Khadija Er-Rmichi is still chasing her first clean sheet of the tournament.

Ghizlane Chebbak

The 2022 WAFCON Best Player and current top scorer (4 goals) continues to inspire. The daughter of former Moroccan international Larbi Chebbak, she blends leadership with quality and will be Morocco's heartbeat in midfield.

Ibtissam Jraidi

With three goals and an assist, Jraidi is a lethal finisher. Her movement and timing make her one of Morocco's biggest attacking threats.

Yasmin Mrabet

A defensive midfielder with an eye for goal (2 goals), Mrabet anchors Morocco's midfield. She's essential in disrupting Nigeria's rhythm and launching quick transitions.

Sakina Ouzraoui

Ouzraoui was instrumental in the semi-final win over Ghana, scoring and assisting in a standout performance. Her versatility makes her vital in both midfield and defence.

Kenza Chapelle

While she has just one goal, Chapelle adds width, energy, and flair. Her ability to unlock defences could prove crucial against Nigeria's structured backline.

Saturday's final promises fireworks. Nigeria have experience, structure, and star power; Morocco have momentum, home advantage, and a burning desire to make history. As the continent watches, these stars will aim to etch their names in WAFCON history.



HOW KIVA GOT HER GROOVE BACK

UDY OSARO-EDOBOR



Kiva had always been perceived through the narrow lens of shallow eyes. To many—especially men—she was too dark, not the conventional definition of beauty. But what people failed to see was her heart, her brilliance, and the fierce compassion she carried in her soul.

At 35, Kiva was a powerhouse. A successful business executive with a PhD, a homeowner, a member of several chartered professional bodies, and a devoted caregiver to widows and orphans. But despite her accomplishments, life had been unkind in one particular area: love.

Men came, not for her heart, but for what she could offer. She was generous, and people knew it. They took and took, without the intention to stay. She became a magnet for emotionally unavailable men who only saw her as a means to an end.

Eventually, Kiva woke up. She distanced herself from opportunists and leaned into the unwavering love of her close-knit group of childhood friends and her family. But the loneliness still gnawed at her. Most of her friends were married or in committed relationships. She, however, remained alone—childless and unmarried.

The weight of her unmet desires began to show—on her body, in her spirit. She was losing weight. Her skin broke out. Her joy dimmed. Then one night, everything changed. She woke up to use the bathroom and caught a glimpse of herself in the mirror. For a moment, she didn't recognize

the woman staring back. That reflection was tired, hollow—burdened by unspoken grief. She sat before the mirror and wept. Then, she spoke to herself—not with pity, but with power.

“It's time to become better, not bitter.”

She remembered who she was. A woman of substance. Accomplished, compassionate, deeply loved by the right people. She reminded herself that life had not cheated her—it had shaped her. That night, Kiva chose gratitude over gloom. She realized the lemons life had handed her were old news—it was time to make lemonade and move forward.

The next morning, she rose with a renewed mindset. She dressed like the queen she was, smiled more, and carried herself like someone who had remembered her worth.

And the world noticed.

People complimented her glow. Her confidence. Her elegance. Even her dimples—those tiny indentations no one had ever paid attention to—suddenly became charming details.

She poured her love into the children around her—nieces, nephews, and the children of friends. Her home became a haven for joyful sleepovers. The kids adored her. Their moms became jealous and even planned their own

sleepover and girls' outing.

There were only two single women left in her circle—Kiva and Onah. And Onah was getting married. This time, instead of feeling sorrow, Kiva felt joy. She helped organize the wedding like it was her own. She was everywhere—calm, elegant, in charge. The event planner even pulled her aside and whispered, “You should consider event planning professionally because your attention to detail should be studied.”

At the wedding, Ivan—one of the groom's friends—could not take his eyes off her. What drew him wasn't just her physical appearance, though he found her stunning. It was the light she carried. Her skin glowed like polished ebony, and her smile lit the room. He was impressed by the way she moved around, making sure everything went well and everyone was alright.

When Kiva came around to check if they needed anything, Ivan seized the moment and complimented her. Then at the after-party, he finally sat beside her. Her wit, intelligence, and grace sealed the deal for him. And in the middle of their conversation, he said it plainly:

“I'm going to marry you.”

Kiva laughed until tears rolled down her cheeks. She was 37. Marriage? Not in her plans. She'd long stopped believing in fairy tales.

But Ivan was different. A software consultant based in Germany, he had come to Nigeria for two things: to attend the wedding and finalize his transfer back home. Meeting Kiva became the third reason to stay.

He pursued her like a gentleman. He called. He checked in. He cared. She kept her guard up, waiting for him to vanish like the rest. But he didn't. Even when he returned to Germany, the connection remained. They talked daily, shared dreams, and opened wounds. Kiva knew now that love comes when you least expect it—and sometimes, the best stories begin when you've given up on the script.

Four months later, when Ivan returned to Nigeria, he didn't waste time. He proposed. Kiva was scared. She wasn't used to this kind of certainty. What would his family think of her? Her fears were almost suffocating her.

But they embraced her warmly.

“You're everything Ivan said you were,” his mother told her, “and even more beautiful in person.”

Kiva was happy.

His nieces and nephews adored her instantly. It was clear that Kiva had a gift with children. Her maternal instinct was deep and natural.

She wanted a quiet wedding, and that's exactly what she got. Then she had fears about getting pregnant. She knew that could be impossible considering her age, but Ivan assured her that he didn't marry her because he wanted

kids—he married her because he loved her.

It's true what they say: “Delayed doesn't mean denied.” Life may not follow your timeline, but it often exceeds your expectations in due season.

Now guess what? Pregnancy came. And with it, its fears too. Kiva was carrying twins. It was classified as high-risk, but with rest, care, and faith, she carried her babies to full term and had them via C-section.

Now Kiva is 40. A wife. A mother to two radiant girls. And more fulfilled than she ever imagined. Ivan turned out to be more than a husband—he was the reward after years of heartbreak, the compensation for every tear shed over men who never truly saw her.

She looks back and smiles, and reminds herself that—you're never too old for a new beginning. Whether in love, career, or motherhood—age is not a limit.

She stands in front of the mirror, remembering how that mirror had been the game changer for her. Her babies crawl up to her as their dad chases them from behind.

Kiva smiles.

“This life—this love—was worth the wait.”



Udy Osaro-Edobor

Udy Osaro-Edobor is the Content Creator for SoTv (Supernatural Online TV) Nigeria. She is a movie/ scriptwriter, editor, and proofreader.

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BROKEN AND UNSPOKEN:

A STORY OF STRENGTH AND HEALING



Adanna Okpalanma-Chika

A Therapy Room Story-A Review of Adanna Okpalanma-Chika's Broken and Unspoken

Title: Broken and Unspoken: A Story of Strength and Healing

Author: Adanna Okpalanma-Chika

Year of Publication: 2024

Number of Pages: 201

BROKEN AND UNSPOKEN: A STORY OF STRENGTH AND HEALING

TITILADE OYEMADE

You're not exactly sure how to label Broken and Unspoken. Is it a memoir? A biography? Maybe both. But that doesn't really matter because once you start reading, you'll find yourself pulled in by a story that feels honest, real, and deeply human.

At the heart of the book are two people: the therapist (who also wrote the book) and her client. What makes this book stand out is how their two stories are told side by side. The author doesn't just talk about healing, she shows it, through both her own journey and that of the woman sitting across from her.

Usually, what's said in therapy stays there. But this time, with the client's full permission, Adanna Okpalanma-Chika lets us in. And what we find is a story that brought healing not just to the one who lived it, but to the one who listened. Now, they're both sharing it with the world, hoping someone out there might feel less alone.

The book is written in simple, honest words. You can hear both voices, the therapist and the client, clearly, and their stories flow together naturally. There's deep pain in this book. The kind that begins with losing a mother, and then being blamed for that loss simply because she died giving birth to you. It's heartbreaking. But it's real. And the way the author tells it makes you feel every word.

At first, the pace is slow. You might wonder why the client is in therapy at all. But little by little, the pieces come together. And when they do, you're faced with painful truths, about childhood trauma, abuse, loneliness, and the struggle to feel worthy of love. The book opens up hard conversations like emotional and physical abuse, sexual violence, grief, betrayal, and the long road to healing.

Sometimes, the emotions in the book feel heavy and repetitive. You may feel like putting it down but then, something pulls you back in.

At first, you didn't get it. You thought, Why doesn't she just leave? Why is she still there? You might even feel frustrated. But as the story unfolds, you begin to see the fear, the shame, the silence and suddenly, you understand. Leaving an abusive relationship isn't simple. And this book helps you see why.

The therapist also shares her own struggles, which makes her feel real not like someone with all the answers, but someone still learning too. That honesty makes the book feel even more powerful.

If you've ever lived through trauma or PTSD, this book speaks to something deep inside you. It doesn't just tell a story; it reflects your own. You might find moments of comfort, or even quiet healing, in the pages.

Still, just when it feels like things are getting better, something else happens. The emotional ups and downs can be draining. But even in the darkest parts, there's a soft, steady reminder that healing is possible. That light does come.

There's a part of the book that may confuse you. Most of the story is told in past tense, but sometimes it shifts into the present, especially during the therapy sessions. You might have to pause and re-read to keep track but it's worth it.

By the end, the book starts to feel more like a self-help guide. In fact, if you jumped straight to the last few chapters, you'd find some of the most powerful lessons waiting there.

When you finish Broken and Unspoken, you might look at your own life differently. You may notice wounds you've ignored. But more importantly, you'll begin to see how healing can start. And you may finally understand why speaking to someone, a therapist, a guide can make all the difference.

This book is for anyone who's tired of hiding pain, and ready to find peace, power, and purpose again.



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WEEKEND QUOTES



1

Faith and natural intelligence
are always on opposing sides.
Be wise
.....WhispersbyTEN

3

Your true self is only true based on
what God says
.....WhispersbyTEN

2

It may not take long speeches to
reach God; it sure takes a sincere
heart to connect with Him
.....WhispersbyTEN

4

Taking responsibility is part
of faith to see your prophecy
fulfilled
.....WhispersbyTEN