

BUSINESS DAY WEEKENDER

EDITION 256 | 23, AUGUST 2025

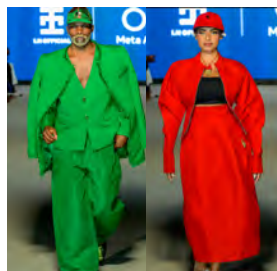


Chiamaka Nnadozie: From Africa's Best to Ballon d'Or Nominee



EDUCATION

Creative confidence: Why children must read books



FASHION

How Meta, I.N. Official collaboration highlights easy AI integration for future fashion designs

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PUBLISHED BY

BusinessDay Media Limited
6A George Street, off
Mobolaji Johnson Street, Ikoyi
01-2799100
www.businessday.ng

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The Law Union

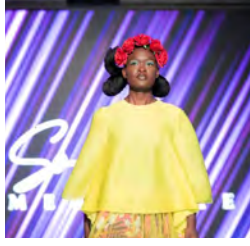
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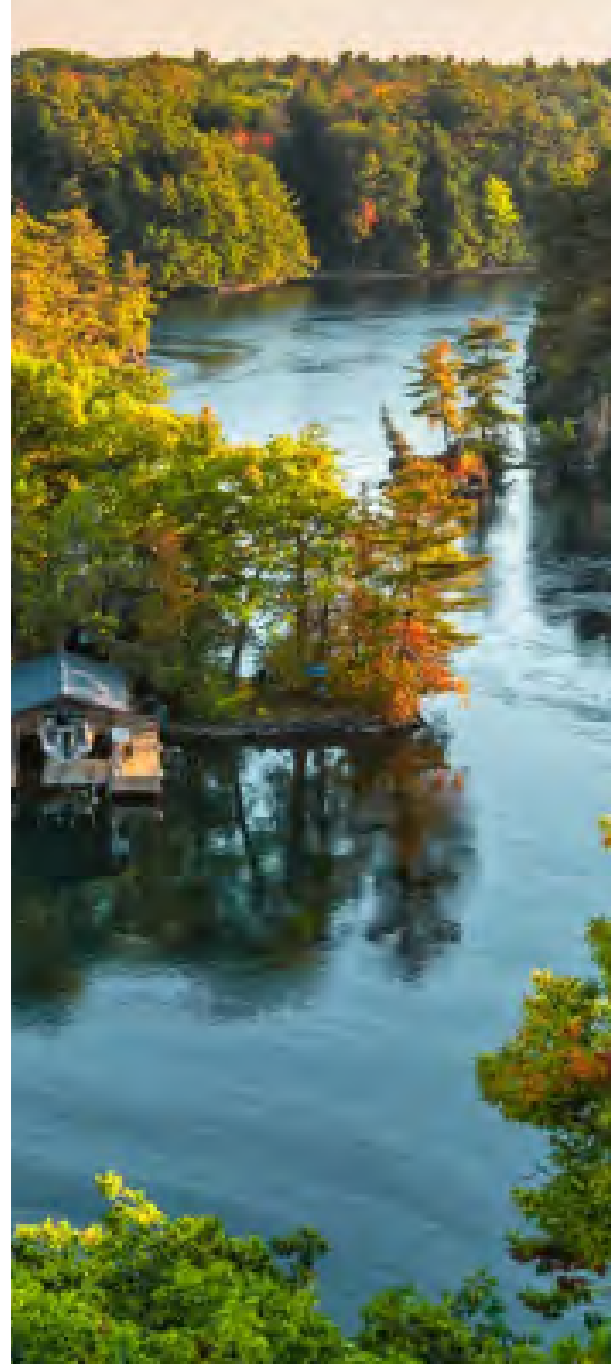
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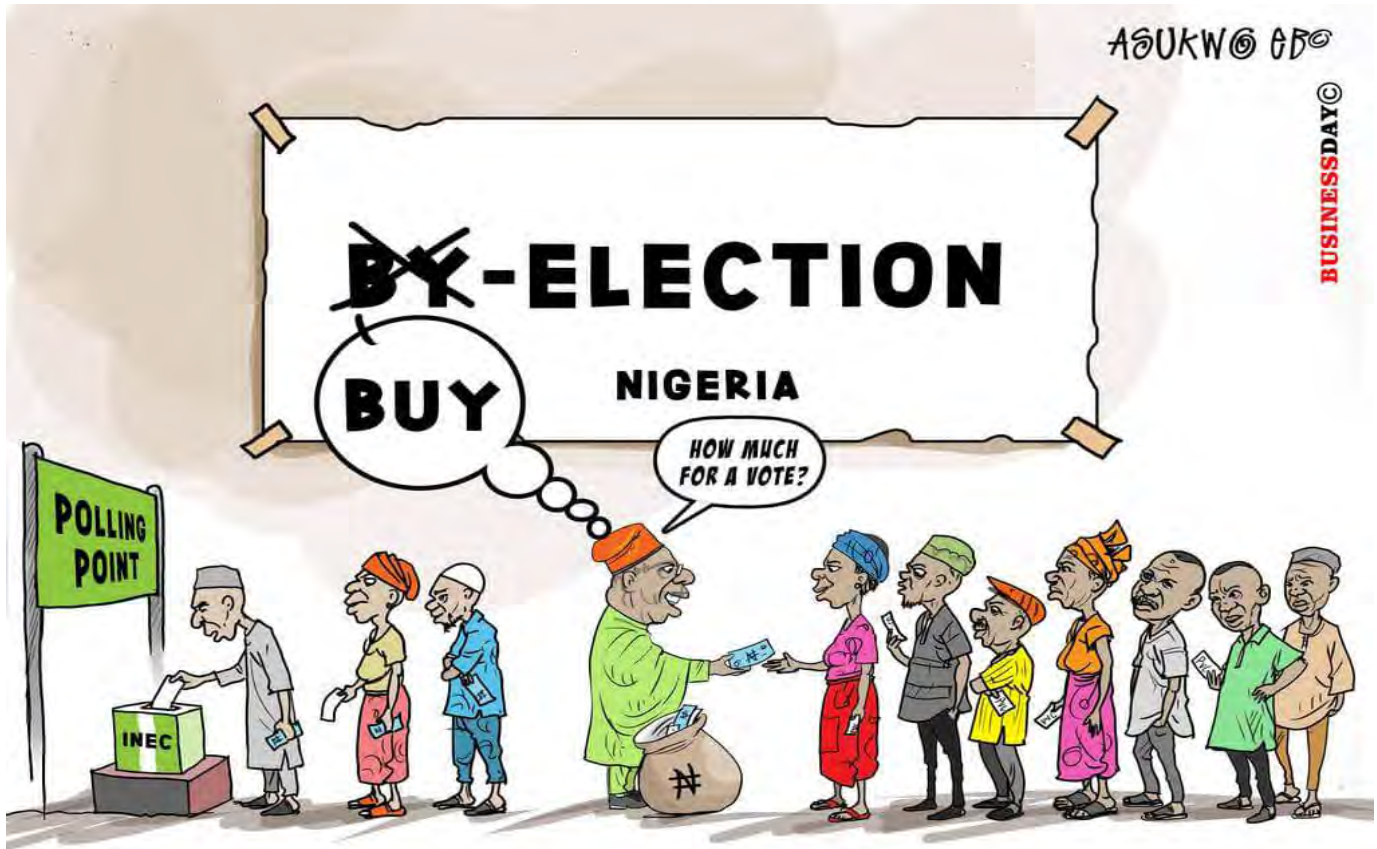
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CHIAMAKA NNADOZIE: FROM AFRICA'S BEST TO BALLON D'OR NOMINEE

ANTHONY NLEBEM



Making History on the Global Stage

Super Falcons and Brighton Women FC goalkeeper, Chiamaka Nnadozie, has carved her name into football history once again, this time as the first African goalkeeper ever shortlisted for the women's Ballon d'Or Yachine Trophy. For the 24-year-old Nigerian shot-stopper, the recognition is more than personal glory; it is a powerful statement that African footballers, especially women, can rise to the very top of the global stage.

Just months after winning her second CAF Women's Goalkeeper of the Year award, Nnadozie now finds herself standing shoulder to shoulder with the game's finest: Spain's Cata Coll, Germany's Ann-Katrin Berger, England's Hannah Hampton, and the Netherlands' Daphne van Domselaar.

"This nomination means a lot to me," Nnadozie said with pride. "It shows that all the hard work, all the consistency, and all the

prayers have been working. Being the first African goalkeeper to be nominated is a morale booster. This is for Africa. This is for every young girl dreaming of becoming a superstar."

A Journey of Resilience

From humble beginnings at Rivers Angels in Port Harcourt to a breakthrough spell at Paris FC in France, Nnadozie's rise has been defined by persistence. Injuries, doubts, and the pressure of expectation have tested her resolve, but each obstacle only sharpened her determination.

Now at Brighton, she has become a symbol of composure, leadership, and athletic brilliance between the posts. Whether it's her commanding saves, sharp reflexes, or fearless penalty stops, Nnadozie has developed into one of the most reliable goalkeepers in world football.



A Season of Triumphs

Nnadozie's nomination capped a spectacular season in which she lifted the Coupe de France with Paris FC before joining the Super Falcons to claim a record-extending 10th Women's Africa Cup of Nations (WAFCON) title in Morocco. She was also named Best Goalkeeper at the CAF Awards and WAFCON Goalkeeper of the Tournament after keeping four clean sheets in six outings.

"After winning the Coupe de France, I told myself my blood was still hot, my spirit was still high," she reflected. "Winning two trophies in two months is not easy, but I believed I could have both. This is to encourage every goalkeeper in Africa: keep working hard, because anything is possible."

Breaking Out on the World Stage

Her rise has been years in the making. She first caught the world's attention at the 2018 FIFA U-20 Women's World Cup, playing all four matches for Nigeria and earning the "Dare to Shine" Player of the Match award against Haiti.





At just 19, she started for Nigeria at the 2019 FIFA Women's World Cup in France. In the Falcons' 2–0 victory over South Korea, she became the youngest goalkeeper to keep a clean sheet in World Cup history, an achievement that announced her to the global stage.

She later helped the Falconets win gold at the African Games in Morocco, saving three penalties in the final shootout against Cameroon. Since then, Nnadozie has continued to grow, establishing herself as one of the most reliable shot-stoppers

in Europe during her time with Paris FC before her summer move to Brighton & Hove Albion in the English Women's Super League.

Madugu Joins the Elite

While Nnadozie was making history between the posts, Super Falcons coach Justin Madugu also broke barriers on the touchline. After guiding Nigeria to WAFCON glory, he became the first African coach, male or female, nominated for the Ballon d'Or Best Women's Coach award.

"It came as a surprise, but I take it as a challenge, with hope that more hard work will take me and other African coaches to the pinnacle of world football," the 61-year-old tactician said. "It's not easy to be nominated among the best five coaches in the world. Win or lose, it will inspire me to do more."

Lighting the Path for Africa

Both Nnadozie and Madugu's recognition send a powerful message that African football belongs on the world stage, and its players and coaches can stand shoulder to shoulder with the very best.

"I hope this motivates every African girl to believe that nothing is impossible," Nnadozie said. "If I can get here, then others can go even further. The sky is only the starting point."

HOW META, I.N. OFFICIAL COLLABORATION HIGHLIGHTS EASY AI INTEGRATION FOR FUTURE FASHION DESIGNS

ANTHONY UDUGBA



Meta teamed up with Nigerian designer Ifeanyi Nwunye of I.N. Official to launch the world's first AI-powered fashion collection at Africa Fashion Week London on August 9-10, 2025. This collaboration shows how Meta AI, embedded in platforms like WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook, makes it simple for creators to use AI as a tool for generating designs, simulating ideas, and speeding up the creative process without needing technical skills.

Meta AI gave the designer complete creative freedom to explore new patterns, color palettes, and design elements in entirely new ways, marking the first time AI has been used as a creative assistant in a runway show.

In an exclusive interview with BusinessDay, Nwunye detailed how his collaboration with Meta AI powered the creation of the "Transcendence" collection, showcased at Africa Fashion Week in London. This partnership marks a historic first: an African fashion house leveraging AI in a major global collaboration to highlight technology's potential in the creative economy. Nwunye, an electrical engineering graduate from Covenant University, emphasized AI's role in streamlining design processes, fostering cultural pride, and inspiring the next generation of designers.

AI as a Creative Assistant: From Concept to Simulation Nwunye highlighted Meta AI's transformative impact on the design workflow, particularly in replacing traditional sampling with digital simulation. "Normally, when you conceptualize, we start by designing the pieces first, then we get the fabrics, then we test, then we confirm whether it's good to go, then we put it in a collection," he explained. "However, this time, instead of testing, we simulate. We say, oh, yeah, Meta AI, imagine a jacket like this, with vampire details and big fur on the hand, and then next thing you see, pictures. And you already have a real-life reference as to what that piece would look like, versus having to sample or get an illustrator."

This approach eliminated the need for costly illustrators and physical prototypes, saving time and resources. Nwunye praised the tool's accessibility, noting its integration into everyday apps like WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook. "You don't have to pay illustrators to give you different designs, and then you confirm. Now you're limiting all those processes of having to get illustrators, get them to do extra sampling," he said. "The most accessible thing about it is the fact that it's embedded in WhatsApp, it's embedded in Instagram, it's embedded in Facebook, it's fast, we're kind of like used to it already, based on our everyday lives."



The emotional aspect of prompting was key, according to Nwunye. “AI has prompts, it’s not really about emotions. The emotion that you’re trying to get from the result, you know, this is the kind of feeling that you’re trying to get from these results. So that feeling really inspired the kind of prompts and the kind of prompts that you let the AI know that you want to receive and then you get results.” This method accelerated iteration, allowing quick adjustments like elongating sleeves or adding details without repeated physical trials.

Crafting Prompts: Emotion-Driven Innovation

When asked about specific prompts, Nwunye revealed they were rooted in desired emotions and outcomes. For instance, a standout red stripe piece with fire on the cuff drew from prompts like “imagine Asoke, red stripe Asoke, vampire outfit types.” He explained, “We wanted to get that emotion of an extreme look, an extreme long look that has a lot of character, but is still wearable. So with this prompt,

once we got the visual direction of this prompt, then we’re going to edit some of it in our own way to actually make it more, bring it more to real life and the real applicable world.”

Beyond visuals, Meta AI suggested materials to enhance designs. Nwunye shared an example: “We don’t always use normal plastic buttons. Sometimes we use a resin button. So, this time we asked Meta AI, for example, what kind of extra materials can we use as buttons that are natural as well? You know, sometimes we use cowries, but it also suggests glass, some special type of stone glass that is wrapped, that we could use. Actually, it was like, the suggestion was a precious stone wrapped in metal, you know, so we’re able to do like a glass, precious glass stone wrapped in copper, you know, and we use that as buttons.”

These suggestions built on existing ideas, amplifying creativity without inventing unrelated concepts. “It’s not like it came from nowhere and gave you some crazy ideas that you didn’t know of, but no, it’s to give you things that kind of enhance the things that you’re already kind of working around,” Nwunye noted.

Runway Triumph: Highlights from Africa Fashion Week London

Reflecting on the runway show, Nwunye described it as a culmination of six months of collaborative effort. “There’s a lot of highlights, you know, from the preparations and the partnership, which was the first time a fashion house from Africa has been able to do a major partnership like that that highlights the advantage of technology in the creative sector and the creative economy,” he said. Key moments included working with teams from Black Superstar (PR), Apollo (Meta’s Africa representative), and his Nigerian staff.

The show itself was a “match made in heaven,” with alignments ensuring satisfaction for both I.N. Official and Meta. “The highlight was pretty much the entire experience from the process that led to the show, to the show in itself,” Nwunye added.

Standout Pieces in the Transcendence Collection

The 15-look collection was intentionally concise, a departure from I.N. Official’s usual 25-piece lines. “I think every single piece was a standout piece,” Nwunye asserted. “We try to make it as specific and encompassing as possible.” While he professed love for the entire lineup, he admitted a personal bias toward a versatile green three-piece suit. “That’s my favorite piece because I can wear each and every one of the pieces separately in there, you know, to feel bagged.”

AI’s role was pivotal: “We just used prompts to make the whole process quicker, which was very, very exciting for us and very innovative.”

The Meta AI Collaboration: A Serendipitous Partnership
Nwunye likened the collaboration to finding the “right girlfriend” – it approached him organically. “We were really scouted by Meta, you know, just based on our work in the industry so far,” he recounted. His engineering background facilitated tech integration, though not as prominently before.



“Naturally, I have a background in electrical engineering... over time, I’ve been able to figure out how to incorporate some tech within our fashion ecosystem, but not as pronounced as this time.”

Meta reached out via his PR head, Latasha, and the fit was immediate since I.N. Official was already using AI. “We’re already using AI to design some stuff. So, when they reached out, we were excited about it and just confirmed it immediately... Pablo Picasso says inspiration has to find you working. If inspiration comes to you and you’re not already working, there’s going to be a waste of time.”

Cultural Roots and Inspirations

The “Transcendence” collection draws deeply from African heritage, aiming to restore dignity and create timeless pieces. “Our brand is rooted in culture, first of all. We’re a very Western brand. Before really blowing up in Nigeria, we were already blowing up in Los Angeles and in Paris,” Nwunye said. The theme emphasizes evolving familiar silhouettes by 5-8% to innovate. “We wanted to create a moment that can be timeless, that can transcend one time, that can transcend one period.”

Central to this is “the restoration of African dignity,” using fashion to counter Western influences. “Through clothing, through creativity, through music, fashion, art, like all these

creative forms, this is how we can really restore African dignity and make Africans globally proud of their cultural heritage... We’re beyond what you guys are. We’re not these African villagers. We’re actually the coolest people in the whole world.”

Nwunye’s personal style promotes Nigerian culture globally, challenging stereotypes of urban Africans mimicking American rappers or Italian mafia looks. “For me, the fact that we are 2 billion Africans, like we have so much power... we have to make sure we are stimulating people’s minds in such a way that they are seeing themselves in the betterment of these things.”

Overcoming Challenges: AI as an Enhancement, Not a Hurdle

Integration posed no major challenges; it amplified existing practices. “I wouldn’t say I had to even integrate, per se. You know, like it was something that we needed anyway,” Nwunye clarified. “It’s about helping to be creative, but it’s about helping you to enhance what you know already or do it faster.” Working with Meta’s team refined skills, adhering to standard guidelines similar to past partnerships like Glenfiddich.

AI's Impact on Fashion's Future, Especially for Gen Z
Nwunye sees AI reshaping fashion profoundly.

"I think it's more than even changing this year because... AI can come up with a small business plan for you, for your fashion house. It can come up with strategies for your marketing," he said. It consolidates information faster than Google searches, but success depends on intent. "If your intent is to learn and to actually apply knowledge... you see young people that just started yesterday, they're already doing mind-blowing things just based off working with AI."

For Gen Z, it's a game-changer: "A lot of creatives, a lot of amazing creatives are. Like you see young people... they have a multi-thousand-dollar business." AI learns user preferences over time, tailoring responses.

Business Boost and Cross-Cultural Ties

The collaboration sparked curiosity among buyers, investors, and partners. "Everyone is curious to see pretty much where this is headed... I think it's more so the curiosity that has been sparked," Nwunye observed. It's accessible via familiar apps, appealing across ages.

Cross-culturally, it bridged Meta, African Fashion Week, and I.N. Official, with Meta sponsoring the event.

The Road Ahead: AI as Industry Standard

Nwunye predicts AI will become ubiquitous: "Honestly, 2 billion percent... You either innovate or... die." Globally, major houses like Gucci use it; Africa must catch up early. "All the major fashion houses are using AI... It's best to jump and learn everything that we can learn now."

He urged intentional integration: "One of the most valuable companies in the world is an AI company. Meta is going to change the entire face of the whole company for AI."

Government Support and Advice for Aspiring Designers
To foster AI in fashion, Nwunye called for education on both sides. "The government needs to understand the value of creativity... Creativity is what's made America, America through Hollywood," he said. Policies should include programs, events, and funding for genuine creatives, avoiding nepotism.

His advice to aspiring designers: "Keep going, keep innovating. Every single day, the sun rises as an opportunity to change the world... We really change the world, the lives of our families, the community and nation at large. So we have to keep pushing every single week. No matter how small, do something that adds to your brand and do it from a place of love."

With 13 years in the industry, Nwunye's journey exemplifies how AI can elevate African fashion onto the global stage, blending heritage with innovation for a transcendent future.



CREATIVE CONFIDENCE: WHY CHILDREN MUST READ BOOKS

CHARLES OGWO



Creative confidence is believing in one's ability to think in new ways, solve problems, and bring his/her ideas to life.

When a child trusts in his or her creativity and is willing to try experiments and learn how to practice self-leadership.

Experts argue that books inspire self-confidence in children by providing examples of characters that overcome challenges, celebrate uniqueness, and believe in themselves, which helps kids internalize messages of resilience and self-worth.

Ugo Anidi, a children's books author, said that reading books builds a child's confidence in several ways, such as boosting skills, imagination and creativity, empathy and social confidence, among others.

"As children practice reading, they get better at it, and this growing ability gives them confidence in school and beyond.

"Books expose children to new words, ideas, and worlds, helping them feel smarter and more capable of expressing themselves," she said.

Anidi emphasised that characters who solve problems, face fears, or succeed against challenges inspire children to believe they can do the same.

According to the children's book author, reading allows children to dream, imagine, and create, boosting their self-esteem as they share and explore their ideas.

"Finishing a book, even a small one, gives children a proud moment of accomplishment. By seeing different perspectives in stories, children learn to understand others, which strengthens their social skills and confidence in making friends," she noted.

The author said that reading gives children the tools, models, and courage to believe in themselves.

Jacqueline Agweh, executive director, technical operations at Sanlam Allianz General Insurance Nigeria Limited, speaking at Sheevolution Africa's 2025 summer camp said, "It's a good for children, especially girls to develop their writing and reading skills, whether they're going to be authors tomorrow or not, because for everyone to be able to write, she must be good at that.

"It's a good thing to be able to put one's thoughts to paper because she can develop the thoughts, and who knows it could become a best seller tomorrow."

The author emphasised that young girls should embrace reading because it opens out their mind, and gives them knowledge that the other person will not necessarily have.

Sope Martins, an author and founder of the Kid Lit Foundation, emphasised that children are upskilled through reading and writing, hence they must be encouraged to read always.



"We upskill children with writing and reading, they tell their own stories, share their thoughts on a global front, which in turn shapes their future and that of the country.

"I believe that children's imagination is crucial to their success in life, which books enhance; once you can imagine a better future for yourself, you can step into that future," she said.

Martins further explained that story-telling skill improves children's imagination and allows them to think beyond their current circumstances.

Experts believe that Nigeria can borrow a leaf from Malaysia, where various public and private educational institutions, ranging from preschools up to universities, are experimenting with outdoor reading classrooms.

According to The Star report, "These spaces, such as edible gardens or parks, allow students to explore subjects like Science, Mathematics, and Art more dynamically and interactively.

"More than just about plants and play, they represent a fresh and much-needed shift in how we educate our children."

In addition, the report said that exercise emphasises sustainability and ecological awareness, which fosters a deep connection to the environment, promoting physical and mental wellbeing, inspires curiosity and creativity, and offers a holistic approach to education.

Though this comes with some measure of challenges, the Malaysian education authorities left no stone unturned in their efforts to make the exercise a success.



'LOVE BLOOM' AT AFRICA FASHION WEEK LONDON: CELEBRATING FAITH AND RESILIENCE

ESTHER EMOEKPERE



Africa Fashion Week London 2025 runway came alive with vibrant colours and profound meaning as luxury womenswear brand Simeogieme unveiled its Spring/Summer 2026 collection, 'Love Bloom.'

Founded in the UK and deeply inspired by Nigerian heritage, this presentation showcased the perfect fusion of couture

craftsmanship and a deeply personal narrative of faith and healing.

Drawing from her triumphant journey through leukaemia, Creative Director Osime Saibu infused each garment with the transformative essence of divine love.

Flowing capes represented the warmth of being enveloped in God's embrace. In this collection, Osime embraced a temporary evolution by exclusively featuring digital artworks, while still honouring her roots in hand-painted prints that have characterised past collections.

This collection reflects a new creative chapter, showcasing rich floral motifs that symbolise grace, hope, and the beauty that can flourish even in life's toughest moments.

The show transcended mere fashion; it was an intimate narrative conveyed through fabric, colour, and movement.

Each ensemble relayed a powerful message that resilience goes beyond survival; it's about discovering beauty amidst life's challenges. This was runway theatre infused with meaning: a visual conversation between the designer and the audience about love, restoration, and inner strength.

"Love Bloom is more than just a collection; it is my testimony," shared Osime Saibu. "Every piece embodies a story of God's faithfulness, and I hope that women who wear these creations feel embraced, valued, and revitalised," she expressed.



The showcase was part of the vibrant two-day celebration that Africa Fashion Week London is renowned for, uniting designers from across the continent and the diaspora. Within this rich tapestry of cultural exchange and creative brilliance, Love Bloom distinguished itself with its heartfelt storytelling and unique aesthetic.

With this collection, Simeogieme reasserts its status as a premier fashion storyteller.

The brand's growing influence is reflected not only on the runway but also in the pages of leading international magazines,

including Vogue, Harper's Bazaar, Grazia, and Cosmopolitan, where Simeogieme has been recently featured. Its global reach continues to expand, with pieces now available at Flying Solo in New York City, giving American customers direct access to its distinctive designs.

Buyers, collectors, and media are invited to explore Love Bloom and place exclusive orders at www.simeogieme.com, ensuring that the narrative of love, resilience, and divine healing resonates far beyond the London runway.



OBINNA CHUKWUJIOKE: SOLVING AFRICA'S PAYMENT PUZZLE ONE CHALLENGE AT A TIME

CHISOM MICHAEL





Obinna Chukwujioko, Co-Founder of Maplerad, says his journey into fintech began with a personal experience.

“After facing the challenge of cross-border payment first-hand and the fact that fintech is at the core of every business,” he said, “I realised that for any business to generate revenue, it needs to receive money. So there has to be a money movement of some sort. With this comes a lot of challenges, so I decided to choose a challenge and solve it, more like making the world of payments a better place.”

At the heart of Maplerad’s work is a simple goal: to make it easier for individuals and businesses to move money across borders with speed and security. Under Chukwujioko’s leadership, the company has processed over \$100 million in transactions and built a presence in key markets including the US, UK, Ghana, and Tanzania.

Reflecting on the journey, Chukwujioko points to the specific gaps in Africa’s financial systems that inspired Maplerad’s creation. “One of the biggest challenges was the complexity of banking

infrastructure,” he explained. “Businesses often struggled to manage relationships with multiple banks, navigate compliance requirements, and secure licences, a process that could take months and slow down innovation.”

Regulatory fragmentation was another hurdle. With 54 countries operating under different financial regulations, compliance requirements were inconsistent and made it difficult for businesses to scale across borders. “Infrastructure limitations also meant that payment processing and cross-border transactions were often slow and inefficient,” he added.

There was also the challenge of interoperability. “Payment systems across Africa are fragmented and don’t talk to each other,” Chukwujioko said. “Maplerad was designed to aggregate these systems into one platform, enabling businesses and individuals to transact seamlessly, regardless of the payment method.”

By building a Banking-as-a-Service (BaaS) platform, Maplerad simplifies the banking stack, handles compliance, and enables businesses to launch financial products in minutes rather than months. The aim, Chukwujioko says, is to give businesses the tools to go global from day one, while providing scalable infrastructure tailored to Africa’s realities.

Outside of Maplerad, Chukwujioko draws motivation from the discipline of daily routines. “It can be a mixture of things,” he said. “I try to organise my personal life, from keeping my closet tidy to doing laundry. Completing these little tasks somehow keeps me motivated to achieve broader goals.”

Scaling the company across Africa, the UK, and the US has not been without its challenges. In Africa, navigating fragmented regulatory environments has meant engaging directly with regulators to align operations. Infrastructure gaps, such as unreliable internet in certain markets, have pushed the team to develop robust, low-bandwidth solutions.

“In the UK and US, the challenge was different,” he noted. “We had to build trust with institutional partners while competing with established



“I believe in hiring versatile, problem-solving talent and giving them the autonomy to experiment within defined frameworks,” he said. “Our ‘fail-fast, learn-faster’ approach allows us to iterate quickly and stay focused on our mission. We also have regular customer feedback loops to keep us grounded in real-world needs.”

After a demanding week, Chukwujioko likes to keep things simple. “I spend some time in the gym, get some sleep and then catch up with family and friends,” he said.

His advice to young professionals looking to enter the tech or fintech space is both practical and aspirational: “Be and build the change you want to see. Then you need a lot of patience.”

Through Maplerad, Chukwujioko continues to contribute to Africa’s financial infrastructure one solution at a time, driven not just by ambition but by a commitment to shared growth and practical impact.

BaaS players. That meant focusing on superior technology and strategic partnerships.” Managing a team spread across continents also tested his leadership skills. “Keeping everyone aligned under a shared vision required clear communication, cross-functional collaboration, and regular strategy sessions,” he said.

For Chukwujioko, building for Africa goes beyond profit margins. It is about solving real problems and contributing to economic growth. “If I have experienced a challenge, it’s likely someone else has too. If I can solve it for myself, I’m solving it for someone else,” he said.

Part of maintaining Maplerad’s agility, he explained, is having the right organisational culture. The company operates a flat structure that encourages open communication and rapid decision-making. Weekly cross-functional syncs bring together product, engineering, and compliance teams, ensuring that collaboration drives every step of development.



INSIDE SMALL AMALA SPOT WHERE THE RICH PARK CARS, QUEUE

ESTHER EMOEKPERE



On a street in Onipanu, a small shop attracts an unusual daily sight. Expensive cars line up beside commercial buses and okadas, all waiting for the same thing: a plate of amala. The shop, run by Mrs. Juliana Adebimpe Okedara, better known as Iya Toyin Alamala, is one of Lagos' most popular food spots.

A recent post by Twitter user @Egwi captured the experience:

“The highly regarded ‘best Amala in Lagos’ is tucked away in a tiny spot on an obscure street in Onipanu. My driver and I nearly got lost trying to find it. Got there and saw different types of cars parked in front of this tiny shop just to have some Amala. Las las you can do great things from a small place.”

The description sums up what many customers already know: the reputation of the shop far exceeds its size.

Iya Toyin started the business in Oshodi Oke more than 50 years ago. At the beginning, she sold rice, pounded yam, and amala. Over time, she focused only on amala, moving the business to its present location in Onipanu.

Unlike other amala spots that offer gbegiri and several side dishes, the Onipanu shop keeps it simple. The only serving is amala with ewedu and omi obe (stew). Customers know what to expect, and that consistency has built loyalty over decades.

The food does not stay within the shop. Customers often buy in bulk to take outside Lagos and abroad. Amala from Iya Toyin has travelled to Abuja, London, and the United States. The business also offers catering services for parties, where rice and pounded yam are included on the menu.

The mix of vehicles parked outside reflects the shop's reach. From office workers to business executives, customers wait their turn for a plate. In a city known for class divisions, the amala shop levels the field.

More than five decades after it started, Iya Toyin's small Onipanu shop continues to draw Lagosians from every background. As the viral tweet put it, great things can indeed come from a small place.

BUSINESS DAY WEEKENDER

CHIVAS 18 RESTAGED IN ABUJA WITH THE NEWLY REDESIGNED BOTTLE AT THE CHIVAS PALACE - AN EXPERIENCE WHERE AMBITION MEETS MODERN LUXURY

Abuja, Nigeria - At The Chivas Palace on Saturday, July 12th, 2025, Chivas Regal, the iconic Blended Scotch whisky, unveiled the newly redesigned Chivas 18 bottle in grand style, a striking symbol of bold evolution for a new generation of whisky enthusiasts. Set against the elegant backdrop of The Chivas Palace experience, the bottle unveiling was the high point of an evening centered on ambition, progress, and shared success. Chivas 18's relaunch represented more than just a visual refresh; it also reaffirmed Chivas' relevance in today's dynamic culture.

The redesigned bottle has a more sleek, confident silhouette, updated typography, and richer colour tones, all while preserving the iconic blend inside. With 85 flavor notes ranging from dark chocolate to dried fruit and buttery toffee, Chivas 18 is still one of the world's most complex and revered blends.

During the unveiling, Evane Chenuet, Marketing Director at Pernod Ricard Nigeria, addressed the guests,

"In today's world, where all the rules are changing, we need to be bold, innovative, and intentional." And tonight is for all of you, our community, as we forge new paths to success together. This is Chivas' new expression. The same world-class blend, but packaged in a bottle that reflects our current values: modern luxury, inclusivity, and earned elevation. Because at Chivas, we believe that "I rise, we rise."

When the bottle was revealed, guests were drawn in by the brand storytelling that had been layered throughout the venue - from a historical "Chivas Wall" that traced the journey from the Chivas Brothers Emporium in Aberdeen (est. 1801) to the royal warrant awarded by Queen Victoria in 1843, to the global legacy that now places Chivas Regal in the hands of visionaries all over the world.

The new Chivas 18 is now available for purchase at select retailers and premium outlets in Lagos, Abuja, Port Harcourt and other cities across Nigeria.

Whether served neat, on the rocks, or in one of Chivas' signature cocktails, the Chivas 18 bottle represents refined ambition - bold in taste, elegant in form, and timeless in meaning.



ABOUT CHIVAS REGAL

Founded in 1786 and produced at the historic Strathisla Distillery in Speyside, the oldest working distillery in the Scottish Highlands - Chivas Regal embodies over two centuries of Scotch whisky craftsmanship. As a leading name in blended Scotch, Chivas is renowned for its signature smoothness, achieved through expert blending of high-quality single malt and grain whiskies sourced from across Scotland. Each expression in the Chivas range is a testament to the skill of our master blenders, combining rich Speyside character with exceptional depth and balance.

At the heart of Chivas is a simple but powerful belief, success isn't a personal journey but it's a shared celebration. That's the spirit of the brand's campaign, "I Rise, We Rise". Today's achievers don't just rise alone - they bring others up with them. Because when one of us rises, we all rise.

For more information, visit chivas.com or follow us @ChivasRegalNG and #ChivasRegalNG #IRiseWeRise



ABOUT PERNOD RICARD NIGERIA

Pernod Ricard Nigeria is the local affiliate of Pernod Ricard, a global leader in wines and spirits.

Pernod Ricard holds a comprehensive portfolio of premium and luxury brands, with 16 out of the top 100 spirit brands in the world, including Jameson Irish Whiskey, Beefeater Gin, Martell Cognac, Seagram's Imperial Blue Whisky, Imperial Black Whisky, Absolut Vodka, Ballantine's Blended Scotch Whisky, Chivas Regal, The Glenlivet Scotch Whisky, Inverroche Gin, Olmeca Tequila, Malibu Liqueur, and GH Mumm Champagne.

BUSINESS DAY WEEKENDER

THE GLENLIVET HOSTS TEAL ROUND TABLE TALK: A CONVERSATION ON ORIGINALITY, LEGACY, AND THE POWER OF PURPOSE

Lagos, Nigeria - Before the cameras rolled and the brand ambassadors unveiling found its mark, The Glenlivet paused to create space for something powerful. In the hours leading up to the official unveiling of its new brand ambassadors, the original single malt whisky hosted the Teal Round Table Talk, an intimate dialogue exploring the deeper values that continue to define The Glenlivet's global identity.

Held at Euphoria in Ikoyi, the roundtable gathered Ebuka Obi-Uchendu, Osas Ighodaro, and Farooq Oreagba - The Glenlivet Originals now officially aligned with the brand, for an honest conversation about living with intention. Hosted by Mojibade Sosanya, the evening unfolded in the brand's signature tone: refined, purposeful, confident and progressive.

In true Glenlivet fashion, the discussion echoed deeply. Themes of originality, resilience, identity, legacy, and cultural evolution took centre stage, offering rare insight into the minds of the newly appointed ambassadors.

Asked what it means to Live Original, Ebuka Obi-Uchendu responded:

"To 'Live Original' means showing up as your full self, consistently, unapologetically, and with intent. It's not about being different for the sake of it; it's about being true to who you are, even when the world expects a version of you that feels safer or more familiar. For me, originality is style with substance, it's how you think, how you express yourself, how you make choices that reflect your values, not trends."

For Osas Ighodaro, when asked about the boldest decision she's made to protect her authenticity, she said:

"The boldest decision I've made was choosing to return to Nigeria and build a career on my own terms. I walked away from comfort and predictability to rediscover my voice, my roots, and my purpose, and that choice has shaped everything I am today."

With Farooq Oreagba, the conversation turned to authenticity and evolution:

"I didn't plan this. I just kept being me. And now, I'm here and it fits perfectly."

Speaking candidly about his unintentional rise as a cultural icon, Farooq reflected on his rebellious nature, his hope for a more expressive corporate Nigeria, and his personal

connection to The Glenlivet, the finest single malt whisky he enjoys neat, for its smooth character and absence of aftertaste.

Also present at the table was Cameron Piper, The Glenlivet's international brand ambassador, who shared his story of leaving a teaching career to embrace whisky storytelling in Nigeria, a bold pivot that now feels like home.

Evane Chenuet, Marketing Director at Pernod Ricard Nigeria, reflected on the moment's significance, noting that the evening marked more than a brand milestone; it signaled the beginning of a shared journey between The Glenlivet and the standard-setters of Nigerian culture.

"The Glenlivet is the first Speyside single malt in the world. That speaks of originality and it's exactly why these conversations matter," said Evane. "We want to create a space where authenticity leads the way, and where our brand ethos could come to life through the voices of those who truly embody it."

As the conversation drew to a close and the ceremonial signing commenced, Ojie Ehianeta, Head of Portfolio, Impress & Night Out at Pernod Ricard Nigeria, was invited to mark the moment.

One thing was unmistakable: the Teal Round Table Talk was a reflection of shared values. An intentional exchange between the world's finest single malt whisky, born from bold beginnings and The Glenlivet Originals who embody that same spirit today. The dialogue echoed everything The Glenlivet represents: clarity of purpose, quiet conviction, and a legacy defined by meaning.

Because The Glenlivet isn't here to chase trends. It was Made to Follow No One.

For more information, visit theglenlivet.com or follow @theglenlivetng #TheGlenlivetNG #LiveOriginal #TheGlenlivetOriginals



The Glenlivet Brand Ambassadors signing their contracts



The Glenlivet Brand Ambassadors; Farooq Oreagba, Osas Ighodaro, Ebuka Obi-Uchendu and Ojie Ehianeta, Pernod Ricard Nigeria's Head of Portfolio, Impress & Night Out



Evane Chenuet, Pernod Ricard Nigeria's Marketing Director, The Glenlivet Brand Ambassadors; Farooq Oreagba, Osas Ighodaro, Ebuka Obi-Uchendu and Michael Ehindero, Pernod Ricard Nigeria's Managing Director

ABOUT THE GLENLIVET

Founded in 1824 by George Smith as the first licensed distillery in the Livet Valley, The Glenlivet is celebrated as the original single malt whisky and the benchmark against which all others are measured. With its smooth, fruit-forward character and unwavering commitment to refined craft, The Glenlivet set the standard for Speyside single malts from day one. Today, it continues to inspire progressive minds to Live Original by embracing both its storied heritage and modern expression. Whether savoured neat, on the rocks, or in an innovative cocktail, every dram carries a legacy of bold beginnings and a promise of genuine quality.

For more information, visit theglenlivet.com #TheGlenlivetNG #LiveOriginal #TheGlenlivetOriginals

ABOUT PERNOD RICARD NIGERIA

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HYDRATION AS A LIFESTYLE RITUAL: UNCOVER AND SO FRESH'S INNOVATIVE APPROACH



In a world where beauty routines are often fragmented, what you drink over here, what you apply over there, Uncover and So Fresh are speaking a new language.

One where hydration is not just about water, but about intention. One where glow is not simply bought, but lived.

This August, these two category-defining brands enter a partnership that is both unexpected and overdue. On one side, Uncover, the skincare company bringing K-Beauty science to African skin with precision and purpose.

On the other hand, So Fresh, Nigeria's most trusted name in clean eating, nourishment, and functional wellness. Together, they launch a hydration experience that's inside-out, culturally rooted, and unapologetically fresh.

Not a trend. Not a campaign. Culture.

This is not just the first beauty x wellness collaboration in Nigeria, it's the first time two brands have come together to say:

"Let's make hydration a lifestyle ritual for the modern African woman," and at the heart of this launch are two hydration products, designed to complement each other like skin and soul.

Together, they offer a layered approach to hydration that bridges inner nourishment and outer care. Because the future of beauty in Africa isn't just about what works, it's about what feels aligned.

Uncover is not just adapting Korean beauty philosophies, it's localising them with purpose. K-Beauty is known for its patience, rituals, and multi-step glow-building routines. But Uncover has asked a better question: What does this look like for the African woman?

This partnership answers that, beautifully.

In a society where wellness is finally being reclaimed as more than luxury and where beauty is being redefined through community, education, and culture, Uncover and So Fresh are creating something that feels global in quality, but deeply local in heartbeat.

To mark this moment, Uncover and So Fresh are inviting their community to The Hydration in Motion Walk, a public activation that brings the ritual to life. More than a wellness event, the walk is a celebration of movement, nourishment, and joyful skin.

Picture women walking through Lagos at sunrise, sipping their hydration blend, misting their skin, reclaiming space. Laughing. Stretching. Pausing. Glowing. Together.

Because hydration isn't just a step, it's a story.

This partnership doesn't just launch products, it launches a new rhythm. A new habit. A new standard for African beauty that doesn't wait for permission to be global.

Uncover and So Fresh are building something that speaks to the future. Not with noise. But with care, clarity, and culture.

And in this story, hydration is only the beginning.

TOLULOPE DAVIDS: REWRITING AFRICA'S BANKING SOFTWARE STORY

CHINWE MICHAEL





Tolulope Davids' entrepreneurial journey began not in a boardroom but in the heart of Africa's banking halls, where he witnessed firsthand the continent's dependence on foreign technology.

As an Oracle Core Banking Application implementation expert, he saw millions spent on foreign consultants at daily rates that could employ at least 80 skilled Nigerian youths capable of delivering greater value if only given the chance.

"It didn't make sense to me," Tolulope said in an interview with BusinessDay. "If someone like me, a local resource, could be trusted to implement Oracle's solutions, then why couldn't we build our own?"

That question became the turning point. Driven by this conviction, and supported by a close friend who shared the same vision, Tolulope left a high-paying career to start InstiQ Professional Services, a homegrown platform committed to digitally transforming Africa's businesses.

Their mission was bold yet simple: to create indigenous enterprise software solutions that could rival, and eventually replace, the foreign platforms that had dominated Africa's financial sector for decades.

InstiQ's bold play in Africa's fintech landscape

Founded on the belief that "the future of Africa's fintech infrastructure will not be imported," InstiQ quickly set itself apart. Its flagship product, Transaction Made Easy (TME), reduces teller transaction times from three minutes to 30 seconds, a game-changer for banks plagued by long queues and slow customer service.

Convincing banks to adopt local solutions was not easy. The biggest barrier, Tolulope explains, was trust. "Many financial institutions doubted the capability of locally developed software. But when we delivered speed, cost efficiency, and round-the-clock local support, trust followed."

Today, InstiQ operates in twenty (20) African countries, offering products translated into English, French, and Portuguese. He said its adaptability across diverse banking cultures and regulatory environments has made it one of the continent's fastest-growing tech providers.

Tolulope is not on this journey alone, as his co-founder, Kehinde Durojaiye, who doubles as the company's chief technology officer, and his Executive Management Team (Cyril Ibeleme and Bode Bankole) work hand in hand with him.

Competing with global giants —on Africa's terms

In a market still dominated by foreign banking platforms, InstiQ's value proposition is clear. Its solutions are up to ten times cheaper than global competitors, are fully customisable to local contexts, and come with on-the-ground support.

"We don't just sell software; we provide speed, affordability, and proximity," Tolulope says.

This approach has seen InstiQ products, such as Q-Switch, Online Tax Payment Application, and the Single Middleware Platform, among others, power operations in some of Africa's largest banks. By reducing reliance on expensive foreign upgrades and delays, InstiQ has given its clients a competitive edge.

Tolulope sees the continent's biggest opportunities in AI-driven innovation and financial inclusion. But he also warns of threats: underdeveloped cloud infrastructure, inconsistent government regulation, and gaps in investment.

"Africa often finds itself playing catch-up with global advancements," he says. "Without proactive management, evolving regulations and infrastructure challenges could slow us down."

Building talent through culture

Behind InstiQ's growth is a dedicated team guided by a unique workplace philosophy—'STRIVE.' For Tolulope, this acronym represents Service, Trust, Relationships, Integrity, Value, and Excellence.

"The secret to attracting and retaining top talent is our culture of STRIVE," Tolulope notes. "Anyone who experiences these values will naturally thrive and stay with us."

This culture, combined with a commitment to integrity, has safeguarded InstiQ's operations. In over a decade, the company has not recorded a single case of fraud, an achievement Tolulope attributes to carefully selecting and empowering the right people.

A Marketplace Minister

More than a tech entrepreneur, Tolulope describes himself as a minister in the marketplace, using enterprise software to create opportunities, empower youth, and transform how African businesses operate.

For Tolulope, InstiQ's story is still unfolding. "Having expanded into 20 African countries, the company now focuses on deepening adoption and building long-term client value."

Looking ahead, He envisions InstiQ launching an app store for banks, where clients can build, customise, and monetise their own solutions within InstiQ's ecosystem, effectively turning financial institutions into co-creators of digital banking infrastructure.

Tolulope remains anchored by purpose. "We started InstiQ because we believed Africa could trust itself to build world-class solutions. That conviction hasn't changed; it's only grown stronger."

ODUKOYA RALLIES YOUNG WOMEN TO BE PROUD IN THEIR PERIOD



Periods, Pads & Proud is a book written by a youngster, Elizabeth Aderonke Odukoya, to promote menstrual health and empowerment as part of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and her NGO, The EmpowHER Project.

The book is teaching young girls that having menstruation is a natural cycle of life they should be proud of and be bold and courageous to confront it. It is a thing of pride that gives you that feminine, soft power that enthalls the world.

The book aims to enlighten young women on how to have a positive approach to having their period and not to feel stigmatized even in midst of the opposite sex, but a phenomenon they should experience with self-confidence, knowing that it is a symbol of their fertility and procreation. It is the key women have to ensure the existence of humanity in the world.

Rather than treating menstruation as a taboo, Periods, Pads & Proud breaks the silence and opens up conversations. It helps young readers understand what periods are, how to manage them hygienically, and most importantly, why they should never feel ashamed of their bodies.

So, the book starts with breaking the taboo, where the young Odukoya discusses about how a young girl will accept that natural phenomenon of menstruation, which distinguishes her from the other human, the man. At first, it requires reconciling with the reality of the difference symbolized with the monthly period. Then it distinguishes the woman as special creation which symbolizes fertility and creation. It is a thing every woman should be proud of.

She writes about the woman's body which is uniquely made, attractive, irresistible and at the same time bestowed with the power to create and rejuvenate the world. The woman's body is a symbol of joy and happiness and God's fulfilment.

Odukoya walks girls through practical topics like recognizing the signs of their first period and tracking their cycle. By blending science with practical advice, the book ensures that no girl feels unprepared.

The young girl traces the history of managing the period in our society, from old rags to modern pads, the evolvement of modernity



and the advancement made in managing a woman's menstruation. Then she narrates, step by step how to wear disposable pads properly and step by step rules on how to wear reusable pads properly.

She also writes on how girls can make their reusable pads at home, understanding period poverty and how The Empower Project tackles period poverty.

Beyond the practical, Odukoya also tackles stigma and period poverty, showing readers

that menstrual health is not just a personal issue but a matter of human rights.

She draws on her experience with The EmpowHER Project, which has reached thousands of girls in Nigeria with menstrual health education and pad distributions, to highlight the urgent need for change in communities and schools.

In the book, Odukoya enjoins women to regard their menstrual period as period of confidence and not to be embarrassed by God's unique designation that gives them the crucial responsibility to sustain mankind.

She ends the work with a glossary of words relating to woman's menstrual health and the often-asked questions about a woman's period.

Odukoya's book is a work that should be on the reading table of every woman who has young girls growing up.

Every mother should have one for her female children. It takes away the drudgery of a woman explaining everything to her daughter. The book teaches her everything she needs to know.

Credit should go to young Odukoya, who dedicated time to write the book. What is key about the work is the design to give young women their pride during their period.

THE DRIVE TO START: A PRACTICAL ROADMAP TO BUILDING BUSINESSES FROM NOTHING



Oludayo Taiwo Gideon, the Convener of TRAVCONEXPO and Group CEO of Aeroport Group, has announced the release of his latest book, *The Drive to Start — A Practical Roadmap to Building Businesses from Nothing*.

The official launch will take place during the maiden edition of TRAVCONEXPO at the Federal Palace Hotel, Lagos, on September 27, 2025.

This groundbreaking book is designed to equip aspiring entrepreneurs with the tools,

mindset, and strategies needed to transform business ideas into thriving enterprises.

From business planning and operational management to cultivating the entrepreneurial mindset, *The Drive to Start* offers a clear, step-by-step guide to building and sustaining success even when starting with zero capital. Gideon's practical insights, drawn from over a decade of leadership and multi-sector business growth, make this work an invaluable resource for the next generation of business builders.



offering actionable steps for building with limited resources.

Part Three

Building What Lasts: A blueprint for creating sustainable businesses through systems, structure, and people.

Part Four

Becoming a Builder of Builders: A call to leadership, legacy, and purpose-driven entrepreneurship.

Speaking ahead of the launch, Dr. Oludayo said: “This book is more than a business manual — it’s my life’s journey distilled into principles anyone can apply. If I could start with nothing and build something significant, you can too.”

Divided into four transformative parts, the book takes readers on a journey:

Part One

The Struggle That Shaped Me: A raw and inspiring memoir of Dr. Oludayo’s rise from humble beginnings, navigating setbacks, and staying laser-focused on his goals.

Part Two

The Mindset to Start from Zero: A powerful exploration of faith, courage, and grit,

TRAVCONEXPO 2025

will be the perfect stage for this unveiling, bringing together travel and tourism leaders, innovators, and entrepreneurs in one of the year’s most anticipated industry events.

The Drive to Start

A Practical Roadmap to Building Businesses from Nothing will be available in paperback, hardcover, and e-book formats from launch day, with pre-orders opening soon.

NOLLYWOOD'S GLOBAL MOMENT: KAVA STREAMING PLATFORM EXPANDS TO UK

...releases early web-only global access following UK expansion



African storytelling has taken another major leap onto the global stage as KAVA, the Nigerian-born streaming platform, officially launched in an all-star soiree in London, United Kingdom.

Backed by some of the most influential forces in Nollywood, the service enters the UK market with a bold promise: to give African films the same global accessibility and visibility as Hollywood. First unveiled in Lagos in July 2025, it is the brainchild of Kene Okwuosa, Group CEO of Filmhouse Group (FilmOne Entertainment, FilmOne Studios, Filmhouse Cinemas), and Chinaza Onuzo, CEO of Inkblot Productions — both industry titans who have redefined cinema culture, distribution, and production across Africa.

For its debut, audiences would gain exclusive early access via web on kava.tv, ahead of app's availability in the coming weeks.

Over 30 Nollywood titles are already live, ranging from recent post-theatrical blockbusters to exclusive originals, with new releases added weekly.

The expansion reflects Nollywood's increasing global influence. Recent box office hits produced and distributed by FilmOne Studios and Inkblot Productions have demonstrated the international appetite for Nigerian films, setting the stage for KAVA to become a true "home of African storytelling" for audiences worldwide.

With over 17 million Nigerians in the diaspora and growing African communities in the UK, Europe, and North America, the timing of the launch is strategic. Analysts suggest the UK debut could pave the way to position Nollywood as a global cultural export.

WHAT NELFUND'S TWEAKING OF UPKEEP LOAN MEANS TO STUDENTS

CHARLES OGWO

nelfund
NIGERIAN EDUCATION LOAN FUND
... increasing access to higher education



The Nigerian Education Loan Fund (NELFUND) has recently announced adjustments to the terms of its student upkeep loans, a move that could significantly impact how students across the country access and manage financial support for their education.

As tertiary institutions resume and living costs continue to rise, these changes come at a critical time.

Stakeholders are worried, wondering what these tweaks could mean for students, and how might they shape the future of higher education financing in Nigeria.

Osehyemi Oluwatuyi, the director of strategic communications at NELFUND, recently stated that Nigerian Education Loan Fund (NELFUND) hereby informs students, institutions and the general public that upkeep loan disbursement is strictly tied to the academic session of each institution.

Oluwatuyi emphasized that in line with this directive students shall only be entitled to upkeep loan to their current academic session.

“Upon the conclusion of an institution’s academic session, upkeep payments for that year shall automatically cease.

“Furthermore, interested applicants are required to apply for the loan at the beginning of every academic session to

be eligible for both institutional charges and upkeep for that particular session,” the statement reads in part.

Moreover, the agency stated that to ensure accuracy and transparency, the NELFUND loan portal is being automated to reflect this adjustment.

“The portal henceforth will display only the upkeep loans that have been collected by each student within the relevant session.

Institutions are advised to upload their academic calendars and sessional information in a timely manner to guarantee that their students receive the full upkeep benefits due to them for an entire academic session,” NELFUND noted.

With the upkeep loans being tied strictly to students’ academic session, it then means that students must apply for a loan at the beginning of every academic session to access both institutional charges and upkeep for that year.

Besides, it means that institutions are to upload academic calendars early so students can enjoy full upkeep benefits.

Olusola Kayode, a parent said the development is a welcomed one provided the various institutions will play their roles accordingly to avoid hindering students from benefitting from the loan as indicated by NELFUND.



Akintunde Sawyerr, the managing director of Nigerian Education Loan Fund (NELFUND), reacting to the ugly development had warned tertiary institutions against any acts of sabotage in the process of application and disbursement of loans to students, insisting that there must be transparency and openness, including prompt disclosure of disbursement information to beneficiary students.

Sawyerr told stakeholders that NELFUND would not hesitate to deal with institutions that go contrary to the terms and conditions surrounding to funds paid to it on behalf of students.

He observed that while the fund lacks the statutory power to suspend, remove or expel erring heads of institutions, any traced illegality will be reported and dealt with administratively by the minister of education.

He emphasised that the fund would not allow the initiative of President Bola Tinubu towards making education accessible to willing Nigerians to be sabotaged on the alter of selfish interest.

Sawyerr reiterated the commitment of the agency is to pay all registration charges that will admit students into classes for lectures, tutorials, and exams, amongst others.

It is now up to students to brace up with the new directives and maximise the benefits of the loan, while universities and other tertiary institutions' managements are expected to meet up with NELFUND's order to avoid depriving their students of the upkeep loan.

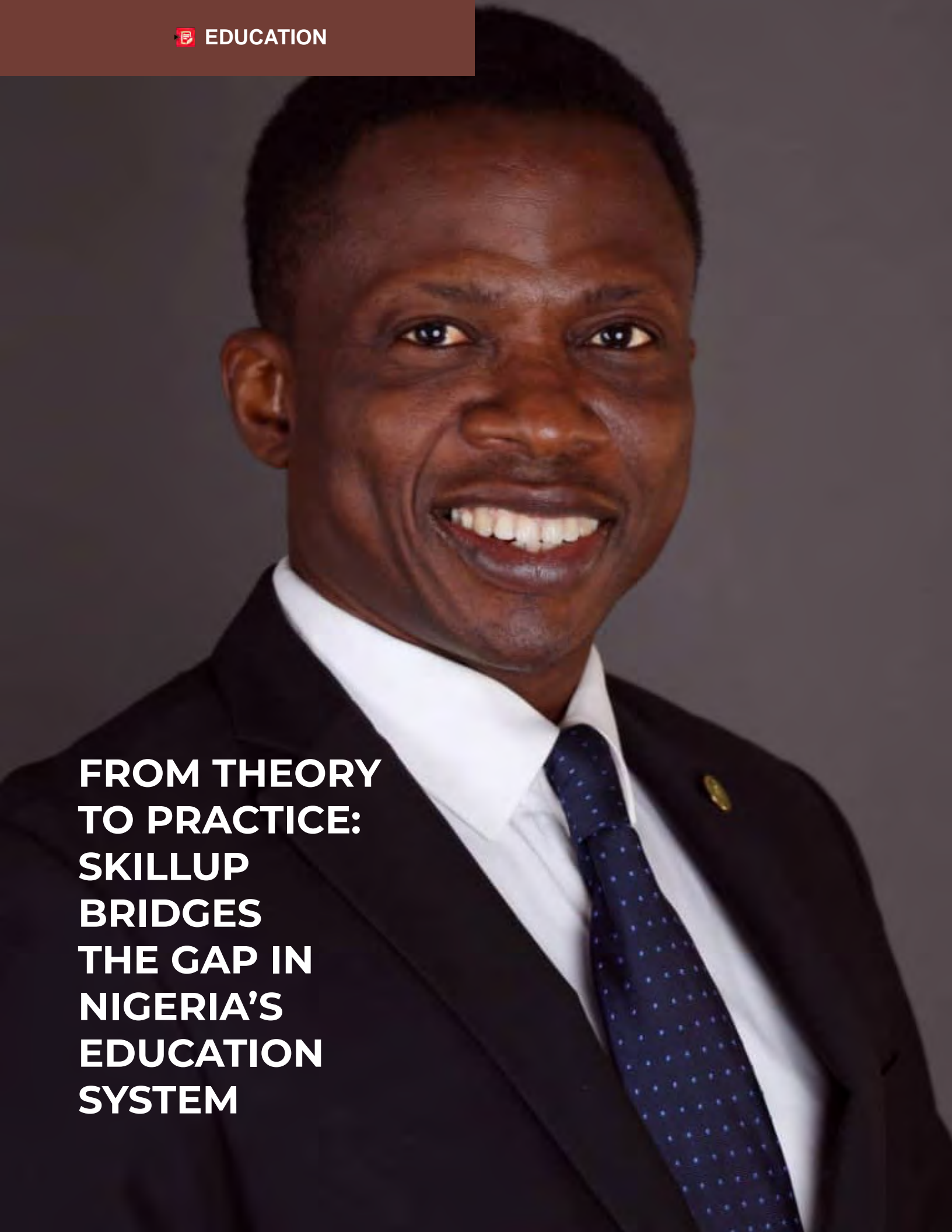
"I don't see any issues with that, provided the various tertiary institutions would play their parts to ensure these students are not deprived of their rights," she said.

Olabisi Adekunle, a student in one of the public universities expressed concerns that it amounts to disruption of a system one is already aligned with, as he queried about those who had already applied.

"I don't know why this sudden change of things, what of those who had already applied. I doubt if the problem is with upkeep loan receiving structure, rather the sincerity of the fund managers and the various institutions management," he said.

Recall, there have been complaints about delays in receiving the loans by students, and other alleged manipulations by tertiary institutions managements.





**FROM THEORY
TO PRACTICE:
SKILLUP
BRIDGES
THE GAP IN
NIGERIA'S
EDUCATION
SYSTEM**



On a quiet Sunday morning in Lagos's Magodo Phase 2 district, while much of the city eases into its weekly rhythm, a group of young professionals gathers at RCCG The Secret Place.

They arrive not only with Bibles but also with notebooks, laptops, and workbooks in hand. The atmosphere is less ceremonial, more charged with focus, curiosity, and ambition. Here, faith meets pragmatism in a bold experiment reshaping the future of work and leadership in Africa.

That experiment is SkillUp a transformative capacity-building programme launched in January 2025 by RCCG The Secret Place in partnership with Africa Tech Hub. What began as a local initiative within a church community is fast becoming a blueprint for how African societies can prepare their young professionals to compete and thrive in a turbulent global economy.

SkillUp's philosophy is deceptively simple: young people need more than technical knowledge. They need clarity, confidence, character, and the street-smartness to navigate real-world challenges.

"We are raising a generation of purpose-driven leaders who will change the story of Africa," says Sean Olabode Badiru, convener of the programme and lead pastor of RCCG The Secret Place. "SkillUp is about equipping our youth with the mindset and values to drive innovation, influence culture, and inspire transformation not only in their industries but also in their communities."

The curriculum is ambitious. In just eight months, participants have journeyed through modules on Self-Discovery & Personal Mastery, Business Model Development, Communication, Emotional Intelligence, Conflict Resolution, and Team Collaboration. Far from lecture halls, these are immersive experiences: personality tests that reveal hidden strengths, live case studies drawn from local realities, and structured workbooks for building business models. The focus is action, not abstraction.

For Oluwatobi Kolapo Olajide, the difference was immediate. "The Business Model Development course has been transformative, empowering me to launch my own business and equipping me with the expertise to support SMEs in achieving their growth potential," he says. "The key insight I've gained is the importance of adaptability and iteration. I now embrace flexibility and continuously refine my strategies as markets shift."

Others describe more personal transformations. Opemipo Amusan, for instance, credits the programme with reshaping how he approaches challenges: "One major shift for me has been moving from a fixed mindset to a growth mindset. I now approach challenges as opportunities to learn rather than setbacks." That shift, he explains, has boosted his confidence and sharpened his communication skills, even pushing him to revive a long-postponed side project.

For Bright-Seden Favour, the programme offered a chance to confront shyness and discover her voice. "My communication skills have really developed, and as a shy person, presentation wasn't part of my skill set but that isn't the case anymore," she says. What made it even more practical was the timing: "My busy schedule never allows me to finish courses I pay for, but with SkillUp, it's just Sundays and I get to combine it with my Sunday service. It's a win-win situation."

The subtle lessons are just as powerful. Ikhine Mary Ekata notes that a deeper understanding of Emotional Intelligence reshaped both her work and personal life. "It shifted my focus from trying to understand people's emotions so I could get them to do what I want, to genuinely understanding them because they deserve to be understood."

Accessibility is another defining strength. "What distinguishes SkillUp is the grassroots teaching," says Genevieve Obiorah Anulika. "I can relate to the facilitators' lessons and practice them immediately in my work and life. It's not abstract it's practical."

The programme's design is part of its secret. Sessions are deliberately set for Sunday mornings, running from 7:30 to 9:00 a.m., making them part of participants' weekly rhythm. Facilitators mostly professionals within RCCG The Secret Place volunteer their expertise as trainers and mentors. The result is a blend of accountability, reliability, and accessibility rarely found in conventional corporate training.

This model is filling a gap left by Nigeria's education system and corporate sector. With youth unemployment stubbornly high and employers lamenting unprepared graduates, SkillUp offers a bridge between theory and practice. Unlike many donor-driven interventions, the initiative is funded primarily by its management team, who also provide seed grants for viable business ideas. The underlying belief: skills are powerful, but access to opportunity makes them transformative.

But what sets SkillUp apart most is its ethical foundation. Its core values integrity, mastery, purpose, agility, community, and transformation ensure that professional growth does not compromise personal character. That matters in a nation where corruption and weak institutions often derail progress.

The stakes could not be higher. Africa's population is expected to double by 2050, with more than 60 percent under 25. Without opportunities, frustration fuels disillusionment and migration. With the right preparation, however, this youth bulge could become Africa's greatest advantage.

SkillUp, still modest in scale, offers a glimpse of that possibility. It shows that transformation doesn't always need to come from governments or foreign aid. Sometimes, it begins in small communities with vision, faith, and a refusal to accept mediocrity.

2 COUNTRIES WITHOUT A UNIVERSITY

ESTHER EMOEKPERE



Universities are often seen as the hallmark of higher education. They produce research, train professionals, and help shape national development. Almost every country in the world has at least one, but there are rare exceptions.

Surprisingly, two European nations do not have a single university within their borders. Their citizens still receive higher education, but mostly by relying on neighbouring countries or state-owned institutes.

Here are the two countries without a university:

Vatican City

Vatican City is the world's smallest independent state, located within Rome, Italy. It is home to the Pope and serves as the headquarters of the Catholic Church. Covering just 49 hectares and with a population of fewer than 1,000 people, it is also one of the least populated countries on earth.

Because of its tiny size and clerical population, Vatican City has no primary, secondary or higher education schools for its citizens. Establishing a full university is practically impossible due to limited land, security restrictions, and its small number of residents.

That said, Vatican City is closely linked with more than 15 universities and colleges, almost all of which are situated just

outside its walls in Rome. The only institution within its borders is the Ethiopian College, which trains African students for the priesthood. For most citizens, higher education takes place in Rome or other Italian universities.

Luxembourg

Luxembourg, a small but wealthy country bordered by France, Germany and Belgium, also lacks a traditional university system. Despite its population of around 682,000 in 2025 and its reputation as a developed nation, it relies instead on a network of state-owned higher institutes.

The country's education system is well-structured. Children attend preschool from ages four to six, then progress to primary school (ages six to twelve) and secondary school (ages twelve to eighteen). Secondary education is split into general and technical tracks, with teaching carried out in several languages — French, German and Luxembourgish.

When it comes to higher studies, however, Luxembourg does not operate full universities. Instead, students often travel abroad to France, Germany or Belgium to pursue advanced degrees. Its local institutions provide professional and technical training but do not offer the broad research-based education associated with traditional universities.

10 COUNTRIES WITH THE MOST ISLANDS IN THE WORLD

CHISOM MICHAEL

WorldAtlas data shows that countries differ widely in how they define and count islands, influencing their official totals. Some, like Sweden, classify any landmass over 270 square feet as an island, while Japan's 2023 recount considered only those with a coastline of at least 330 feet.

Improved satellite mapping has also pushed numbers higher, revealing many previously unrecorded islets. The figures cover all natural islands, inhabited or not, but exclude artificial islands, offshore rock formations, and sandbanks that vanish at high tide.

While tropical chains often come to mind, nations with fjord-laced coastlines, inland lakes, and fragmented geography also dominate the rankings, highlighting how both nature and methodology shape the global list of countries with the most islands.

Here are the ten countries with the most islands in the world

1. Sweden – 267,570 islands

Sweden holds the world record, with nearly 30,000 islands in the Stockholm area alone. Fewer than 1,000 are inhabited, but the network of freshwater and marine islands is vast. The Stockholm Archipelago Trail, launched in 2023, connects 22 islands over 170 miles, offering routes through forests, coves, and bays.



2. Norway – 239,057 islands

Norway's coastline is shaped by fjords and broken into thousands of islands, from Arctic Svalbard to southern skerries. The Lofoten Islands remain a highlight, known for fishing communities and dramatic sea–mountain landscapes.



3. Finland – 178,947 islands

Finland's archipelago and lake regions are heavily fragmented, with numerous islands forming part of the national landscape. While Helsinki is a popular city destination, the islands offer diverse routes for travel and exploration.



4. Canada – 52,455 islands

Canada's islands range from large territories such as Baffin and Vancouver to many uninhabited Arctic islets. In British Columbia, a community ride-share scheme enables locals to give tourists free lifts, supporting low-cost, eco-friendly travel.



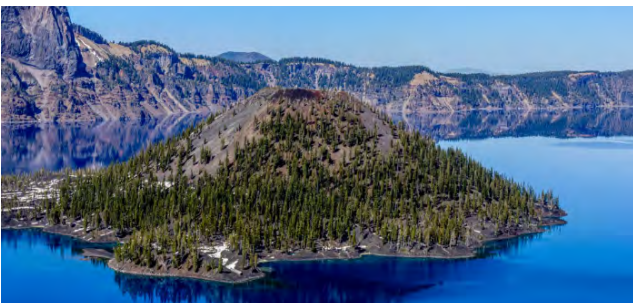
5. Japan – 14,125 islands

Japan's official island count rose sharply in 2023 after new mapping technology was applied. Okinawa's 160 islands stand out for their beaches, green landscapes, and heritage sites from the Ryukyu Kingdom.



6. United States – 18,617 islands

The US includes Alaskan islets, the Florida Keys, and Pacific territories such as Guam and American Samoa. These islands range from tropical coastlines to rugged Pacific Northwest outposts.



7. Indonesia – 17,504 islands

Stretching over 3,000 miles, Indonesia is the largest archipelagic state. While Bali is its best-known island, major landmasses such as Sumatra, Borneo, Sulawesi, and Java play central roles in its economy and culture.



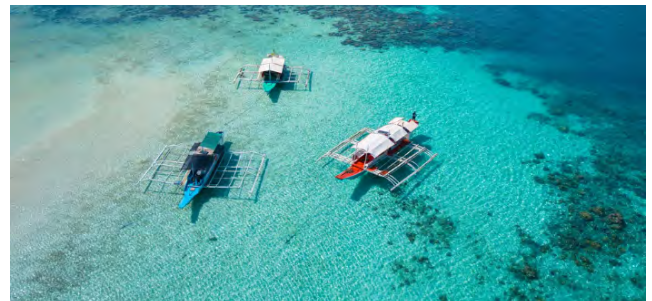
8. Australia – 8,222 islands

Australia's count includes Tasmania, the Torres Strait Islands, and smaller surrounding landmasses. Many serve as key habitats and destinations within the wider region.



9. Philippines – 7,641 islands

Over 2,000 Philippine islands are inhabited, offering coastlines, volcanic interiors, and marine environments. Visitors can hike, dive, kayak, and camp across various locations.



10. Chile – 5,000 islands

Chile's islands are concentrated along the southern Pacific coast and in Patagonia. They host fishing villages, historic churches, and a range of wildlife.

IMAGINE A 30-DAY HALT IN PETROLEUM PRODUCT IMPORTS ACROSS AFRICA

ANIBOR KRAGHA



Fuel queues would stretch across Lagos, Johannesburg, Kinshasa, Cairo, and Nairobi. Planes grounded. Trucks immobilised. Hospitals in darkness. Cities in chaos. The continent’s economic engine would grind to a halt within a matter of days.

This isn’t a worst-case scenario exaggerated to cause alarm. It’s a strategic blind spot hiding in plain sight. Despite producing more than 5 million barrels of crude oil daily, the continent still imports over 70 percent of its refined petroleum products. The truth is, this dependence leaves Africa dangerously overexposed.

If imports were to stop, the collapse wouldn’t just be technical – it would be systemic. Today, Africa is deeply reliant on fuel imports, leaving it exposed to shocks with immediate and far-reaching consequences.

A Continent Held Hostage by Its Fuel Imports

The fallout from a prolonged disruption to fuel imports in Africa would escalate quickly and across multiple fronts. Aviation, trucking, and construction sectors would grind to

a halt, with jet fuel shortages effectively isolating countries. Millions of tonnes of goods, medicines, and food would be stranded in warehouses and ports, unable to move. Critical infrastructure would fail as diesel-powered generators essential to hospitals, telecom towers, water systems, and banks shut down.

In small rural communities, clinics would lose power; in cities of ten million, water pressure could collapse. Then, as supply chains fracture and basic services falter, energy insecurity would escalate into broader social unrest. Fuel shortages would drive food inflation, blackouts, and economic paralysis conditions ripe for political instability across the continent. Entire sectors would collapse overnight.

Mining in South Africa, Nigeria, Ghana, the DRC, and Zambia would halt. Copper exports from Zambia and cobalt – critical to the global electric vehicle supply chain – would be stranded in Congo. Ghana’s gold production, already under pressure, would freeze. Oil rigs, vessels, and haul trucks would fall silent. Billions of dollars in revenue lost within days.

Africa’s Energy Paradox: Resource-Rich, Refinery-Poor

Africa is rich in crude oil but suffers from a persistent lack of refining capacity. The continent hosts over 40 refineries, yet many are outdated, underutilised, or idle. Nigeria, Africa’s top oil producer, has a nominal refining capacity of 1.1 million barrels per day, including the new 650,000 bpd Dangote Refinery. Still, it relies on imports for over half its fuel needs.

Across the continent, crude production outpaces refining. At the Congo Energy & Investment Forum, plans were announced to double the country’s crude output to 500,000 bpd, but the CORAF Refinery in Pointe Noire can currently process only 24,000 bpd, with a planned increase to 40,000 – far below potential despite proximity to key markets like the DRC.

Meanwhile, demand is rising fast. Africa’s population is projected to hit 2.5 billion by 2050, with energy needs expected to double.

This dependence on imported refined products undermines economic sovereignty, widens trade deficits, destabilises currencies, and impedes industrialisation. It also threatens the goals of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) by reinforcing external dependencies rather than building internal resilience. Addressing this imbalance requires a coordinated, continent-wide response – one that ARDA has already begun to shape.



ARDA's Vision: Energy Security as a Catalyst for Prosperity

This year's ARDA Week 2025 conference in Cape Town was held under the theme "Africa First," reflecting the African Refiners and Distributors Association's enduring vision for the continent to take charge of its own energy future refining, distributing, and powering its economies on its own terms.

Energy security isn't a luxury – it's a lifeline. Without energy sovereignty, there is no sustainable development. This is about more than infrastructure it's about Africa's future.

To avert the economic paralysis that a sudden halt in fuel imports would trigger, ARDA is leading a continental strategy focused on five pillars:

Upgrading and scaling refining capacity through resilient, commercially viable projects.

Harmonising fuel specifications and regulations to unlock intra-African trade.

Attracting investment through transparency, bankable projects, and risk mitigation frameworks.

Developing infrastructure – pipelines, depots, storage terminals, LPG bottling plants and logistics networks.

Building human capital in regulation, engineering, finance, and operations.

One flagship initiative is expanding access to clean LPG in households and underserved regions – creating millions of jobs while reducing dependence on biomass.

This transformation won't happen through advocacy alone. It demands urgent, coordinated action.

Securing Africa's Energy Future

First, governments must cut red tape and streamline project approvals to accelerate implementation timelines.

Infrastructure bottlenecks that make local refining and distribution uncompetitive must be addressed to enable a more efficient and scalable downstream sector.

Equally critical is the mobilisation of domestic capital. With over \$4 trillion locked in pension funds, insurance pools, and sovereign wealth funds, smart policies are needed to de-risk energy investments and unlock this vital source of financing. Empowering regulators with both the autonomy and technical capacity to enforce standards is essential to ensure consistency, transparency, and investor confidence. In parallel, Africa must break down internal trade barriers so that fuel, capital, and technical expertise can flow freely across borders, driving regional integration. Financial innovations such as carbon credits, blended finance, and guarantee mechanisms offer valuable tools to scale investment and reduce project risk.

Strategic stocks must be part of the equation. Many African countries hold only a few days' worth of fuel reserves – a vulnerability in the face of global supply disruptions. Yet creating national or regional stockholding frameworks is both practical and affordable. Minimum stock obligations, backed by reporting systems and modest levies, could significantly improve resilience without burdening consumers. Many countries already have sufficient depot capacity to increase stock levels – what's needed is policy coordination and political commitment.

None of this will succeed without strong political will and a unified voice from African leadership. Energy sovereignty must become a continental priority – not just for growth, but for long-term resilience and prosperity.

Crisis or Catalyst? Africa's Energy Turning Point

A 30-day shutdown of fuel imports would cripple the continent – but it could also be the wake-up call Africa needs. This isn't just a supply chain risk anymore; it marks a strategic inflection point. The choice is clear: remain exposed to external shocks or seize the moment to invest in refining capacity, infrastructure, and workforce development to secure lasting energy sovereignty.

"Refine, baby, refine" has become the rallying cry in recent years. But this goes beyond fuel – it's about building the backbone of industrialisation, deepening regional integration, and unlocking shared prosperity.

With the right leadership, Africa can transform today's dependency into tomorrow's strength. Building modern, resilient refining systems won't happen overnight, but coordinated action and bold investment can, over the next decade, deliver the energy security needed to power inclusive, sustainable growth across the continent. Fuel by fuel. Refinery by refinery. Africa must power its own future – not in reaction to crisis, but in pursuit of opportunity.

Anibor Kragha is the Executive Secretary of the African Refiners and Distributors Association (ARDA).

LADDERS, LEGACY, AND WHAT COMES NEXT

EYESAN TORITSEJU

I started putting this article together in my thoughts, in the quiet echo of legacy, seated at the 90th birthday ceremony of Uncle Sam Amuka, founding publisher of Vanguard Newspapers, a man whose life and voice helped shape Nigerian media. It's a gathering not just of people, but of memory, of what Nigeria once made possible.

During the thanksgiving service, I discovered that Chief Olusegun Osoba, Uncle Sam's lifelong friend, had come up with him at The Daily Times in the 1960s. They began as young reporters: humble in means, rich in promise, shaped by an institution that valued rigor, integrity, and potential. One would go on to found Vanguard, one of Nigeria's most enduring newspapers; the other would rise to become a two time governor of Ogun State. Their journeys, though different, are threaded with the same DNA, institutions that once opened doors, careers built on merit, and public lives rooted in service, not spectacle.

Watching Uncle Sam smile, I couldn't help but wonder if Nigeria still makes room for such journeys.

The Golden Era of Institutions

In their time, Nigeria still had what you might call functional ladders. Newspapers like Daily Times weren't just press outlets, they were pipelines. Civil service wasn't glamorous, but it was respected. Young people with ideas, discipline, and grit could enter a newsroom, a courtroom, a classroom, and over time, earn their way into public prominence. It wasn't easy, but it was possible. These institutions were imperfect, of course, but they worked enough to launch lives. In Sam Amuka's generation, Nigeria was still young enough to believe in growth, and still honest enough to reward it. Today, that scaffolding feels absent.

Where Are Our Ladders Now?

We still produce talent, perhaps more than ever. Across tech, literature, activism, and entrepreneurship, young Nigerians are breaking ground. Nigeria is brimming with potential, but potential needs structure to grow, and ours is crumbling. Especially in industries that don't come with foreign investment or shine. If you're not in oil, finance, tech, or something glamorous, the infrastructure for upward movement has all but collapsed.

Where is the Daily Times of our day? Not just in name, but in function, a place where a sharp mind from a modest background can become an institution?

The breakdown goes beyond media, it's a wider erosion of the spaces that once nurtured growth, dignity, and direction. Our universities are broken. Our civil service is politicised. Our courts are slow. Where past generations saw a path, younger Nigerians now see the public sector as a place to avoid, not aspire to. The ladders didn't just disappear. They were gradually pulled up, by nepotism, by corruption, by a system that now runs on gatekeeping rather than gate-opening.

A Different Kind of Climb

However, there's a new spirit brewing. In today's Nigeria, ingenuity refuses to wait for permission. A coder in Lagos turns a weekend idea into a startup. An investigative journalist publishes on Substack

when legacy newsrooms look away. A civic activist livestreams a protest and reaches a million people. A designer, shut out of national contracts, builds a client base in Berlin and Nairobi. The system may stall, but the energy finds other lanes.

Yet, even these new paths are often lonely, unsupported, and exhausting. To succeed today is to hack the system, not to rise through it.

And therein lies the tragedy: while previous generations rose with Nigeria, today's youth must rise in spite of it.

A Nation That Punishes Promise

At the heart of this is not just systemic dysfunction, it is a betrayal of promise. A country that cannot provide clear ladders for its brightest minds, but still expects them to serve it, innovate within it, or believe in its future, is gaslighting its own children.

The real danger isn't just that we've stopped building new ladders, it's that we've allowed the old ones to rot. And when institutions collapse, they don't just fail today's systems, they quietly take entire generations down with them. Every broken sector condemns thousands of young people to futures they'll never fully enter.

Still, the Legacy Speaks

Sitting in that room, watching Uncle Sam laugh about stories from his early newspaper days, I'm reminded that Nigeria did not always function this way. The evidence is here, alive, breathing: Uncle Sam, and the statesman he came up with. Their very lives are arguments against despair.

Their legacy is not just a memory, it is a mirror. A reminder of what can happen when institutions work, when promise is met with opportunity, when ladders are built, not broken.

The task ahead for our generation is clear: to fight not just for personal success, but for systems that allow success to be scaled. To build the new Daily Times, the new Vanguard, the new institutions that outlast individuals. Because without ladders, there is no ascent.

Only isolation.

And perhaps, at a future 90th birthday, someone will look back and say "That was the generation that brought the ladders back."

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.

FUNDING THE FUTURE: SUSTAINABLE MODELS FOR AFRICAN MUSEUMS

Walk into any African museum and you'll find more than art on the walls. You'll see history, memory, and identity woven into every display.

Museums in Africa don't just hold collections; they tell the continent's story. But here's the challenge—keeping them alive is expensive. Staff salaries, building maintenance, conservation labs, exhibitions, education programs—it all requires steady funding. And unfortunately, many African museums rely too heavily on government budgets or international aid. When that money dries up, museums suffer.

Yet, there is hope. Across the continent, new and creative funding models are emerging. From private foundations building university museums to large-scale endowments fueling new cultural hubs to community partnerships making museums self-sustaining, the future is looking brighter. In this digest, we explore some of the most promising models shaping tomorrow's African museums.

TOP PICKS FROM OUR COLLECTION



Title: Lady Poses (series)
Artist: Lambert Shumbusho
Medium: 300+ aged ironwood
Dimensions: 20.4 x 12 x 13 in | 52 x 30 x 33 cm
Available on Request



Title: Introspection 1
Artist: Alabi Oladimeji
Medium: Acrylic on canvas
Dimensions: 25 x 25 in | 64 x 64 cm
Available on Request



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1. Private Foundations & University Museums

One of the most exciting shifts is the role of private foundations.

A strong example is the Omooba Yemisi Adedoyin Shyllon Art Foundation (OYASAF) in Nigeria.

In partnership with Pan-Atlantic University, OYASAF funded the creation of Africa's first privately-funded university museum.

This wasn't just a donation—it was a vision to link academia with cultural preservation.



Title: The Family
 Artist: Justine Gaga
 Medium: Posca and collage on canvas
 Dimensions: 8 x 11 in | 20 x 28 cm
 Available on Request

The museum houses over 7,000 artworks and supports research fellowships for African scholars. This model proves that private funding, when tied to education, can create institutions that last. It's not just about showing art—it's about teaching, researching, and passing knowledge on to the next generation.

2. International Partnerships & Green Museums

Another sustainable path is global collaboration. Take the National Museum of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, built with \$21 million in funding from South Korea's KOICA. But this isn't just any museum. It was designed with solar panels and passive cooling systems, making it energy-efficient and climate-friendly. Why does this matter? Because electricity and maintenance costs are a huge financial burden for African museums. By cutting those costs, the museum secures a more sustainable future. International partnerships like this don't just deliver infrastructure; they also bring training, technology, and a sense of global solidarity.

3. Endowments & Large-Scale Cultural Projects

For long-term sustainability, endowments are key. A prime example is the Museum of West African Art (MOWAA) in Benin City, Nigeria. With a projected budget of \$100 million, it has already received major grants, such as \$3 million from the Mellon Foundation. But what makes MOWAA stand out is its vision. It isn't only a museum; it's a research, conservation, and training center. Its endowment model means income from investments will cover running costs,

instead of relying solely on donors. If successful, MOWAA could serve as a blueprint for other African museums looking to build financial independence.

4. Community Partnerships & Corporate Support

Museums thrive when they are part of people's lives. That's why community engagement is also a sustainable model. For example, some museums are turning their spaces into event venues, hosting cultural festivals, fashion shows, and conferences. This not only generates revenue but also strengthens their role as community hubs. Corporate sponsorships are another rising model. By linking with local businesses—tourism, airlines, hotels—museums can access steady funding while boosting local economies. When communities and businesses see museums as partners, sustainability naturally follows.

5. Impact Investing & Diversified Funding

The final piece of the puzzle is impact investing. Unlike traditional donations, impact investors provide funds that seek both social and financial returns. For museums, this could mean receiving investment for a new digital archive, eco-friendly renovations, or educational programs—with the museum expected to generate some revenue in return. This approach encourages creativity. Instead of waiting for a grant, museums think like entrepreneurs—offering memberships, virtual exhibitions, or online shops. The goal is not profit but resilience. By diversifying income, museums can weather financial storms.

Sustainable funding for African museums is not a dream—it's already happening. Private foundations are linking art with education. International partners are building eco-friendly institutions. Large endowments are laying financial foundations. Communities and businesses are turning museums into lively cultural centers. And impact investors are pushing museums to innovate. Each model brings lessons, and together they paint a hopeful picture. African museums are not only preserving history; they are building a sustainable future.



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



REGRETS

UDY OSARO-EDOBOR

I had just finished secondary school when I met Fred. His older brother had moved into our neighbourhood and Fred came to live with him. He was in his final year at the university yet carried himself with the kind of focus and clarity you'd expect from someone much older. Fred was what you'd call a purpose-driven person. As a student of Business Management, he already had a deep interest in real estate. His journal could intimidate any seasoned entrepreneur—it was filled with well-thought-out ideas, each one waiting to be brought to life.

From the very beginning, Fred told me I was going to be his wife. I was young but the thought thrilled me. I could already picture myself woven into the dreams and plans of this ambitious young man. I saw potential in him but my mother saw something else entirely. She thought he was too proud, accusing him of speaking too

much “big grammar.” She believed his dreams were just empty ambitions that would never materialise.

Her disapproval quickly turned into open hostility. She began making outrageous financial demands on Fred and for a while, he met them without complaint. But the day she asked for an amount he couldn't give, everything changed. That was when she told him never to set foot in our house again.

Fred didn't give up on me, though. We continued to meet in secret but it was no longer the same. I was my mother's first daughter and we were very close. She had a strong influence over me—something I didn't recognise then as emotional blackmail. She convinced me that

my relationship with Fred would hurt her and damage the bond between us.

My siblings saw things differently. They even called a family meeting urging me to ignore our mother and choose my own happiness. I could see why they never got along with our mother—they were far too stubborn. Always opinionated, always insisting on their own way, never listening to her. It drove her into constant anger. But I was different. I followed whatever she wanted, and her happiness was my happiness.

My siblings went on and on but I still refused. Even my father—quiet, reserved and long subdued by my mother’s domineering ways had called me aside and spoke in Fred’s favour. He told me he approved of our relationship and had a good feeling about him. But I was too afraid to upset my mother so I ended things with Fred.

I will never forget that day. I have never seen a grown man cry the way Fred did. He broke down completely, weeping like a child. He told me he was willing to stay by me no matter how my mother treated him. He believed she would eventually come around. But I couldn’t hold on long enough to see if he was right. Soon after, Fred left his brother’s house and never returned, not even for the holidays.

That was twenty-two years ago.

A few days ago, while scrolling through social media, I kept seeing a particular post pop up in my feed. It was about Fred. I looked closely at the photos—he had aged gracefully. He once said he was going to be a real estate mogul but he had clearly surpassed even his own expectations. He was by every standard, a very successful man.

Before his brother moved away from our neighbourhood years ago, he had mentioned that Fred was getting married and moving into his new home—his second home—in Warri. I remember my late father being present when I heard that news. He looked at me with knowing eyes while I forced a smile to mask the sting of regret.

Time passed. All my siblings got married one after the other and I remained at home with my mother because for reasons she never explained, no man was ever “good enough” for me. And so, I never married and she would not let me go live on my own. Now, the house has become unbearable. I have thought more than once about getting my own place.

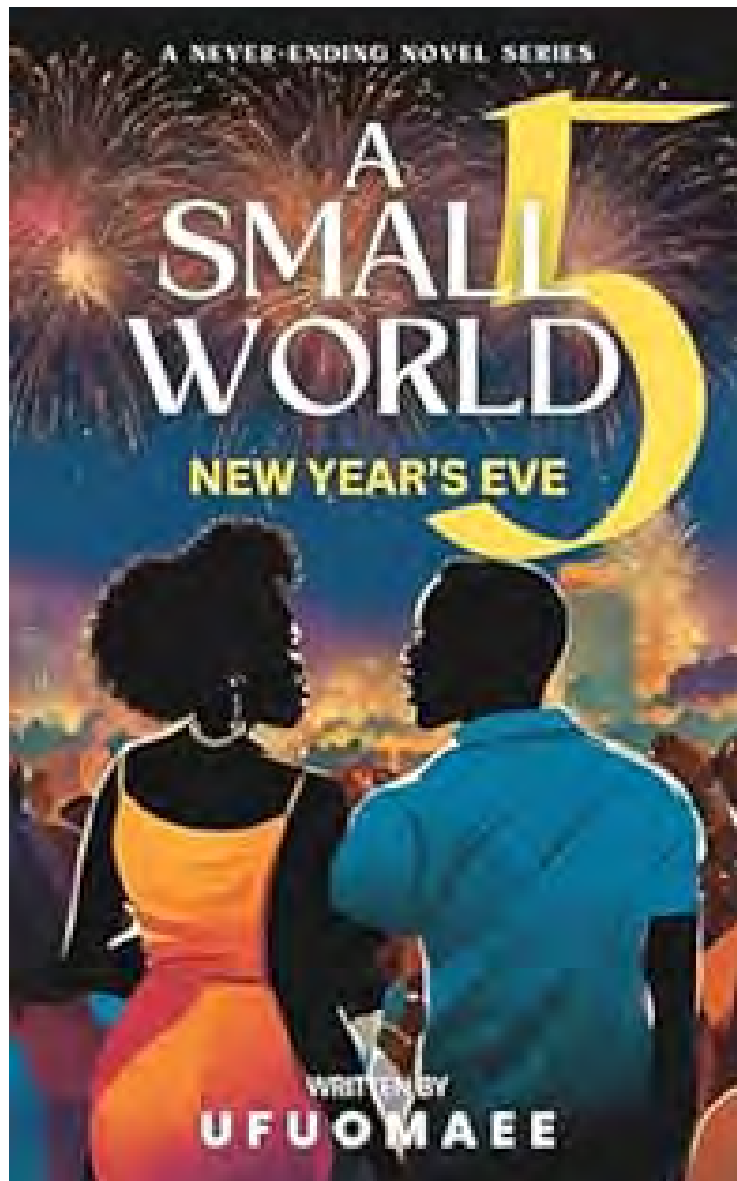
And here I am today, staring at photos of Fred and his beautiful wife celebrating their son’s graduation in the UK. I can’t help but think that could have been me standing beside him and that could have been my son but I allowed my mother’s opinion to dictate my life and I have to live with the regret.

The worst sting came recently when my mother walked in on me looking at Fred’s pictures. She had the audacity to say I had missed out on a fine man because of my bad character. It took every ounce of restraint in me not to hit her. But in truth, I can’t blame her as much as I blame myself. I loved my mother too much, I sacrificed my own happiness and that cost me everything. I threw away my one chance at real happiness—at being with the love of my life.



Udy Osaro-Edobor

Udy Osaro-Edobor is the Content Creator for SoTv (Supernatural Online TV) Nigeria. She is a movie/ scriptwriter, editor, and proofreader. She has several stories to her credit which she posts for free on her Ebook called Udy’s Chapter. She is currently working on two short movies. Udy is also a wife, mother, and a “serial entrepreneur”.
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When Happily-Ever-After Isn't Simple-A
Review of Ufuomaee's A Small World 5

Title: A Small World 5: New Year's Eve

Author: Ufuomaee

Year of Publication: 2023

Number of Pages: 275

Category: Fiction

A SMALL WORLD 5: NEW YEAR'S EVE

TITILADE OYEMADE

Celebrations galore, promises the blurb of Ufuomaee's A Small World 5, instantly sparking excitement and anticipation. Unlike previous editions that opened with trouble, this one hints at joy yet the celebrations don't appear right away. Instead, the story takes its time, building up in a way that tests your patience but rewards it.

True to form, Ufuomaee blends relationship and marriage drama with valuable life lessons. Forgiveness is a central theme, though you can't help questioning if it's truly that simple in real life especially when some betrayals cut so deep. Temptation also steps into the spotlight. What business does a married woman have developing feelings for another man? Some readers may see parts of themselves reflected here, and that's part of Ufuomaee's magic: she tackles real, messy issues most avoid.

Alongside the turmoil, there's growth and transformation. Characters confront flaws, mend broken bonds, and give love a second chance. We see partners fighting hard to win back their loved ones, creating a layered mix of tension, hope, and heartfelt emotion.

This season also delivers marriage proposals, blossoming romances, and fresh beginnings, a refreshing contrast to the chaos of earlier editions. If you're not in a loving relationship, you might feel a twinge of envy. But beneath the charm and sweetness, Ufuomaee always tucks away deeper truths.

It's not all rosy. Living with a cheat is portrayed as one of the most painful experiences you can endure. If you've been there, this story may stir up memories you'd rather forget, or even trigger a wave of sadness as you recognise yourself in its pages.

In the end, the story comes full circle with celebrations though not everyone gets their share of joy. It's a fitting close, because festive seasons are meant for exactly that: joy, reconciliation, and coming together. Still, you might find yourself silently pleading with the author to leave it here. Season 5 feels like the perfect curtain call, no season 6, please. After all, who's ready for another round of couple drama?



Titilade Oyemade is a business executive in a leading organisation and holds a degree in Russian Language. She's the convener of the Hangoutwithtee Ladies Event and the publisher of Hangoutwithtee magazine. She spends her weekends attending women conferences, events and book readings. She loves to have fun and to help other women have the same in their lives. Email: titi.oyemade@gmail.com Social: @tiipreeofficial

WEEKENDER

N ŐŨĚĀŘĚŨĚŨ

DEVIL IS A LIAR (2025)

From the title one would almost predict that this movie would be around deceit and lies, well it wasn't far from that at all, besides the fact that I just couldn't believe the extent one would go to deceive someone else, just to get their heart desires. Jaiye was a very young handsome guy, he met Adaora at her sisters introduction and fell in love with her, or so we assumed, in less than 6 months Jaiye and Adaora were married, they had a daughter, but kept having issues all through the marriage, nothing Adaora did was ever good enough for him, but that wasn't even the issue until Adaora ran into Jaiye with her car after she found him cheating. Well, you will need to go checkout the movie to discover how Adaora went to jail for her anger and how she lost every single thing that she owned and worked for. The 137m Nollywood drama, thriller, social issues, African movie was directed by Moses Inwang they featured actors like Nse Ikpe-Etim, James Gardiner, Erica Nlewedim, Nancy Isime, Patida Agu, Caroline Hutchings Danjuma, Yemi Blaq, Tina Mba, Akin Lewis and many more.



GIGI & NATE (2022)

I had saved this movie on my watch list for ages now, I finally decided to watch it, as there were no action movies to watch anymore. Nate was a very young vibrant teenager who was full of life, he had all his life goals clearly written out, until one day during a house party, Nate had a seizure and that singular event turned his entire life around. Nate almost died but for the love of his sister and family, Nate was able to fight and come back to life. After spending month in the hospital Nate was sent home but he couldn't move any part of his body except his head, he had to learn to read, write and move his arms, but doing things alone were difficult which led to his parents acquiring a Service monkey called Gigi. Nate and Gigi become good friends and almost inseparable till one wicked lady in the grocery store decided to sue Nate and his monkey, this singular act led to the agent taking Gigi back, this affected Nate negatively, do check out the movie to see how Nate survived the lawsuit. The 114m feel-good, Inspiring, heartfelt movie was directed by Nick Hamm, they featured actors like, Hannah Alligood, Charlie Rowe, Marcia Gay Harden, Jim Belushi, Diane Ladd, Sasha Compere, Mishel Prada, Zoe Colletti etc.



THE STARLING (2007)

Lynette was a young lady who had been through a lot in life to just keep things going. In this brand-new movie Lynette has just one night to raise \$25,000 to save her mum and brother from being forcefully evicted from their childhood home, Lynette was desperate and anxious and at this point was willing to do anything to raise that money and save their home. The most shocking aspect of this movie for me was the sad response and feedback from her mum after all she had done. Lynette couldn't believe that after all she had gone through in life her mom was pleased or delighted by her actions, Lynette had to learn the hardway, she had to make some difficult decisions in her life.

Well, do check it out to see how that night went down. The 108m Crime, thriller movie was directed by Benjamin Caron, they featured actors like Vanessa Kirby, Julia Fox, Zack Gottsagen, Jennifer Jason Leigh, Ellie Roth, Ron dall park, Micheal Kelly, Stephan James, Dara Millican, Jasaan Rouse, Rachel Pate, Jennifer Lanier etc.



LINDA OCHUGBUA

WEEKEND QUOTES



1

Giving help to those who require it is not wasteful. It only registers you on a platform for continuous flow

.....WhispersbyTEN

3

Always remember that the world does not care about how long you have been sorrowful or have suffered, they are eagerly waiting for you to rise at the scent of water as God promised. Rise!

.....WhispersbyTEN

2

Don't live in frustration and sorrow rather turn it to an energy for greatness and intimacy with the Holy Spirit

.....WhispersbyTEN

4

Never say it is over, it's just sunrise; there is hope

.....WhispersbyTEN