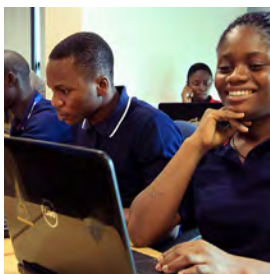


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10 Years of
ORIKI

Joycee Awosika's
Vision for a Wellness Empire



EDUCATION

How Nigeria should lead Africa's AI education revolution



BUSINESS

Eight investing lessons from the world's ultra-rich

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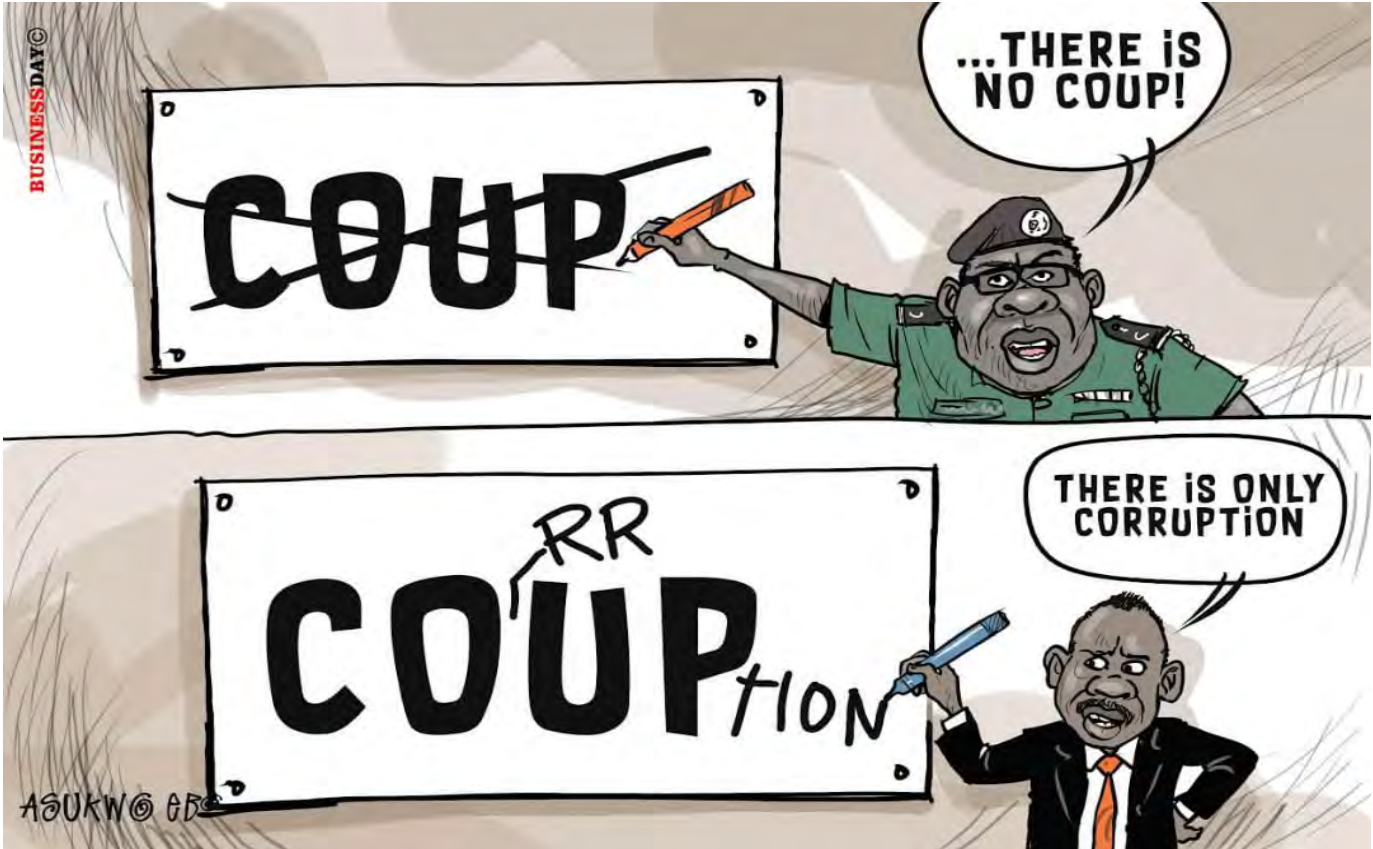


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10 YEARS OF ORÍKÌ GROUP: JOYCEE AWOSIKA'S VISION FOR A WELLNESS EMPIRE





In the realm of wellness, few individuals have made as profound an impact as Joycee Awosika, the visionary founder and CEO of ORÍKÌ Group. With a remarkable decade-long journey, Awosika has catapulted ORÍKÌ Group to unprecedented heights, establishing the brand as a beacon of excellence in the African wellness landscape. As a trailblazing enterprise, ORÍKÌ Group has not only redefined the contours of the wellness industry but has also empowered countless individuals, communities, and professionals along the way.

Through its multifaceted ecosystem, which encompasses premium spas, manufacturing, e-commerce, training academies, and mobile wellness services, ORÍKÌ Group has successfully bridged the gap between traditional African practices and modern innovation. Awosika's leadership has been instrumental in driving the company's growth, expansion, and commitment to sustainability, making ORÍKÌ Group a household name in Africa and beyond.

In this interview with IFEOMA OKEKE-KORIEOCHA, Awosika shares her vision for ORÍKÌ Group's future growth and expansion, discusses the company's approach to innovation and sustainability, and offers valuable advice to aspiring entrepreneurs looking to make an impact in Africa's wellness industry.

What's your vision for ORÍKÌ Group's future growth and expansion in Africa and globally?

My vision is to see ORÍKÌ become the infrastructure of wellness across Africa and beyond — not just a brand, but a full ecosystem powering the industry. Over the next decade, we're scaling to 500+ wellness centers, expanding our manufacturing capabilities, and growing our training institute to empower thousands of professionals. We're also building partnerships across regions — from hospitality to healthcare — because I believe every community deserves access to world-class wellness. The dream is that when people think of holistic, African-inspired wellness anywhere in the world, they think of ORÍKÌ.

How do you balance innovation and sustainability in ORÍKÌ's business model?

Innovation and sustainability are the two pillars of our growth. From the beginning, we decided that we would not have to choose between profitability and purpose we would pursue both. We innovate by integrating technology and finding better methods for our processes and divisions. Unwind by ORÍKÌ, our mobile wellness platform is one example. Unwind brings wellness spa services directly to people's homes, hotels, or offices. At the same time, we stay rooted in sustainability through our farm-to-skin philosophy, sourcing locally, minimizing waste, and empowering communities. Every new system, process, and product we create must meet two criteria: it must make life better for people, and it must be kind to the planet. That's how we measure true innovation.

What advice would you give to aspiring entrepreneurs looking to make an impact in Africa's wellness industry?

Start with purpose and pair it with structure. Africa is full of opportunities, but impact happens when your vision meets execution. As the structure advocate that I am, I always emphasize the need to systemize and standardize a business. Build systems early, invest in training your people, and don't rush growth at the expense of consistency. And most importantly, stay authentic to Africa. Our ingredients, our people, and our stories are powerful. The world doesn't need another imitation, it needs original African excellence.

Who are some of your biggest inspirations, and how have they influenced your leadership style?

I'm inspired by visionary builders who create systems that outlive them. Leaders like Estée Lauder who was a visionary entrepreneur who challenged the status quo and proved that anything was possible. My leadership style is a blend of servant leadership, vision, structure, and heart. I believe in clarity, accountability, and empowerment. I lead with faith, but I also lead with systems, because inspiration must translate into implementation.

Estée Lauder started her business with just a handful of products, but with perseverance and innovation, she built a successful business and changed the face of the beauty industry forever. These are the type of qualities I instill in my team.

How do you prioritize self-care and wellness as a busy entrepreneur and mother?

I've learned that you can't pour from an empty cup. As a leader, mother, and visionary, my energy is the fuel behind so much of what I do so I truly seek to treat my own wellness as a non-negotiable priority. I schedule quiet time in the mornings for prayer, reflection, and gratitude before the world starts calling. That grounding has helped me lead from a place of peace instead of pressure for the past 10 years.

I also practice what ORÍKÌ stands for: intentional rest, regular treatments, proper nutrition, and mindfulness. I genuinely believe that wellness is a priority not a luxury. I'm deliberate about carving out time for my family and for myself because those moments of renewal allow me to show up stronger, clearer, and more creative in every area of my life.

What's the most important lesson you've learned as a leader, and how has it shaped ORÍKÌ's culture?

The biggest lesson I've learned is that people build vision, not just plans. You can have the best strategy in the world, but without empowered, aligned people, it's meaningless. That realization shaped ORÍKÌ's culture from year 1. We hire for skillset but just as important is passion and integrity as much as skill. We build environments where people feel seen, valued, and accountable.

I have also learned that leadership requires balance: structure with empathy, firmness with grace. I'm big on systems, but I'm equally big on heart. The combination of both has created a culture where excellence isn't just demanded, it's embraced. You're not just managing people— you're shaping lives and destinies. That realization changed how I lead. I've learned that clarity, empathy, and accountability must coexist. At ORÍKÌ, we've built a culture where excellence and compassion go hand in hand. I push my team to think big, but I also care deeply about their growth and wellness. We celebrate wins together, but we also embrace feedback and failure as learning opportunities. Leadership has taught me that your culture is not what you write on the wall, it's what people feel when they come to work.



How does ORÍKÌ Group's farm-to-skin approach contribute to sustainable wellness practices?

Our farm-to-skin philosophy is at the heart of everything we do. It ensures that we're not only creating products that are safe, natural, and effective, but also that we're supporting local farmers and producers across the value chain. We partner directly with cooperatives and women-led agricultural groups to source ingredients like shea butter, kola nut and more. This approach keeps the economic value within Africa while promoting traceability, sustainability, and authenticity. Every product tells a story, from the farms to our labs to our clients' hands proving that wellness can be premium, ethical, and locally empowered at the same time.

What's the significance of incorporating African botanicals and natural ingredients in ORÍKÌ's products?

African botanicals are among the most potent in the world yet for decades, they've been underrepresented in global beauty and wellness conversations. For me, using African ingredients isn't just about formulation; it's about representation. It's about telling our story through the richness of what grows on our soil.

By using indigenous ingredients like kola nut, atili oil, shea and hibiscus amongst others, we're showcasing Africa's scientific depth, the balance of efficacy and heritage. Every product we create is a statement that Africa's natural resources can meet and even exceed global standards of performance and purity.

How do you see the wellness industry evolving in Africa, and how is ORÍKÌ Group positioned to lead this change?

Africa's wellness industry is entering a defining era. The pandemic accelerated awareness around health, rest, and mental well-being, and now we're seeing a massive shift — wellness is no longer a luxury; it's a lifestyle. As disposable income grows and awareness deepens, people are investing in self-care as a necessity.

ORÍKÌ is positioned at the forefront of that movement. With our expanding network of spas, our manufacturing capability, our on-demand mobile wellness services, and our partnerships with healthcare providers and HMOs, we're shaping how wellness is delivered and experienced. We're building the standards, systems, and infrastructure that will sustain the industry for generations.

Can you take us back to the early days of ORÍKÌ Group - what inspired you to start the business, and what were some of the initial challenges you faced?

The inspiration for ORÍKÌ came from a deep desire to showcase Africa's potential. I had worked in the energy sector and in government, and while those roles were



impactful, I felt called to build something that created jobs, empowered people, and celebrated Africa's natural wealth.

I started with a fascination for natural ingredients and their healing power, I wanted to prove that African botanicals could compete globally. The spa actually began as a marketing tool — a space for people to experience the products but it grew into a movement. The early days weren't easy. We faced challenges with infrastructure, supply chains, and even perception — convincing people that an African beauty and wellness brand could be world-class. But through persistence, faith, and an incredible team, we turned those obstacles into stepping stones. ORÍKÌ was built from grit, grace, and the belief that Africa has everything it needs to shine.

How did your background in energy economics and working with organizations like the UK Department for International Development (DFID) shape your approach to building ORÍKÌ Group?

My background in energy economics and development exposed me to structure, policy, and systems thinking. Working with organizations like DFID and serving during Nigeria's power-sector privatization taught me how large ecosystems function — how policy, data, and execution must align to create real impact. Reporting and metrics were two important aspects of my work back then.

That experience shaped how I built ORÍKÌ. I approached wellness like an infrastructure project: start with a clear framework, create systems that sustain growth, and ensure every layer — from products to people — runs with accountability. It also gave me a development mindset: every business decision should empower others, not just enrich the company. So even though the industries are worlds apart, the discipline, data orientation, and long-term thinking from my energy background have become the backbone of ORÍKÌ's growth.

What were some of the key milestones or turning points that helped ORÍKÌ Group grow from a small startup to the leading wellness chain it is today?

There have been several defining milestones. The first was launching our flagship spa in Lagos, it gave people a tangible experience of what a premium intentional space and authenticity could feel like. Another major turning point was the establishment of FSC Manufacturing, our production arm, which allowed us to control quality, scale our product lines, and produce for other brands. We stopped contract manufacturing and started producing all our products from Lagos Nigeria. Launching the ORÍKÌ Training Institute in 2021, inaugurated by the First Lady of Lagos State, cemented our role as a leader in building capacity for the entire wellness ecosystem.

And finally, the launch of Unwind by ORÍKÌ, our mobile wellness platform, was another breakthrough. It allowed us to reach people wherever they were — homes, hotels, and offices — and proved that wellness could be convenient and inclusive. Each milestone expanded our reach in ways that ultimately formed the ecosystem we have built today.

Looking back, what were some of the biggest risks you took in building ORÍKÌ Group, and how did they pay off?

Every major leap has come with risk. Leaving a structured career in energy to build something from scratch was a huge one. Investing heavily in manufacturing and expansion when others advised caution was another. Leaving the shores of Nigeria and opening a branch in Kenya was a risk. Now we have 2 locations in Nairobi Kenya and our biggest is in Kampala, Uganda. But the greatest risk was believing — believing that an African wellness brand could stand on the global stage.

Those risks have paid off because they stretched us. Taking bold steps forced us to innovate, to build systems, and to rely on faith and resilience. Today, we have multiple thriving subsidiaries, global recognition, and impact across three countries. The risks were real, but so were the rewards — both tangible and transformational.





How did you transition from working in the energy sector to becoming a successful entrepreneur in the wellness industry?

The transition was both natural and faith-led. I had reached a point in my career where I wanted to create something that didn't just solve policy problems, but transformed people's lives directly. I've always been fascinated by nature, healing, and the power of Africa's resources — so I began experimenting with natural formulations. What started as curiosity became conviction. I realized that wellness could be a bridge — between purpose and profit, between Africa and the world. It wasn't an easy transition; I had to build from scratch. But that leap of faith birthed ORÍKÌ — a brand rooted in authenticity, innovation, and impact.

What's the most fulfilling aspect of your work as an entrepreneur and leader?

For me, fulfillment comes from transformation — seeing people, communities, and ideas evolve because of something we built. Watching a trainee from our institute become a certified spa therapist or a team member get promoted multiple times in one year — that's the reward.

I also find deep fulfillment in leading others. I love mentoring, developing teams, and watching people grow into leadership. Entrepreneurship has shown me that success isn't measured just by revenue, but by how many lives are better because you said yes to your vision.

How do you want ORÍKÌ Group to be remembered, and what legacy do you hope to leave behind?

I want ORÍKÌ to be remembered as the brand that redefined wellness in Africa — one that built systems, empowered people, and showcased the continent's richness to the world. I want people to look back and say, because of ORÍKÌ, wellness became accessible, sustainable, and proudly African; because of ORIKI the A- beauty movement (A-Beauty) took its rightful place on the global stage.

My personal legacy is about continuity raising leaders who will carry the vision forward and building structures that thrive long after me. Legacy, to me, isn't about fame or spotlight; it's about sustainability. I hope to leave behind an ecosystem that keeps transforming lives, an unshakable proof that Africa can build, lead, and compete globally with excellence and integrity.

What's the best advice you've ever received, and how has it impacted your journey as an entrepreneur?

The best advice I've ever received is simple but profound: "Don't move until God says move." It's taught me the power of alignment, that timing, clarity, and obedience are everything. In business, it's easy to chase opportunities, but I've learned that not every open door is your door.

That advice has anchored me through every season of ORÍKÌ's growth. It's reminded me to seek wisdom, not just speed, to build from a place of conviction, not comparison. Every major decision, from launching new locations to expanding internationally, has been guided by prayer, preparation, and purpose. It's also taught me patience, because true success isn't rushed, it's refined. And when you build with alignment, what you create stands the test of time.

EIGHT INVESTING LESSONS FROM THE WORLD'S ULTRA-RICH

CHISOM MICHAEL



Building lasting wealth is rarely a matter of luck. Among the world's ultra-high-net-worth individuals, financial success stems from deliberate choices, long-term discipline, and a distinct mindset about money.

Beyond private jets, lavish homes, and vast portfolios, what truly sets the ultra-wealthy apart is how they think about money. Their decisions are driven by vision, purpose, and confidence in the wealth-building process.

From compounding returns to calculated risk-taking, their approach offers valuable lessons for everyday investors.

Here are the eight investing lessons from the world's ultra-rich, compiled by Rediff.

Wealth creation begins with a growth mind-set

Most ultra-wealthy individuals built their fortunes from the ground up. Many are first-generation entrepreneurs, business owners, or professionals who expanded their income through consistent effort and reinvestment. Their success stems from a growth-oriented outlook. They understand that wealth is not created overnight but developed through sustained discipline and execution. The principle that guides them is clear: financial growth begins with how one thinks about opportunity and effort.

Compounding is more than just a formula

For the ultra-rich, compounding is not a mathematical concept but a core belief. They allow their investments to grow uninterrupted, resisting the urge to withdraw funds during market corrections. By giving them the chance to work, they benefit from exponential growth. This patience shapes their preference for long-term equities, private equity, and structured products that reward consistent holding. Their approach is defined by stability and scalability rather than short-term gains.

Smart risk-taking as a wealth-building strategy

Wealthy investors are not afraid of risk, but they do not take it blindly. They evaluate potential downsides, expected returns, and market trends before committing. Early-stage start-ups, international real estate, or emerging industries often feature in their portfolios, but only after extensive due diligence and consultation with experts. Their risk-taking is informed and aligned with clear financial objectives, turning uncertainty into opportunity.

The value of flexibility

One of the advantages the ultra-rich hold is agility. Free from institutional mandates, they can shift capital quickly when conditions change. If equity markets appear overheated, funds are reallocated to private debt, real estate, or alternative assets such as fine art. Many have also been early adopters of new investment areas, including Blockchain infrastructure and sustainability-focused funds. This ability to move decisively helps them stay ahead of market transitions.

Thinking in decades, not just years

Ultra-wealthy investors view wealth through a generational lens. Their planning often spans decades, with structures such as family offices, trusts, and tax-

efficient vehicles established to preserve assets across generations. Every investment decision is guided by the principle of endurance. They recognise that while markets fluctuate, a sound long-term strategy can sustain growth over time.

Managing underperformance with discipline

The long-term focus of wealthy investors does not mean they tolerate poor results. Underperformance is met with scrutiny and adjustment. They conduct regular portfolio reviews, relying on performance data and expert analysis to ensure each asset contributes effectively. This level of discipline ensures that capital remains productive, with no room for complacency.

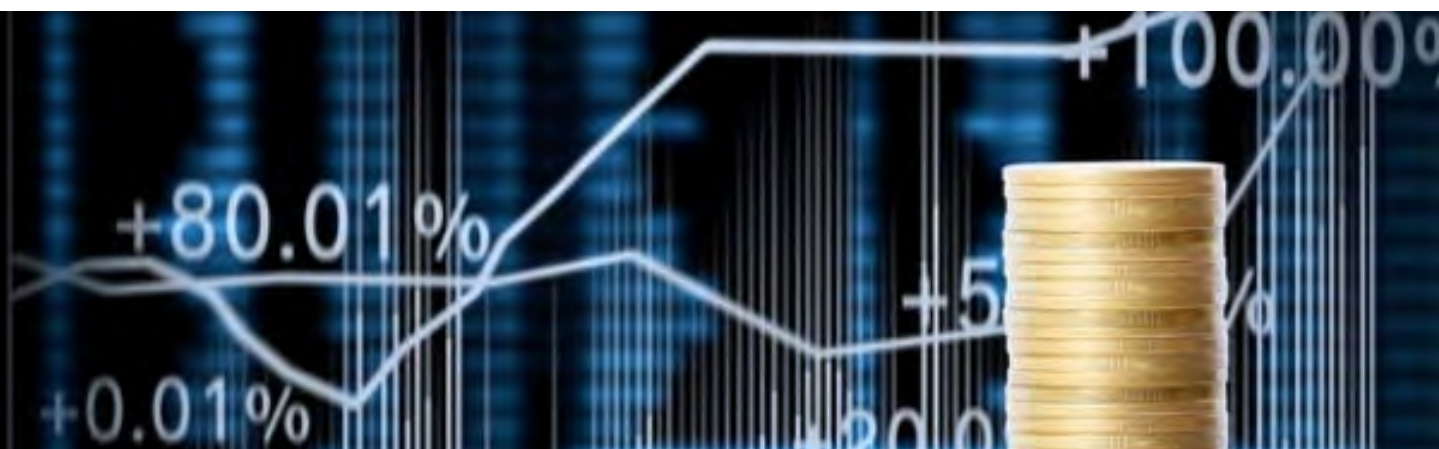
Managing emotional biases

Even the rich are not free from emotional bias. Overconfidence, familiarity bias, and fear of loss affect all investors. However, many UHNW individuals work closely with advisors who challenge their assumptions and provide perspective. This approach helps reduce emotional decision-making and maintains alignment with long-term objectives. A willingness to listen and adapt is often as important as financial expertise.

Lessons for everyday investors

The habits of the ultra-rich offer lessons that can be applied by investors at every level. Thinking long-term, focusing on quality assets, taking calculated risks, remaining flexible, and seeking diverse opinions are principles that build resilience.

Wealth creation is not confined to those with large sums to invest. It begins with the right mindset, patience, and a structured approach to decision-making. By applying these principles consistently, investors can build portfolios designed to grow and endure beyond a single generation.



HOW NIGERIA SHOULD LEAD AFRICA'S AI EDUCATION REVOLUTION

CHARLES OGWO



As the world rapidly adopts artificial intelligence (AI) to transform education, Africa cannot afford to be left behind. Nigeria, with its large population, growing tech ecosystem, and youthful demographic, is uniquely positioned to lead this charge.

By integrating AI into its education system, Nigeria has the potential not only to revolutionise learning outcomes at home but also to set the pace for the rest of the continent, and the time to lead is now!

Nigeria's young, hungry, and digitally-native creators is a huge advantage in this. Obviously, the country's music, films, fashion, and "soft power" is already a global force.

Nigeria's entertainment industry has rapidly evolved over the years, becoming a major player not only in

Africa but also on the global stage. From Nollywood to music, fashion, and more, this article will delve into the exciting world of Nigeria's top entertainment industry sectors.

Nollywood, often referred to as the third-largest film industry in the world, is the heartbeat of Nigeria's entertainment scene. Renowned for producing thousands of movies annually, it boasts an enormous global fan base. From thrilling blockbusters to thought-provoking dramas, Nollywood continues to capture hearts with its storytelling prowess.

According to Ibrahim Adeyanju, the CEO at Galaxy Backbone Limited, Nigeria must channel its creative energy into building digital public goods and global tech giants.



“Nigeria, as a country in Africa, understands complexity. We are resilient, and we are entrepreneurial by necessity.

“These are the very skills needed to thrive in the AI age. We can build AI that is contextual, empathetic, and solves real-world problems,” he said.

Adeyanju, however, emphasised for the country to lead the charge, it must prepare its workforce for this new reality by shifting from a knowledge-based education model to a skills-based one, fostering lifelong learning and continuous adaptation.

“The evolving work landscape is characterised by a progression from traditional work, to AI augmentation, to skills-based education, and ultimately to a future where human attributes and the symbiotic relationship with AI take centre stage,” he noted.

Sarumi Oyewole, a faculty head at ICLED Business School, speaking on tech in education, said, “AI is an opportunity we can benefit from. The question is not

whether AI will impact education, but how we’re going to optimise the innovation.

“We need to shift our perspective of seeing AI as a threat to seeing it as a tool.”

The future of education in the AI age is a fundamental shift from a model of knowledge transmission to one of skill and character cultivation.

Adeyanju describes the AI age as a move from “what to learn” to “how to think and who to become. Education, he said, will no longer be about accumulating information, but a shift from knowing to understanding, applying, and creating.

Changing classroom: From lecture hall to collaborative studio

With AI integration into education, the traditional classroom is evolving, and Nigeria must be deliberate in equipping schools for the tech-world in education.



There is a great need to train and retrain teachers and equip them for digital education. Adeyanju emphasised that with AI, the physical and virtual classroom will be transformed.

“The teacher’s role evolves from a dispenser of knowledge to a “Coach on the Side,” a facilitator, and a mentor.

“They will guide students in critical thinking, projects, and ethical reasoning,” he said.

To address this AI challenge, the CEO of Galaxy Backbone reiterated that the curriculum of the future will be built around skills that AI complements but cannot replicate.

We can think of this as the human skills curriculum, critical thinking and problem formulation; that is the ability to ask the right questions is more valuable than knowing the right answers.

Education will teach students to challenge assumptions, identify biases in AI outputs, and define problems in a messy, real-world context.

The most important skill will be the ability to learn, unlearn, and relearn throughout one’s entire life.

Peter Ejiofor, the chief executive officer at Ethnos IT Solutions Limited calls on African leaders to embrace the digital economy which according to him is the way forward in this contemporary era.

“AI improves delivery of services through tech, and it is something that everybody should look into; it is a good thing that African countries should look into it,” he said.

A look at the African AI Index shows Egypt is the country that is making the most rapid progress in AI development, with its position of 52nd worldwide. Morocco holds the 57th position globally and ranked the 4th in Africa; following Egypt, South Africa and Tunisia.

For Nigeria to be able to compete with its contemporaries in Africa, Bala Hassan, the managing director at Learn Africa Plc, said the government must be deliberate in improving infrastructure for online learning.

“The government need to improve on infrastructure because the key challenges in accessing e-contents is power and bandwidths, these are the areas the government needs to come in,” he said.

TURNING DATA INTO DIRECTION: HOW MICHAEL-OGUNSANWO BLENDS INSIGHT, STRATEGY, AND PURPOSE

CHISOM MICHAEL





Chioma Michael-Ogunsanwo is a data-driven strategist passionate about helping brands achieve customer success, drive growth, and build strategic partnerships. As a Senior Research Executive at NielsenIQ, she uncovers insights that help brands understand market trends and consumer behaviour to inform smarter business decisions.

Beyond her corporate role, Chioma is a content creator and thought leader who shares actionable perspectives on market research, customer success, and personal branding. Her work blends data, strategy, and storytelling to help organisations stay competitive and drive lasting impact. In this interview with Chisom Michael, Chioma reflects on her journey across finance, customer success, and market research, and how these experiences shape her approach to strategy and data interpretation. Excerpts:

You have worked across market research, customer success, and finance. How have these varied experiences shaped the way you approach problem-solving today?

My experience in finance, customer success, and market research has been one of bringing data, people, and purpose together. Each step along the way has shaped the way I approach problem-solving as not just an analytical exercise but as an opportunity to create real impact.

From my early experience in finance and field of study, I learned discipline, how numbers form the language of business performance and how structure provides clarity. Through customer success, I understood the power of relationships and a winning attitude, understanding that actual progress is made when solutions are designed with humans in mind. Through market research experience, I developed a deep appreciation for insight and strategy, the ability to turn data into direction and complexity into simplicity.

Now, I leverage all three dimensions: analytical ability, human understanding, and strategic vision. I think the most effective solutions lie where these meet, where data and compassion intersect, and where strategy and action converge. This is now the foundation upon which I lead, generate value, and deliver results.

You manage insights for leading FMCG brands. What do you consider the most critical factor in turning data into strategies that actually drive growth?

Clarity of purpose, to me, is the most critical element to converting data into strategies that actually drive growth. There's a lot of data wandering on its own, but without a clear business question, a clear consumer reality, and a desired result, even sophisticated analysis can go astray.

In managing insights for leading FMCG brands, I've seen that growth happens when data is translated into stories that decision-makers can act on. It's about connecting the "what" to the "why" in every analysis, moving beyond surface trends to uncover the motivations, tensions, and opportunities that truly shape consumer behaviour.

Equally important is collaboration. Insights are only as effective as when they're plugged into decision-making in marketing, innovation, and commerce teams. When data translates into action and alignment, it's no longer numbers on a piece of paper but a growth driver.

Ultimately, the true power of data lies in its ability to simplify complexity and point to purposeful action; that's what silences the gap between insights and strategy, and strategy and impact.



Many companies gather data but struggle with interpretation. How do you bridge the gap between numbers and meaningful business action?

Bridging the gap between numbers and meaningful business actions starts with understanding that data alone doesn't drive change, "clarity does". My approach has always been to translate complexity into context. I focus on uncovering what the data is really saying about people, markets, and opportunities, then shaping that into insights that can influence decisions and inspire action.

I believe interpretation is both an art and a discipline. It requires analytical precision, but also curiosity, empathy, and storytelling, the ability to make data resonate beyond reports and dashboards. In my work, I bridge this gap by ensuring every insight is connected to a business objective: what should we start doing, stop doing, or do differently?

By aligning insights with strategy and communicating them in a language that decision-makers understand, I help transform data from static information into a strategic compass; one that directs growth, innovation, and performance.

As someone who champions lead generation and thought leadership, what role do you think research executives should play beyond delivering reports?

I believe the role of research executives has evolved far beyond delivering reports, and it's about driving influence, foresight, and value creation. In today's data-rich environment, clients and businesses no longer need more numbers; they need partners who can translate those numbers into direction and growth opportunities.

As someone passionate about lead generation and thought leadership, I see research executives as strategic storytellers, people who bridge data with decisions, insights with influence. Our role is to anticipate what's next, connect patterns across markets and consumers, and help shape the conversations that move industries forward.

Beyond reporting, we should be catalysts for innovation: identifying white spaces, informing go-to-market strategies, and inspiring bold thinking within organisations. When research moves from informing decisions to influencing vision, that's when it truly becomes leadership.

In your customer success role, you focused on retention and adoption. What lessons from that period do you still apply when working with clients today?

One key lesson I learnt is to always put myself in the client's shoes. If I am not satisfied with my work, how do I think the client would be about the same work? So I try as much to ensure I am tackling the pain points and not going in circles. Seeing my clients make the right decision with data is what drives me more.

Market trends are constantly shifting in Nigeria and globally. How do you ensure your insights remain relevant in such a dynamic environment?

The pace of change in both the Nigerian and global markets demands constant curiosity and agility. For me, staying relevant begins with staying in tune with people, with culture, and with the subtle shifts and trends that influence how consumers live, spend, and make decisions.

I make it a priority to continuously learn from data, from conversations, from trends across industries. I don't just look at what's happening, I ask why it's happening and what it could mean next. That mindset helps me move beyond reacting to trends to anticipating them.

Equally important is collaboration. The best insights come from diverse perspectives engaging cross-functional teams, staying close to clients and consumers, and connecting global movements to local realities.

Ultimately, relevance in this dynamic environment is about adaptability and combining an analytical mindset with cultural awareness and intuition. It's about staying curious, connected, and confident enough to evolve with the world, not after it.

If you had to identify one key principle that guides your work across research, customer success, and entrepreneurship, what would it be and why?

The one principle that guides everything I do is intentionality. Whether in research, customer success, or entrepreneurship, I've learned that clarity of intention is what gives direction to effort and meaning to results.

Intentionality means being deliberate about the value I create by understanding the "why" behind every analysis, every strategy, and every decision. It's about ensuring that my work doesn't just meet expectations, but moves people, businesses, or ideas forward in a purposeful way.

In research, it drives me to look beyond data points to the real human stories behind them. In customer success, it shapes how I build trust and deliver lasting impact. And in entrepreneurship, it reminds me that growth is not just about profit, but about creating something that reflects light, meaning, and progress, and this is a journey I am still figuring out.

You also create content. How has this influenced your career and relationships with industry peers?

Content creation started as a personal hobby, a space for self-expression, creativity, and connection. I wanted to build a community where I could share my thoughts, experiences, and the little lessons that shape everyday personal growth.



Over time, it became more than just something I did for fun; it became a platform that allowed me to connect with like-minded people who value purpose, progress, and authenticity. I've found that when you share authentically, whether through ideas, experiences, or reflections, you don't just build visibility, you build trust and community.

Interestingly, it has also influenced how I show up professionally. Creating content has taught me consistency, storytelling, and the power of voice lessons that translate naturally into how I communicate insights and ideas at work. But at its core, it remains something I do for joy, a place to express myself freely, to connect genuinely, and to remind myself that creativity and curiosity should always have a place, no matter how busy life gets.

Looking back at your transition from finance internships to research and strategy, what prompted the shift, and what have you carried over from your early finance background?

My transition from finance into research and strategy was driven by curiosity and the desire to understand not just what the numbers were saying, but why they mattered. During my finance internship, I enjoyed the structure and discipline of working with data, but I found myself more fascinated by the human and market dynamics behind those figures. That curiosity naturally led me toward research and strategy, where numbers meet narratives and insights can influence real business decisions. I look forward to being on the path to see how this data is used in real-time decision-making.

What I've carried over from my finance background is a strong analytical foundation and a results-oriented mindset. Finance taught me how to see patterns, measure impact, and stay precise, all of which are invaluable in research and strategic thinking. It also gave me a deep respect for clarity and accountability, understanding that behind every data point is a business decision that affects people and performance.

That balance of analysis from finance and curiosity from research continues to shape how I approach strategy today -with structure, insight, and purpose.

Mentorship and knowledge-sharing seem important to you. What kind of impact do you hope to have on younger professionals entering the field of market research and analytics?

Mentorship and knowledge sharing are deeply personal to me because I understand how transformative guidance can be, especially in a field as dynamic as market research and analytics. When I started my journey, I benefited greatly from people who took the time to explain, challenge, and encourage me, and that experience shaped my belief that growth multiplies when it's shared.

Even as a student, I've seen firsthand how access to information and mentorship can transform lives and guide better choices. That's why personal mentorship and knowledge sharing mean so much to me.

The impact I hope to have on younger professionals is to help them see that this field goes beyond data; it's about curiosity, empathy, and influence. I want them to understand that their value lies not just in the numbers they analyse, but in the stories they uncover and the decisions they help shape.

More than anything, I want to inspire confidence, to show that you can build a meaningful career in insights by combining technical skill with purpose and authenticity. If I can help young professionals think boldly, ask better questions, and trust their voice in the room, then I've made the kind of impact that truly matters.



MEET ITORO LAWRENCE, YOUNG PROFESSIONAL FOSTERING PERSONALISED LEARNING HUB FOR AFRICA

CHISOM MICHAEL





Ito Lawrance is quietly rewriting the story of how African professionals learn, grow, and compete globally. Ito Lawrance, a branding and marketing communications professional with years of experience in brand building and corporate communications, is the brain behind Workplace Series Africa, a personalised learning platform that uniquely blends soft skills, branding, tech and workplace tools to help African professionals, including founders, thrive.

For 6 years, Ito Lawrance has worked at the intersection of marketing, technology, and education. She managed communications for a leading ed-tech company, worked in software testing to deliver quality digital experiences for product-led companies, and advised executives on positioning and branding. She created a proprietary digital learning hub that delivers workplace and branding skills to African professionals. Rather than follow the traditional path of large-scale, impersonal online learning, she designed a unique one-on-one model that prioritises quality and measurable transformation

This observation led to a critical insight into the combination of digital competence, branding clarity, and practical workplace skills. That gap inspired the birth of Workplace Series Africa, designed not as a generic online course, but as a personalised training lab that adapts to the unique goals of each learner.

Workplace Series Africa designed a unique model: Soft Skills + Branding + Tech Tools.

Unlike traditional training platforms, Ito has through Workplace Series Africa focused on two flagship programmes namely; Digital Workplace Essentials: a hands-on programme that equips African professionals with the practical tools in digital communication and strategy, online security, ethical use of Artificial Intelligence, productivity hacks, and business intelligence.

The second is Branding Lab: an exclusive programme for founders and executives who want to refine, package, and monetise or amplify their brands (personal and business) with precision.

The goal is to serve more people while creating a personalised impact. Every participant begins with a personality test and brand audit to evaluate their personalities. This allows the training to be tailored, ensuring that learning is not one-size-fits-all, but directly aligned with professional goals.

Itoro since the inception of the Workplace Series Africa has trained over 100 professionals across industries within Nigeria and beyond, from corporate employees seeking growth to small business owners aiming for the next big thing to African founders positioning themselves for global relevance. The results speak for themselves: improved career confidence, sharper digital presence, and brands that convert into business growth.

With this backing, her company have grown its students' reach, experimented with digital learning models, and built programmes that directly serve the needs of professionals and executives.

Beyond students, Ito Lawrance has also worked directly with clients to audit their brands, craft positioning strategies, and even produce high-quality packages that align with their visions.

She insists that her organisation is not just telling professionals to learn another technical skill, they are helping them integrate digital tools, workplace essentials and branding into their existing career and business journey so they can turn them into opportunities in today's market, whether they're in Lagos, Nairobi, or London.

To her, at its core, Workplace Series Africa is a dynamic branding and digital edtech school designed to empower professionals across the continent. The strategic focus is on combining the rigour of marketing communications with the creativity of branding and the necessity of digital tools.

Unlike the typical large-class learning formats, Workplace Series Africa thrives on personalisation. One-on-One Learning: We believe every learner is unique. Data from our personality assessments show that nearly 89 percent of our learners prefer one-on-one sessions. So we make it our model because close learning delivers deeper impact.

Small Group Learning: Where group learning is necessary, we cap it at 3-10 participants to maintain quality. This ensures conversations are direct, questions are answered, and every learner leaves with transformation, not just information.

On her vision, she insists that she is not just training the crowd, but are training the committed professionals and founders with years of experience building companies and executives shaping industries.

To her the vision is to transform African professionals into globally competitive leaders who can thrive, stand out, and inspire. The e-learning platform is designed to give professional trust, access and convenience.

SUMMER OKIBE: ADVANCING JUSTICE THROUGH ENERGY, LAW AND EDUCATION

CHISOM MICHAEL





Where many saw barriers, she built bridges of light, law, and learning. Her story is proof that resilience can power a generation. Summer Okibe is a climate and energy policy specialist, attorney, and doctoral researcher whose work spans academia, governance, and community empowerment.

Based in Canada, she serves as an Energy Policy Analyst with the Government of Alberta, while pursuing a PhD in Law at the University of Victoria, where her research focuses on energy, climate, environmental, and Indigenous issues. She has also served as a Just Energy Transition Analyst with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Okibe's trajectory has been shaped by both personal experience and systemic barriers. Early in her career in Canada, she faced over 500 rejections, spanning study abroad applications and job opportunities. Reflecting on these experiences, she explains that "every 'no' became a learning curve for me, forcing me to not just refine my résumé but my resilience."

Those early setbacks taught her that merit alone is rarely enough, and that access, networks, and persistence are equally critical. "Each rejection taught me how to stand up again, to rewrite my story better, and to open doors for others who are still knocking," she adds. Today, her leadership is rooted in empathy and persistence, informed by lived experience and a deep understanding of the obstacles young Africans face.

This combination of personal motivation and social vision underpins her ongoing project, Aderayah Academy, a tuition-free, solar-powered school currently being developed in Enugu, Nigeria. Okibe describes the initiative as "born from pain and gratitude," reflecting both her deep appreciation for the scholarships that shaped her journey and her empathy for children in her community whose dreams are limited by poverty.

The Academy merges education with renewable energy, creating a space where children can study without disruption, dream without limits, and experience sustainability in practice. "The most transformative moment for me was seeing the video of the land for the first time. I pictured the classrooms and realised that it's not just charity, but a legacy. Every child who walks through those gates will know that brilliance, resilience, and intelligence can come from any village."

Central to Okibe's vision is the concept of energy as a tool for justice. She frames energy access not only as a technological or economic issue but as a matter of dignity and equity. "It's about whether a woman can cook without choking on smoke, whether a hospital can power an incubator at night, or whether a student can read after sunset," she says.

Clean energy, she insists, requires law and policy to ensure fairness and accountability, to empower communities, and to respect Indigenous rights. In the African context, she argues that energy law must be reimagined to be people-centred, embracing local knowledge, ownership, and sustainability. "True climate justice must speak with an African voice. Without that voice, there is no justice, there is no transition."

Alongside energy access, Okibe has invested in advancing women in law and policy. The Summer Okibe Prize, an annual ₦500,000 award for the best female law graduate at Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, is intended not merely as financial support, but as a statement. "Many women still face invisible ceilings, not because they lack talent, but because the spaces weren't built with them in mind," she notes.

The prize signals that women can lead legal pipelines, draft energy legislation, and sit at decision-making tables. She envisions winners becoming judges, policymakers, or clean energy entrepreneurs, continuing the cycle of mentorship and leadership. "When women rise, systems shift. If we keep investing in them early, the next generation won't just break glass ceilings, they'll build new roofs."

Okibe's mentorship extends beyond scholarships. She has guided thousands of young Africans in accessing global opportunities, observing patterns in the next generation

of climate and development leaders. She notes their fearlessness and strategic approach, understanding that talent alone requires bridges to reach opportunity.

One initiative, the International Passport Fee Grant, addressed a small but critical barrier, allowing students to meet deadlines and pursue fully funded programmes abroad. “These young people are purpose-driven. They want to build, not just make money. What they need is access to knowledge, networks, and opportunities that match their passion,” she explains. For Okibe, facilitating these connections is a means of ensuring that Africa’s energy and development solutions are invented at home.

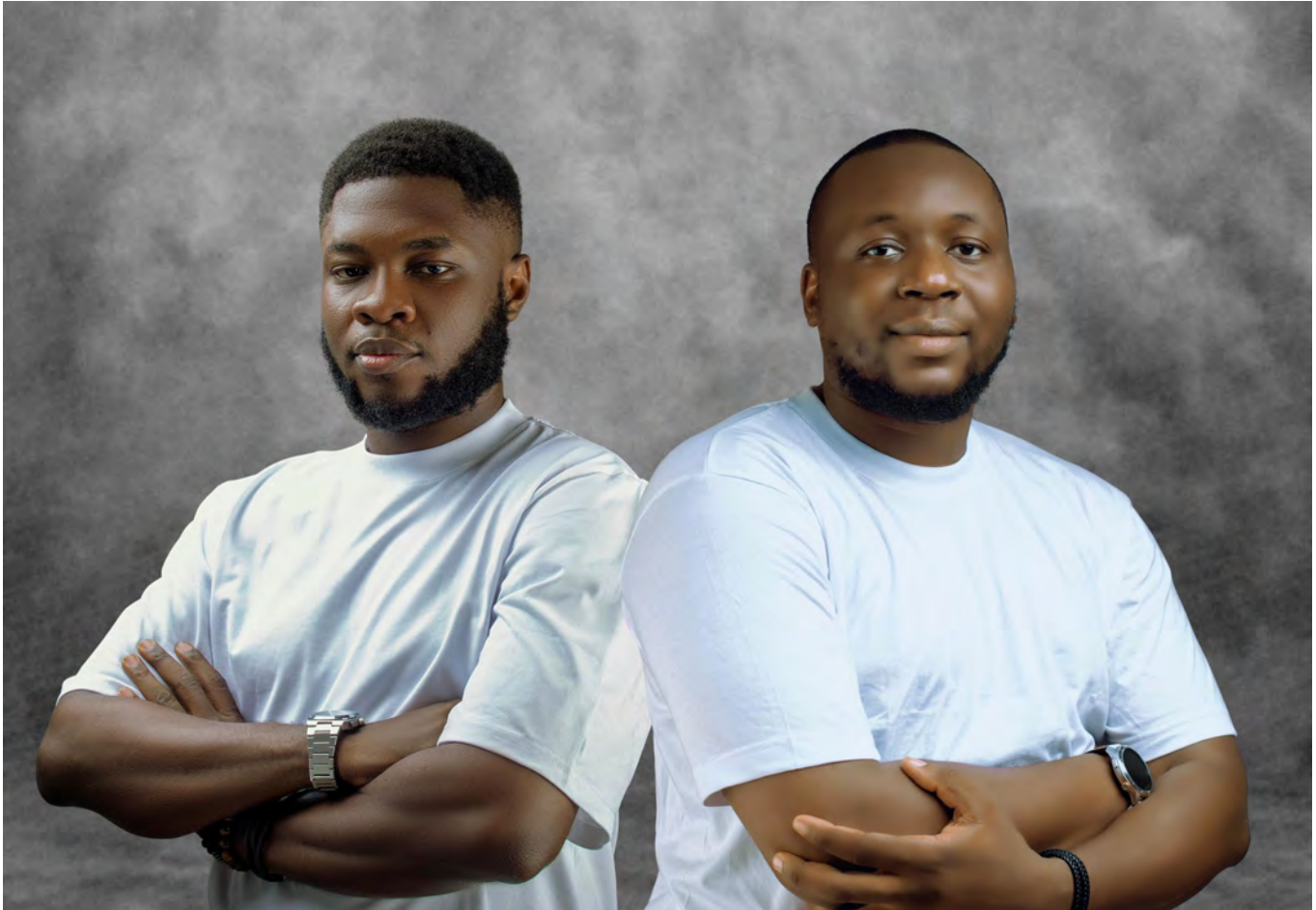
Balancing multiple high-demand roles, Okibe continually challenges herself to grow. Dividing her time between her work with the Government of Alberta and her PhD research, she intentionally positions herself in complex spaces that refine both her expertise and capacity. “Each role sharpens a different blade,” she explains. “My policy work, among other things, teaches me how to turn good ideas into bankable,

job-creating projects for Indigenous peoples, marginalised communities, and women.”

Among her projects, Aderayah Academy remains a personal commitment. She funds it personally, explaining, “Not because I’m rich, but because it’s a promise I made to God and to myself. I want laws that lower bills, policies that power clinics, and programmes that turn talents into salaries. I’m stubborn enough to keep going until the community can run without me.” Her guiding principle is to move communities from “beneficiary to decision-maker,” transforming external assistance into local empowerment.

Summer Okibe’s work demonstrates that education, energy, and policy are interconnected instruments of justice. Through her initiatives, mentorship, and scholarship, she continues to shape a vision of African leadership that is inclusive, innovative, and unapologetically determined.





MEET THE ENTREPRENEURS MAKING GLOBAL PAYMENTS EASIER FOR AFRICANS

Lucrestack co-founders Damilola Parkinson and Olajide Bakare are rethinking how individuals and businesses across Africa send and receive money globally through their new platform, LupoFi.

For years, cross-border transactions have remained one of the biggest pain points for African entrepreneurs. Now, two Nigerian founders, Damilola Parkinson and Olajide Bakare, are tackling that challenge head-on with a new platform that aims to make global payments faster, safer, and more inclusive.

Their company, Lucrestack, recently launched LupoFi, a cross-border payment platform designed to help individuals and businesses send, receive, and settle international transactions seamlessly. The platform currently connects users across Africa with countries such as China, Saudi Arabia, Israel, Canada, the United States, and parts of Europe, with plans to expand into other regions.

Parkinson, Lucrestack's Co-Founder and Chief Executive Officer, said the launch marks the next phase of their mission to simplify global financial connectivity.



he said. “With LupoFi, we are extending that reliability to those driving trade and innovation across Africa.”

Unlike most fintechs that depend on external processors, LupoFi is powered directly by Lucrestack’s proprietary infrastructure. The platform leverages blockchain technology and an OmniChain engine that enables instant settlement across multiple currencies, while its automated compliance layer ensures every transaction is verified in real time.

For Parkinson and Bakare, this innovation is more than technology. It is a tool for inclusion. “LupoFi is not just a product; it is a movement toward financial equity,” Parkinson said. “We are giving Africans the tools to participate fully in the global economy.”

“We have spent years building and refining infrastructure that powers cross-border payments for banks and fintechs,” he said. “LupoFi represents the evolution of that work, extending our enterprise-grade systems to individuals, entrepreneurs, and businesses that need reliable access to the global economy.”

While Africa’s digital economy continues to grow, many businesses still face friction when sending or receiving funds due to slow settlements and compliance challenges.

Bakare, Co-Founder and Chief Technology Officer, explained that the company’s solution is built around resilience and interoperability. “Our goal has always been to build systems that empower institutions to scale confidently,”

As both founders put it, their mission is simple: to make it possible for Africans to trade and thrive without borders.





HOW OBIORA ANTHONY MOVED FROM BEING ‘NWABOY’, HAWKING SHOES IN IDUMOTA TO OWNING GREENLIFE PHARMACEUTICALS

CHIOMA ONUH

Born on 18 July 1963 in Anambra State, Obiora Anthony Chukwuka was the last child and the only male among seven siblings. His early years were marked by modest means. After secondary school, unable to afford university education, he chose apprenticeship instead of waiting idle. At age 17, he moved to Lagos to become an apprentice in his cousin's ladies-shoes business at Idumota market.

In 1983 his settlement from his apprenticeship included goods and a shop. A few years later, in 1984-85, this business was disrupted when the War Against Indiscipline (WAI) campaign led to the demolition of many shops in Idumota—including his. Undeterred, he sold off what remained of the shoe business for ₦10,000 and pivoted into pharmaceuticals. “I sold the shoe business and opened Leton Pharmacy,” he later told an interviewer.

By 1995 his firm was incorporated as Greenlife Pharmaceuticals Limited, which would go on to become a major indigenous pharmaceutical company in Nigeria. In 2011, the company introduced a mobile-authentication service (MAS) for its anti-malaria drug product to fight counterfeit medication in Nigeria.

Chukwuka returned to formal education later in life. He matriculated at the University of Lagos at age 40 and later earned a Master's in Corporate Governance from Leeds Metropolitan University, United Kingdom. He also holds an honorary doctorate from Commonwealth University, Belize.

In his own words:

“The secret is that when you want to start life, start with a vision... If making money is your primary focus you will not go far.”

Greenlife now boasts a broad product portfolio across antimalarials, anti-infectives, multivitamins and other therapeutic categories, distributed nationwide. Over the years, Chukwuka's business interests expanded into more than eleven subsidiary companies and he has created thousands of jobs across sectors.

Chukwuka established the Eziafakaego Foundation in 2003 to support youth and women empowerment, free health services, and construction of hostels in schools.



NIGERIA JOINS GLOBAL COMMUNITY TO CELEBRATE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF CARE AND SUPPORT

ESTHER EMOEKPERE



Nigeria will join the global community in commemorating the International Day of Care and Support on October 29, as proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly.

In response, Caring Africa has launched #StartWithCare, a nationwide activation calling for urgent recognition of care as the foundation of strong families, resilient economies, and inclusive national development.

Under the theme “Strong Families, Workplaces, Nations — Start with Care,” the campaign brings together policymakers, employers, care workers, civil society, and the public to spotlight the often-invisible labor of caregiving—both paid and unpaid—and to drive meaningful investment in Nigeria’s care infrastructure.

“The campaign arrives at a pivotal moment,” said Blessing Adesiyan, Founder of Caring Africa. “This is not just about recognizing care; it’s about redesigning our systems around it. From child and elder care to paid family leave and domestic work protections, we must treat care as infrastructure.”

As part of the #StartWithCare movement, Nigeria is rolling out a series of groundbreaking initiatives including the launch of the Creative Care Council, a collective of visionaries and storytellers reimagining the narrative of care through culture, media, and the arts; the premiere of “Strong Nations Start with Care,” a moving documentary exploring caregiving experiences across Nigeria; the debut of the Caring Blocks digital platform connecting Nigerians to trusted childcare, eldercare, and community services; and the StartWithCare Roundtable, convening policymakers, corporate leaders, and grassroots voices to discuss care as a driver of economic growth and gender equity.

The campaign will also honor 10 exemplary employers through the Caring Workplace Awards, recognizing organizations leading the way in paid leave, childcare support, and family-friendly work policies.

Among this year’s honorees include Providus Bank, Bank Of Industry, Interswitch, MTN, Nigerian Breweries and many others, celebrated for their leadership in promoting inclusive, care-centered workplace practices.

Nigeria’s growing population, shifting family structures, and widening gender gaps make the need for a national care agenda increasingly urgent.

The United Nations and International Labour Organization have warned that deficits in care policy and infrastructure deepen inequality and weaken economic growth if left unaddressed. Data shows that women in Nigeria perform over 75 percent of all unpaid care work, while 70 percent of domestic and care workers operate in informal employment without protection or benefits. Globally, over 2.1 billion people rely on care, yet the sector remains underfunded, undervalued, and unequally distributed.

“Strong families don’t just happen. They start with care,” said Commissioner Mobolaji Ogunlende, Lagos State Ministry of Youth and Social Development. “It’s time to center caregivers, mothers, fathers, workers, and communities in how we design economies, workplaces, and futures.”

Caring Africa and its partners, including the Lagos State Ministry of Youth and Social Development, Lagos State Residents Registration Agency, Lagos State Safety Commission, BellaNaija, Leading Ladies Africa, Gatefield, WIMBIZ, WILAN, WISCAR, and the Nigeria Governors’ Forum—are calling on leaders across sectors to advance states and national care policy, recognize and value unpaid care work, invest in family-friendly workplaces, and formalize protections for care workers.

The flagship event, Strong Families, Workplaces, Nations — Start with Care, will take place on October 29, 2025, at Capital Club, Lagos, beginning at 3:00 PM, with a cocktail reception to follow. Media and partners are invited to attend this landmark celebration of care leadership and innovation.

Caring Africa invites institutions, media, and individuals to amplify the message of care by engaging with the #StartWithCare social toolkit, participating in campaign events, and sharing stories of care from their communities.

AFRICA'S FASHION POWER SHINES AT THE E1 CHAMPIONSHIP FASHION SHOW



The E1 Championship Fashion Show transformed the EbonyLife Centre, Victoria Island, Lagos into a vibrant hub of creativity, innovation, and cultural pride — an evening that positioned African fashion at the center of the global stage.

Curated by Rikaoto by Me, the event brought together some of Africa's most visionary designers from Lagos to Johannesburg, Accra to Harare each telling stories woven in fabric, tradition, and modern artistry. It wasn't just a runway show; it was a grand showcase of the continent's creative economy — where fashion met opportunity and vision met investment.

The evening opened with Afrikayla by Ibijoke Shallangwa, whose collection celebrated Africa's rich heritage through a stunning fusion of Ankara, Adire, Aso Oke, and Kente, reimagined in fresh, urban silhouettes. "We're passionate

about telling Africa's story through fashion," said the designer. "Every piece carries a slice of history stitched into style, that's Afrikayla."

What to Wear redefined the classic Agbada with refined detailing and elegance, while Keannie Fashion Line lit up the runway with playful, curvy dresses for the modern party lover. The finale belonged to RikaotoByMe, whose luxury gowns dazzled under the lights, each one a symphony of crystals, beads, and stones reflecting African opulence at its finest.

Speaking after the show, Maryam Elisha, Founder and CEO of RikaotoByMe, described the event as "a celebration of Africa's creative excellence, powered by vision, partnership, and purpose.

She acknowledged the strong support of Afreximbank through its CANEX program, FEDA, and the Lagos State Government, whose collaboration made the show possible.

This was more than fashion, it was a platform that united designers, artisans, and models from across the continent to tell the story of African innovation. Together, we're accelerating intra-African trade and investment in the creative economy while amplifying our talent to the world.

The fashion show also created a melting pot of culture and experience. The international beauty queens who attended the E1 Lagos Grand Prix had the opportunity to experience Africa's luxury and style firsthand, discovering that glamour and sophistication live not only in Paris or New York but also in the vibrant heart of Lagos.

Beyond the glamour, the E1 Championship Fashion Show stood as proof that collaboration fuels transformation. By merging fashion, culture, and sustainability, the initiative

unlocked real opportunities for job creation, business networking, and global exposure for African creatives.

"I'm deeply grateful to all our sponsors and to every designer who brought their dreams to this runway," Elisha added. "Designers like Tannymash (Zimbabwe), Afrikayla, Keannie Fashion Empire, What 2 Wear, Anjoreen Couture, Prince Glam Style (Nigeria), SGTC Clothing (Ghana), and Dashikipride African Designers in the Diaspora (New York City) gave this event its true power."

The success of the E1 Championship Fashion Show sends a bold message — Africa's creatives are ready. Ready to trade, to create, and to lead. With continued support from visionary partners, the continent's creative industry will keep transforming ideas into enterprise and dreams into opportunity.



FASHIONEVO SUMMIT & SHOW 2025: CELEBRATING AFRICA'S FASHION FUTURE WITH INSPIRING CONVERSATIONS, INNOVATIVE DESIGNERS



At the centre of the recently held Africa Creative Market 2025 at Landmark Event Centre, Lagos, was FashionEVO Summit & Show 2025, which united visionary minds, talented designers, and industry innovators from across Africa and beyond.

The transformative event celebrated creativity, commerce, and community, resonating throughout the global fashion ecosystem.

Under the theme, 'Creative Bridge: Bridging Creativity, Community, and Commerce in Africa's Fashion Future,' the summit reinforced FashionEVO's mission to elevate African fashion as a global powerhouse while highlighting the sector's vast potential for economic transformation and cultural influence.

Delegates from various African nations and international markets engaged in a dynamic day filled with thought-

provoking panels, fostering robust dialogue about the industry's trajectory and opportunities.

Panel discussions examined cross-border collaboration in African fashion, exploring how partnerships can amplify individual designers' reach while preserving authentic cultural narratives. Notable speakers included Sandra Alonge, Creative Director, IFFIZI, Harriet Hala Kahuzu, Founder, FAB L'Style Magazine, and Ameyaw Debrah, Celebrity Blogger, Freelance Journalist, and Reporter, with Tolu Ajibola, Award-Winning Broadcaster & On-Air Personality moderating the session.

Their insights enriched the conversation around Pan-African fashion.

The importance of education in shaping future designers and the transformation of supply chains in our digital era were also key topics, with insights from industry luminaries such as Blessing Azubike of CcHub, Achu Blessing Ebere of 360



Creative Innovation Hub, Sola Babatunde of OSC Group, and Emmy Collins of Emmy Collins London, moderated by Adaeze Aduaka, Spice TV Presenter and Event Compère.

Queen Ronke Ademiluyi-Ogunwusi of Adire Oodua Textile Hub & AFWLondon & Nigeria delivered a compelling keynote speech highlighting the intersection of traditional craftsmanship and modern technological innovation, joined by Kiki Okewale, Founder, Fabric Printing Global, and Femi Olayebi, Founder & CEO, Femi Handbags, with Seyi Amao, Founder, Sissyremi, moderating the session titled “Textile to Tech – Fashion Supply Chains in a Digital Era.”

Fireside chats featuring Nigeria’s leading stylists and creative visionaries further enriched these discussions, creating intimate spaces for deeper exploration of industry challenges and opportunities. A significant session, moderated by Maryanne Alabi, International Fashion Consultant & Stylist, included Diipo Ayo-Adeusi, Rhoda Egun, Ifeoma Odogwu, and John J. Angel (DeAngelicTouchStylist), who examined “The Business of Style.”

Another discussion featured Malik Afegbua, Founder of Slickcity Media, Princess Ifedolapo Onikoyi, Founder of Artfrofest, and Lasisi Olubunmi of Black Adudu, moderated by Somto Ajuluchukwu, CEO of Vortex Animation, exploring fashion as an archive and digital as a voice.

This conversation illuminated how contemporary African designers leverage digital platforms to preserve cultural heritage and build global audiences, addressing the critical intersection of tradition, documentation, and modern storytelling.

Interactive workshops on sustainability, strategic pricing, export readiness, technology integration, and legal frameworks ensured participants left with actionable knowledge to transform their businesses.

Facilitators included Tolulope Omoyeni (Circular Business Platform), Lanre Shonoiki, Co-Founder, CAFET, Obinna Okerekeocha, Artist, Creative & Content Director, and Annie Oti, Founder, Africa Fashion Law Services. An experiential pop-up session led by Tallulah Doherty Adetona focused on wellness and beauty activation, enhancing the learning experience alongside her comprehensive masterclass in branding and stage presence.

As the day transitioned into the evening, the FashionEVO Show dazzled audiences with a spectacular showcase of style, artistry, and cultural innovation. Visionary designers, including Amarelis, Kijipa Couture, Henri Uduku, Yígalos, Salvage, Sly Monay, IFFIZI, Adire Oodua Textile Hub, Revolution by Yetty D, Kola Kuddus, TF Apparel, and Rukuhs Petali, presented collections that beautifully balanced traditional craftsmanship with contemporary innovation and fearless creativity.



Fabric Printing Global, Amel Susan, and others, ensuring the event's programming reached its full potential.

Throughout the four-day Africa Creative Market, a vibrant pop-up booth showcased an array of brands, allowing attendees to engage directly with the diverse expressions of African fashion.

Yetty Ogunnubi, Founder of FashionEVO and Convener of the FashionEVO Summit and Show, remarked, "FashionEVO was conceived as more than just a platform. It is a bridge connecting creativity with commerce, vision with opportunity, and Africa with the world.

SLY MONDAY



“This year’s event affirms that African fashion is not just thriving; it is setting new global standards, driven by innovation, resilience, and an unwavering cultural identity,” Inya Lawal, Convener of the Africa Creative Market, added, “FashionEVO 2025 was fundamentally about forging meaningful connections between creativity and commerce, local artisans and global markets, and today’s established leaders and tomorrow’s visionary changemakers.”

FashionEVO Summit & Show was organised by FashionEVO in partnership with the Africa Creative Market and YD Company, with international collaborators providing valuable perspectives that highlighted opportunities for African designers to access global markets while maintaining their authentic creative voices and cultural integrity.

This collaboration demonstrated how cultural diplomacy and creative industries can synergistically build sustainable bridges between Africa and the world’s fashion capitals.

AFRICA'S FASHION FUTURE

VENUE

2025
LANDMARK EVENT CENTRE
LAGOS NIGERIA



BEAUTY WITH PURPOSE: THE BODY SHOP EXPANDS TO NIGERIA'S CULTURAL HUB, LAGOS



Sepideh Paddock, Franchise Business Manager- Middle East and Africa;
Edward Nnadi, CEO, JE Group;
Gill Lever OBE, The British Deputy High Commissioner, Abuja; Shalom Ijeoma
Lloyd MBE, General Manager, The Body Shop Nigeria

Following a successful debut in Abuja, The Body Shop Nigeria is set to make a bigger impact with its official expansion into Lagos, Africa's most vibrant and trendsetting city.

Known as Nigeria's commercial and cultural heartbeat, Lagos offers the perfect

home for the UK's most iconic ethical beauty brand.

With its thriving mix of creativity, ambition, and cultural energy, Lagos provides fertile ground for The Body Shop's mission to inspire self-love, celebrate diversity, and promote beauty with purpose.

The expansion will see the opening of two flagship stores, at Ikeja City Mall and Circle Mall, Lekki, further strengthening the brand's commitment to bringing cruelty-free, sustainably sourced, and community-driven beauty products closer to Nigerian consumers.

To mark the occasion, The Body Shop Nigeria hosted an exclusive VIP Reception on October 23, 2025, at the British High Commissioner's residence, celebrating the brand's arrival in Lagos.

The following day, October 24, 2025, saw the official grand opening and ribbon-cutting ceremony at The Body Shop's new store at Ikeja City Mall, where Lagosians can finally experience the brand's iconic range in person.

The second Lagos store, located at Circle Mall, Lekki, is set to open in November 2025.

It will cater to Lagos's fashion-forward, socially conscious consumers while serving as The Body Shop's national distribution hub, ensuring accessible, premium service across the country.

Speaking on the expansion, Shalom Lloyd MBE, General Manager of The Body Shop Nigeria, said:

"Lagos has been calling, and we have answered. Following our successful

entry into Abuja, expanding to Lagos, the cultural and economic heartbeat of Nigeria, is a natural next step.

We are not just opening stores; we are joining a movement. We are here to inspire self-love, celebrate diversity, and stand for ethical beauty in a city that truly embodies our brand spirit."

Reinforcing this commitment,, Edward Nnadi, CEO of Jean Edwards Group, added: "Our expansion into Lagos represents our deep commitment to bridging cultures, driving ethical business, and celebrating community.

"The Body Shop's arrival in Lagos isn't just a business move, it's a celebration of resilience, empowerment, and beauty with purpose."

Founded by the visionary Anita Roddick, the Body Shop has always been more than a beauty brand, it is a global force for good, pioneering ethical beauty through cruelty-free and sustainably sourced products.

The Lagos launch builds on this powerful legacy, creating a space where consumers can experience beauty that looks good, feels good, and does good.



HOW DAPPER CEO FORGES CREATIVE BUSINESS SYNERGIES FOR NIGERIAN MUSIC STARS

ANTHONY UDUGBA





In the cutthroat world of Nigeria's booming music industry, where raw talent alone rarely guarantees stardom, Damilola 'Dapper' Akinwunmi, CEO of Dapper Music and Entertainment, emphasizes that signing artists hinges on far more than musical prowess—it's about forging unbreakable partnerships built on creative synergy and shrewd business acumen.

"We have to believe in the artist," Akinwunmi told BusinessDay, underscoring how mismatches in vision or strategy have derailed past deals, while aligned collaborations propel careers to new heights.

As his label scouts diverse talents beyond street vibes, from soulful high-life crooners like Ghanaian star Lasmid to Afrobeats innovators, Akinwunmi's team approval process ensures every investment isn't just a bet on sound, but on sustainable success in a landscape rife with fleeting fame.

Dapper Group is a full-service artist management, music distribution and entertainment company founded by Akinwunmi, in 2018.

The discussion with BusinessDay covers crucial criteria for signing artists, strategic resource allocation, financial transparency, and future growth plans, including an upcoming concert designed to redefine live performance experiences.

On the criteria for choosing talent and whether Dapper Music focuses only on street genre music, Akinwunmi explained that that success depends on more than talent; factors like creative alignment and business approach play key roles.

Past experiences showed that mismatches can lead to separations, while compatible partnerships thrive. Akinwunmi stressed that signing decisions combine various variables, but team approval is essential.

On genre preferences, Akinwunmi clarified that Dapper Music is not limited to street music. He cited Ghanaian artist Lasmid as an example, describing his music as soulful and high-life influenced. "We sign what we like, and we listen to all kinds of music," Akinwunmi said. "It's not restricted to just one sub-genre or style." This diversity reflects the label's openness to different sounds, countering assumptions of a narrow focus.

Speaking about sustaining artists' careers and allocating resources, Akinwunmi observed that the Nigerian entertainment industry has matured, with clearer business understanding among stakeholders. "We're able to agree on budgets, which I believe is the same thing that goes on everywhere," he said, comparing it to football team planning. Decisions cover projects, timelines, and seasons, ensuring alignment on financial commitments before proceeding.

Delving deeper into the signing process on practical aspects, including upfront costs for signing and promoting new artists, Akinwunmi admitted he could not provide specific figures, as they vary by artist and change over time.

He acknowledged the standard marketing and promotional costs in the industry but noted that hypothetical amounts exist to break an artist, though specifics for Dapper Music remain confidential.

The conversation shifted to financial and rights management, referencing past controversies with former artists that Dapper Music has addressed. When asked about transparent practices in intellectual property management to build long-term partnerships, Akinwunmi highlighted the challenges in a third-world context like Nigeria, where financial literacy is low.

"People don't have accountants. People don't understand splits, understand contracts," he said. He pointed out similar issues in Western markets, where even major artists complain about payments.

To promote transparency, Akinwunmi detailed Dapper Music's contract features. Contracts allow audits by independent auditors to verify financials from shows and other income sources. Artists can have their own legal representation to review terms before and during the deal. Exit clauses outline dispute resolution procedures.

The label also focuses on regular reporting and checks to ensure accuracy. "We're able to cover the important reporting of your earnings and also do checks and balances," Akinwunmi said.



These measures aim to educate artists and prevent misunderstandings.

On exploring the business hurdles in the Nigerian Afrobeats scene, including competition from global labels, streaming algorithms, and economic factors, Akinwunmi acknowledged Nigeria's lag behind the West in access to financing, copyright laws, and functional agencies. "We don't have access to financing. We do not have proper copyright laws that protect the copyrights, the artists, the labels," he said. He viewed these as collective industry issues, not unique to Dapper Music.

On global competition, Akinwunmi noted it predates his company, with African artists often preferring international deals. Strategies include better partnerships with global labels. However, he stressed that complaints won't solve problems; action is needed. "It's just actually being a part of the solution as opposed to nagging about the problem," he said.

When asked if label heads collaborate to address these issues, Akinwunmi said some agencies exist but questioned their effectiveness. "I'm not sure of anyone that's currently effective and making those changes that need to be made," he said. He called for collective improvement, including his own involvement.

On Dapper Music's future growth, focusing on scaling operations, new genres, and international markets, Akinwunmi teased expansions but kept details vague. "I think you just have to watch and see," he said. "Most definitely, we have everything on the cards, and through God we'll achieve everything."

Pressed on diversification beyond street vibes, Akinwunmi reiterated openness to various genres, again mentioning Lasmid. He encouraged checking the artist's music and attending the concert. The label's strategy involves investing in young talent, providing live opportunities, and building confidence to propel careers.

Dapper's 'Trench Symphony', which took place in September, featured a variety of Dapper music artist performing their street vibe music in orchestral sound, highlighting the versatility of the Afrobeats sound and how far it travels and blends with various international genres.

Akinwunmi explained its origins in challenging norms around live music in Nigeria. "Live music is almost treated like a luxury," he said, noting artists often perform without bands or pre-recorded elements to cut costs.

"It's really about the fans at the end of the day," Akinwunmi said. Also adding that the key goals included inspiring audiences, boosting artist confidence, and showcasing versatility.

Speaking on the unusual September timing, which is outside the typical December concert season, Akinwunmi confirmed it was deliberate. "If you look at what's going on in the world, people are doing shows anytime, anywhere," he said, citing Afrobeats artists' global tours. This move challenges seasonal norms and promotes year-round musical experiences.

Akinwunmi's responses paint a picture of a label navigating Nigeria's evolving music landscape with pragmatism and optimism. By prioritising partnerships, transparency, and innovation, Dapper Music aims to support artists amid industry-wide challenges. The September "Trench Symphony" concert represents a step toward redefining live music in Nigeria, while plans signal ambitions for broader impact.

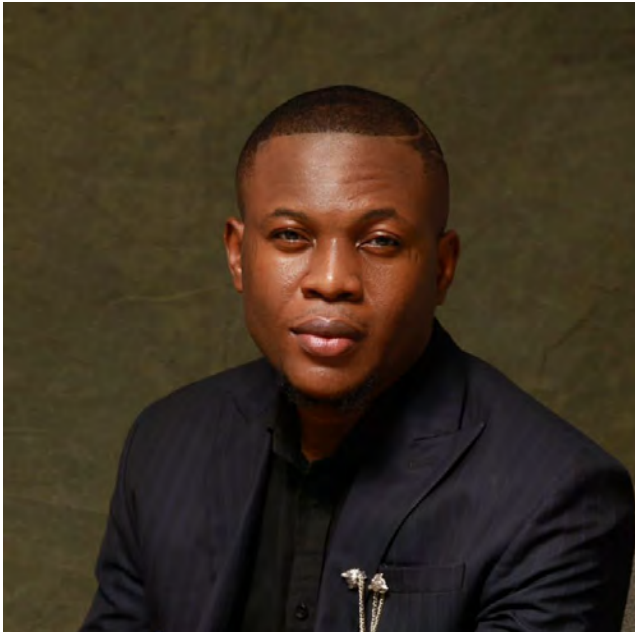
Looking ahead, Dapper Music's focus on diverse genres and potential international expansion positions it for growth in 2025 and beyond. The label's commitment to young artists, even those not yet at the top, highlights its role in nurturing the next generation of Nigerian and African talent.



HOW CHILDHOOD STRUGGLES WITH ASTHMA INSPIRED CHINEDUM VICTOR'S MISSION TO FIX NIGERIA'S HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

IFEOMA OKEKE-KORIEOCHA





As a child in Nigeria, Chinedum Victor knew what it meant to struggle for breath. Asthma attacks were a regular part of his life, and his parents often traveled long distances in search of rare medication.

Those experiences planted a seed that would later grow into a lifelong mission: making quality healthcare more accessible and affordable for millions.

The mission has never been more urgent. According to the World Health Organization, more than 600 million Africans lack access to essential health services, while the World Bank estimates that 11 million people on the continent are pushed into poverty each year by out-of-pocket health expenses. In Nigeria, the government spends less than 4 percent of GDP on health, far below the global average of 10 percent. For many families, pharmacies are the first and only point of care, with McKinsey reporting that over 60 percent of Nigerian patients begin their healthcare journey at the community pharmacy.

It is this gap between need and access that Victor has dedicated his career to closing.

According to Victor, “Nigeria’s healthcare underfunding crisis, spending less than five percent of its GDP on health, is both a challenge and an opportunity. The truth is, the public sector alone cannot finance or deliver the scale of reform required. The private sector must step in not merely as a service provider, but as an ecosystem builder”

Today, he is the Chief of Staff at Purelife Health, a forward-thinking healthcare company reimagining community pharmacies as CareHub One-Minute Clinics. Under his leadership, the Purelife Health Model is transforming pharmacies into tech-enabled primary care centers that provide diagnostics, preventive education, and treatment bringing healthcare closer to underserved communities across Nigeria.

His journey began in 2016 at a small community pharmacy, where his patient-centered approach quickly distinguished him. He combined pharmaceutical expertise with marketing flair, elevating customer care and building trust in a sector where patients often feel neglected.

That foundation prepared him for a fast-rising career at Purelife, where he later spearheaded brand repositioning campaigns, digital platforms, and operational strategies that expanded access and boosted revenue.

By 2024, Victor had helped secure an international \$100,000 grant, and played a pivotal role in scaling Purelife’s Primary Healthcare Fulfillment Center model—a blueprint designed to integrate diagnostics, medication therapy, insurance, and digital health services on a single platform.

His innovative approach has already improved patient retention by nearly 50 percent while redefining how health brands build trust.

For Victor, these achievements are deeply personal. “As a child with asthma, I experienced first-hand how lack of access and poor communication can make patients suffer unnecessarily,” he says.

“That’s why I’ve dedicated my career to building systems that deliver care faster, smarter, and with empathy. I believe access shouldn’t be a privilege; it should be a right. And I’ve been deeply involved in designing and executing systems that address the three chronic ailments of our healthcare sector, fragmentation, inaccessibility, and inefficiency.

Beyond his corporate role, Victor is deeply engaged in community outreach. He mentors young professionals through Y.O.U.S, a mental health initiative that encourages open conversations around depression and emotional intelligence. He also advocates for aligning Nigeria’s healthcare transformation with the UN Sustainable Development Goals particularly SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth).

On fixing healthcare in Nigeria, Chinedum believes it requires more than building hospitals; it demands restructuring the system that supports them.

“My role as Chief of Staff has allowed me to sit at the intersection of technology, operations, and strategy orchestrating collaboration between our pharmacy chain, telehealth platform, diagnostic partners, and logistics networks to create a closed-loop healthcare ecosystem”

From organising the Mr. and Miss Medilag Pageant as a student, to leading corporate storytelling campaigns, to pushing the boundaries of digital health adoption, Victor’s path has always been guided by creativity, resilience, and integrity. His work today is not just about filling prescriptions, it’s about prescribing a new vision for healthcare in Africa, one where innovation meets empathy, and where no child has to experience what he once did.

HOW PAUL ADAMS IS BUILDING AI-POWERED TOOLS FOR EDUCATION WITH WRITINOVA

IFEOMA OKEKE-KORIEOCHA





Growing up in a half-built house without electricity, Paul Adams knew darkness in its most literal form. Nights were long, and the glow of a television or computer screen was an unreachable luxury.

Yet, even then, the young boy was drawn to creation. He spent what little he had not on food, but on minutes at a neighborhood cybercafé, where the hum of computers and the glow of monitors offered him something priceless: access to the world of programming.

Those early sacrifices became the foundation of a career defined by problem-solving, resilience, and innovation. Adams, now a seasoned software engineer with stints across Nigeria, Austria, and Canada - the founder of Writinova, an AI-powered writing assistant designed to help students become better writers.

What sets him apart is not just his technical expertise though he has built products serving more than a million users but his relentless focus on real-world impact.

“I’ve always loved building,” Adams reflects. “For me, technology isn’t about code. It’s about solving problems that matter, in ways that can last.”

His obsession with building useful things began early. As a teenager, he repaired phones to make ends meet, fascinated by how gadgets worked. By university, he had shifted from hardware tinkering to software development, securing his first job at Capital Sage while still a student.

There, he built a full product from scratch, a defining moment that proved to him that skills and determination could outweigh lack of connections.

But it was his lived experience with poverty and the role education played in his own life that drew him toward building for students.

Writinova, which launched in 2024, is an AI-driven writing companion already serving over 2,000 users. Unlike other AI platforms that simply generate text, Writinova is designed to guide students toward clearer, stronger writing while preserving their unique voice.

The tool integrates advanced AI models from OpenAI, Perplexity, and DeepSeek. Its mission is not to replace teachers or encourage shortcuts but to provide students, particularly in resource-scarce contexts, with the kind of feedback and support many lack. “What excites me,” Adams says, “is that a student anywhere in the world can get high-quality writing guidance instantly. That’s something I wish I had when I was growing up.”

He is building at a time when AI in education is both celebrated and scrutinized. A 2025 study found that nearly 70% of university students now use AI tools to support their writing. While many praise these platforms for improving grammar, clarity, and structure, educators worry about over-reliance, plagiarism, and the erosion of critical thinking.

Adams acknowledges these challenges but sees them as design opportunities: “The question is not whether students will use AI — they already are. The question is how we can shape these tools so they build skills rather than undermine them.”

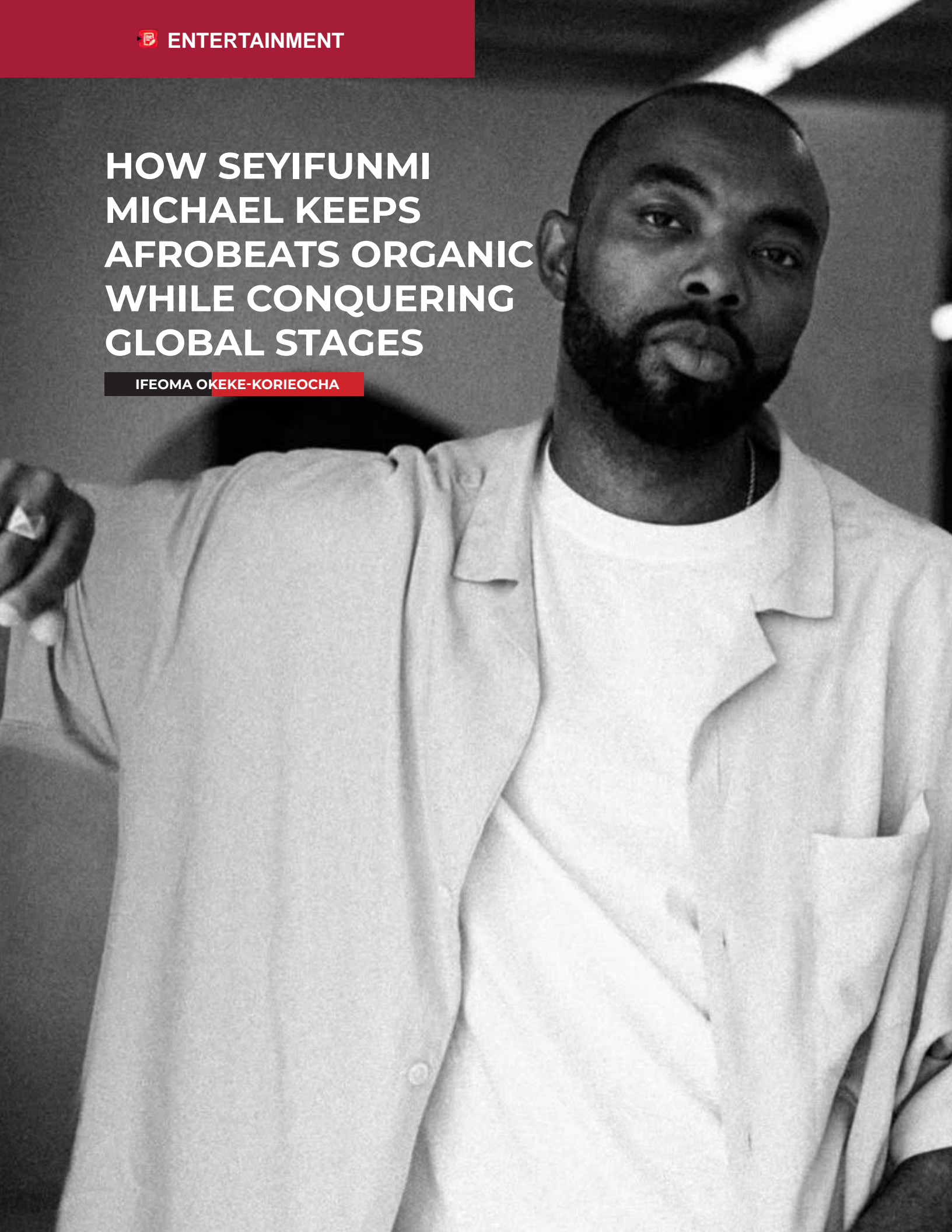
Writinova’s early adopters reflect that vision. Students report improved confidence and performance in their academic writing, not just cleaner essays. For Adams, that’s the real measure of success: not how many users sign up, but how many lives change because of what he builds.

Looking ahead, Adams envisions Writinova as more than a writing tool. He sees it as part of a larger mission to democratize access to quality education, especially in parts of the world where mentorship and feedback are scarce. “I know what it’s like to want to learn but not have the resources,” he says. “If technology can close that gap for even one student, it’s worth it.”

From nights in darkness to building platforms that could illuminate the future for millions, Paul Adams’s journey is proof that innovation often begins not with abundance, but with hunger for knowledge, for solutions, and for change.

HOW SEYIFUNMI MICHAEL KEEPS AFROBEATS ORGANIC WHILE CONQUERING GLOBAL STAGES

IFEOMA OKEKE-KORIEOCHA





In the complex, global machinery of Afrobeats, few figures possess the expertise to transition seamlessly from arranging a studio album to orchestrating a world tour.

Seyifunmi Michael is one of those rare architects. Spanning the critical roles of Music Director, Producer, Arranger, Programmer, and Composer, Seyifunmi has built a career defined by versatility and longevity.

His musical roots trace back to his childhood in the Ikotun-Egbe area of Lagos. His early passion was nurtured in a genuinely musical household: Seyifunmi's late mother was a gospel singer, his father played the guitar, and his sisters sang.

He began playing the keyboard at four or five and was the official keyboardist for his mother's church by age six or seven. It was in Ikotun that he forged his powerful chemistry with Adegkunle Gold. Seyifunmi Michael recalls the complementary nature of their early dynamic: "Adegkunle came into the picture... He was more of a singer, and I was more of a music person".

His synergy with AG led to the formation of their early collective, "The Bridge". The official leap into professional music production took place in 2015, cemented by the creation of Adegkunle Gold's debut album, *Gold*. Seyifunmi reveals that nearly 95 percent of the whole *Gold* album was already produced by him, with him creating the music in their Gbagada one-bedroom flat using an iMac before the project was refined by then-YBNL producer, Pheelz.

As Adegkunle Gold strategically transitioned from "Urban Highlife" on *Gold* to contemporary "Afropop" and R&B fusion on *Tequila Ever After*, Seyifunmi Michael has been the constant production and directional force across every project.

This unwavering, two-decade partnership culminated in Seyifunmi's assumption of Executive Producer for Adegkunle Gold's sixth studio album, *FUJI* (released in October 2025), a role he describes as officially "wearing the robe properly" after years of simply "just been working" together. "I've always been an executive producer and A&R on all of his projects," he declares.

Seyifunmi Michael's personal sound trajectory is rooted in his technical versatility and commitment to organic sounds. In the initial phase of his professional work, Seyifunmi was deeply immersed in the traditional Nigerian music that produced hits for Simi, Teni and Adegkunle Gold, utilizing elements like talking drums and "things like Alujo production".

However, recognising the need to evolve, Seyifunmi transformed into a more eclectic pop-infused style while still maintaining his organic core.

His commitment to continuous learning while maintaining his essence has allowed him to anchor Adegkunle Gold's bold sonic pivots while producing hits for Pheelz, Jacob Banks, Davido.

His production of Teni's monumental hit "Uyo Meyo" (2018) earned the Headies Award for Best Recording of the Year 2019.

The track was deeply personal to him, connecting him to his late mother through Teni's vocal tone and intonation which was from Ondo State where his mother came from. "I always want to create from my soul, not just my wrists, and for "Uyo Meyo", I knew I had to be in the zone," he shares.

Speaking on the idea behind the *FUJI* album, he said, "The core vision was to do a sound of Lagos and take it back to Fuji." As Executive producer, he oversaw every track (except the tracks, "Attack" & "Oba") "I'm the one that puts the puzzle together. Even if it's a complete image, I'm the one that says, ' Let's add a little color onto this one. We need to remove a little color from this one."

Their approach was to strike a balance and present a "mix of the core Fuji and a mix of pop in a way" to avoid sounding "alien" to global audiences.

For instance, on the track "Many People" (which was co-produced with The Kazez), Seyifunmi deployed advanced sound design, layering a grand piano, pop sounds, and a "crazy 808" before switching to the traditional "Shina Peters-type kick" in the second verse, an arrangement designed to ensure that the Gen Zs and the older gens understood the sound".

He also traveled with Adegkunle Gold to Ibadan to record Yinka Ayefele and his "Elegbes" (the traditional term for Yoruba backup singers) to deepen the cultural authenticity.



Looking ahead, Seyifunmi Michael is focused on expanding his influence beyond his established collaborations, centering his next five years on impact, mentorship, and diversifying his own musical output. He aims to step out of the background and put himself “more out there”. He’s gearing up for the release of a personal EP, expected in the first quarter of 2026.

Beyond this, Seyifunmi plans to collaborate more extensively with international and local A-list artists and producers and push his boundaries by venturing into new genres driven by rich storytelling.

As a Music Director, a major goal is to stage his own proper orchestral concert. This event would uniquely feature his produced songs, with the artists he produced them for performing live on stage, creating a concert experience where people would buy tickets “just because I’m the music producer that is involved”.

Underlying all these professional ambitions is a commitment to mentorship: he aims to “create kings and queens,” developing new artists and making himself available to mentor emerging producers without charge. Ultimately, Seyifunmi wants his legacy to be one of lasting impact, where his product outlives him.

“I want the future generations of creators to look back and study my sound for inspiration,” he concludes.

The second crucial pillar of Seyifunmi’s career is live music arrangement and direction, a non-negotiable requirement for Afrobeats artists seeking global crossover. He serves as the Producer and Music Director for Adekunle Gold’s official band, “The 79th Element”.

In this capacity, Seyifunmi is responsible for the logistics and artistry of international touring. His philosophy in this field is simple: “Live music has no rules. Whatever you give people is what they’ll take”.

His directorial portfolio includes the sprawling Catch Me If You Can Tour (North America, Europe, and Australia 2022) and the Tequila Ever After Tour (North America 2023). An example of his technical mastery in music arrangement came during a performance in Europe.

After researching the crowd, Seyifunmi switched the hit song “High” into an EDM arrangement at the end, leading to positive crowd reception and even social media virality. “It was one of my proudest moments as an arranger and music director”.

Seyifunmi has also served as a music director and arranger for Mayorkun, Taves, and Pheelz.

Beyond music, Seyifunmi is the founder and CEO of Three Kings Burger, a fast-food restaurant brand based in Lagos, Nigeria. Additionally, SEYIFunmi applies his skills as a Composer and Programmer to the corporate space, creating soundtracks and theme songs for major corporate clients, including Airtel Nigeria and Unity Bank Nigeria.



5 RESTAURANTS TO EAT CHINESE CUISINE IN LAGOS

ESTHER EMOEKPERE



Chinese cuisine has long found a loyal audience in Lagos, shaped by a growing appetite for global flavours and dining experiences that go beyond the familiar. Across the city, Chinese restaurants have become part of the urban dining routine — a mix of fine dining spaces and casual spots offering everything from sweet and sour chicken to handmade dumplings.

Yet, beyond the menus, these restaurants represent how Lagos continues to open its palate to the world. They cater to both the comfort of routine diners and the curiosity of those eager to try something new.

Here are five restaurants in Lagos serving Chinese meals in the city

White Garden Restaurant

White Garden Restaurant is located at 34 Balarabe Musa Crescent, Victoria Island, and operates daily from 11:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. It pairs a full stir-fry menu with a dedicated bubble tea selection. The menu covers a wide range of options, offering both quick bites and large shared meals. Their bubble tea menu starts from ₦7,500, featuring different flavour bases and toppings. The stir-fry menu includes starters from ₦10,000, soups from ₦7,000, seafood from ₦26,000, beef and lamb dishes from ₦24,000, chicken and duck meals from ₦24,000, pork dishes from ₦17,600, and vegetable, rice, and noodle meals from ₦11,600. One of their more notable offerings is the Chinese hotpot, which serves three to four people and costs ₦106,000. White Garden Restaurant holds a 4.4 rating on Google and has become known for

maintaining steady quality and variety in both meals and service. Its pricing and presentation place it among the more structured Chinese dining spots in Lagos.

The Green Pepper

The Green Pepper is located in Ikeja Town Square Mall on Obafemi Awolowo Road, Ikeja. Their menu cut across pastries, soups, rice dishes, noodles, and a range of protein-based meals, including beef, pork, chicken, prawns, fish, squid, and crab sauces. Prices are moderate and clear across categories — pastries start from ₦2,000, rice dishes from ₦3,500, soups from ₦4,000, and noodles, beef, or chicken dishes from about ₦6,000. Pork dishes begin around ₦6,500, while prawn and fish sauces go from ₦9,000. Squid and crab sauces are priced from ₦7,000 and ₦7,500 respectively. The restaurant offers dine-in, take-out, and delivery options, catering to both casual visitors and regular customers who prefer convenience. The Green Pepper currently holds a 4.4 rating on Google, a reflection of steady customer satisfaction. It is also considered one of the more affordable Chinese spots in Lagos, offering well-prepared meals at reasonable prices for both casual diners and returning customers.

Prime Chinese Restaurant (Prime Lagos)

Prime Chinese has been around for more than 25 years and remains one of the most recognised Chinese restaurants in Lagos. It is located at 860A Bishop Aboyade Cole Street, Victoria Island, Lagos.

Prime offers both dine-in and delivery options, with two notable perks — free delivery within select areas and a 24-hour dining service. Its menu is one of the most extensive among Chinese restaurants in the city, covering noodles, vegetables, rice, lobster, crab, squid, prawns, shrimps, duck, fish, chicken, beef, crispy rice, pork, cold dishes, pastries, and soups. Meals are served in bowl, medium, or large, allowing flexibility in price and portion size. The most affordable option is a bowl of steamed rice priced at ₦4,500, while duck dishes, the most premium on the menu, go up to ₦60,000. With a 4.1 rating on Google, Prime continues to attract both long-time patrons and new customers who value its consistency and round-the-clock service.

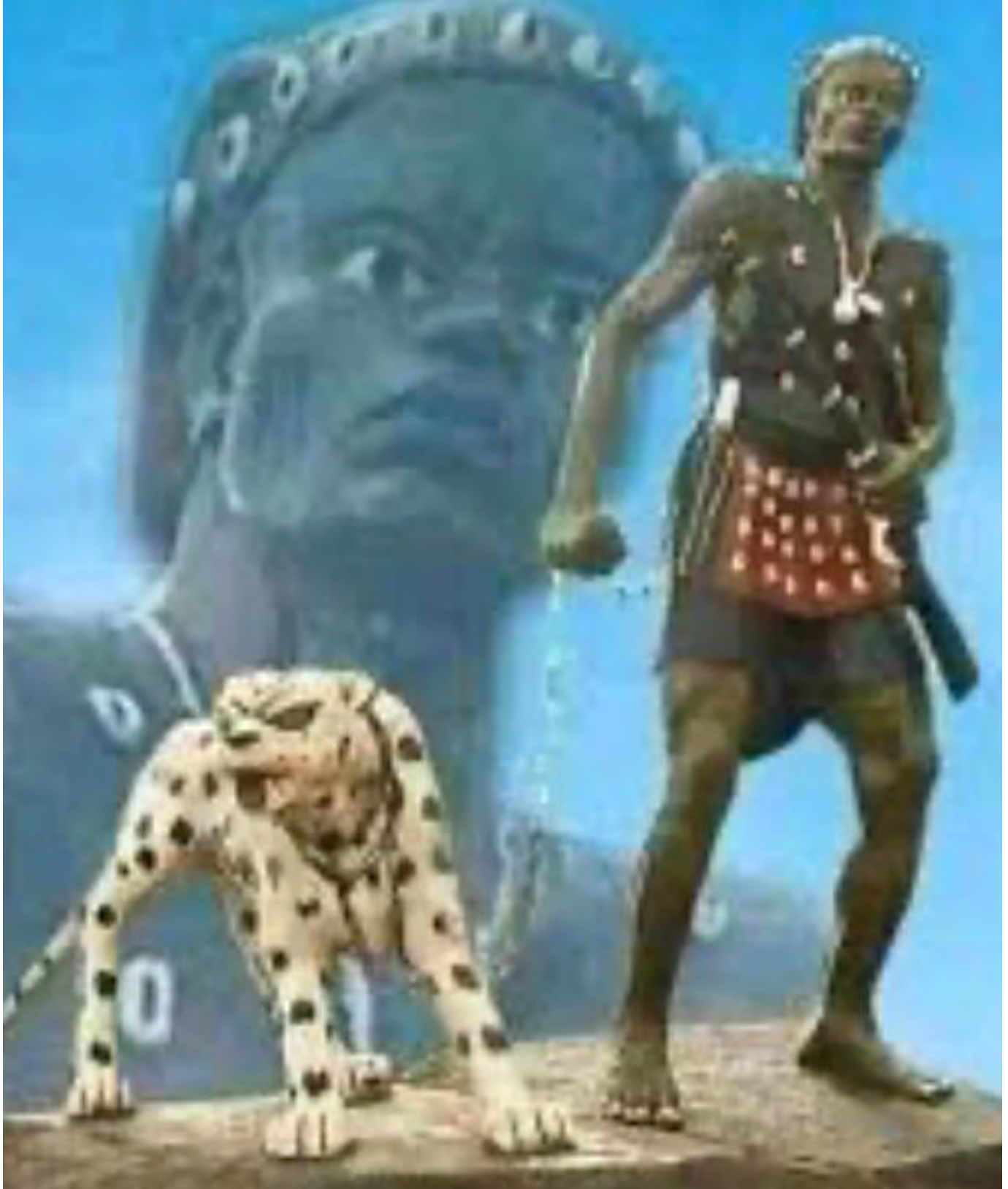
Chow 16

Chow 16 operates strictly as a take-out and delivery restaurant, with service beginning at 10:00 a.m. daily. It has a small waiting area for walk-in customers who prefer to pick up their orders while the food is being prepared. The brand has three locations across Lagos, one on the Mainland at No. 16 Adebayo Mokuolu Street, Anthony Village, and two on the Island at 27 Sanusi Fafunwa Street, Victoria Island, and Suite 16, Anuva Mall, Orchid Road, Lekki. The menu covers a wide range of Chinese meals, including rice dishes, noodles, beef, chicken, pork, prawns, crab, and fish sauce. There are also appetizers and finger foods, the latter available only at the Island outlets. Customers can order standard portions, deluxe meals, or tray options suitable for group orders and small events. Prices are moderate, with finger foods starting at ₦1,000, rice, chicken, and beef dishes from ₦5,500, noodles, pork, and crab meals from ₦6,000, prawns from ₦7,500, and appetizers from ₦3,000. Combo deals are available from ₦10,500. Chow 16 currently holds a 3.7 rating on Google, noted mainly for its convenience, variety, and reliable delivery service across locations.

Chai Tang

Chai Tang is located inside TwinWaters, Okunde Bluewater Zone, off Remi Olowude Street, Lekki Phase 1. It operates from Tuesday to Sunday between 12:00 p.m. and 10:30 p.m. The restaurant maintains a 4.4 rating on Google and is known for its wide-ranging Chinese menu that covers cold and hot appetizers, soups, fish, prawns, crab, chicken, squid, fresh lobster, beef, duck, pork, tofu, rice, noodles, vegetables, and desserts. The pricing reflects the diversity of the menu — a bowl of steamed fragrant rice goes for ₦7,000, while fresh lobster, the most expensive item, is priced at ₦85,000. Chai Tang also features a dedicated dim sum menu that highlights several traditional Chinese selections. Prices for dim sum start from ₦4,500 for Pak Choi and go up to ₦12,500 for prawn rolls with sesame seeds. Every Tuesday, the restaurant offers a 15% discount on all orders. While it is an aesthetically refined space that appeals to diners who appreciate design and ambiance, Chai Tang enforces a no-picture policy within its dining area.

ORONNA ILARO FESTIVAL 2025: A SHOWCASE OF YORUBA CULTURE AND TRADITION





Procession Carnival, the Sisi Ilaro Beauty Pageant, and the famous Ilaro cuisine feast tagged “Poosu Night.”

Other highlights include Bolojo Night at the Children’s Park, Itolu and Ita-osi Day celebrations, a medical outreach, 5km race, football final, and traditional performances such as Egungun, Igunnuko, and Efe/Gelede dances that attract visitors from within and beyond Ogun State.

The ancient town of Ilaro in Ogun State is set to come alive once again as preparations reach top gear for the 2025 Oronna Ilaro Festival, proudly themed “Festival of Joyful Grace.”

The much-anticipated cultural celebration, scheduled to hold from Friday, November 7 to Saturday, November 15, 2025, promises a radiant display of heritage, unity, and tourism excellence in Yewaland.

According to the festival committee, the annual celebration is a tribute to Oronna, the legendary warrior who defended Ilaro against external threats and brought enduring peace to the land. This year’s theme, “Festival of Joyful Grace,” reflects the community’s gratitude for the developmental strides and transformation that Ilaro has witnessed through divine favor. It is a call to celebrate with thanksgiving, to dance in the grace of shared history, and to embrace the joy of togetherness.

The festival will begin on Friday, November 7, with the conferment of chieftaincy titles at the private palace of the Olu and Paramount Ruler of Yewaland, His Royal Majesty, Oba Kehinde Gbadewole Olugbenle, Asade Agunloye IV. The next day, Saturday, November 8, will feature a roadshow and the unveiling of the festival mascot to officially signal the commencement of the celebrations.

A rich lineup of events will follow throughout the nine days, including visits to deities, traditional homage and cultural parades, the colourful Onigbaaje

The Princesses’ and Princes’ Night will hold on Friday, November 14, at the Yewa Frontier Hotel, while the grand finale and reception will take place on Saturday, November 15, at the Asade Agunloye Pavilion Ground, featuring Balogun horse processions, cultural displays, music, dance, and special recognitions.

Dapo Abiodun, the Governor of Ogun State, is expected to grace the grand finale as the Special Guest of Honour, alongside the Deputy Governor, Engr. Noimot Salako-Oyedele, federal and state lawmakers, ministers, and other top dignitaries.

Speaking on the forthcoming event, the Chairman, Oronna Festival Committee, Pharmacist Lekan Asuni, said the celebration serves as a reminder of courage, sacrifice, and communal pride. He extended a warm invitation to all sons and daughters of Ilaro, cultural enthusiasts, and tourists to join in the festival.

“Come witness the grace of tradition, the joy of community, and the heartbeat of Yewaland,” Asuni said.

Ajiroba Dapo Oke, the Chairman, Media, Publicity and Programme Committee, also reaffirmed the organizers’ commitment to making the 2025 edition a tourism and cultural attraction that will strengthen unity and economic development in Yewaland.

10 OVERLOOKED EUROPEAN DESTINATIONS TO VISIT IN 2026

CHISOM MICHAEL

Europe's major cities may steal the spotlight, but beyond the tourist hotspots lie towns and regions quietly preserving their charm. With overtourism prompting new travel restrictions and rising costs in popular capitals, 2026 is the year to explore differently.

From tranquil coastal hideaways to culture-rich inland escapes, a new wave of destinations offers authenticity without the crowds. Whether you're after a budget-friendly break, a peaceful retreat, or somewhere refreshingly off the beaten path, these hidden gems deliver Europe at its most genuine.

According to Time Out experts, the continent's best-kept secrets for 2026 promise history, community, and unspoiled beauty, proof that Europe's true magic often lies just beyond the guidebook.

Here are the 10 most underrated European destinations to visit in 2026

1. Izola, Slovenia

Slovenia's short coastline hides a small fishing town that offers a slower, more local experience. Izola, located between Piran and Koper, reflects a strong Venetian influence in its streets and architecture. Cafés, restaurants, and small workshops line its narrow alleys, while life by the marina unfolds at a gentle pace.



2. Machynlleth, Wales

Known locally as "Mach", this market town in mid-Wales holds deep cultural and historical importance. In 1404, Owain Glyndŵr established his Welsh parliament here, marking it as a key site in the nation's story. The town lies within the UNESCO-protected Dyfi Biosphere, an area rich

in wildlife and landscapes. It also hosts the Machynlleth Comedy Festival and an art museum set in a converted chapel.



3. Tilburg, Netherlands

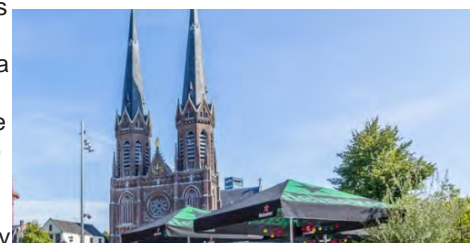
Once an industrial textile hub, Tilburg has transformed into a creative city that balances history and innovation. Its Textile Museum remains one of the Netherlands' most engaging cultural sites.



The city is also home to Roadburn Festival, a major annual event for fans of heavy alternative music. Outside the festival season, Tilburg offers a relaxed rhythm with strong links to art, design, and local craft.

4. Ulcinj, Montenegro

At Montenegro's southern tip, Ulcinj provides a different side of the Adriatic. The town is a centre of Albanian culture, giving it a distinct identity from the busier resorts further north. Its old town stands dramatically above the sea, while the coastline stretches into quiet beaches and nature reserves. Ulcinj's slower development has preserved much of its charm and local traditions.



5. Terracina, Italy

South of Rome, Terracina sits on the ancient Appian Way and offers access to the Pontine coast. The town combines a working port with Roman ruins and a historic centre of narrow streets and open squares. The beach at Spiaggia di Levante sits below the Temple of Jupiter Anxur, giving a view that links past and present. Ferries from the port connect to the islands of Ponza and Ventotene, known for their rocky inlets and clear waters.



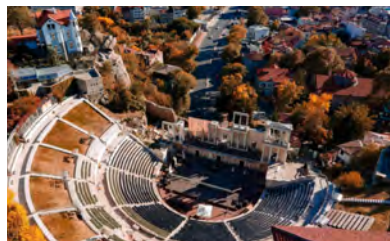
6. Gothenburg, Sweden

Sweden's second city provides a balance between maritime heritage and modern city life. Located on the west coast, Gothenburg has an active harbour, strong café culture, and a compact city centre that encourages walking. The neighbourhood of Haga is known for local cafés and shops, while Linnéstaden offers a lively evening scene. Visitors often explore the nearby islands for quiet nature escapes.



7. Plovdiv, Bulgaria

Bulgaria's second-largest city blends layers of history with a growing contemporary scene. The old town, with its cobblestone streets and colourful buildings, tells stories from the Roman, Ottoman, and Bulgarian Revival periods. The Ancient Theatre of Philippopolis remains in active use for performances, offering wide views of the city below. Plovdiv's food and wine culture continues to expand, reflecting both tradition and creativity.



8. Aarhus, Denmark

Aarhus combines the atmosphere of a university town with design-led urban development. The city's waterfront has been transformed into a social space with swimming pools, restaurants, and bars. The ARoS Art Museum, with its circular rainbow walkway, has become a defining landmark. Known as "the city of smiles", Aarhus encourages a relaxed pace of life, with local markets, music, and easy access to nearby forests and beaches.



9. Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Banja Luka, capital of Republika Srpska, offers a quieter experience of Bosnia and Herzegovina.



Its landmarks include the Orthodox Cathedral of Christ the Saviour and the Ferhadija Mosque, both carefully restored. The city's long history is visible in its Roman fortress, Habsburg-era buildings, and lively café terraces. Food is central to life here, with local restaurants serving traditional Balkan dishes at modest prices.

10. Isles of Scilly, England

Off the coast of Cornwall, the Isles of Scilly form a small archipelago with a close-knit community and open landscapes. Reached by ferry or small plane from Land's End, the islands offer coastal walks, quiet beaches, and clear waters. Local pubs such as the Mermaid Inn and Turk's Head provide a gathering point for residents and visitors. With few cars and little noise, the islands present a simple and refreshing kind of travel.



6 AFRICAN COUNTRIES YOU CAN VISIT VISA-FREE

CHISOM MICHAEL



African countries are taking bold steps toward unity and mobility, with several nations opening their borders to fellow Africans. As of 2025, six countries, including Seychelles, The Gambia, Benin, Rwanda, Ghana, and Kenya, now offer full visa-free entry to all African nationals, making travel across the continent easier, cheaper, and more accessible.

Beyond tourism, these policies support the African Union's Agenda 2063, which envisions seamless mobility, economic integration, and cultural exchange. For entrepreneurs, students, artists, and tourists, the initiative means fewer barriers and greater opportunities for collaboration and exploration.

With six nations leading the way, the vision of a borderless Africa is becoming a reality, and these destinations are ready to welcome travellers from across the continent, passport in hand and no visa required.

Here are 6 countries African citizens can visit visa-free

Seychelles

Seychelles, an island paradise in the Indian Ocean, has long been a trailblazer in visa-free travel as the first African country to fully embrace open borders by allowing entry to all nationalities without a visa. For African travellers, this means you can explore its stunning beaches, coral reefs, lush jungles, and vibrant Creole culture without any bureaucratic hurdles.

The Gambia

The Gambia, often called the "Smiling Coast of Africa," has offered visa-free access to all African nationals since 2019,

welcoming visitors to experience its hospitality, scenic riverbanks, vibrant markets, and rich history. With river cruises, diverse wildlife, and a lively cultural scene, the country offers plenty to explore, and Banjul, the capital, serves as an excellent starting point for discovering West Africa.

Benin

Benin was among the first African countries to remove visa restrictions for fellow Africans, positioning itself as a hub of history and culture for those interested in the roots of Vodun (Voodoo) and the legacy of the Dahomey Kingdom. Visitors can explore its historical sites, vibrant cultural festivals, and beautiful coastal cities, with Ouidah's annual Vodun Festival in January being an unmissable highlight.

Rwanda

Rwanda has made significant strides in promoting regional integration by offering visa-free or visa-on-arrival access to all African Union member states. Renowned for its breathtaking landscapes, clean cities, and tech innovation, the country stands as a model of post-conflict transformation, with gorilla trekking and vibrant urban life among its top attractions. Kigali, its capital, is also celebrated as one of Africa's safest and cleanest cities.

Ghana

In January 2025, Ghana officially implemented visa-free entry for all African nationals, reinforcing its commitment to the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and its vision of a borderless Africa. Visitors can experience the country's rich history, vibrant music scene, and warm hospitality, with landmarks like Cape Coast Castle and the enduring legacy of the Year of Return serving as major highlights.

Kenya

Kenya joined the visa-free movement in July 2025, removing visa requirements for all African countries except Libya and Somalia due to security concerns. The policy supports Kenya's "open skies" initiative and strengthens its role as a major regional hub. Visitors can experience thrilling safari adventures, stunning coastal resorts, and the vibrant atmosphere of Nairobi, while travellers from Libya and Somalia are still required to obtain visas.

TECHNOLOGY CAN DETECT FRAUD, BUT ONLY HUMANS CAN INTERPRET INTENT - AYOOLA

...Afolabi on Fraud Prevention, Innovation, Building Trust in Financial Systems



In an era where financial technology evolves faster than regulation, Ayoola Afolabi, a Nigerian-born UK-based technology and fraud-prevention professional, stands strategically at the intersection of innovation, risk intelligence, and empathy. In this interview with BusinessDay Weekender, the Fraud and Change Professional at Barclays UK shares insights from his journey across Nigeria and the UK, reflecting on what it takes to build safer, smarter, and more human financial systems.

Before becoming popular as an international professional in the Fraud and Financial Technology space, Ayoola Afolabi cut his teeth by getting a degree from Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, before racking professional experience at FBN Capital and Diophantus Nigeria Limited.

Speaking on how his journey started, the Osun indigene traces it back to fascination with systems and their impact on humans.

“My journey into tech and banking has been quite organic,” Afolabi says. His fascination with how systems connect people led him from early digital banking tools in Nigeria to more complex fraud-detection platforms in the UK.

“What drew me to fraud prevention was seeing how technology could be used not just to move money faster, but to protect people better. Fraud prevention sits at the intersection of technology, psychology, and ethics, and that’s what keeps it endlessly interesting for me.”

Having experienced both the Nigerian and British banking ecosystems, Afolabi recognises their strengths and gaps.

“Nigeria’s banking system is one of the most dynamic in Africa. It is fast, innovative, and adaptive,” he notes.

Yet, the pace of innovation can outstrip regulatory coordination. “In the UK, data-sharing protocols between banks and regulators are much more structured. Nigeria has the talent and appetite for innovation; what’s needed now is coordinated data governance and predictive fraud-detection infrastructure.”

Experience with fraud prevention in the UK

At Barclays, Afolabi’s approach to fraud prevention is defined by the integration of tools, teams, and technology. “We’ve implemented multi-layered detection systems that blend rule-based analytics with machine learning. The goal is real-time decisioning—detecting fraud within milliseconds without frustrating genuine customers.”

Cross-training between fraud and change teams ensures operational insight feeds directly into innovation, creating a resilient, customer-centred system.

How Nigeria can follow in UK’s footsteps

Asked how Nigerian banks and fintechs can replicate such systems, Afolabi is clear: “It starts with data quality and collaboration.”

He advocates a three-step strategy—unifying internal data, investing in real-time analytics, and building shared intelligence layers, or what he calls Smart Numbers.

“The technology already exists; what’s needed is trust and regulatory support to make it work collaboratively.”

Contributing his part to helping Nigeria

With his non-executive director role at Diophantus Nigeria Limited, Afolabi helps bridge ideas with impact, leveraging his UK exposure to improve companies and systems in Nigeria.

“One of our flagship projects is FMTspace, a mobile banking app developed for an investment bank in Nigeria. We also built a digital billing and e-tag system for Oniru Estate in partnership with the Lagos State Government. It automates land rate payments and reduces revenue leakages.”

The most rewarding part for Afolabi is seeing Nigerians with requisite skill and awareness create world-class solutions that improve governance and efficiency.

On challenges, balance, and resilience

For a professional with an accomplished CV, there would have been a few tumultuous challenges and Afolabi agrees. He goes on to say, “There were times I felt

like quitting. Projects don’t always go as planned, and outcomes can take time. What helped was focusing on process over perfection and surrounding myself with mentors who helped me see challenges differently.”

Reflecting further, Afolabi says what would stand out as his biggest professional challenge is balancing innovation with regulation.

“In fraud prevention, we’re constantly pushing boundaries with AI and data integration, but we must stay compliant and ethical,” he reflects. “It’s a delicate balance—innovating responsibly while maintaining customer trust.”

Smart Databases and helping Nigeria’s financial future

Afolabi’s vision for Nigeria’s financial future revolves around Smart Databases, that is secure, anonymised systems where banks and fintechs can share verified fraud intelligence.

“Imagine a network where a suspicious phone number triggers an alert across all institutions without revealing personal data. That’s how we can reduce scam velocity and rebuild trust in the system,” he explains.

Despite the evolutions that have greeted financial systems across the world, Afolabi remains rooted on one thing, which is that technology must always serve people.

“Technology can detect anomalies, but only humans can interpret intent. That is why empathy is just as important as analytics. At Barclays, our fraud teams are trained to understand distress, recognise manipulation, and support victims. Every alert represents a person.”

Advice for the young professionals toeing his career path

For many young people who are also pursuing a career in finance, fraud detection and technology, the UK-based expert advises:

“Start where you are and stay curious. The future belongs to those who can connect disciplines: tech, risk, data, and empathy. Build integrity early; it’s the one currency that compounds for life.”

Looking ahead, Afolabi sees a future defined by adaptive intelligence – systems that learn in real time across institutions. “The UK is already moving toward AI orchestration and federated learning.”

He adds, “For Nigeria, the opportunity lies in leapfrogging, which is adopting these technologies quickly with local context. Fraudsters evolve daily, so must we.”

OPAY DOUBLES DOWN ON USER PROTECTION WITH NEW LOCATIONGUARD FEATURE



Financial technology company, OPay, has introduced a new security innovation, LocationGuard, as part of its continued push to strengthen user protection and digital trust in Nigeria's fintech space.

Unveiled during the company's MySecurity Campaign grand finale in Lagos, the LocationGuard feature is designed to offer users an additional layer of account protection through location-based authentication. The innovation allows users to set a safe zone for their mobile device, ensuring that if their phone is moved outside that zone, such as in cases of theft or loss, the OPay account automatically locks. Only the registered Face ID can reactivate it.

According to Elizabeth Wang, chief commercial officer of OPay, the new feature underscores the company's philosophy of placing customers' safety and satisfaction at the heart of its operations.

"At OPay, one of our strongest values is putting the customer first and when it comes to customer priorities, security always comes first. We continue to invest heavily in technologies that protect users from any form of digital threat," Wang said.

She explained that the fintech has built a series of in-house security solutions tailored to the Nigerian market, including Face ID authentication, Last Transaction Check, and USSD Lock, adding that the

newly launched LocationGuard brings real-world practicality to mobile banking safety.

“Our promise is real security that adapts to real life. We know how common device theft or SIM swaps are in Nigeria, so LocationGuard was created to automatically protect users even before fraudsters can act,” Wang said.

The unveiling coincided with the climax of the MySecurity Campaign, a 10-week digital education initiative that ran across Instagram, X (Twitter), Facebook, and TikTok. The campaign aimed to raise awareness about fintech safety and encourage users to adopt OPay’s built-in security tools.

Over 15,000 participants won weekly prizes and OPay merchandise, while four grand prize winners: Onyinye Ekeogu, Greatness Ezeonwuka, Adegoke Oluwatoyin, and Charles Ihugba, each received N1 million for their creative content promoting digital security awareness.

According to Oluwaseun Imadi, OPay’s enterprise marketing manager, the new product represents a major milestone in the company’s innovation journey. “Every product we unveil is designed for real users and real experiences. Our engineers have studied the daily risks Nigerians face online, and we’re building digital protections that are both simple and effective. Innovation at OPay is not just about technology—it’s about trust,” Imadi said.

The launch event brought together fintech users, influencers, and entertainment figures including Funke Akindele, Broda Shaggi, Brain Jotter, and Layi Wasabi, who partnered with OPay to amplify security awareness among young Nigerians.

Broda Shaggi praised OPay’s efforts, describing LocationGuard as a “super important” tool in the fight against cybercrime. “Security is a big issue in Nigeria. Everyone wants to take what you’ve worked hard for. But with OPay’s security features, your money is safe,” he said.

Similarly, Funke Akindele applauded OPay for blending innovation with customer reward. “We work so hard for our money, so it’s comforting to know our bank is working just as hard to protect it. Rewarding customers weekly and giving N1 million grand prizes? That is huge,” she said.

With eight advanced security tools now in its portfolio, including Face ID, USSD Lock, and the newly launched LocationGuard, OPay says it remains committed to building safer and smarter digital experiences for millions of Nigerians.

“We will continue to innovate, continue to educate, and continue to protect our users,” Wang reaffirmed.

WHY WE BREW DONCOCO LOCALLY – ONWUNALI, IKI LEADS BOSS



Innocent Onwunali, Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Iki Leads Limited, has explained why his company decided to produce its newest liquor brand, Doncoco, locally instead of importing it.

He offered the explanation at the unveiling of the new product in Lagos, over the weekend. He noted that the company's decision was driven by the need to make premium-quality drinks affordable to Nigerians.

He said: "The brands we introduced are not in Nigeria currently. They are mostly imported, and by the time you add the cost of importation, they become too expensive. But, since these ones are made here, Nigerians can afford them."

He described Doncoco as a blend of boldness and culture, adding that the brand was conceived to create memorable drinking experiences.

"We wanted more than just another bottle on the shelf. We wanted a drink that commands presence; a drink that says, 'I've arrived.' From that thought, Doncoco was crafted to speak to different moods, nights and personalities," he said. The product comes in five variants, comprising Dancoco Whisky

& Cola, Dancoco Vodka & Orange, Dancoco Single Malt Whiskey, Dancoco Vodka and Dancoco Tequila Reposado, each designed to appeal to distinct tastes.

He emphasised that the company's aim is to maintain affordable prices, despite inflationary pressures.

He assured that a bigger bottle size, locally produced and packaged, would be introduced within the next eight months.

"The market is already there. Our goal is to ensure Nigerians enjoy premium products without breaking the bank. And if there is inflation in the country, everybody will understand but we look forward to maintaining the prices we are starting with for a while, before an increase in price," he assured.

He expressed gratitude to his team and event partners for bringing the dream to life. "It's a dream come true. I thank my staff, the event planners and everyone who made this launch a success," he said.

Unveiling the product, a Nollywood legend, Kanayo O. Kanayo, commended the initiative, describing Doncoco as a proudly Nigerian product worthy of global attention.



“When you cook a good soup, you must give it a name, and that name sells it. This product has been made in our homeland to bring enjoyment and refreshment to Nigerians. Let’s toast to good health, prosperity and Doncoco,” he said.

Apart from Kanayo, five Nollywood actors and actresses who are the products’ brand ambassadors were in attendance. They include Zubby Michael, Nosa Rex, Catherine Onoja, Dukori Patience and a Lagos-based Liberian, Fanta Amonaline Kouyateh.

Onoja said she was proud to represent a product that “offers something for everyone.” Patience described Doncoco as a drink that gives vibes and confidence.

Liberian-born influencer Kouyateh expressed excitement about the brand’s potential, saying she looked forward to Nigerians “trying it, enjoying it, and having fun.”

Rex thanked the company for the partnership and assured that the world would hear about Doncoco, while Michael described Iki Leads’ founder, Onwunali, as a man of humility and courage. He noted that ordinarily his role model should be from the entertainment industry but noted that Onwunali is his role model.

He urged Nigerians to patronise Dancoco as a homegrown brand.

The event, which was held on Saturday, blended music, style and entertainment as guests toasted to the birth of what many described as ‘Nigeria’s drink of the century.’ly instead of importing it.

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THE AFRICAN DENTIST: REDEFINING DENTISTRY WITH PASSION AND INNOVATION



L-R: Ikenna Chima - Business Partner; Hilda Akinbami - Chief Operating Officer; Abraham Akinbami - Chief Executive Officer (The African Dentist); Babajide Williams - Administration Officer and Olatomiwa Akinnubi - Business Development Officer

What started as an oral health education initiative for Abraham Akinbami has gradually evolved into a one-stop destination for anyone seeking dental attention.

Akinbami, popularly known as the African Dentist, is the Founder and Managing Director of Toothmine Dental Clinic.

He began his journey by spreading the gospel of oral health education, which eventually led to the establishment of a modern dental clinic offering a wide range of dental services.

Speaking during the launch of Toothmine Dental Clinic in Lagos, Akinbami shared his story of how he became the

African Dentist. “I said to myself, what’s the next thing to do? I then said, maybe I should call myself the Nigerian dentist. Well, I thought to myself, that was really small thinking. Let’s think about something huge, something more dramatic. And that was where the name, the African dentist, came about.”

Akinbami’s vision was bigger than himself, and he knew he had to take a bold step to achieve it.

“I took out my phone, hit Instagram, and I typed out the African dentist. Voila, it wasn’t taken. Then I signed up on Instagram, YouTube, and Twitter, all platforms available, just to secure the name. And I moved ahead to start recording videos.”



Through his social media platforms, Akinbami educated people on basic oral health practices, such as how many times to brush in a day, the type of toothbrush to use, and the type of toothpaste to use. “Things as basic as how many times to brush in a day, the type of toothbrush to use, the type of toothpaste to use. Those things sound very basic. But interestingly, it cuts across all socioeconomic status.”

Akinbami’s passion for dentistry led him to establish Toothmine Dental Clinic, with the goal of providing quality dental care to patients. “I wanted to start a private dental clinic. Then it was time to choose a name again. You know how these names come about. Then Toothmine came. Now, how did I come about ToothMine? It’s restoring your tooth. So that’s how the name ToothMine came about.”

When asked about the future of dentistry practice in Nigeria, Akinbami said, “We’re transforming into digital dentistry where we utilize technology a lot. We scan digital scanners. With digital scanners, we can communicate with labs across the world and provide optimal care and provide accurate treatment for patients.”

Akinbami focuses on partnerships and building relationships with schools and clinics, “I am all about partnership. Now, what do I mean by partnership? Partnership with schools, building relationships with schools and clinics so that it’s not just about coming into the clinic. We’re also able to build relationships outside the clinic.”

Akinbami’s team, including Babajide Williams, the administrative officer, works together to ensure that the clinic provides quality care to patients. “Being an administrative officer at a branch is quite a lot. I mean, there’s the nurses, there’s the doctor, there’s the janitors. There’s the clinic as well in general. So we all have to come together as a team.”

The clinic’s ambience and patient comfort are top priorities for Akinbami. “We were intentional about a patient having to come in and feel a bit of warmth, you know, feel comfortable. And that wasn’t just it for us. You know, it wasn’t about just the beauty of the ambience of the space. We also wanted to be intentional about it being comfortable as well.”

Akinbami’s outreach programs aim to educate people on the importance of oral health and provide preventive care. “From time to time, like the business developer explained and mentioned, we have outreaches. So these outreaches are designed to ensure that we are able to capture the masses, like you said. And in those outreaches, we do preventive care, we do basic treatments, and we also go the further step to restore teeth.”

Akinbami doesn’t regret studying dentistry and is passionate about his work. “I don’t regret studying dentistry. One bit. Why? In school, we close by five. And then the medical students have calls, have ward rounds, and I was like, oh, thank God, I’m still in medicine.”



JOHN MOMOH SPOTS NIGERIA'S PROBLEM TO LACK OF CREDIBILITY

...as NECCI PR holds its 25th Roundtable discussions

CHARLES OGWO



In an era where information flows faster than ever, John Momoh, a veteran broadcaster and chairman of Channels Media Group, has identified credibility, rather than information, as Nigeria's greatest challenge.

During his keynote address at the 25th NECCI PR Roundtable discussions, themed; "The Ethics of Governance: Shaping Reputation through Public Relations", he emphasised that the problem of governance in Nigeria is lack of trust.

"Trust is the currency of leadership. Trust between leaders and citizens, government

and the governed, and between Nigeria and Nigerians.

"People no longer take official statements at face value. They hear promises that don't match their pay, see projects launched but rarely completed," he said.

He emphasised that when citizens stop believing their leaders, no amount of publicity can repair that loss of faith, and this he said is the very heart of credibility.

"When we talk about ethics of governments, we're talking about what leaders do when



no one is watching. Because ethics is the summation of integrity plus transparency and accountability.

“It means doing the right thing, not the complicated thing, it’s transparency in all forms. Letting the light shine on decisions, and it’s accountability,” he noted.

Nkechi Ali-Balogun, the founder/convener of NECCI PR Roundtable discussions, said over the years, the PR roundtable has evolved into a respected forum for dialogue, learning and advocacy.

“We have remained true to our founding vision to promote professionalism, uphold ethics and use communication as a tool for development and nation building. Our impact over the past 25 years has been significant,” she said.

She announced the launch of the NECCI Public Relations Pulse Excellence Prize, which is aimed at promoting professionalism in the industry.

“Today, we are proud to launch the NECCI Public Relations Pulse Excellence Prize. This initiative aims to cultivate knowledgeable and skilled public relations professionals who will make a significant impact in the industry,” she said.

Godrey Ogbechie, group executive director at Rainoil Ltd, said that ethics gives governance its soul and public relations, when practiced truthfully, gives practitioner’s soul a voice.

Ogbechie emphasised the need for integrity even in the face of crisis management.

“I’ve learned that integrity is the best crisis management tool, when you choose openness over silence, honesty over convenience, trust grows in tough times.

“We are in tough times, not just in Nigeria, even those of you who may disagree, but globally, these are really very tough times. As we are professionals, we must more than be storytellers, we must be truth tellers; let our messages align with our values,” he said.

She reiterated that if Nigeria’s reputation is to rise, ethics must move from documents to daily conduct, from slogans to standards. “Let us make ethics our strongest brand,” she urged.

Ike Neliaku, the NIPR president, represented by Emmanuel Dandaura, the vice-president at NIPR, said the issues of ethics, governance and the strategic role of public relations cannot be overemphasised.

“Governance everywhere is under intense public scrutiny. Citizens are more vocal in the digital spaces, and they are also unforgiving as far as demanding accountability is concerned.

“Let us face it, no amount of public relations can save unethical governance. You can try your best to polish an image, but if the conduct is rough, the shine won’t last,” emphasised.



Neliaku highlighted the need to train a new generation of public relations practitioners who understand that ethics is not a chapter in a textbook, but an oxygen of credibility.

“Let us use our skills not just to promote power, but to humanise it. Not just to shape messages, but to reveal meaning in public life.

“As we celebrate this silver jubilee, let’s remember that reputation is not what people say about us when we issue a press statement. It is what they believe about us when the microphone is off,” he said.

Idris Malagi, the minister of information, stressed that the link between the ethical governance and national reputation has become critical; hence, he said as government communicators and stakeholders in the information

ecosystem, practitioners must continue to uphold ethics, transparency and the truth at the foundation of every effective public communication.

“As the Federal Ministry of Information and National Orientation, our work is deeply anchored in this main principle. Through the renewed agenda of President Bula Tinubu, this administration is committed to rebuilding public trust, promoting transparency and ensuring that government communication serves as a bridge between government and the people.

“Through responsible information management, media engagement and national orientation, we aim to foster a culture where truth, accountability and integrity is defined by our national narrative,” he said.

Dignitaries such as Tokunboh George-Taylor, Nkiru Olumide-Ojo, AliceAjeh, Abike Dabiri-Erewa, Rafia Oseni, Yakubu Lamai, Femi Adesina and Lampe Omoyele, among others lend their voices to promoting ethics in Nigeria’s governance at all levels.



FATIMA MAADA BIO, RECEIVES AEMA BLACK PRIZE FOR GLOBAL ADVOCACY AT AEGC 2025 SUMMIT IN NEW YORK



Fatima Maada Bio, the First Lady of Sierra Leone, was honored with the prestigious AEMA Black Prize during the recently concluded African Economic Global Convergence (AEGC) 2025 Summit held on the margins of the 80th United Nations General Assembly at The Yale Club of New York City.

The award recognised her outstanding advocacy for gender equity, girl-child education, and national transformation, as well as her global leadership in protecting women and children's rights.

Through her "Hands Off Our Girls" campaign, H.E. Dr. Bio has set a new standard across Africa in policy influence, survivor support systems, and awareness creation at both local and international levels.

Presenting the award, the AEGC Board commended her for redefining the role of First Ladies as active change-makers and champions of justice. Her work, which blends civic courage with cultural dignity, has gained widespread recognition from the United Nations, ECOWAS, and other global platforms.

This recognition not only cements her place as a humanitarian powerhouse but also amplifies Sierra Leone's growing diplomatic and socio-economic leadership across Africa.

The AEMA Black Prize is awarded to distinguished individuals of African descent who have made global contributions to justice, leadership, enterprise, education, and cultural advancement. It is one of the highest civilian honors bestowed at the African Economic Global Convergence Summit.

WHY DO WOMEN HAVE TO CODE-SWITCH AT WORK?

EKEMINI AKPAKPAN

In February 2019, Purl broke the internet. Pixar's animated short — which I first came across on that year's International Women's Day — tells the story of bubbly Purl who joins a corporate office steeped in “bro culture”. At first, Purl's warmth and vibrancy make her stick out — and not in a good way.

Faced with exclusion and dismissiveness, she does what many women in workplaces are forced to do: she sheds her softness, swaps her color for conformity, and adopts the brash, abrasive behaviors of her male colleagues and becomes accepted. By the end of the film, another feminine-presenting character enters the office, but this time, the environment is different.

Because Purl, through her hard-won survival, had paved the way. Purl is fiction, but it mirrors the reality of many of us. This isn't just a story about fitting in — it's a reflection of how rigid gender norms shape, and sometimes distort, who we're allowed to be at work.

What Does Bro Culture Look Like?

It's easy to imagine it as crude jokes or overt aggression, but bro culture in the workplace is often more subtle. At its heart, it's a set of male-coded behaviors that aren't inherently bad.

It looks like dominating conversations, risk-taking bravado, and aggressive competitiveness. Emotional detachment is another hallmark - the “leave your feelings at

the door” mindset that frames empathy as weakness.

Bro culture also thrives on transactional networking — relationships built on leverage, access, and “what can you do for me?”. It favors command-and-control leadership styles. And then there's the brash humor and offhand banter — edgy jokes, and sometimes inappropriate comments masked as friendly bonding.

The problem isn't that these behaviors exist; is that they've become the unwritten rules for workplace success.

Purl May Be A Character, But For Many Women, Her Story Hits Home.

We know what it feels like to walk into spaces where the unspoken expectation is to fit in.

Take the “Power Suit”. It started with the 80s and 90s power-dressing era — think padded shoulders, dark colors, and sharp, structured tailoring. The silent rule has become clear: To be taken seriously, dress like a man - corporate style codes that reward muted colors and neutral palettes that downplay femininity.

You'd learn quickly that a soft, expressive style might make you look approachable, not “leader-like.”

Then there's the “Professional Headshot” look. Almost laughably rigid: a strong jawline, serious expression, eyes that say no-nonsense. Smiling too much? You risk looking frivolous.

Seem too warm? Suddenly, you're not "executive material." The message is subtle yet clear — your competence should radiate from how intimidating you look, not from your approachability.

And let's not forget the pressure of male-coded informal networking — golf outings and whiskey tastings. This is not to say they're male sports by nature, but have long been male-coded power spaces. For many women, access to decision-makers and deal flow means mastering these rituals. You become the woman who "networks well with the guys," the one they say is "one of us."?

The Outcome? Women Become Left Out, Or Left Behind

When access to leadership happens in informal power circles such as late-night meetings built around male-coded norms, exclusion becomes inevitable. These circles aren't wrong by default, but they conveniently shut women out. Married women and caregivers are seen as too "unavailable".

And when women finally get in, it's often not because their unique perspective is valued, but because they've learned to mirror the gatekeepers. Being left out means missing mentorship, sponsorship, and critical decisions.

Leadership itself is still defined by narrow, male-coded traits — boldness, dominance, emotional detachment — forcing women to either perform 'stereotyped' versions of leadership or risk being sidelined.

And the bias spills beyond boardrooms into funding. Male custodians of capital back what

they know — for example, overlooking women-led ventures in sectors like fashion, food, wellness, or social impact. Not because they lack value, but because the men holding the checkbooks don't relate.

Let's Do Better

We need to redefine leadership — valuing competence without coding it as masculine. Access must be democratized, and power circles shouldn't be gated by rituals or relationships that exclude women by default. Funding conversations need new voices — more women investors, sector-diverse panels, and intentionality about backing leadership that doesn't mirror the status quo. Because here's the truth: when leadership is only accessible to those who conform, we'll lose out on the innovation, creativity, and transformative power of authentic diversity.

Ekemini Akpakpan is a Strategic Leader and Gender & Development Specialist with over a decade of experience strengthening institutions across government, civil society, and the private sector. She specialises in designing transformative programs, building governance systems, and advancing gender equity and inclusive leadership. Akpakpan has led strategy and institutional development initiatives for organizations such as WISCAR, Heifer International Africa, and the Nigerian Police Force Gender Unit.

Her thought leadership publications have been published on the World Economic Forum, She Leads Africa, on BusinessDay Women's Hub where her writings focus on women's empowerment and leadership in Africa.

REDEFINING LEADERSHIP: LESSONS FROM YOUNG WOMEN WHO DARE

EKEMINI AKPAKPAN

I remember my former classmate Georgia Akwudike, a young single woman in leadership, sharing a moment of vulnerability. She whispered a prayer: “God, I can trade all of this—my career—for family.” Almost immediately, she felt convicted. Her purpose, tied to the impact she makes through her work, wasn’t something to sacrifice. It was a reminder that her journey wasn’t an either/or equation.

The definition of success for young single women rarely includes leadership. Ironically, the word leading implies excelling, yet when a young single woman occupies that space, it becomes unacceptable. Yes—gender norms happened. They dictate what is considered “appropriate” for young women. Being aspirational, single, and successful is often treated as deviance.

Why is being a young woman in leadership not the norm?

For the same reason, women in leadership are not the norm, but even more so. As a young woman, you get penalized for making career choices that land you in leadership. It is perceived as though you’ve “unchosen” the things society deems right for women. Simply put, you’ve broken a record. The systemic barriers designed to exclude women from leadership suddenly feel like walls you’ve somehow bypassed.

It is almost as if to say you have no purpose or existence outside traditional gender roles. To lead authentically, then, can feel like betraying yourself—your own authenticity is at stake.

For me, being in leadership was a deliberate pursuit, almost like an epiphany that hit me. I came to a realization early: so many people point fingers at the government for their problems, but change essentially starts with us. As a young undergraduate, I started volunteering for several initiatives in search of answers to social issues.

One of my earliest social impact projects was to furnish public school libraries. I saw the gaps, felt people’s burdens, and I wanted to be part of the solution. That desire unknowingly put me on a trajectory toward leadership.

So no, I did not arrive in leadership by accident, and there is nothing wrong with that. Except, of course, that I am not a man. And I had this epiphany at 21.

The story of Georgia - Defying Gender stereotypes as a young woman in leadership

When I wrestle with stereotypes, I look at women like Georgia, and I am reminded: purpose-driven leadership is not about conforming to stereotypes, but redefining them. In a world where young women in leadership are often treated as

anomalies, Georgia Akwudike stands as a bold contradiction. As Director of Specialty Operations across Africa, the Middle East, and Turkey for Amazon in a male-dominated sector, she challenges the systemic idea that ambition in your youth and being a woman are mutually exclusive. Beyond the boardroom, she DJs, and occasionally boxes—proof that leadership is not about narrowing yourself into a mold, but expanding into purpose wherever it leads. More importantly, Georgia’s story reveals something else: that the real sacrifice is made when women silence their purpose to fit stereotypes.

Showing Young Women it’s Possible - Defying Molds

You are not the Norm

And that’s okay. Standing out is simply an outcome of hard work, not something to be shamed for. If we don’t celebrate those who excel, we risk raising a generation of women who will not attain their full potential but limit themselves to fit narrow expectations. That is why I am proud to have facilitated a session at Georgia’s Raising Giants Initiative, which nurtures young women the Proverbs 31 way, fostering a holistic, multidimensional definition of success.

You are the Definition of Success

A friend once told me that success, my way, is unattractive. That day, I not only refused to see myself through that mirror but lost myself in the process. I own my success and the values I stand for. Leadership, excellence, aspiration, and authenticity are not crimes; they are expressions of purpose-driven growth and self-awareness.

It’s a Double Standards world

It’s ironic how young women are criticized for rising into leadership, yet simultaneously expected to cross boundaries. There’s an expectation that young women in positions of power have freedom, lack accountability as singles, and must be reckless, opportunistic, or morally lax. True leadership is rooted in discipline, integrity, and courage—qualities too often assumed absent in young women who dare to lead.

Lift as You Climb, Lets Raise More Young Women Leaders!

Breaking molds isn’t just personal, it’s generational. By mentoring, advocating, and creating spaces for young women to see themselves reflected in leadership, we ensure that they know they too can thrive without sacrificing authenticity.

THE BLOOM AFRICA, UNFPA PARTNER TO PROMOTE MENSTRUAL HEALTH

...deliver 100,000 reusable period underwear to Nigerian girls



The Bloom Africa and UNFPA Deliver 100,000 Reusable Period Underwear Across Nigeria in Landmark Effort to Address Period Poverty

...Largest single donation of period supplies by a single donor, valued at \$1.2 million, was made possible through a partnership with Delta Airlines, UNFPA — the United Nations agency for women and girls.

In an effort to combat period poverty and promote menstrual dignity, The Bloom Africa, a non-profit organization dedicated to the development and empowerment of Black and Diasporan girls, has, in partnership with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) – the UN agency for women and girls, and Delta Air Lines, delivered 100,000 pairs of reusable period underwear to girls and women across Nigeria.

The supplies, valued at \$1.2 million, were transported to Nigeria in partnership with Delta Air Lines, ensuring that vital menstrual care products reached some of the most underserved communities.

This initiative — the largest single donation of period supplies by a single donor — was coordinated through USA for UNFPA in support of UNFPA Nigeria, which will lead distribution efforts across the country.

The supplies are expected to reach more than 30,000 girls nationwide and represent a major step forward in providing sustainable, reusable menstrual solutions.

Each pair of underwear can be washed and reused, reducing both environmental waste and the barriers to education caused by lack of access to menstrual products.

Earlier this month, The Bloom Africa joined UNFPA officials for an official government handover ceremony at an Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camp in Maiduguri, Borno State, where more than 8,000 pairs were distributed.

The event was presided over by Chris Macauley, UNFPA Head of Office in Maiduguri, and Hajija Aishatu, representing the Borno State Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development.

A second handover took place in Lagos State, led by Abbigail Msemburi, Head of the UNFPA Lagos Liaison Office, alongside Ayeni Olasumbo of the Lagos State Ministry of Health.

Thousands of additional pairs were formally presented to the Lagos State Government to support girls across the region.

In the coming weeks, several other states across Nigeria will also receive allocations of the 100,000 pairs through partnerships with state ministries and local agencies.

Other partners in the U.S. who made the mission possible were SteelSky Ventures - a VC fund shaping the future of healthcare, Geodis, a global transport and logistics company and Good360, a nonprofit connecting corporations to nonprofits. This collaboration between civil society, an international agency, and the private sector demonstrates the power of shared purpose in driving sustainable change.

Speaking on the initiative, Tosin Durotoye, Founder of The Bloom Africa, emphasized the organization's mission to create long-term impact through access and dignity:

“When girls can manage their periods safely and confidently, they can show up fully—in school, in their communities, and in life. Through our partnership with UNFPA and Delta Air Lines, we’re ensuring that no girl is held back by a natural part of who she is.”

The Bloom Africa plans to continue the campaign through its ongoing partnership with UNFPA and other strategic allies, expanding access to menstrual health resources for girls and women across Africa.

HOW AKWA IBOM'S AVIATION PUSH IS TURNING ITS RUNWAY INTO A TOURISM GATEWAY

EKAETTE OKON JOSEPH



When a state decides that time on its runway matters as much as time in its coffers, its ambition is no longer symbolic, it becomes operational. Last week, Victor Attah International Airport (VAIA) in Uyo resumed night operations after a calibrated overhaul of its airfield lighting and navigational aids, removing the sunrise-to-sunset restriction that had constrained flight schedules for years.

That technical upgrade is small in vocabulary but large in consequence: it makes Akwa Ibom a more predictable destination for tourists, business travellers and cargo operators alike.

“I am pleased to announce that night flight operations have been fully restored at Victor Attah International Airport,” Governor Umo Eno said in an official statement announcing the development. “Last week, I directed the Ibom Airport Development Company to complete the overhaul of navigational aids and lighting systems by September 30, and I am glad to report that the deadline was met.”

The governor’s public deadline followed a decisive injection of capital earlier this year. In July the state authorised ₦1.194

billion for a comprehensive overhaul covering replacement of navigational aids, upgrade of airfield lighting, settlement of electricity bills and service charges to the Nigerian Airspace Management Agency (NAMA). That budget line made the restoration possible and signalled that the upgrade was policy, not afterthought.

Why does lighting an airfield matter so much to tourism? Because aviation is an ecosystem, each improvement unlocks activity across other sectors. Night operations extend scheduling flexibility, reduce the cost penalties airlines face when they must compress routes into daylight windows, and broaden the range of flight times available to business and leisure travellers.

It also supports cargo, charter, medevac, and even private aviation schedules that demand flexibility.

For Ibom Air, the state-owned carrier that uses Uyo as its hub, the ability to operate after dusk means more rotations, better connections and an easier time matching flights to events, conferences and hotel bookings across the state.



Ibom Air has been a visible anchor of the state's strategy to use aviation to drive growth; making the airport operational round the clock strengthens that anchor.

Ibom Air is a great success story among state-owned airlines in Nigeria, and for the first time, it recently opened its books to scrutiny, despite being 100 per cent funded by the state government. No airline has come clean on its revenue. Ibom Air has demonstrated tremendous success, indicating that airlines can be profitable in Nigeria if properly managed.

The carrier is projected to increase its revenue to N150 billion in 2025 from N95 billion in 2024, indicating that Ibom Air is growing organically and positioning itself as an airline with the potential to revolutionise the airline business in Nigeria.

The Chief Executive Officer of Ibom Air, George Uriesi, recently reiterated the carrier's ambitious plan, noting that it plans to join the Global Distribution System (GDS) by October 2025; a key instrument to interline and expand with other global airlines.

His words, "It takes discipline and determination to run airlines like Ethiopian Airlines, ASKY, RwandAir, Air Côte d'Ivoire, and others are cleaning up the market, and we need to respond. They night-stop in Nigeria. ASKY's passenger traffic was around 100,000 but has grown to 1.5 million passengers. That is remarkable. We need to start responding to the market. We believe that there is room for improvement. We can do it."

Aviation analyst Chris Aligbe recently described the state's approach as "a rare example of subnational discipline and vision in Nigeria's aviation sector," noting that "Ibom Air has already shown that a state can run a viable airline if guided by sound management rather than politics."

Restoring runway lighting is necessary, but not sufficient. The significance of this milestone lies in how it dovetails with the Arise Agenda's broader tourism and infrastructure programme. Under the governor's plan, a modern international terminal, an MRO (maintenance, repair and overhaul) facility, an Aviation Village, the ARISE Resorts and other visitor assets are scheduled to come online in the months ahead.

Together, these projects convert a technical capability, night operations into an end-to-end travel proposition that can support multi-day stays, conferences and family leisure travel.

Consider the visitor's decision tree. A cultural tourist from Lagos weighing a weekend trip to Akwa Ibom is influenced by flight frequency, arrival and departure times, ease of ground transport and the quality of accommodation.

Before the upgrade, limited flight windows narrowed choices and pushed some travellers to choose destinations with more convenient schedules.

With 24-hour capability, VAIA becomes comparable with other regional hubs and gives tour operators the confidence to package Akwa Ibom into holiday itineraries. That translates directly into hotel bookings, restaurant revenue and employment for guides, drivers and artisans.

The state's approach is deliberately sequential: funds were allocated to correct the most urgent operational shortfalls, a strict timeline was enforced, and the technical validation by NAMA ensured compliance with aviation safety standards.

Governor Eno publicly commended NAMA and the airport board for delivering on the mandate, reflecting a partnership model that mixes political will with technical oversight.

Evidence from other jurisdictions bears the point out. States or cities that synchronise airport operations with tourism product development routinely see faster growth in visitor numbers than those that treat transport and attractions as separate problems.

Akwa Ibom's inventory; Ibeno Beach, historic sites in Ikot Abasi, Oron's cultural assets and the planned ARISE Resorts is internationally competitive on paper; the recent upgrades make it reachable in practice. Travel trade and media attention already followed the announcement, an early sign that perception is beginning to align with reality.

There will, rightly, be scrutiny. Restoring the lights must be matched with reliable power, robust air traffic procedures, completed terminal works and improved ground transport.

The state has recognised that, and the funding decisions announced in July were aimed precisely at knitting those

elements together. What remains essential is steady follow-through: completing the international terminal, bringing the MRO online to reduce aircraft ground time and working with carriers to open new routes that feed Uyo into national and regional networks.

If implemented faithfully, the payoff is tangible and multipronged: increased tourism receipts, diversified revenue for a state preparing for a future "with or without oil," more jobs in hospitality and aviation services, and the emergence of Uyo as a reliable arrival point for conferences and cultural festivals.

Governor Eno's directive and the subsequent delivery on the timeline demonstrate that infrastructure strategy, when paired with execution, changes outcomes.

As he said when releasing the funds in July, "World-class infrastructure is the bedrock of economic transformation under the Arise Agenda."

The restoration of night operations at Victor Attah International Airport is a technical improvement with strategic consequences. It is proof that a state can reimagine its geography by investing in the connective tissue that turns potential into visitation.

Our runway is now lit; the next task is to fill the flights, the hotels and the plates of travellers who will discover that Akwa Ibom's coastlines, culture and hospitality are, at last, open around the clock.

Ekaette Okon-Joseph is Special Assistant on Media to the Governor of Akwa Ibom State.



MUSEUM NARRATIVES: WHOSE STORIES ARE BEING TOLD?

Museums are more than buildings filled with artefacts. They are storytellers. Each object on display speaks about identity, memory, and power.

But here's a question worth asking—whose stories are they really telling? For many years, museums across the world have shared histories told through the eyes of colonizers, not the colonized. The narratives often celebrate discovery while silencing the discovered. Today, a global shift is happening. Curators, artists, and communities are questioning what has long been accepted. They're asking for inclusion, truth, and representation. In Africa, this change feels urgent.

Many artefacts that tell African stories still sit in European museums. The push to reclaim these objects is not just about ownership. It's about voice and visibility. This conversation is reshaping how we see museums—not as keepers of history, but as partners in truth-telling.

In this digest, we will discuss the story being told in African museums and how the narrative is being reclaimed. Whose Story Gets Told?

Every exhibition makes a choice—what to show and what to hide. Those choices shape how we understand history. For decades, museums presented African, Asian, and Indigenous artefacts as curiosities, not as living culture.

The result? A one-sided story that glorified colonial “exploration”. According to The Guardian, nearly 90% of Africa's cultural heritage remains outside the continent, mostly in European museums. This imbalance affects how generations learn about themselves and others.

Now, museums are being challenged to rethink their purpose. Should they remain neutral spaces, or should they take a stand for justice? Many are choosing the latter. New curatorial practices invite local communities to co-create exhibits. For instance, the Museum of Black Civilizations in Dakar, Senegal, aims to tell Africa's story through African voices. This shift is a call for authenticity and respect.



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Exhibition at the Museum of Black Civilisations, Dakar. (Photo courtesy of Maya Varichon)



Returned artefacts from the “Benin Bronzes” collection displayed at the signing ceremony and handover of the 119 Benin Bronzes returned from the Netherlands to Nigeria at the National Museum, Onikan, Lagos

Reclaiming the Narrative

Restitution movements have become central to this discussion. The return of the Benin Bronzes from European museums is more than a symbolic act. It’s an acknowledgement that history was taken, and truth must return home. This movement is inspiring other institutions to reflect on their collections.

But reclaiming narratives isn’t only about physical objects. It’s about who gets to speak. Artists, historians, and communities are demanding a seat at the table. They want to shape how their stories are told, displayed, and remembered.

Museums are changing, slowly but surely. They are learning that representation matters.

True storytelling requires many voices, not one dominant narrative. As visitors, we must also ask questions—whose story is this, and who is missing? Because in the end, museums are not just about preserving the past. They are about shaping how we understand it.



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

RANKING THE 10 HIGHEST-PAID PREMIER LEAGUE MANAGERS IN 2025

ANTHONY NLEBEM

The Premier League remains the world's most popular and money-spinning football league. The league is home to the most valuable clubs and some of the best-paid managers in the game.

Interestingly, six of the ten highest earners currently manage London-based clubs, a testament to the city's dominance in English football.

Below is the ranking of the highest-paid Premier League managers in the 2025/26 season, with data from the Premier League.

Pep Guardiola

– Manchester City (£20m annual salary)

Spanish tactician Pep Guardiola tops the list, earning around £20 million annually. The Spaniard tactician continues to justify his massive salary, having guided Manchester City to multiple Premier League and Champions League titles. Guardiola remains the benchmark for tactical brilliance and success in modern football.



Mikel Arteta

– Arsenal (£10m annual salary)

Former Guardiola assistant Mikel Arteta has emerged as one of Europe's top young managers. Since taking over Arsenal in 2019, he has transformed the club into a consistent title contender. Arteta signed a lucrative contract extension in September 2024, nearly doubling his wages as he looks to end the Gunners' 21-year title drought.



Unai Emery

– Aston Villa (£8m annual salary)

Unai Emery's career resurgence at Aston Villa has been remarkable. After short-lived spells at Arsenal and PSG, the Spaniard rebuilt his reputation at Villarreal before taking over at Villa Park. He has since guided the club to the Champions League for the first time in 41 years, earning a deserved £8 million annual salary.



Ruben Amorim

– Manchester United (£6.5m annual salary)

Appointed in November 2024, Ruben Amorim is tasked with restoring Manchester United's fading glory. The Portuguese tactician, who impressed at Sporting Lisbon, earns £6.5 million per year under a deal running through 2027. United fans are hopeful his progressive style can bring back the club's winning mentality.



Arne Slot

– Liverpool (£6.2m annual salary)

Dutch manager Arne Slot replaced Jürgen Klopp and has adapted quickly to life in England. Known for his attacking

philosophy and calm demeanour, Slot earns £6.2 million annually and has already guided Liverpool back into European contention.



David Moyes

– Everton (£5m annual salary)

After returning to his former club, David Moyes has stabilised Everton and brought discipline and structure back to Goodison Park. His experience and longevity in the Premier League make him one of the most respected managers in English football.



Thomas Frank

– Tottenham Hotspur (£5m annual salary)

Thomas Frank's managerial stock continues to rise. Having impressed with Brentford, he made the move across London to Tottenham. The Dane earns £5 million annually, leading Spurs' long-term rebuild with his attacking brand of football.



Oliver Glasner

– Crystal Palace (£4.5m annual salary)

Austrian tactician Oliver Glasner has brought structure and modern tactics to Crystal Palace since his appointment. His £4.5 million salary reflects Palace's growing ambition to consistently challenge mid-table and top-eight finishes.



Enzo Maresca

– Chelsea (£4.2m annual salary)

Enzo Maresca, one of the Premier League's youngest managers, is leading Chelsea's new era of youth and rebuilding. Despite the club's ups and downs, the Italian's £4.2 million salary highlights the Blues' faith in his long-term project.



Marco Silva

– Fulham (£4m annual salary)

Rounding out the list is Marco Silva, whose steady leadership has kept Fulham competitive in the Premier League. The Portuguese manager's tactical discipline and man-management have earned him a £4 million annual deal at Craven Cottage.



GBEMILEKE

UDY OSARO-EDOBOR

Our father had always been sickly so the burden of caring for our family of five rested heavily on our mother, a petty trader. Mama was determined to give us a good life even if it meant working herself to the bone.

Her business thrived for a while but when it began to tell on her health, my younger brother, Gbemi, the last born and only son made a decision that shocked everyone. Gbemi was one of the most selfless humans I've ever known. He quit school to help Mama.

He was brilliant—the best student in his class. But he said he didn't need an education to be successful. We all pleaded with him to reconsider but his mind was made up.

When he joined Mama in business, everything changed. Gbemi brought in fresh ideas and innovation. Mama was old fashioned but she eventually yielded to his modern methods. Within months, sales multiplied and she was able to employ two extra hands.

Outside business, Gbemi poured himself into music. He had always played the keyboard in church but now he took it seriously—taking online lessons and performing at events. Before long, he was producing music for known artistes, going on tours and gaining recognition.

Gbemi became the pride of our family. He promised to change our lives and he did. The poverty that once shadowed us disappeared. People who once pitied us now looked on in awe. Rumours spread that Gbemi's wealth came from fraud but his hard work and success silenced their gossip.

With money came better care for Papa. The treatment we could now afford prolonged his life far beyond what the doctors expected. When he eventually passed, our hearts were heavy but we were at peace knowing we had done our best.

Papa's burial was planned swiftly just as he had wished. Gbemi, who had been away was flying home for the funeral. He called to say he had landed safely and even did a video call from the car. But minutes later, the unthinkable happened.

A call came in—there had been an accident. His driver had rammed into a broken down trailer. The impact was fatal. Gbemi died instantly. He hadn't been wearing his seatbelt. His driver passed on days later.

It felt as though life had been snuffed out of our family. The pain was unbearable. Mama was inconsolable. Watching her weep was like watching a candle melt in slow motion. Grief engulfed our home. The laughter, the music, the life Gbemi brought—all gone.

A week later, we buried him beside Papa. Father and son, side by side. That day, Mama could barely stand. Her blood pressure kept fluctuating. The once vibrant woman grew frail and six months later, she suffered a stroke in her sleep. She never woke up.

Another round of grief hit us like a storm. Only Kemi and I were left now—just the two of us, two sisters holding each other up. Kemi being the eldest had to shoulder the weight of everything: her 9-to-5 job, caring for me and keeping Mama's business from collapsing.

She worked tirelessly until she made a bold decision—she quit her office job to focus fully on the family business. That decision changed everything. The business grew rapidly. Within a few years, Kemi expanded, opening six branches across the country. She began traveling abroad to buy goods and I worked alongside her. Together, we built an empire while also building our own families.

It was beautiful to watch but one strange mystery haunted us for years.

Long before Gbemi died, he used to send us monthly allowances. Strangely, those alerts didn't stop after his death. Month after month, money kept coming in—same date, same amount.. sometimes more, same reference. The bank couldn't trace it. His old production company had no record of it. No one could explain it. But it never stopped.

Years later, while on a family trip to the UK, Kemi's friend Lala, invited her to a Christmas concert. Her friend had connections with the organizers so they got front row seats. Everything was fine until a particular band came on stage to perform Christmas carols.

Kemi froze. The bandleader looked exactly like Gbemi. She said she felt her stomach turn. It couldn't be. Her heart pounded as she tried to make sense of what she was seeing. He looked her way several times and she said a chill run down her spine.

Her friend Lala noticed her distress. Kemi whispered everything to her but Lala brushed it off—"It's just a coincidence. People have lookalikes." Yet even Lala later admitted that the man's constant glances toward their side were unnerving.

Kemi discreetly snapped a photo and sent it to me. Seconds later, I called her, screaming—“That’s Gbemi!”

When the final song began, the lights went off and everyone was asked to turn on their phone flashlights for Silent Night. Kemi and Lala planned to rush backstage once the lights came on. But when they got there, the man was gone.

The crew said he had stepped out to use the restroom during the final song but he wasn’t there. When Kemi asked about him, they said his name was Leke. He had a wife and two daughters named Kemi and Aanu.

Gbemi... Leke... Gbemileke
Kemi’s knees gave way. The realization hit her like a blow. She fainted.

Later, she met his wife, Nicole who confirmed everything. Her husband’s full name was Gbemileke. He had told her his parents were dead but often spoke lovingly of his two sisters in Nigeria—Kemi and Aanu. He even made monthly transfers to them..

Kemi was stunned. How did he know that Mama was dead? This was so unbelievable. It was happening like an out of body experience but this was real.

Nicole was shattered. The man she loved, her husband and father of her daughters was gone. Or maybe had never truly been here. She was devastated.

After that concert, there was no trace of “Leke.” No one saw him again. His phone numbers stopped working and his family was left confused and broken.

Kemi and I struggled to accept it. It was as though Gbemi had returned only to remind us that love never really dies, it just changes form.

Nicole eventually moved back to Nigeria with her daughters. We had grown close, bound by love, mystery and memory.

And though the we may never understand what truly happened, every month without fail, that mysterious alert still comes in—just as it always has.

It feels like he just wants to remind us that he’s still watching. Still giving. Still keeping his promise.

One evening, Kemi received an email. It contained no words—just a link and a short message that read:

“For my sisters that I love so much.”

We hesitated for hours before clicking it. When we finally did, a video opened. It was a live performance, an outdoor concert somewhere in Brazil. The camera panned across the stage and there he was.

Gbemi. Older, broader, wearing dark shades but unmistakably him. He was leading a band, singing in Portuguese.
And as the music swelled, he looked straight into the camera and smiled.

Kemi screamed. I froze. My hands trembled so badly I almost dropped the phone. We contacted the email but it bounced back and the video link vanished a few days later.

Then, one quiet night, I received a message from an unknown number on WhatsApp. It was a voice note. It was his voice...low and unmistakable:

“Tell Kemi I kept my promise. I trust you both to look after my wife and kids. Aanu, some journeys are meant to be walked unseen.”

I sat there, tears streaming down my face. Before I could even replay it, the message deleted itself. The number disappeared.

I don’t know where Gbemi is now—but deep down, I know one thing for sure: He’s out there. Somewhere. Still watching. Still sending love across time and distance. Because some bonds are too strong for death to break.

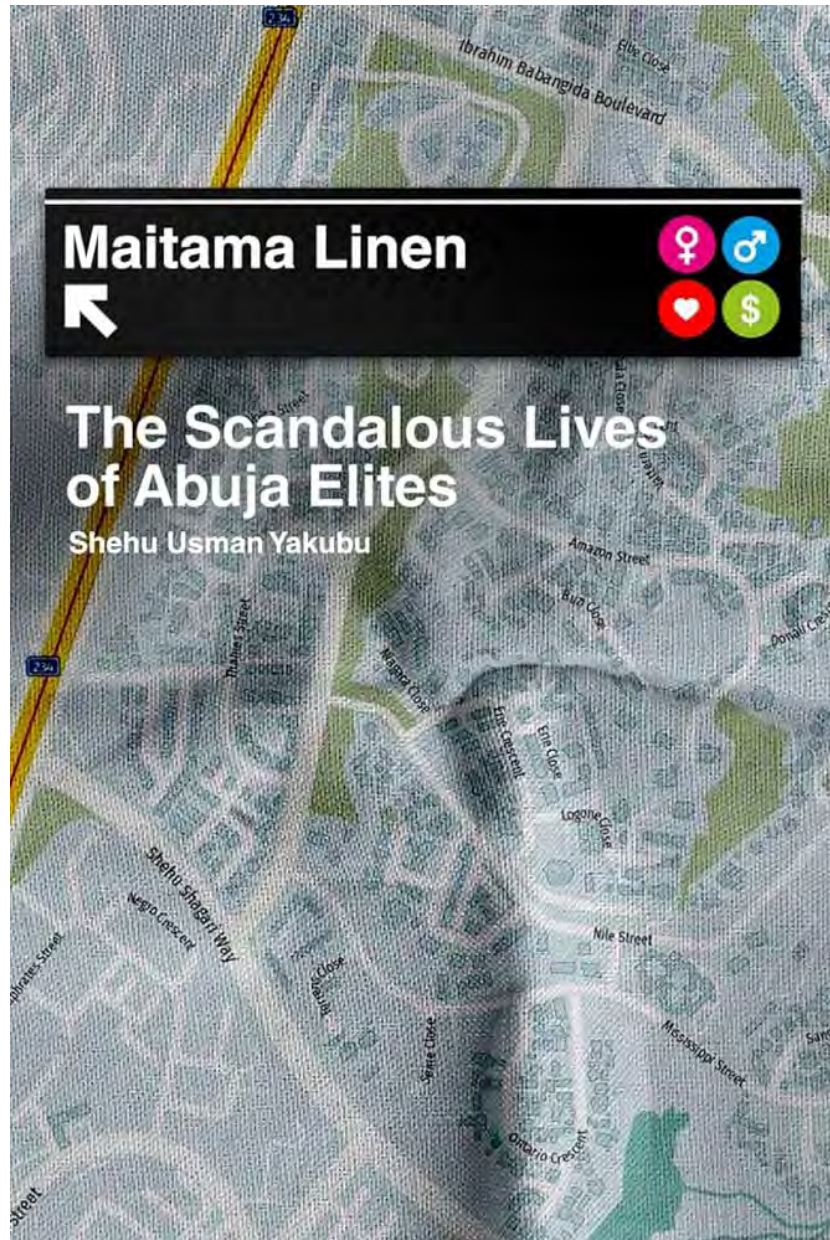


Udy Osaro-Edobor

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

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The Capital of Secrets-A Review of Shehu Usman Yakubu's Maitama Linen

Title: Maitama Linen: The Scandalous Lives of Abuja Elites

Author: Shehu Usman Yakubu

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AITAMA LINEN: THE SCANDALOUS LIVES OF ABUJA ELITES

TITILADE OYEMADE

Even Lagosians doff their hats to Abuja folks when it comes to mischief. So when an entire book is dedicated to them, curiosity naturally kicks in, you just have to know what the author has to say about the city's flamboyant elites.

If you've lived in Abuja long enough, tales of scandalous escapades among the powerful won't exactly shock you. But for outsiders, Shehu Usman Yakubu's book is an eye-opener, one that might leave your jaw hanging as you discover how deep the rot runs beneath the city's polished surface.

The story begins like a movie, fast-paced, vivid, and full of intrigue. At first, you think Kemi, a female mechanic, will take center stage. She's bold, different, and her story feels promising. But before you can settle in, she's swept aside as a stream of new characters enters the scene, each carrying secrets that deepen the drama and expand the world Yakubu has created.

The author doesn't waste time painting Abuja as perfect; instead, he peels back the layers to reveal the chaos behind the gloss. Each chapter introduces a new character and storyline. At first, it feels like too many moving parts, but as the pages turn, you start to see how everything connects. It's a web of greed, lust, ambition, and vengeance, all woven together with remarkable detail.

To truly enjoy this book, you have to pay attention. Miss a name or a subtle clue, and you might lose track of how one scandal links to another. Yakubu explores everything from drugs to same-sex affairs, political manipulation, deceit, and revenge. He doesn't just tell stories; he exposes a society where everyone is chasing power or pleasure and often paying a heavy price for it.

From one scandal to the next, there's barely a pause to breathe. Just as you think you've heard it all, another revelation drops, and you're right back in the storm. The author's vivid storytelling might even tempt you to admire some of his characters until their perfect worlds begin to crumble, leaving you face to face with the bitter consequences of their choices.

There are quite a lot of characters in this book, some daring, others wicked, and a few utterly useless, quite an

interesting bunch. However, if you don't mind keeping up with the many characters, you'll definitely enjoy this story.

At some point, you can tell that the author has drawn inspiration from action-packed movies, which explains some of the intense scenes in the book, scenes that will most likely keep you on the edge of your seat.

By the time you reach the final chapters, you may have forgotten how the story began, there's just that much going on. For some, it might feel like an exaggeration; for others, it's a brutally honest mirror reflecting the wildness of Abuja life.

And when the last scandal lands, you're not even shocked anymore, you've been gasping since chapter one. Still, the chaos is addictive, and Yakubu knows exactly how to keep you hooked till the end. One thing's for sure: before you pack your bags and move to Abuja, you might want to read this book first.



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WEEKENDER

MOVIE REVIEW

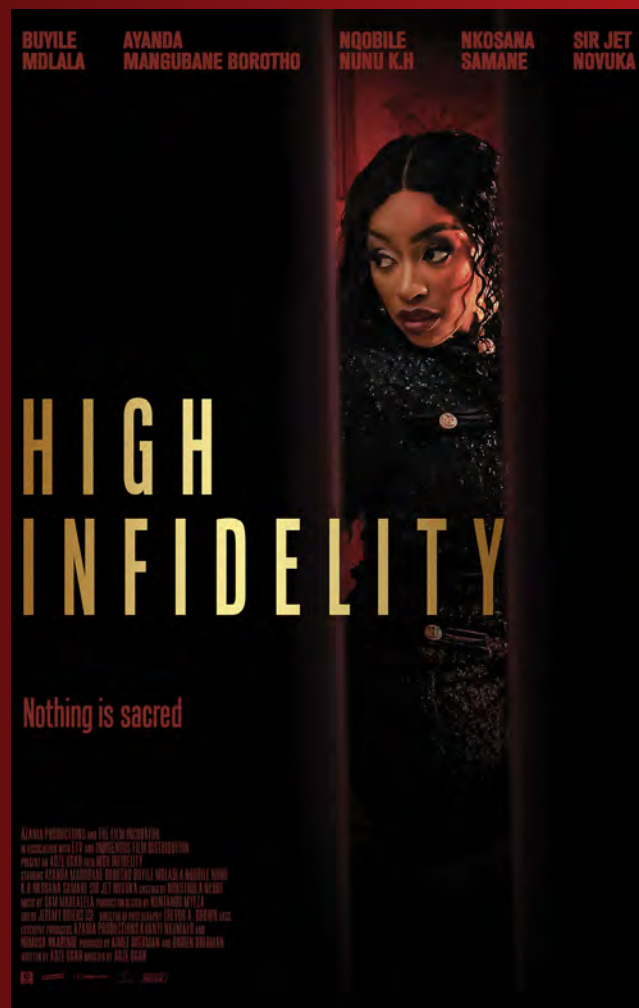
CARAMELO (2025)

Pedro was a young hardworking upcoming chef, he worked really hard but didn't get promoted, Till one day a stray dog comes into the kitchen disrupts the entire cooking process on a day when they had the biggest critic was in the room, that day became his lucky day as his kind act of saving the dog from the main chef made the main chef angry, he resigned and Pedro became the new chief chef, he was allowed to try all his new recipes and that won the heart of the food Critic. Suddenly Pedro was stuck with Caramelo the strain dog, who became his best friend throughout his health crisis. Few weeks after his promotion, Pedro discovered he had a terminal illness, this put a toll on his new role, you will need to check out the movie to see if he survived and how he managed all that life threw at him. The 101m family film, Brazilian, drama, comedy, emotional, sentimental movie was directed by Diego Freitas, they featured actors like Rafael Vilti, Amendoin, Ariane Boteko, Kelzy Ecard, Bruno Vincius, Ademara, Nemia Oliveira, Carolina Ferraz etc.



THE FARMER'S BRIDE (2025)

Funmi was a very young girl, who was betrothed to an old farmer to become his new wife after he lost his wife, she was also didn't have any child for him. The old farmer loved Funmi, he was lonely and needed a wife, a companion and children to take over his wealth when he is gone. Funmi had no choice but to live with him and learn to cope. One day, the old farmer's nephew walks in, he was young, handsome and charming, Funmi had to hold herself strongly to avoid falling for him. Well, you will need to watch the entire movie to find out if Funmi fell for the farmer's nephew, and if she later fell in love with her new husband. The 112m Nollywood, drama African movie was directed by Adebayo Tijani, Jack'enneth Qpukeme, they featured actors like Gbubemi Ejaye, Tobi Bakre, Mercy Aigbe, Femi Branch, Efe Irele, Wunmi Toriola etc



HIGH INFEDELITY (2025)

Larissa worked with a life insurance company. She had a very close colleague at work and they assisted each other. One day, she gets home only to find her husband cheating with another woman, rather getting upset, angry and leaving the house, she decides to forgive her husband, allow things slide and move on. This singular act came as a huge surprise to her husband and his girlfriend. Well, Larissa decides to work with her husband to save their marriage and fight the intruder. This they did and left us confused, Well, you need to watch the entire movie, pay attention to totally grasp who was really played and who played the other; honestly the end left me hanging and confused as there were so many loop holes in the movie for me. The 88m South African, crime drama, thriller, romance, African movie was directed by Aze Ugah, they featured actors like Ayanda Borotho, Buyile Mdladla, Ngobile Nunu Kitti, Nkosana Samane, Sir Jet Novuka etc



WEEKEND QUOTES



1

On the day you are to receive mercy, remove fear and ignore what people will say. Refuse to be stopped!

.....WhispersbyTEN

3

When your past finds a reason to praise God, then you are a worshipper. Be grateful for yesterday!

.....WhispersbyTEN

2

My case is revelation-based not situation-biased. Therefore, be calm

.....WhispersbyTEN

4

The delay, most times is to showcase God's glory and not to punishment you

.....WhispersbyTEN