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7 restaurants
on Lagos Island to visit
during Dettu December



SPORTS

Underdog Giants: 10
smallest countries ever to
qualify for World Cup



ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Transforming Trash
into Treasure:
Marjory Houlbert's
Vision for a Circular
Economy in Lagos

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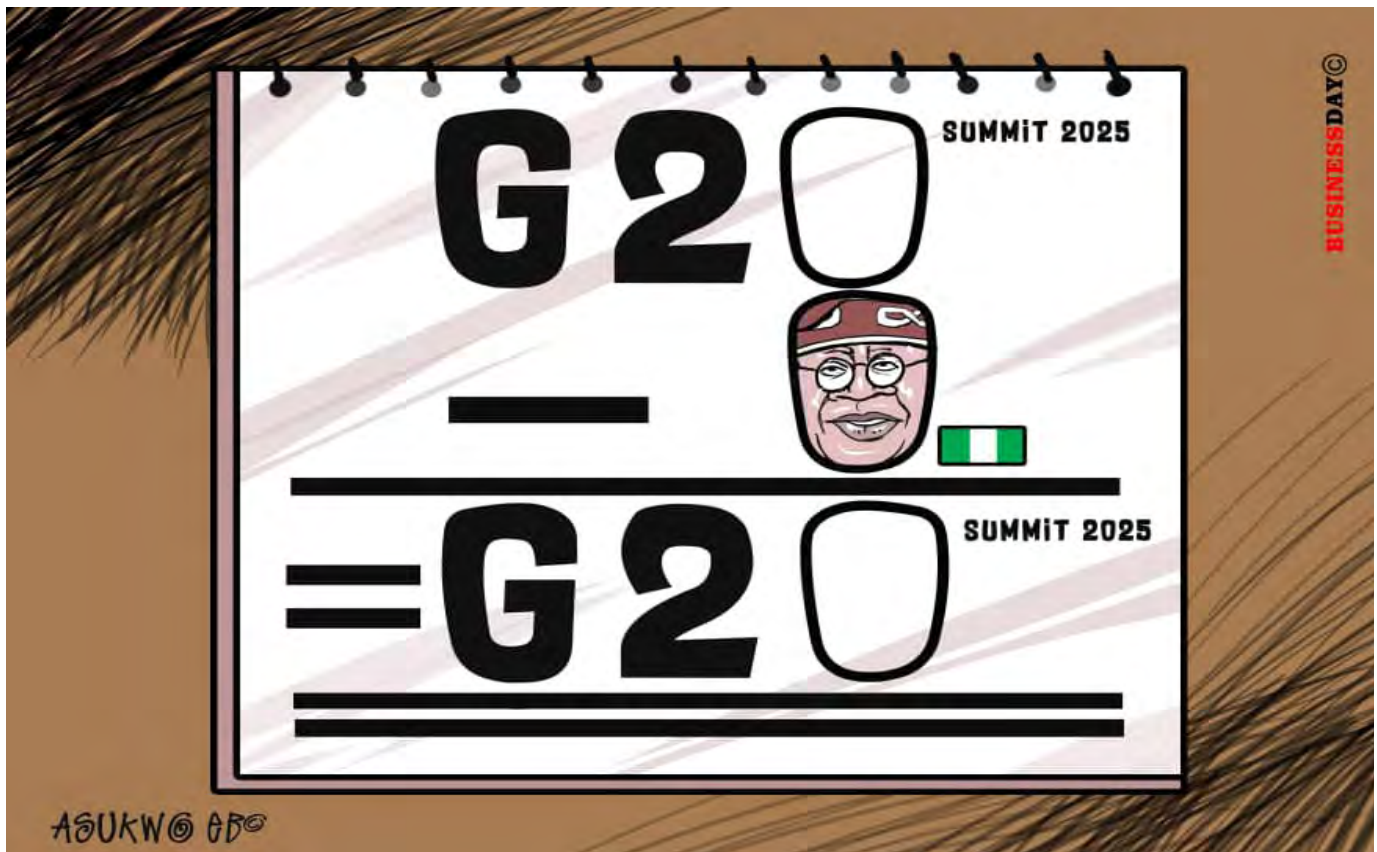




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7 RESTAURANTS ON LAGOS ISLAND TO VISIT DURING DETTY DECEMBER

ESTHER EMOEKPERE



December in Lagos is a season of energy and celebration. The city feels different, streets are livelier, and everyone is looking for ways to make the most of the festive period. For food lovers, it's also the time to explore spots that bring both great meals and memorable moments.

Finding the right place can change the way you experience the season. The right setting, the right flavours, and the right vibe make all the difference when you're catching up with friends, enjoying a night out, or just treating yourself after a long year.

Here are 7 restaurants to visit in Lagos Island during Detti December

Turáká Lagos

Turáká Lagos is located at Ademola Adetokunbo Street, Victoria Island. The restaurant offers a rooftop dining experience with panoramic views of Lagos and the Atlantic Ocean, making it a standout venue for festive evenings. Turáká specialises in both Nigerian and international dishes, including grilled meats, seafood, a variety of signature cocktails and mocktails. The space is ideal for groups, couples, or individuals who want to enjoy a lively December night. The combination of quality food, rooftop views, and a relaxed social environment makes Turáká a preferred destination for those seeking both dining and festive entertainment.

La Veranda

La Veranda, located at BlowFish Hotel in Lekki, is a rooftop restaurant that blends Italian-inspired cuisine with a calm dining atmosphere. Guests can enjoy a menu featuring pastas, seafood, and a variety of wines while taking in panoramic city views. The venue is ideal for diners seeking a relaxed yet festive environment, offering the right balance of calm and celebration during December evenings. La Veranda's unique combination of elevated views and curated cuisine makes it a memorable destination for special December nights.

The View Rooftop Lounge

The View Rooftop Lounge at Twinwaters in Lekki provides guests with an elevated perspective of Lagos. It offers a menu that combines Nigerian and continental flavours, catering to diverse tastes. Diners can enjoy different dishes and drinks while overlooking the skyline and Atlantic Ocean. The venue is suitable for both small groups and larger gatherings, and its rooftop setting adds an extra layer of festive charm during December nights. The View stands out as a place where food, drinks, and scenery come together seamlessly.

RSVP Lagos

RSVP Lagos, located at Eletu Ogabi Street in Victoria Island, is a versatile venue combining dining, a poolside lounge, and a hidden bar. The restaurant offers New American cuisine, sushi, burgers, and a wide selection of cocktails. The poolside setting and ambient lighting make RSVP suitable for festive gatherings, whether for small groups or larger parties. Its combination of modern cuisine, stylish design, and evening entertainment makes it a destination of choice for those looking to celebrate December nights in Lagos.

Terra Kulture

Terra Kulture in Victoria Island is well known for its plays and artistic exhibitions, but it also has a restaurant serving African cuisine. Guests can enjoy local favourites such as spicy soups, grilled meats, and traditional Nigerian dishes in a fine dining environment. The unique aspect of Terra Kulture is that visitors can combine cultural experiences with dining, making it a complete destination for Detty December. The walls and décor, featuring paintings and artwork, give diners the impression of eating within a gallery. The combination of food, culture, and festive ambience makes Terra Kulture ideal for anyone looking to tick multiple experiences off their December list.

Cactus Restaurant

Cactus Restaurant is located along the Lagos waterfront and offers a spacious setting suitable for families and groups. Its menu includes seafood, continental dishes, and desserts. Outdoor seating allows diners to enjoy views of the water while sampling a diverse menu. The restaurant provides a relaxed festive atmosphere, making it a good option for those seeking casual dining with a scenic backdrop during December. Its combination of waterfront views and a varied menu ensures a memorable dining experience for all types of guests.

Sky Restaurant & Lounge

Sky Restaurant & Lounge, located at the Eko Hotel, offers elevated views of the Lagos skyline and the Atlantic Ocean. The restaurant Asian fusion delicacies. Its rooftop setting and sophisticated ambience make it a popular choice for December celebrations. Guests can enjoy fine dining while taking in the panoramic cityscape, making Sky Restaurant suitable for both intimate dinners and larger festive gatherings.

UNDERDOG GIANTS: 10 SMALLEST COUNTRIES EVER TO QUALIFY FOR WORLD CUP

ANTHONY NLEBEM

Qualifying for the FIFA World Cup is a major achievement, especially for countries with small populations; it represents a remarkable demographic feat.

Throughout the World Cup history, a handful of countries with tiny populations have managed to reach football's biggest stage, proving that passion can sometimes outweigh population size.

From Iceland's unforgettable 2018 adventure to the historic breakthroughs of Curaçao and Cape Verde for the 2026 edition, these underdogs have written some of the most inspiring stories in world football.

Curaçao made history by clinching a 2026 World Cup spot on a dramatic final night of CONCACAF qualifying, becoming the smallest nation (post-World War II) ever to reach the tournament.

With a population of roughly 156,000, the Caribbean island, a constituent country of the Netherlands, is less than half the size of Iceland (352,000), which held the previous record after qualifying in 2018.

"It's an impossibility that is made possible," winger Kenji Gorré told *The Guardian*. "It's literally impossible for such a small population of 150,000, and now to go to the biggest pinnacle of football is unbelievable."

As 42 of the 48 spots for the 2026 World Cup are now filled, several other small nations have also defied expectations to reach the tournament co-hosted by the United States, Mexico, and Canada.

While big nations such as Nigeria, China, India, Greece, Serbia, and Hungary failed to qualify, the headlines have instead been dominated by inspiring underdogs.

Cape Verde, set to make its World Cup debut in 2026, has a population of 525,000, making it the third-smallest nation ever to reach the finals, behind Curaçao and Iceland. Before Iceland's 2018 qualification, Trinidad & Tobago (1.3 million) held the record as the least-populated World Cup participant, set in 2006.

Here is the list of the 10 smallest countries to ever qualify for a FIFA World Cup tournament:

Curaçao (2026) – 156,000



Iceland (2018) – 352,000



Cape Verde (2026) – 525,000



Trinidad and Tobago (2006) – 1.3 million



Kuwait (1982) – 1.7 million



Northern Ireland (1958) – 1.4 million



United Arab Emirates (1990) – 1.9 million



Slovenia (2002) – 2 million



Paraguay (1950) – 1.5 million



Uruguay (1950) – 2.2 million



TRANSFORMING TRASH INTO TREASURE: MARJORY HOULBERT'S VISION FOR A CIRCULAR ECONOMY IN LAGOS

IFEOMA OKEKE-KORIEOCHA



The Economic Department of the Embassy of France in Nigeria recently hosted a game-changing conference that brought together the crème de la crème of Lagos' creative and innovation scene.

Titled "From Makers to Markets: Building Circular Innovation – A Conversation with Marjory Houlbert," the event was a masterclass in rethinking waste and exploring the limitless possibilities of circular innovation in Lagos.

Designers, entrepreneurs, engineers, and sustainability advocates converged at Impact Hub Lagos to learn from French designer and researcher Marjory Houlbert, who's making waves in the world of circular design.

Marjory's presentation was a deep dive into the world of waste management and innovation, with a focus on Lagos' unique challenges and opportunities.

Did you know that Lagos produces over 13,500 tonnes of waste daily, with plastics being a significant part of it?

Marjory's talk highlighted the potential for makers and innovators to tap into this waste stream, transforming it into valuable resources that can drive creativity, entrepreneurship, and sustainability in the city.

With the French Tech Lagos community in attendance, the event showcased the growing interest in circular innovation and the potential for cross-border collaboration between France and Nigeria.

French designer and researcher Marjory Houlbert, whose practice evolves at the intersection of circularity, collaborative making and material experimentation, delivered an insightful presentation grounded both in her experience within French fablabs and in the environmental realities of Lagos.



Opening her talk with an overview of the city's waste landscape, she highlighted that Lagos produces more than 13,500 tonnes of waste each day, with plastics (particularly LDPE, PP, PET and HDP) forming a significant part of the city's highly available waste streams. Some of these plastics are recyclable, while others require more advanced transformation processes, creating both constraints and opportunities for makers and innovators.

Marjory went on to define what makes a fablab an essential catalyst for innovation. Drawing on examples from Fablab La Verrière and WoMa, she described these spaces as hybrid ecosystems where digital fabrication tools (such as CNC machines, 3D printers, presses, ovens and laser cutters) coexist with a vibrant community of designers, engineers, architects and researchers.

Beyond the equipment, she insisted, the real strength of a fablab lies in its ability to connect diverse expertises, accelerating problem-solving and enabling makers to move from early concepts to reliable, market-ready prototypes. To illustrate this dynamic, she presented Flowlen, an air purification system born within WoMa.

Through the combined contributions of a fabmanager, an electronics engineer, a developer and financial guidance, a simple concept evolved into a functional prototype capable of securing public funding and scaling toward industrial production.

This example underscored the power of collaborative making: when a community's knowledge and tools converge, makers can transform ideas into tangible solutions with real-world impact.

Marjory then shifted to the topic of industrialisation, focusing on the case of Le Pavé, a French venture producing 100 percent recycled panels from HDPE and polystyrene

recovered from recyclers such as Paprec, Veolia and Suez.

She detailed the transformation process, from melting to pressing to forming large, solid panels used in furniture, interior design and everyday objects, while emphasising the crucial role of consistent waste streams and strong B2B partnerships.

This example demonstrated how waste, when paired with technical expertise and industrial capacity, can become a viable and scalable material used across creative and architectural sectors.

In the final part of her presentation, Marjory proposed a prospective model for a Lagos-based fablab, integrating local recyclers, existing facilities, digital fabrication tools and a dedicated fabmanager.

Such an ecosystem, she argued, could allow Lagos makers to transform both plastic and organic waste into furniture, objects, textiles and new materials, creating local jobs, stimulating creative industries, and strengthening the city's circular economy.

The conference highlighted the growing collaboration between France and Nigeria in advancing sustainable and innovative approaches to design, fabrication and material transformation.

By convening experts and local stakeholders around shared environmental challenges, the Embassy reaffirms its commitment to fostering dialogue, creativity and Franco-Nigerian cooperation in the circular economy.



THE HISTORIC CONFIRMATION OF BALOGUN LAI LABODE PHD. AS AARE OF EGBALAND

ROYAL  IBEH





The government of Ogun State, together with the Oba Adedotun Aremu Gbadebo CFR, the Alake and Paramount Ruler of Egbaland has formally appointed Balogun Lai Labode, PhD, Kurumi of Ijaye as the new Aare of Egbaland.

This elevation honours his outstanding contributions to community development, cultural advancement and visionary leadership in both the creative and economic sectors of the state.

The title of Aare Egba is among the most revered chieftaincy offices in Yoruba and Egba history, historically recognised as the supreme military and strategic commander of the Egba people.

Today the role serves as a symbol of courage, resilience, diplomacy and duty, rotated toward cultural guardianship, identity reinforcement and future-oriented economic stewardship.

Balogun Lai Labode, now the youngest ever to assume the title, is a distinguished business executive and investor whose career is built around innovation, economic empowerment and ecosystem development.

As CEO of CashToken Rewards Africa, he leads a socially-smart business model transforming loyalty programmes into life-changing cash rewards for consumers and growth engines for enterprises.

His commitment spans finance, enterprise and fashion: he founded the Egbaliganza (Egba Fashion Celebration) cultural-fashion initiative under his Lai Labode Heritage Foundation, and is the president of the continental platform Confederation of African Fashion (CAFA), which aims to grow Africa's fashion economy toward a projected \$500B valuation.

His selection as Aare Egba signals a new era for Egba nation: one built on heritage, youth engagement, global outlook and cultural-economic integration. Under his leadership, the vision for heritage preservation, tourism, community enterprise and global positioning of Egba culture gains renewed momentum.

Balogun Lai Labode expresses his gratitude to the Ogun State Government and Egba Traditional Council for this trust. He affirms his readiness to serve with loyalty, humility and vision. His mission is clear: to honour the legacy of the ancestors, uplift the people, and build a future in which the culture and economy of Egbaland flourish in unity and purpose.

THE POWER OF CRAFT: HOW TOMIKE LAYI-BABATUNDE IS EMPOWERING ARTISANS, PRESERVING CULTURAL HERITAGE

IFEOMA OKEKE-KORIEOCHA



Tomike Layi-Babatunde, an Interior Designer and Creative Director of Acacia Studios, has emphasised how her firm is making a significant impact by creating employment opportunities, empowering artisans and promoting African crafts globally, thereby contributing to the growth of the continent's creative economy.

Noting that Nigerian artisans are renowned for their skills in creating intricate textiles, vibrant beadwork and distinctive wooden carvings, she said by prioritising local craftsmanship, her organisation contributes to the local economy, providing job opportunities and fostering skill development.

Speaking during her exhibition at the just-concluded Design Week, Layi-Babatunde, who is the founder of Acacia Studio, said that by prioritising local craftsmanship, the studio's initiative aligns with the global movement towards sustainability and ethical production, stating that it emphasises transparency, improvement of local techniques and the use of locally sourced materials.

The approach, according to her, not only enhances the visibility of Nigerian craftsmanship but also ensures its relevance in the current-day market.

Layi-Babatunde, who is a Lawyer by profession from the University of Leeds, United Kingdom, said that with her huge respect for traditional craftsmanship, she has been in business for seven years, working directly with artisans and providing fair compensation to help improve the livelihoods of craftspeople and their families.

The Acacia boss said her designs blend traditional African craftsmanship with modern styles, appealing to a broad audience, and by leveraging e-commerce platforms and digital marketing, they can reach customers worldwide, contributing to the growth of Africa's creative economy.

In some ways, Acacia Studio's approach has benefited the local community, she said that it has helped to empower artisans, preserve cultural heritage, promote sustainable practices, and foster economic growth by

exporting African crafts to global markets, thereby generating income and stimulating economic growth in local communities.

"Nigerian craftsmanship is increasingly significant for global trade, particularly in the current global climate where there is a growing appreciation for unique, high-quality, and ethically produced goods. Nigerian artisans are renowned for their skill in creating intricate textiles, vibrant beadwork, and distinctive wooden carvings. The global demand for such authentic handcrafted products has surged as consumers seek to support ethical practices and preserve cultural heritage," she said.

AFRICA CREATIVE MARKET 2025: SHOWCASING AFRICA'S CREATIVE EXCELLENCE AND GLOBAL PARTNERSHIPS



Africa Creative Market 2025 Wraps Up Four Days of Innovation, Collaboration, and Global Bridges

The fourth edition of the Africa Creative Market (ACM) had four days of transformative programs that showcased Africa's creative excellence, global collaborations, and industry-shaping innovations.

The event which took place at the Landmark Event Centre, Victoria Island, Lagos and held from September 16 - 19, 2025, brought together creators, investors, policymakers, and cultural leaders from across Africa and beyond.

ACM 2025 covered all aspects of Africa's creative economy, from foundational business skills to cutting-edge technology. The conference, which ran multiple sessions simultaneously, focused on film, television, fashion, music, digital creation, legal frameworks, and emerging technologies across four stages.

This comprehensive approach brought together diverse creative industries in one place, positioning this year's event as a pivotal platform for collaboration, learning, and collective impact across the creative sector.

The Women in Film and TV Conference was one of the program highlights, which brought together industry leaders from several countries, including Ghana, Senegal, South Africa, Kenya, Cameroon, Zambia, the United States, the United Kingdom, and others.

It featured various speakers, including the Lagos State Commissioner for Tourism, Arts and Culture, Toke Benson-Awoyinka, the former First Lady of Ekiti State, Erelu Bisi Adeleye-Fayemi, the veteran actress and producer Joke Silva, the British Council Country Director Donna McGowan, and the U.S. Consul General Rick Swart, who emphasized the importance of investing in skills and visibility for women's stories.

The conference culminated in the prestigious WIFTAfrica Gala and Awards, which celebrated excellence, leadership, and creative impact across Africa's screen industries.

The evening honored trailblazers who are shaping the future of African storytelling; The Gates Foundation received the Alliance Vanguard Award, while Women in Film LA was honored with the Ignite Impact Award.

Felicia Naiwa Sithebe received the Amplifier Award for their sustained commitment to empowering women in the global screen industries, and the U.S. Consulate General Lagos was honored with the Circle of Change Award.

Fatou Jupiter was presented with the Next Frame Visionary Award, with Erelu Bisi Adeleye-Fayemi receiving the She Builds Nations Awards, and The Gurl Boss Productions being recognized with the Emerging Powerhouse Award.

The Ladima Foundation was celebrated with the Pan-African Vanguard Award, while Joke Silva received the Creative Vanguard Award, and Bimbo Oloyede was recognized with the Legacy in Motion Award.

The Creative Continuum Africa Summit, led by renowned actor Bucci Franklin, opened with candid discussions on the well-being and long-term sustainability of creative professionals.

Actors and creators, including Blossom Chukwujekwu, Bimbo Ademoye, Adesua Etomi-Wellington, Gabriel Afolayan, Adeola Kingsley James, Kyomnom Kachiro Bargo, Farai Ncube (British Council), and others.

The summit reinforced the importance of creative wellness, financial literacy, and innovation as pillars for building resilient and globally competitive creative industries across Africa.

A major highlight of the summit was the launch of the Creative Continuum Toolkit, a resource designed to equip creatives with sustainable business strategies, alongside the presentation of a ₦5.5 million mentorship and training grant to support an emerging talent.

The NOVUS Art Summit celebrated creativity, innovation, and cultural exchange through a day of inspiring dialogue and artistic expression. Panelists, including Dr. Adeola Balogun, Yulia Daniels, Harry Kesiena, and Dotun Popoola, led thought-provoking conversations on art education, ethical collecting, technology's influence on creativity, and the evolving art economy.

The summit successfully fostered collaboration, visibility, and critical discourse across Africa's art ecosystem, positioning NOVUS as a catalyst for cultural advancement. Through its sessions and networking moments, the event reaffirmed the power of art as both a creative and economic force, bridging tradition, innovation, and the future of Africa's cultural industries.

The Business of Photography Conference, convened by Kola Oshalusi, brought together creative entrepreneurs and industry leaders like Kelechi Amadi Obi, Mai Atafo, and Clarence Peters for an inspiring exploration of the evolving future of visual storytelling in Africa.





Merging creativity with commerce, the conference provided practical strategies for building profitable and sustainable photography businesses while emphasizing digital transformation, intellectual property, and brand positioning.

Speakers shared insights on how collaboration, capacity building, and technology can scale creative ventures and strengthen the continent's visual storytelling ecosystem.

A highlight of the day was the ULANZI product display, showcasing cutting-edge tools that empower photographers to innovate and compete globally. Together, these sessions reaffirmed photography's vital role as both an art form and an engine of Africa's creative economy.

The Business of Entertainment Conference, curated by Mykel Parish, focused on the film industry, with trade, financing, and global distribution in Africa's screen ecosystem as touch points. Delivering the keynote, Abdoulie Jobe, Gambia's Minister of Tourism, Arts, and Culture, underscored creativity as a key driver of Africa's economic transformation. An impactful panel with Delane Boakye, Sebo Lenyai, and Amb. Mohamadu Musa Nije explored how entertainment is reshaping Africa's global image.

The session "Building the Bridge: Zambia x Nigeria Co-Productions for Global Markets," moderated by Ade Laoye, brought together Fumba Chama (Permanent Secretary, MYSA, Government of Zambia), Chris Odey, and Moses Inwang to share insights on cross-border partnerships and co-production opportunities.

Industry icons, including Ruth Kadiri Ezerika, Biodun Stephen, Frederick Leonard, and, led conversations on standardized contracts, cross-border collaboration, and the untapped potential of intellectual property across African markets.

A key highlight of the conference was the signing of an MOU between Inya Lawal, Convener of the Africa Creative Market, and Peter Pages Bwire of Kitale Film Week, Kenya. The partnership paves the way for collaboration between Nollywood and the East African film industry, strengthening cross-continental storytelling and creative exchange.

The FashionEVO Summit, convened by Dr. Yetty Ogunnubi and co-hosted with the British Council, positioned African fashion as a scalable global industry rather than merely a cultural expression.

Olori Ronke Ademiluyi, Founder of Adire Oodua Textile Hub & Africa Fashion Week London/Nigeria, delivered a keynote address calling for increased investment in digital infrastructure and skills development. Industry experts Harriet Hala Kahuzu, Sandra Alonge, Kiki Okewale, Femi Olayebi, and Emmy Collins, amongst several others, shared insights on sustainable supply chains, continental collaboration, and investment opportunities.

The summit concluded with a spectacular FashionEVO Fashion Show and Awards, featuring avant-garde collections and dynamic performances by AMARELIS, KIJIPA COUTURE, HENRI UDUKU, YIGALOS, and others.

The Awards segment celebrated outstanding achievements across the African fashion industry, recognizing Hon. Toke Benson for her leadership as a catalyst in the creative economy, Olori Aderonke Ademiluyi-Ogunwusi for her pioneering contributions to African textile heritage, Femi Olayebi for ecosystem building, and Clement “Mudi” Enajemo for his revolutionary menswear designs.

Other distinguished honorees, such as Ugochukwu Monye, Sandra Alonge, Eneoma Azubike Chigo, Ejiro Amos-Tafiri, Frank Osodi, Bimpe Onakoya, Kelechi Amadi-Obi, and ACM Convener Dr. Inya Lawal, were also recognized for their enduring impact across fashion, beauty, and creative enterprise.

The Digital Creator Africa Summit centered on creative wealth generation, featuring leading voices such as Chude Jideonwo, Tosin Ajibade, Tomike Adeoye, Sisi Yemmie, David I. Adeleke, Chichi Nworah, Obi Asika, and Malik Afegbua. Convened by Ifeoma ‘Oma’ Areh, the programme served as a platform for creators to bridge the gap, diversify income, and build sustainable careers through keynotes, panels, workshops, pitch sessions, and brand activations.

While delivering his keynote speech, Chude Jideonwo announced the Fourth Mainland Creator Fund (4ML), a \$500,000 (₦1 billion) investment initiative launching in January 2026 through Joy Inc. to support African creators directly. His message that “overtaking is allowed” resonated across the room, a reminder that in today’s creative economy, anyone can rise by their own creativity, consistency, and unique voice without waiting for traditional validation.

The British Council’s Creative Economy Week, which ran in partnership with ACM, convened policymakers, cultural leaders, and entrepreneurs to address policy, trade, and creative sector transformation. Speakers included Donna McGowan, Country Director of the British Council, Chikodi Onyemerela, Director of Programmes and Partnerships, Bambara-Abban Eneni, Film & Creative Technology Relationship Manager for Sub-Saharan Africa, Harry Kesiena, Head, Arts & Culture, British Council Nigeria, and several

others. The event underscored the importance of evidence-driven approaches, IP protection, and strategic investment in scaling Africa’s creative industries.

Recognizing technology as the heartbeat of Africa’s creative economy, the ACM Hackathon brought together 27 teams (107 participants) who were challenged to develop multi-layered, Africa-led solutions to tackle the continent’s music and film distribution challenges, focusing on access, visibility, piracy, intellectual property rights, and monetization.

Supported by Ascend Studios Foundation, Amazon Web Services (AWS), CcHub, Africa Creative Market (ACM), and NITDA, the hackathon showcased creativity, structure, diversity, and impact over four days of intense development and mentorship.

The jury featured a distinguished lineup of experts, including Chikodi Onyemerela (Director of Programmes, British Council Nigeria), Oludare Olarewaju (CEO, Raotech), Seyi Alawode (Founder, CHL World), Emmanuella Etuk (Head of Cloud Programs, Qucoon), Israel Aladejobi (Cloudplexo), Ike Nnabue (Filmmaker, Producer, and Director), and others.

Following rigorous evaluation and final presentations, FairPlay emerged as the overall winner, claiming the ₦10 million grand prize, while Jara and Polaroid secured the first and second runner-up positions, respectively, marking a defining moment for innovation in Africa’s creative-tech landscape.

The Global Creative Legal Summit served as a pivotal platform to examine pressing issues on intellectual property rights, AI disruption, and cross-border deal-making in the creative economy. The summit featured insights from legal and creative leaders such as Oyinkansola “Foza” Fawehinmi, Lola Oyekan, Angela Adebayo Agbe-Davies, Olamilekan Bamidele, and Perenami Momodu, who also led a mock arbitration session showcasing the power of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) with a grand prize of one million Naira shared amongst the top 3 winners in resolving intellectual property and contractual disputes.

The Ideas Mill Africa by Bukola Oloyede brought together cross-sector innovators to explore collaboration and policy frameworks for Africa’s creative economy. Conversations featured voices such as Illbliss, Clarence Peters, Malik Afegbua, and Seju Alero Mike.

The Kingdom Film Festival (KFF), convened by Ewomaoghene Luther-Abegunde, brought together faith-based creatives, filmmakers, and cultural advocates to celebrate African storytelling through film while exploring themes of sustainability, cultural preservation, and creative entrepreneurship.

NIGERIA'S CLEAN FUTURE BEGINS IN ITS SMALLEST COMMUNITIES

ROYAL IBEH



A few months ago, the people of Araromi Aperin, a small village on the edge of Oyo State, lived with a harsh reality, as many homes had no toilets, so open defecation was the only option.

People had to relieve themselves outdoors. The practice spread disease, made families sick, and carried a deep sense of shame, not by choice, but because there was no alternative.

Today, life has changed. Children walk to school without dodging human waste. Women no longer have to hide in the bushes or worry for their safety. Families are healthier, and the community talks openly about dignity, pride and cleanliness, things they once thought out of reach.

Across Nigeria, this transformation is slow but growing and it often begins in small, determined communities like Araromi Aperin.

A National Challenge Rooted in Everyday Realities

Nigeria's open defecation crisis remains one of the country's most stubborn public health challenges. According to the 2023 WASH National Outcome Routine Mapping (WASHNORM) report, over 46 million Nigerians still defecate in the open, placing the nation among the highest globally. Despite years of advocacy and investment, only two states, Jigawa and Katsina, have been certified open defecation free (ODF).

"If we have only two states that have been declared open defecation free out of our 36 plus the FCT, you can see how far we are. We are still very far. There are still states that have not even started the programme," said Mr. Monday Johnson, the United Nations Children Fund, UNICEF's WASH specialist. Of Nigeria's 774 local government areas, just about 140 LGAs have reached ODF status, a fraction of what is needed to meet the national target of ending open defecation by 2025 under the Clean Nigeria: Use the Toilet Campaign.

Yet the challenge is not confined to rural areas. Nigeria's urban landscape is transforming at an astonishing speed. As of 2023, 54.3 percent of the population, about 123.7 million people, now live in cities, compared to 29.7 percent in 1990.

Unfortunately, sanitation systems have not kept pace. Only 25.4 percent of urban residents have access to safely managed sanitation, and more than 150 million Nigerians still lack basic sanitation services.

"Urban sanitation is our next big crisis. Rural areas are improving, but cities are falling behind," Johnson warned.

Informal settlements in Lagos, Ibadan, Kano, Onitsha, Uyo, and Abuja present an especially daunting challenge. Overcrowding makes it nearly impossible to construct toilets or safely manage waste, resulting in contamination of water bodies, frequent cholera outbreaks, and a cycle of poverty fuelled by illness.



A Rigorous Path to Open-Defecation-Free Certification

UNICEF's Johnson explains that becoming ODF is far from a symbolic declaration, it is a thorough, multi-tiered process.

"A community first claims to have stopped open defecation. The local government verifies this, then the State Task Group on Sanitation conducts further checks. Once all communities in the LGA are certified, a national team validates the entire LGA," he said.

This layered approach ensures accountability but also demands coordination, training, and sustainable financing, conditions that are uneven across Nigerian states.

How Small Communities Are Leading the Way

Despite these systemic constraints, communities like Araromi Aperin show that dramatic change is possible. The catalyst in this case was leadership, the kind that listens, mobilises, and inspires action.

Under the guidance of its Royal Highness, Oba Mudasiru Obisesan Alararomi, the community embraced the call to end open defecation. When facilitators from UNICEF and the Oyo State WASH team first arrived, they expected scepticism or fatigue. Instead, they found a leader ready to champion change. The Oba hosted the visiting team, provided accommodation, and rallied his people.

"Before, our people didn't understand why open defecation was dangerous. But now they know it brings sickness, and everyone is happy to have their own toilet," said Mr. Jimoh Adetona, deputy WASH coordinator for Ona Ara LGA.

Initially, only the palace had about 22 toilets. But once the Oba issued a royal directive mandating every household to build a toilet, the tide turned. To ease the financial burden, the community established a soft-loan scheme enabling households to pay an initial N17,000 for subsidised low-budget toilets costing about N65,000.

Neighbours volunteered to assist one another, digging pits, moulding blocks, and constructing slabs. Many families built what they once considered impossible, their own household toilets.

Today, Araromi Aperin stands as a community transformed. Nine out of eleven wards in Ona Ara LGA have already been certified Open Defecation-Free (ODF), with the remaining wards clustered in dense peri-urban pockets where sanitation challenges are more complex.

The impact on children has been especially profound. At Islamic Mission School, one of the community's primary schools, teacher Omolara Oyelude said pupil attendance has doubled.

"Before now, children often fell ill or missed classes. But since we got toilets, that has changed. Our enrolment jumped from 40 to 80 pupils. The girls, especially, no longer stay home during their periods," she said.

Still, challenges persist. The surge in enrolment has not been matched by an increase in teaching staff. "We need more teachers. But we are grateful our children are healthier and happier," Oyelude admitted.

Urban Sanitation: The Next Frontier

With Nigeria urbanising at record speed, experts say sanitation strategies must evolve beyond rural-focused models. In Oyo State alone, 1.5 million households lack safely managed sanitation, and only three percent of excreta is safely disposed of.

To address this, UNICEF and partners are piloting Citywide Inclusive Sanitation (CWIS), a framework that integrates containment, emptying, transport, treatment, and reuse of waste across entire cities.

"Urban sanitation demands new thinking. We need systems that are affordable, resilient, and inclusive," Johnson stated.

The Economic Case for Sanitation

Sanitation is not just a social investment; it is an economic opportunity. Analysts estimate a N75 billion sanitation economy in Oyo State alone if private-sector participation is scaled in faecal-sludge management and sanitation services.

But a gap remains as the average household can afford only N15,000 for safe services, far below the actual N50,000–N76,000 cost. Bridging this gap will require public-private partnerships, subsidies, and micro-credit schemes.

"The private sector must see sanitation as a viable market. With the right incentives, sanitation can be both sustainable and profitable," Johnson said.

A Clean Future Built From the Ground Up

Nigeria's battle against open defecation is far from over, but communities like Araromi Aperin offer a glimpse of what is possible. They show that a clean future does not start in high-level conference rooms or government offices, it begins in households, schools, and small communities determined to chart a different course.

"For us women, having a toilet at home means safety and pride. Our daughters no longer go into the bush. It has changed our lives," said Mrs. Taiwo Adebisi, a mother of four,

For Nigeria, the path to a clean future may be long. But in its smallest communities, the journey has already begun.

CAP PLC LEADS DIALOGUE ON COLOUR, MATERIALS AND SUSTAINABILITY AT DESIGN WEEK LAGOS 2025

JULIET ONYEMA



L - R: Aramide Nwokediuko, Company Secretary/General Counsel, Chemical and Allied Products (CAP) PLC; Bolarin Okunowo, Managing Director, CAP PLC; Titi Ogufere, Founder, Design Week Lagos and Jethro Iruobe, Chief Operating Officer, CAP PLC at the DWL Talks session where CAP PLC showcased Dulux's innovations in sustainable coatings, digital tools, and colour systems tailored for African markets.

At this year's Design Week Lagos, one of the continent's most influential gatherings for designers and architects, Bolarin Okunowo of Chemical and Allied Products PLC (CAP) used her keynote session to raise a simple but urgent point: Africa's built environment needs smarter, cleaner and more responsible materials.

Speaking on the theme Colour, Materials & Innovation in Our Built Environment, the CAP Managing Director challenged industry professionals to rethink the products they use. She argued that design across Africa can no longer focus on visual appeal alone, and that the continent must embrace materials that support healthier and more sustainable living conditions.

Okunowo pointed to CAP's recent work with Dulux as an example of how the industry can shift. She discussed the company's investment in low-VOC coatings, which improve indoor air quality and align with global green building standards. She also spoke about the Dulux Tint-Base System, introduced in 2022, which gives customers instant access to thousands of colours across stores in Nigeria.

In her remarks, she spent time on a topic that often goes unnoticed in design conversations: surface preparation. She highlighted CAP's Caplux Surface Prep range and explained that a good paint finish depends heavily on what happens before colour even touches the wall. Well-prepared surfaces, she noted, allow colours to show accurately and last longer.

The keynote also included a look at CAP's updated Dulux e-commerce platform. The platform is designed to make paint selection and ordering easier for both professionals and homeowners, expanding access to quality products

without requiring physical store visits. For Okunowo, digital access is a necessary part of encouraging more people to make sustainable choices in their projects.

Beyond materials and technology, Okunowo returned to a theme that consistently shapes CAP's public conversations: colour as a tool of expression. She spoke about the role colour plays in influencing mood, identity and even how people experience a space. According to her, Dulux's long-standing research into how light, climate and culture interact with colour helps customers choose shades that reflect their lives more accurately.

Throughout the week at Livespot Entertainium, CAP hosted an interactive booth featuring its latest products, colour tools and sustainability-focused innovations. The company also held business sessions with designers, discussing topics including colour psychology, climate-responsive design and the importance of preparing surfaces correctly.

This year marks CAP PLC's second partnership with Design Week Lagos. While the company continues to highlight its products, its presence this year felt more focused on steering a wider conversation. The message was consistent: Africa's design future will depend on materials that are healthier, smarter and more intentional, and the industry must take that shift seriously.

LAGOS STREET ART FESTIVAL: BUILDING CAPACITY FOR EMERGING ARTISTS

CHISOM MICHAEL



Lagos, the center of excellence, is about to experience an explosion of creativity and colour as the Lagos Street Art Festival (LSAF) 2025 returns, a platform created by artists, for artists, to celebrate expression, community, and identity through public art.

With the theme “Legendary Lagos: City of dreams,” the festival goes beyond beautification to showcase the true spirit of Lagos, bold, dynamic, and unafraid to create. This year’s edition celebrates the collective power of artists reclaiming public spaces, turning city walls, walkways, and corners into canvases of pride, storytelling, and connection.

Led by Osa Okunkpolor, simply known as Osa Seven - Renowned Visual Artist, and Co-Founder of Inscribe Art, and Akinlabi Akinbulumo, popularly known as Phisha, two of Nigeria’s most respected creative voices, the festival gives emerging and established artists an opportunity to express themselves freely and legally in ways that inspire and unite.

It represents a movement where creativity meets purpose, where the city becomes both muse and gallery.

Karishma Daryani-Chugani, a member of the Lagos Street Art Festival Founding Council, described the festival as a place where “we are creating a platform for non-traditional artists, a festival that allows them to showcase their work publicly and professionally, right on the streets.”

For Osa Seven, the festival represents more than beautification; it is a movement of pride and possibility. “It’s about empowering people because even if their art isn’t in a gallery, they still deserve the chance to showcase their work,” he explains.

Adaora Mbelu, a founding Council Member of Lagos Street Art Festival, said the plan for the festival is to make street art a global event, empowering creatives to learn the process through the workshops and showcase their talent to the world.”

Oluwatomi Ikenye, marketing partner, Berger Paints, said that art is not a luxury, but involves education, mental health, community and identity.

According to him, being part of an art festival essentially aligns with the company's ideas, which are innovation, creativity, and community transformation.

"Internally, we have looked at this and seen that this is something we want to be part of because, as a brand, we have contributed to the architectural and cultural transformation of Nigeria. So it is only natural for us to be part of this cultural movement," Ikenye said.

On his part, Fatiu Akiolu, managing director of LASAA, said that the role of the agency is to regulate and enhance the city's visual environment.

"Partnering with the festival aligns perfectly with our mission to ensure that Lagos State remain aesthetically appealing, orderly and culturally dynamic," he said.

The journey begins with "Story Walls" on November 25th and 27th across the Lagos Mainland, where artists will collaborate on large-scale murals that reflect the city's diversity, resilience, and shared dreams. These murals serve as storytelling landmarks, visual narratives of Lagosian identity told in bold colour and design.

From December 4th to 10th, the festival enters its most dynamic phase, Public Art Painting, a collaborative citywide transformation from Surulere to Lekki, Ikeja to Yaba. Artists will take over streets, schools, and open spaces, reimagining the urban landscape through collective artistry.

Capacity building remains a central focus of LSAF. On Wednesday, December 10th, the British Council will host two specially curated workshops designed to help creatives develop both artistic and strategic skills:

Design Thinking is an innovation-focused session that teaches artists to approach creativity as a tool for problem-solving; Brand Storytelling is a hands-on exploration of how artists can craft authentic personal and brand narratives that resonate across audiences.

These workshops will host a hundred participants, ensuring intimate, high-impact sessions where learning meets collaboration.

On Thursday, December 11th, the spotlight shifts to Fireside Chats and Artist Talks at Bature, featuring eight distinguished panellists across two sessions. These interactive conversations will explore Lagos' growing creative economy, the power of public art, and how young artists can navigate their paths in an ever-evolving industry.

To round off the festivities, the Pop-Up Event on Saturday, December 13th, also at Bature, will bring together art lovers, creators, and community members for a day of live art, music, and creative exchange. Alongside it, the OSA 7 x 10 Exhibition, running from December 12th to 15th (Upstairs at Bature), will showcase ten works that celebrate the evolution of Osa Seven's artistry and his decade-long contribution to Nigerian street culture.

At its heart, LSAF 2025 is about providing a platform for artists. It is where Lagos' creative energy finds its voice, a space where upcoming talents can be seen, heard, and celebrated. Through murals, installations, and live projects, artists will transform everyday environments into vibrant landmarks that reflect the pulse of Lagos life.

The festival was born from a deep belief in the power of art to move people and transform spaces. It embodies the shared passion of creators who understand that art can build community, tell powerful stories, and drive social change. Every mural and installation created during the festival carries a story, one that connects the artist to the city and the people who live in it.

By turning the streets into an open-air gallery, the festival breaks down traditional barriers to artistic appreciation. Art leaves the confines of galleries and enters the neighborhoods, schools, and markets, where everyone can experience it. This is art that belongs to the people, created in their spaces, and inspired by their stories.

Beyond its visual appeal, the Lagos Street Art Festival fosters growth and collaboration. It encourages upcoming artists to learn, connect, and gain visibility both locally and globally. It also provides a unique platform for mentorship and capacity building, led by Inscribe Art and other key industry figures.

Powered by Inscribe Art and LASPARK, in partnership with Lagos Tourism, LASAA, Adidas, and Bature Brewery, and supported by Pim Pam, Mirus Events, Artzmaniang, Filmbydt, Q21 Solutions, Sketchar, Loatsad Promomedia, and Crea8torium, LSAF 2025 reflects a shared commitment to nurturing talent, beautifying public spaces, and positioning Lagos as a thriving hub for creative expression.

This year's festival invites every artist, from the aspiring painter to the seasoned muralist, to take part in shaping the city's visual identity. Together, they will turn Lagos into a living masterpiece, one wall at a time.

In the end, the Lagos Street Art Festival is a celebration of artists, their courage, their voices, and their ability to turn imagination into something the whole city can see, feel, and take pride in.

REIMAGINING NIGERIA'S WORKFORCE: HOW JOHN AMHANESI'S YOUTH AGENCY MODEL IS SHAPING A NEW ERA OF HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT





Nigeria's youth make up the heart of the nation. They account for 70 percent of over 200 million people—restless, capable, yet conspicuously absent from the national infrastructure designed to cultivate them.

This gap between potential and opportunity is not just a policy failure; it is a national emergency. This is the paradox that drives John Amhanesi, a data-driven strategist and founder of the John Amhanesi Foundation (JAF), whose work is redefining what youth empowerment can mean in Africa's largest economy.

From classrooms to corporations, the Ivy League-trained strategist with experience in people analytics at NVIDIA and human capital systems advocacy at CIVICUS has observed the same pattern: talent thrives where it is nurtured, measured, and trusted. Where structure fails, ambition fades.

Young minds capable of reimagining economies grow immobile, unable to think critically or see themselves as architects of national transformation.

The result is not just economic stagnation but the slow unraveling of a nation's future, one disengaged youth at a time. This is the crisis John has committed his budding professional career to solving. Through the John Amhanesi Foundation (JAF), he is building the solution.

He combines data science with systems thinking to tackle one of Africa's most pressing challenges, which is the underutilization of human capital. His thesis is radical: youth agency is not a luxury—it is the foundation of national development. Through JAF, Amhanesi operationalizes a model that treats young people not as charity beneficiaries but as co-architects of national transformation.

The foundation's programs are designed around two complementary structures, Internal and External Program Divisions.

The Internal Program Division includes in-house initiatives like essay competition challenging bold visions, a policy and Research Training Institute that builds analytical depth, scholarship and mentorship programs that strengthen community, and emergency funds that keep promising talents from dropping out, and a plethora of data-driven mission-aligned programs.

The External Program Division, on the other hand, scales JAF's philosophy through partnerships with corporations, government agencies, and civil society.

From innovation challenges with tech firms to social enterprise incubators and public service fellowships, these collaborations expand reach without compromising rigour. JAF maintains the intellectual architecture while partners provide reach and resources.

The Foundation does not view its programs as isolated initiatives but as living laboratories of transformation. Each experience is designed to simulate real-world challenges where young Nigerians analyse complex problems, leading under ambiguity, and contributing to outcomes larger than individual success.

Scholarship recipients become mentors. Innovation challenges force prototyping and iteration. The meta-lesson is constant: youth agency can reshape outcomes. Not someday. Now.

Amhanesi's model is grounded in what he learned building predictive workforce models at NVIDIA and contributing to youth participation frameworks at CIVICUS. Yet, beyond the analytics lies something deeply personal—the story of a Nigerian who excelled globally and chose to return his expertise to build infrastructure Nigeria can own, scale, and sustain.

As Nigeria stands at a defining moment in its history, John Amhanesi represents a new generation of leaders who are not waiting for reform. Instead, he is building the alternative: one program, one partnership, one transformed young person at a time.

The John Amhanesi Foundation offers more than mentorship and training; it is a blueprint for what Nigeria could become if it treated its youth not as a problem to manage, but as the solution it has been waiting for.

THE BLOOM 2025: HOW WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS ARE RETHINKING FOOD, HEALTH ACROSS AFRICA AND THE MENA REGION

IFEOMA OKEKE-KORIEOCHA



When basic healthcare and reliable food are still out of reach for millions, the most promising answers are often built from the ground up, by women designing solutions shaped by local realities. In 2025, five African founders were recognized by the Bayer Foundation Women Entrepreneurs Award, supported in partnership with Impact Hub.

Their work was celebrated at The Bloom, a virtual showcase held on 19 November 2025, which gathered investors, media, partners, and changemakers to spotlight practical, scalable solutions for food and health equity.

The winners bring different tools to the same challenge: making health and food systems more accessible, resilient, and fair. Salma Tammam of Egypt founded REME-D to produce affordable molecular diagnostics locally, a move that has helped tens of thousands access timely care.

REME-D now supplies scores of hospitals and labs across the region and is expanding into new African markets.

In Zimbabwe, **Chiedza Mushawedu** runs Zimbos Abantu Healthcare on Wheels, a solar-powered mobile clinic model that takes primary care straight into underserved neighbourhoods.

The initiative has reached thousands of patients and created local employment while launching an affordable micro-insurance product that helps families pay for care without catastrophic costs.

Faith Koki in Kenya addresses post-harvest loss with SmartSilo, a solar airtight storage system equipped with sensors. By cutting spoilage and linking farmers to buyers and credit via her Kuza Trading Hub, she's helping smallholders capture more value from their harvests. In Ghana, Anaporka Adazabra's Farmio Limited combines solar greenhouses, drip irrigation, and a farmer SuperApp to boost yields and build climate resilience.

And in Sudan, **Alaa Salih Hamadto's** Solar Foods uses solar drying plus IoT tools to preserve produce affordably as a lifeline for farmers and communities, especially during crises.

Across these initiatives, a pattern emerges: technologies and services that respect local context, create dignified incomes, and scale sustainably.

With backing from Impact Hub and the Bayer Foundation, the entrepreneurs gain funding, mentorship, and networks of support that turn promising pilots into systems-changing solutions. The Bloom event made clear that investing in women innovators is not charity; it is a strategic route to stronger food and health outcomes across regions.

Reme-D Test Kit

A nanotechnology researcher turned entrepreneur, Salma built REME-D to produce affordable molecular diagnostics locally. REME-D now serves 92 hospitals and laboratories, delivering tests to over 50,000 patients per month and exporting to neighbouring markets.

For Salma, diagnostics are the entry point to care: local testing capacity shortens the path from symptom to treatment and keeps health systems responsive during outbreaks and everyday care alike.

Chiedza's fleet of solar-powered mobile clinics brings primary care to settlements where the nearest clinic can be 15 kilometres away.

By meeting communities where they are, Zimbos Abantu has reached over 108,000 patients and created 48 full-time jobs. Its recent micro-health insurance product, Mukando weHwutano, addresses financial barriers to care a reminder that accessibility is both geographic and economic.

Solar-powered food dryer after the war. Impact Hub and the Bayer Foundation play complementary roles: one provides a global network and local ecosystem support, the other provides targeted funding, technical mentorship, and credibility.

Together they offer:

- Seed and scaling capital: early investments plus follow-on funds that help pilots grow into sustainable models.
- Technical and business support: mentorship in product development, regulatory navigation, and market entry.
- Network access: introductions to investors, buyers, research partners, and policy actors.
- Visibility: platforms like The Bloom amplify founders' stories to audiences that can accelerate adoption and investment.

This mix matters because entrepreneurs working on health and food systems face technical barriers (regulation and standards), logistical barriers (distribution and cold chains), and financial barriers (access to affordable capital).

Support that combines money, mentorship, and market access helps bridge those gaps.

The solutions on display at The Bloom event are not isolated innovations; they are building blocks for more resilient, inclusive systems.

Diagnostics reduce unnecessary referrals and speed treatment; mobile clinics reach populations that would otherwise slip through the cracks; better storage preserves farmers' income and local food supplies; climate-smart farming improves yields with fewer resources; and solar preservation expands shelf life where refrigeration is scarce.

Each intervention reduces loss and cost, increases autonomy, and creates jobs, all central to equitable development.

While their sectors differ, from biotech to agritech, from mobile healthcare to renewable-powered food systems, these five women share a common approach:

solutions that are locally anchored yet globally scalable, and which place dignity, sustainability, and equity at the center.

Through the Bayer Foundation Women Entrepreneurs Award and the Impact Hub Network, they have not only gained funding and mentorship but also access to a global community that amplifies their impact and accelerates their growth.

The collaboration between Bayer Foundation and Impact Hub has been instrumental in unlocking this potential. Together, they are demonstrating that the future of health and food security will not be delivered by one innovation alone, but by many, each rooted in the realities of the people it serves.

In a time when global crises can feel overwhelming, the work of these five women is a reminder that meaningful change is not only possible, it is already happening.

FSDH'S WIBI SUMMIT: CELEBRATING WOMEN'S RESILIENCE, INGENUITY

CHINONYE ISIDIENU



L-R: Biodun Stephen, Film-maker and Producer, Stella-Marie Omogbai, Executive Director of Corporate Banking and Branches at FSDH Merchant Bank, Blessing Obasi-Nze, Actress and CEO Desperanza Media, Joke Silva, Veteran Actress, Award-winning Producer, Bukola Smith, MD/CEO, FSDH Merchant Bank Chief, Taba Peterside, CEO at Waveline Growth Partners, Kubi Momoh, Executive Director, Risk Management and Executive Compliance Officer, Hakeem Muhammed, Executive Director, Global Markets & Institutional Banking Division, FSDH Merchant Bank

FSDH Merchant Bank has reaffirmed its leadership role in championing women's economic advancement in Nigeria with the successful hosting of the 2025 Women in Business Initiative (WIBI) Summit.

The milestone fifth edition, held on Wednesday, November 19, 2025, at the Civic Centre, Victoria Island, Lagos, brought together hundreds of female entrepreneurs, corporate professionals, creatives, policymakers, and ecosystem leaders to celebrate women who continue to drive growth, innovation, and resilience across the economy.

Themed "Empowered – Celebrating Women in Motion," this year's summit highlighted the real progress and persistent challenges shaping the female economy, while spotlighting FSDH's expanding footprint in enabling women-led growth.

Delivering her opening remarks, Bukola Smith, Managing Director of FSDH Merchant Bank, reaffirmed the Bank's dedication to removing structural barriers for women and creating pathways to sustainable economic inclusion.

"WIBI was built on the belief that when women are equipped with the right systems, knowledge, and support, entire economies shift. Five years on, we are seeing that transformation play out — not just in individual success stories, but in the confidence, collaboration, and ambition now shaping our community. This year's focus on the creative economy reinforces our commitment to backing women in sectors that define culture, influence markets, and shape Nigeria's future," she said.

This year's keynote address was delivered by veteran actress, award-winning producer, and business leader Joke Silva, whose presence brought both depth and authenticity to the day's conversations.

Drawing from her decades-long career in Nigeria's creative industry, she spoke passionately about the importance of resilience, reinvention, and emotional intelligence as tools for navigating and excelling in an evolving economy.

Her message resonated strongly with emerging entrepreneurs, creatives, and corporate professionals seeking to build sustainable legacies, even as she emphasized the need for proper training and skills development to prepare young talents for global competitiveness.

"Today, FSDH celebrates five years of impact for women in business — five years of grace, growth, and undeniable progress. Across history, women have stood as beacons of excellence in every industry, and their stories continue to inspire us to push boundaries and create room for even more women to rise.

"Nigeria is blessed with a large pool of young talent, particularly within the creative industry, which has the potential to absorb and empower thousands. However, the reality remains that while current training initiatives provide exposure, they often fall short in delivering the depth of skills required for global competitiveness," she said.

Joke added that "What is needed now is intentional selection, targeted skilling, and accelerated capacity building, so that young women — and all creative talents — are fully equipped to thrive, lead, and compete on the global stage."

The panel session featured a dynamic lineup of thought leaders who unpacked the realities facing women in business today. Jide Sipe, Group Head of Brand Transformation and Digital Marketing at the Bank of Industry, brought a development finance perspective, emphasizing the role of structured funding and capacity building in scaling women-led ventures.

Biodun Stephen, award-winning filmmaker and producer provided insight into the creative and technical challenges facing women in film and media, underscoring the need for stronger institutional support for creatives.

While sharing thoughts during the panel session, Blessing Obasi-Nze, Actress and CEO of Desperanza Media, shared the story of how she came to the limelight and her evolution since then, adding that young creative talents should focus on being original, authentic, and consistent in their pursuit of success.

The session was moderated by TV host and media personality Olive Emodi, who guided a rich, high-energy discussion on leadership, brand-building, access, and the shifting economic landscape for women.

Across the conversations, a recurring theme emerged: women are not only participating more actively in Nigeria's economic narrative—they are driving its next growth curve.

From entrepreneurship and digital innovation to creative exports and corporate leadership, Nigerian women continue to demonstrate remarkable resilience and ingenuity. The WIBI Summit offered both a mirror and a megaphone for these stories, amplifying their visibility and providing a platform for meaningful dialogue.

While speaking to the measurable impact of FSDH's Women in Business Desk, Stella-Marie Omogbai, Executive Director, FSDH Merchant Bank, stated that over the past five years, the Bank has disbursed more than \$3.9 million (₦3 billion+) in loans to women-led businesses, working closely with partners such as BOI, IFC, AGF, and WEAV Capital to deliver blended financial solutions and targeted interventions.

"Our capacity-building programmes—including the Women Business Impact Programme delivered with the Enterprise Development Centre, the Female Founders Growth Programme run in collaboration with IFC and WEAV, and the WIBI Coaching Programme—have provided training, mentorship, and market access to over 500 women-led SMEs.

With more than 2,000 women engaged across summits, masterclasses, coaching cohorts, and accelerator programmes, WIBI continues to serve as one of the country's most influential platforms for female enterprise development," she said.

Throughout the event, speakers emphasized that unlocking the potential of the creative economy requires more than episodic support. It demands structural reforms, patient capital, industry collaboration, and platforms that recognize women as economic powerhouses—not just beneficiaries. FSDH's approach, combining access to finance, capacity-building, market access, and community, was widely commended by panelists and participants alike.

The energy across the summit reflected not only celebration but momentum, even as the WIBI platform awarded outstanding women in business across different industries. Participants expressed optimism about the future, citing improved access to information, shifts in social norms, and institutional support as enablers of women's economic mobility.

Many described the 2025 edition as the most inspiring and strategic yet, particularly as it marked the fifth anniversary of WIBI's journey.

With the successful hosting of the 2025 Summit, FSDH Merchant Bank continues to deepen its influence and reaffirm its commitment to gender-focused development, a commitment that aligns with both national and global ambitions to drive inclusive growth.

As the Bank prepares for the next wave of interventions, the underlying message from the day was clear: when women are empowered, entire economies shift.

awumi Fajemiroku

Executive Director, Otadele
Fajemirokun Foundation

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**IWÈ ÀLÀ: A NEW SIGNAL OF
INVESTOR CONFIDENCE IN
NOLLYWOOD'S CREATIVE
ECONOMY**





According to Fajemirokun, *Iwé Àlà* is “a groundbreaking ode to the heart of Ojúde Ọba... an immersive experience designed to showcase heritage, fashion, and the profound communal spirit of the festival.”

On the significance of AIICO’s involvement, she added: “Having AIICO Insurance onboard signals a deepening recognition, within corporate Nigeria, that Nollywood is not only a cultural force but also an investable industry with sustainable long-term value.”

In a statement underscoring this new direction for the company, Segun Olalandu, Marketing and Communications Lead at AIICO Insurance Plc, remarked: “AIICO Insurance Plc. stands firmly in support of projects like *Ojúde Ọba*, which serve as vital platforms for cultural continuity and preserving the richness of our indigenous heritage. We believe that authentic, entertaining storytelling is essential for intergenerational connection, ensuring that the legacy narratives and deep cultural roots celebrated in this film inspire and resonate with the younger generation..”

Producer Kenechukwu Egbue added: “AIICO is a strategic partner rooted in Nigerian culture since 1963. We are glad to collaborate with an insurance giant, whose rich history parallels the nation’s resilience.

...as Come On Naija partners AIICO Insurance

Following the success of the award-winning *Afamefuna: An Nwaboi Story*, leading Nigerian production studio ComeOnNaija has announced its next major cinematic venture: *Iwé Àlà (The Book of Dreams)*. In a move industry stakeholders are calling a milestone for Nigeria’s creative economy, ComeOnNaija also confirmed a strategic production partnership with AIICO Insurance, one of Nigeria’s foremost insurance institutions and a long-standing leader in risk and asset management.

The announcement was made by Olawumi Fajemirokun, Executive Producer at ComeOnNaija, during a special session at AFRIFF 2025 in Lagos, where she revealed that principal photography begins in November 2025.

“It’s also a bold statement for AIICO especially as the creative industry in recent times has taken the centre stage and they have through this collaboration, proven to be *_au fait_* with the dynamism of the business world and its intersection with creativity.”

Industry analysts note that the AIICO / ComeOnNaija alliance highlights a broader movement: institutional investors are recognising the film industry as a viable, scalable asset class capable of generating cultural influence and measurable returns.

As Nollywood deepens its global presence, partnerships between financial institutions and filmmakers could reshape the funding architecture for premium productions.

Set in Ijebu and culminating in the splendour of the iconic Ojúde Ọba Festival, *Iwé Àlà: An Ojúde Ọba Story* promises not only a visual celebration of Nigerian tradition but also a new model for how films can be financed, insured, and structured in the era of a rapidly maturing creative economy.

GRANDPA MUST OBEY' MOVIE: A STORY OF FAMILY, FORGIVENESS AND FUN

ESTHER EMOEKPERE



Nadi, who has been acting since she was nine years old, spoke about her passion for the craft and her aspirations to become a director, producer, and editor in the future. 'I want to study more on acting and directing,' she said. 'I'm going to go to a film school and study every aspect of film.'

With its blend of humor and heart, 'Grandpa Must Obey' is a must-watch for families this holiday season. The film's cast and crew are excited to share 'Grandpa Must Obey' with audiences, and with its blend of humor and heart, it's sure to be a hit. 'Grandpa Must

'Grandpa Must Obey,' the highly anticipated family dramedy, directed by Chibuzor Afurobi and written by Saviour Kings Bob, promises to leave audiences in stitches and tears.

Obey' is a must-watch for families this holiday season.

The film which recently hit cinemas tells the story of Mr. Okafor, a man who finds himself in a whirlwind of chaos when he's left in charge of his energetic grandkids.

The film is being distributed by FilmOne Entertainment and produced by Trino Motion Pictures.

As they turn his world upside down, he learns valuable lessons about forgiveness, hope, and the true meaning of family. With a talented cast, including Bimbo Akintola, Darasimi Nadi, Fiyinfoluwa Asenuga, Kanayo O. Kanayo, and Yvonne Jegede, this movie is set to become a family favorite.

At a recent press junket at Filmhouse, Landmark, Lagos, Darasimi Nadi, the talented 14-year-old star of the film, shared her insights on the movie's themes and her experience working on the project. 'I feel like the film is going to make parents understand that children need their attention,' she said. 'Children want attention, and when they can't express it, they tend to become aggressive and violent.'



CAN'T COOK? HERE ARE 10 FOOD CAREERS YOU CAN STILL DO

ESTHER EMOEKPERE



Food photographer

Food photography plays a major role in how restaurants and food businesses present themselves. To begin a career in this field, you can start by practising with simple meals at home, using your phone or a basic camera to understand lighting, composition and angles. Over time, you can improve your editing skills through online courses in Adobe Lightroom or Photoshop and gradually build a portfolio. Many new photographers gain experience by offering free or low-cost shoots to small food vendors or home-based chefs who need clear images for menus or social media. As you grow, you can approach restaurants, cafés, packaged food brands and marketing agencies. Strong attention to detail, reliable organisation and consistency in editing will help you stand out, and learning basic photography principles through formal or online classes will strengthen your foundation.

Many people assume the food industry begins and ends in the kitchen. When people think of food careers, they imagine chefs, caterers, bakers or restaurant owners. Yet the modern food industry is far broader than that. Behind every successful restaurant, packaged snack, delivery company or food brand, there are people who never handle ingredients, never taste-test recipes and never stand behind a stove. Their work keeps the industry functioning, growing and adapting to new consumer demands.

These non-cooking careers are becoming even more important as food businesses rely heavily on digital tools, logistics networks, branding strategies, research support and customer communication. If you cannot cook or simply have no interest in culinary skills, you can still build a respected, long-term career in food. Many of these paths require creativity, organisation, communication, research or technical skills. They are open to both young graduates and mid-career professionals looking to transition.

Here are ten career paths and what you need to start each one.

Social media manager for food brands

Managing social media for food brands involves creating content, planning posts and tracking engagement across platforms. You can begin by experimenting on your personal page, creating sample food content to demonstrate your style and understanding of online trends. Many people enter the field by managing accounts for small food businesses, which gives them hands-on experience in scheduling posts, responding to customers and interpreting analytics. Courses in digital marketing, content strategy, SEO writing and analytics can help you understand audience behaviour and plan effective campaigns. Good communication skills, a consistent posting routine and the ability to analyse performance data are essential. Once you develop a solid portfolio, you can work with restaurants, packaged food brands, delivery platforms or food influencers.

Food stylist

A food stylist helps prepare sets for photography and advertising shoots. This role does not require cooking but does involve organisation, careful arrangement and attention to detail. You can start by reaching out to food photographers or stylists to volunteer or shadow them during shoots. Many stylists accept beginners who are reliable and willing to learn.

Practising simple arrangements at home and taking pictures can help you develop an eye for presentation. Courses in visual merchandising, creative direction or basic styling can provide structured knowledge. Over time, assistants learn how props, lighting and equipment work together. This path can lead to opportunities with advertising agencies, photography studios and large food brands that require frequent product shoots.

Food content writer

Food content writing includes creating menu descriptions, product stories, blog posts, newsletters and packaging copy. To start, you can write sample pieces that show your ability to describe products clearly and accurately. Building a small online portfolio helps potential clients see your work. Courses in copywriting, SEO writing, brand storytelling and digital communication can help you improve your structure and clarity. Food businesses often value writers who can interpret customer needs and translate them into simple, engaging text. Strong research skills, consistency and the ability to explain food concepts in everyday language are essential. As you gain confidence, you can write for restaurants, food magazines, digital agencies and food product companies.

Food operations manager

Operations roles keep the daily activities of food businesses running smoothly. This includes managing stock, tracking orders, monitoring supplies and coordinating with staff. You can enter this field through entry-level administrative roles in restaurants, catering companies or food factories. Over time, you learn how each part of the organisation works. Courses in business administration, supply chain basics, Excel, project management and customer service can help you build the technical skills required. Success in operations requires strong organisation, problem-solving ability and clear communication. With experience, operations manager often advance to supervisory or managerial positions, especially in fast-paced environments like delivery kitchens or supermarkets.

Food safety and hygiene officer

Food safety officers ensure that businesses follow hygiene and safety regulations. You can start by taking a recognised food hygiene certification and progress to higher levels for more advanced knowledge. Understanding storage procedures, temperature control and documentation is essential. Courses in HACCP, public health, microbiology basics or quality control help strengthen your foundation. This role requires attention to detail, confidence in reporting issues and strong record-keeping. Many start in entry-level compliance roles before moving into inspection or audit positions. Food safety officers are needed in factories, restaurants, hospitals, schools and regulatory agencies.

Supply chain and logistics officer

Supply chain officers help food products move smoothly from suppliers to manufacturers and finally to consumers. You can start by working in a warehouse, delivery company or supermarket where you gain practical experience with dispatch and stock management. Courses in logistics, inventory control, Excel and data analysis can prepare you for more advanced roles. Planning, communication and accuracy are crucial. As you build experience, you can work with food factories, distribution centres, delivery platforms or large retailers. This role suits people who enjoy organisation and fast-paced environments.

Food product research assistant

Research assistants support food scientists by collecting data, coordinating trials, handling samples and documenting test results. You can start by applying for junior roles in food manufacturing companies or research facilities. Many employers provide training, but basic knowledge of food science, biology or chemistry is an advantage. Courses in research methods, quality control, food science fundamentals and lab safety can help you grow. This role requires accuracy, curiosity and comfort with structured procedures. With experience, research assistants can move into full product development or quality assurance roles.

Packaging and labelling specialist

Packaging and labelling specialists ensure that food packaging is clear, compliant and practical. To enter this field, you can learn basic design tools and study regulatory requirements for food labels. Creating sample packaging concepts for practice helps build a portfolio. Courses in graphic design, regulatory labelling, branding and packaging technology provide essential knowledge. Strong writing skills, accuracy and the ability to follow legal guidelines are important. Specialists often work with food manufacturers, branding agencies, supermarkets and packaging companies.

Customer experience

Customer experience roles focus on managing customer questions, resolving complaints and tracking feedback. You can begin with customer service roles in food businesses and gradually build stronger communication and conflict-resolution skills. Courses in customer service management, communication techniques and CRM software can strengthen your abilities. This role requires patience, clear communication and good organisation. Customer experience leads help businesses understand patterns in customer behaviour and improve their services. They work in restaurants, delivery companies, packaged food brands and supermarkets, and many eventually move into operations or marketing roles.

IT'S TIME TO BREAK DOWN THE BARRIERS LIMITING AIR TRAVEL IN AFRICA

ERIKA ACHUM



In recent years, the narrative around Africa has been filled with promises of growing economies, increasing intra-African trade ambitions, a rising middle class, and the much-celebrated African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA), which has synthesized the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM) that will enable free aviation mobility across the continent.

However, with recent events, I am reminded yet again of how painfully slow, progress has been in aligning policy with aspiration. I've spent years navigating global policy, but the greatest operational absurdity I face is within my own continent. Whilst we speak of seamless integration in the media and at conferences, the on-the-ground reality for African professionals moving across Africa is punitive, costly, and humiliating.

Two months ago, on a ferry flight from Dubai to Libreville, a routine ATC rerouting made continuing operationally unfeasible without a technical stop

for fuel. Ethiopian and Eritrean ATC rejected our emergency diversion request.

"We were forced to contact Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Jeddah not only accepted us immediately but granted visas-on-arrival so our crew could rest, shower, and continue. Where is our continent's agility?"

This month, while flying a highly influential African footballer to Gaborone, Botswana, authorities blatantly refused our crew's entry. This is a clear violation of ICAO Annex 9, which grants crew members on a General Declaration (GenDec) right to access for 72 hours. Why do our own governments violate global aviation laws against their own professionals?

Recently in Cairo, Egypt, our crew was again blocked from entry solely because they hold Nigerian passports and the aircraft flies a Nigerian flag. The bureaucratic penalty? Being offered a "crew lounge" at \$200 an hour. This isn't safety! It is a punitive tax on African mobility.

In September, my colleagues attending the Africa Energy Week in Cape Town, South Africa, endured an 18-hour layover, kept at the airport like criminals, and denied access to a shower or even a clean place to brush their teeth.

For too long, the idea of "African unity" has been sabotaged by the lack of "Open Skies." We are a continent where tickets are prohibitively expensive, routes are indirect (often forcing a layover in Europe or the Middle East), and flight frequencies are low. This isn't just an inconvenience; it is a tax on progress.

This protectionist mindset, fueled by a misguided fear that liberalization will cause smaller national carriers to fail, has instead ensured that all African airlines struggle to compete on a global scale.

African aviation only accounts for a fraction of global air traffic, despite having 18% of the world's

population. Our fragmented skies are not protecting our airlines; they are suffocating our economy, and the suffocation extends to other areas of our economy besides aviation.

Africa needs mobility to make significant progress, and aviation provides this critical leverage, though hampered by inadequate infrastructure.

Therefore, the benefits of free aviation are enormous. It will lead to lower fares and higher frequencies, ultimately resulting in free flow of people and goods. This means growing employment and revenue for multiple countries. Open skies will also unlock an intra-African tourism market, keeping travel revenue on the continent

There is a growing conversation about building what we need here in Africa, from aircraft parts to full maintenance and manufacturing industry. I believe in that future. But to get there, we must stimulate intra-African demand, trade, and movement. No manufacturer will set up shop in a market without adequate volume. If the economic environment doesn't support scale, it won't make business sense to invest.

Trade doesn't happen without movement. Goods don't move without air and logistics infrastructure. Business relationships don't form without mobility. Before we dream about building engines in Nigeria or Ethiopia, let's first remove the barriers preventing us from simply flying from Lagos to Addis Ababa without red tape.

Beyond just frustration, these barriers come at a real cost. For instance, our aircraft based in recently needed a maintenance part sourced from the U.S. That engine spent four weeks held up at the border. Imagine the operational delays, customer dissatisfaction, and economic loss we incurred all because of poor logistical infrastructure and tariff complexities.

Multiply that scenario across dozens of operators and hundreds of flights, and you get a sense of how much productivity we're bleeding every year. Instead of fostering industrialization, our policies are reinforcing dependency. We import almost everything we need, and yet we create no incentive or pathway for value to be created within.

The first step is harmonization. We need one aviation regulatory language across Africa. That means a unified and digitized landing permit systems across

regions like ECOWAS and the African Union. Also, recognition and implementation of regional travel documents that are currently in place on paper but ignored in practice.

Moreover, we need a reduction in the tariffs and taxes that currently penalize operators for trying to do business within the continent. And, open skies policies that go beyond signing agreements to actual enforcement.

If we're serious about integration, the skies must be the first frontier we conquer. Without that, AfCFTA and other continental initiatives will remain paper tigers.

Despite the challenges, we're not waiting for the perfect system. At VivaJets, we're innovating within the limits of our environment. We are building proprietary charter technology that simplifies access to private aviation across Africa. We've expanded our service footprint across multiple countries, maintaining high standards of aircraft availability, safety, and luxury.

Through VivaJets, we have connected more entrepreneurs, executives, and investors than ever before. We have also built partnerships with international service providers to bridge the infrastructural gaps our region presents.

These wins, though hard-earned, are a testament to the resilience and creativity of African aviation entrepreneurs. But imagine how much more we could do if the policies caught up with the vision?

African governments must realize that private sector growth in aviation is not a luxury; it's a necessity for continental development. Every time a flight is delayed for bureaucratic reasons or grounded for want of a permit, we lose time, opportunity, and competitive advantage.

The world isn't waiting. If Africa continues to treat aviation as a peripheral sector, we will be left behind in the global race for innovation, trade, and industrialization. The choice is clear: either break down the walls holding our skies hostage or watch others fly past us.

It's time to act.

Erika Achum is the CEO, VivaJets

A SAFE SPACE FOR MEN: TRIPLE G CONFERENCE INSPIRES GROWTH, RESILIENCE



Triple G Conference, a maiden event created by Sola Oyebade (Mr. Mahogany) to celebrate International Men's Day, aimed to empower and inspire young men aged 20 to 35 through a combination of panel discussions and networking opportunities.

With a goal to create a platform that fosters personal growth, professional resilience, and brotherhood in a positive, empowering way, the conference spurred conversation that highlighted the struggles of men and how they could address them.

According to Sola Oyebade, the event was long overdue, noting that “when we look around, we see that there’s a lot of events and a lot of support systems for women out there but there’s nothing for men.”

He emphasized that men, particularly young men, seem to be getting lost, with no clear support system

or mentors to turn to. As he put it, “Who’s their support system? Who can they talk to? Who are their mentors? Who can they look up to?”

Oyebade highlighted the pressure society puts on men to be strong and not show emotions, saying, “You must be a man. You must be strong. You must make the money. You must pay the bills.”

He noted that this pressure can lead to mental health issues, which are often stigmatized and hidden. “Mental health issues, it’s much higher than people think. We try and hide it. We don’t know who to talk to,” he said.

The conference provided a platform for men to open up and share their struggles, with Oyebade encouraging them to “be vulnerable and open up and say, these are the issues I’m facing. How do I deal with it? I feel I’m alone.”



He also emphasized the importance of mentorship, noting that “each of us has different lessons that we can impart on people. We all have different stories.

Oyebade noted that the speakers were chosen for their ability to impart valuable life lessons, saying, “We’ve got a cross variety of speakers from entertainment, to business, to tech, to fitness... People that are known, very well known, as well as people that nobody knows at all, but they’ve achieved things in their life.”

Speaking on the topic, ‘Boss Moves, Soft Life’, Deyemi Okanlawon - Creative Entrepreneur and renowned actor shared some of his struggles when he started his acting career and how he sailed through. He also shared some useful tips on building a savings culture.

“I try to save and keep my money where I know I can’t touch it for a certain period of time. My desire has always been to build a comfortable life not just for myself but for everyone around me.

“I have been acting for 12 years and I have never had a management. Recently, for the first time, I hired a manager. That person is bringing in structure I know my business needs. I am not going to put myself into trouble because I want to look like a big man. I’m not going to hire people I don’t need,” Okanlawon said.

He advised participants at the conference not to put themselves under pressure trying to make it big.

“I have failed so many times and in so many levels.

Failure for me is an indication of growth. Focus on the goal,” he added.

Ayo Akinola, Co-Founder, PiggyTech Global Limited advised participants that whatever they do, they should build a good savings culture and only engage in projects they can fund.

“Whatever you do, save and grow your business. You have to be true to yourself. Can your business scale without choking you? If you are looking to go into business, do what people can pay for.

“A lot of times, the reasons businesses fail is lack of funding. Sometimes runway help you just test things. Don’t grow beyond your scale. There are talents around you that are also on your level. It is important to grow as you start to scale. What got me into systems is that I had a mentor,” Akinola disclosed.

The event featured a diverse range of speakers, including industry experts and mentors, including Jason Poshe, Founder and Creative Director of Jason Poshe; Ugo Monye, Creative Director, Ugo Monye Clothing; Ibukun Tunde Oni- Physician and Serial Healthtech Entrepreneur; Samuel Ayowole- Fitness Coach, Deyemi Okanlawon - Creative Entrepreneur and Ayo Akinola, Co-Founder, PiggyTech Global Limited.

Ultimately, the Triple G Conference aimed to change the narrative around men’s mental health and wellness, providing a safe space for men to share their struggles and receive support. As Oyebade put it, “How can you change that narrative? You know, and that’s what we’re here to do.”



GRC FINCRIME AWARDS 2025: CELEBRATING INTEGRITY AND INNOVATION



It was a night of pride and inspiration on Friday, November 7, 2025, as leaders in finance, technology, media, and public service gathered at the Lagos Marriott Hotel, Ikeja, for the 2025 GRC & FinCrime Prevention Awards.

The event followed a vibrant summit held earlier in the day, where experts explored “Localising GRC for Africa’s Next Frontier.” Together, the summit and awards celebrated the individuals and institutions driving governance, risk management, and financial-crime prevention across the continent.

In the fintech sector, OPay emerged a standout, winning both the Organisational Excellence in Financial Crime Prevention Award and the Organisational Excellence in

Governance, Risk & Compliance (GRC) Award. Tony Elumelu was crowned Influencer of the Year, while Arise TV took home GRC & Anti-FinCrime Reporter/Station of the Year.

Other prestigious recognitions included KPMG Africa for Best GRC & FinCrime Prevention Advisory Service, Jobberman for Best Recruitment & Talent Firm, and Huawei Cloud as FinCrime Prevention Solution Provider of the Year.

The deeply applauded Lifetime Achievement Award went to Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala. Beauty Mtonga earned the GRC Woman of the Year title, while NNPC was honoured for excellence in both the energy sector and financial-crime prevention.



In the utilities and telecommunications category, Globacom claimed Organisational Excellence in GRC.

Foluso Amusa, Founder and Convener of the Annual GRC & Financial Crime Prevention Summit and Awards, praised the progress made during the sessions and the achievements celebrated.

“This year’s event reaffirmed our belief that Africa is not merely catching up—it is driving meaningful, homegrown reforms in governance and financial-crime prevention.

“The trailblazers we honoured tonight embody integrity, resilience, and innovation. What inspires me most is the shared purpose we saw at the summit earlier today: experts, regulators, and industry leaders all committed to building systems that safeguard our economies, empower our people, and strengthen trust across the continent.”

In a major announcement, organisers revealed that the 2026 edition of the GRC & FinCrime Prevention Summit and Awards will be hosted in Nairobi, Kenya, on



November 6, 2026—a move widely welcomed as a step toward deeper regional engagement.

The day ended with renewed momentum and optimism for a future anchored in ethical leadership and strengthened governance across Africa.

7 CITIES LEADING SUSTAINABLE GROWTH AND SMART LIVING IN 2025

CHISOM MICHAEL



Cities worldwide are embracing technology and sustainability to redefine urban life in 2025. Governments, businesses, and communities are collaborating on projects integrating digital innovation, renewable energy, efficient transport, and citizen engagement.

From AI breakthroughs to self-driving cars, innovation is accelerating rapidly, with select regions leading the charge. According to the 2025 Global Innovation Index (GII) by WIPO, top countries and metro clusters are driving technological progress.

Seven European and Middle Eastern cities stand out, demonstrating how strategic tech use, public participation, and sustainable planning can

reshape urban living for efficiency, resilience, and environmental responsibility.

According to Interesting Engineering, here are seven cities leading sustainable growth and smart living in 2025

Zurich

Zurich continues to develop as a smart city through its Smart City Zürich strategy, launched

in 2018. The city uses smart data platforms to monitor traffic, waste management, and public services. Programs such as Open Zurich promote transparency and collaboration among government, startups, and planners. The ZVV app integrates buses, trains, and e-scooters for efficient travel. Waste heat from factories is reused for heating and cooling, while augmented reality and digital twins support safer and more sustainable construction planning.

Oslo

Oslo has maintained a high ranking in the Smart City Index since 2019. Named European Green Capital 2019, the city promotes electric mobility, with 40% of private cars and 90% of new car sales in 2024 being electric. The FutureBuilt program advances low-carbon, high-quality architecture near transit hubs.

Oslo's energy system relies mainly on hydropower, covering around 60% of total consumption. The automated Oslo Toll Ring supports zero-emission vehicles and funds eco-friendly transport initiatives.

Geneva

Geneva has strengthened its position in the Smart City Index through the Smart Canton project, which uses advanced technology to improve infrastructure. The TetraEner initiative combines renovation and new construction to maximise renewable energy use. The Geneva Lac Nations project links buildings to a hydraulic network for heating, cooling, and irrigation. LoRaWAN technology monitors environmental factors, optimising energy and transport systems. Geneva also focuses on public participation, education access, and green space development.

Dubai

Dubai rose from 12th to 4th place in the 2025 Smart City Index. Its strategy is based on six pillars: economy, living, governance, environment, people, and mobility. AI-powered

traffic systems use sensors and cameras to reduce congestion by 20%, while the Roads and Transport Authority manages traffic lights in real-time. Projects such as the DEWA Smart Grid and Dubai Silicon Oasis support energy efficiency, helping the UAE aim for 75% clean energy by 2050.

Abu Dhabi

Abu Dhabi moved from tenth to fifth place in the Smart City Index. The Zayed Smart City Project, launched in 2024, is a five-year plan using AI and IoT technology to pilot smart traffic, lighting, and parking systems. The TAMM platform integrates hundreds of government services digitally, reducing paper use by over 90%. The city is also building networks for electric vehicle charging, in line with its Sustainable Energy Strategy and the UAE's net-zero goal by 2050.

London

London has introduced systems such as the Congestion Charge, contactless payments, and the Ultra-Low Emission Zone to manage urban mobility and reduce emissions. Transport for London and BAI Communications have installed over 2,000 km of cabling in the Tube network to enable 4G and future 5G coverage across all stations and tunnels. Open data platforms allow startups and developers to create solutions for parking, EV charging, and environmental monitoring.

Copenhagen

Copenhagen aims to be the world's first carbon-neutral city, a goal set in 2009. The city prioritises carbon neutrality, sustainable urban living, and economic growth. Cycling infrastructure is central, with 62% of residents commuting by bike on 400 km of dedicated lanes. Smart infrastructure projects, such as the Copenhagen Connecting plan, are expected to generate €600 million in socioeconomic benefits, supporting the city's long-term sustainability objectives.

HOW TO VIST THE TOP SEVEN MODERN WONDERS OF THE WORLD

CHISOM MICHAEL

The world's wonders remain a magnet for travellers. The Seven Ancient Wonders of the World, documented by Greek travellers in the fifth century BC, celebrated human ingenuity. These included the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, the Colossus of Rhodes, and the Lighthouse of Alexandria. Today, only the Great Pyramid of Giza survives, standing 4,600 years as a testament to ancient engineering.

Time and nature have taken their toll on the other ancient wonders, leaving them only in history books and legends. But the spirit of marvel did not fade. The New7Wonders Foundation launched a global initiative to recognise heritage sites across the world. Over 100 million votes were cast to select the New Seven Wonders of the World.

The list includes Petra in Jordan, the Taj Mahal in India, and other landmarks that celebrate cultural diversity and human achievement.

Travel experts say visiting these wonders offers more than sightseeing. Structured tours and travel packages allow visitors to explore history, architecture, and culture in depth. Planning, securing tickets, and understanding access options are essential for a rewarding experience. These sites continue to inspire awe and connect travellers with the stories of civilisations past and present.

According to the Independent, here is a guide on how to visit each of these wonders.

1. Roman Colosseum, Italy

The Colosseum is the largest amphitheatre ever built and remains a symbol of ancient Roman life. Constructed in the first century AD under the Flavian dynasty, it hosted gladiator battles and animal hunts. It is located in the centre of Rome and is accessible to visitors daily.

Tickets can be purchased online in advance or at the entrance. Guided tours and audio guides are available to explain the history and architecture of the site.



2. Petra, Jordan

Petra is an ancient city carved into rock that served as a crossroads for Arabia, Egypt, and Syria-Phoenicia. It was inhabited by the Nabataeans over 2,000 years ago and later became part of Roman and Byzantine territories. Visitors can enter Petra through the Siq, a narrow canyon leading to the Treasury, and explore temples, tombs, and other structures. Entry tickets are required, and the site is accessible on foot or by horse carriage.



3. Christ the Redeemer, Brazil

Christ the Redeemer is a 98-foot statue on Corcovado Mountain in Rio de Janeiro. Completed in 1931, it was constructed by engineer Heitor da Silva Costa, with contributions from sculptor Paul Landowski. The site can be reached by train, car, or on foot. Visitors can view the statue and the city from observation platforms. There is an entrance fee for access to the top.



4. Taj Mahal, India

The Taj Mahal, a white marble mausoleum, was built by Emperor Shah Jahan in memory of his wife Mumtaz Mahal. Completed in 1648, it is located on the banks of the Yamuna River in Agra. Visitors can enter the complex through a main gate and explore the mausoleum, gardens, and surrounding buildings. Tickets are required, and there are restricted visiting hours to manage crowds.



5. Machu Picchu, Peru

Machu Picchu is a 15th-century Incan citadel in the Andes Mountains. Abandoned shortly after the Spanish conquest, it was rediscovered in 1911. The site can be reached from Cusco by train to Aguas Calientes and then by bus or on foot. Entry requires a ticket that must be booked in advance. Guided tours provide historical and cultural context for the citadel, temples, and terraces.



6. Chichén Itzá, Mexico

Chichén Itzá is a pre-Hispanic Mayan city in the Yucatán Peninsula. The main structure, El Castillo or the Temple of Kukulcan, is a 98-foot step pyramid. Visitors can explore the pyramid, temples, and plazas across the archaeological site. Tickets are required, and it is recommended to visit early in the morning to avoid crowds and heat.



7. Great Wall of China, China

The Great Wall stretches over 13,000 miles and was built to protect China from northern invasions. Construction started in 220 BC and continued until the 17th century. Visitors can access sections of the wall near Beijing, including Badaling, Mutianyu, and Jinshanling. Some areas are more restored and easier to climb, while others are rugged. Entrance fees and cable cars are available at certain sections.



AKADA CHILDREN'S BOOK FESTIVAL 2025 OPENS NEW DOOR TO DISCOVERY

...celebrates reading and adventure
at seventh edition in Lagos

CHARLES OGWO



The 2025 edition of the Akada Children's Book Festival (ACBF) kicked off with a renewed focus on discovery and learning, creating an engaging platform for children to explore literature, arts, and culture through interactive sessions and exciting activities.

With Over 1,500 people in attendance at this year's ACBF, held at the UPBEAT Recreation Centre, Lagos, the festival, curated specifically for children, marked its biggest edition yet, with a multitude of schools in attendance, 34 authors and speakers, and 27 featured books; 14 workshops; 11 storytime sessions; 8 book readings; five book chats; and an array of engaging activities, all designed to inspire curiosity and creativity in young readers.

Olubunmi Aboderin-Talabi, the convener of the ACBF, who is also an author, said the theme of this year's festival, "Book an Adventure" underscores the role of storytelling in helping children explore new worlds, ask bold questions, and see themselves as active participants in shaping the future.

"We are delighted by the incredible energy and enthusiasm that filled this year, the seventh edition of the Akada Children's Book Festival. The theme "Book an Adventure" reminds us that every story opens a new door of discovery. Books give children the courage to imagine, to dream, and to explore worlds beyond their own.



“At Akada Children’s Book Festival, we want every child to experience that sense of wonder and possibility, to see reading not as a task, but as an adventure waiting to unfold. Our goal is to keep building a generation that reads, creates, and tells the African story with pride,” she said.

The 2025 festival, themed “Book an Adventure,” showcased and celebrated the idea that every book is a journey, into imagination, history, culture, and self-discovery.

Across the day, the festival featured a diverse programme of activities for children and for the parents and teachers who accompany them. The programme also included special animation and illustration workshops, which introduced children to the exciting world of visual storytelling.

The festival also recognised excellence in children’s literature with three major awards presented during the event.

Komtu, the Grumpy Chameleon won Picture Book of the Year and The Water School by Ogbu Eme was named Early Reader Book of the Year.

Commenting on the recognition, award winner Tayo Oyetayo said, “My goal is to carefully craft a world in my children’s books where every child sees themselves reflected in the pages, the Akada Children’s Books Festival creates a platform that recognizes and elevates these stories.”

The Akada Children’s Book Festival (ACBF) is an annual event that provides a visible platform for the work of indigenous authors and encourages broad public engagement with children’s literature from Nigeria and around the world.

Since its launch in 2019, the festival has drawn over 10,160 attendees and donated more than 5,118 books, creating greater access to quality reading materials for children.

Beyond celebrating African stories and authors, the festival empowers parents and educators to nurture a love for reading, embrace shared reading practices, and inspire the next generation of African storytellers.

HOW SHOYEBO GROOMS NIGERIA'S FUTURE BBC SCRIPT WRITERS VIA COMPETITION

CHARLES OGWO



In a country rich with untold stories, Tobi Shoyebo is carving a pathway for young Nigerians to develop world-class storytelling skills.

“Tobi Shoyebo “ essay competition has evolved into an incubator for aspiring scriptwriters, many dreaming of writing for the BBC and other global media giants.

The maiden event recorded had 20 students emerging winners on Friday, November 14, at the grand-finale

held in Lagos, which qualifies them for mentorship and N10,000 and N5,000 prize money for essay and poem respectively.

Tobi Shoyebo, the convener of the essay and storytelling competition emphasised that the event is a chance to plant seeds of courage, creativity, and love in the next generation of Nigerian leaders.

“The entire point of the storytelling competition is to show that as long as you can create something and are courageous enough to chase that dream, you can make it happen,” he said.

Tobi, who is a graduated from English Department at the University of Lagos, had his life trajectory for of challenges and triumphs; starting as a pharmaceutical sales representative, where he was moving from town to town with sample kits and a script to follow.

Writing, he says, was always part of him, but it needed freedom to breathe. That freedom came when he traveled to Wales, pursuing a Master’s in Film Production at the University of South Wales.

There, he began writing scripts, freelancing for the BBC and other media outlets, publishing short stories and magazine pieces, and

contributing to blogs.

This experience he brought back home to help nurture youngsters in storytelling and script writing.

The maiden storytelling and essay competition themed, “Learning Curve,” was designed to reflect not only the students’ writing but their mindset.



“We didn’t want to just tell them what we wanted. The story conception is about their story. That’s where the learning curve comes in,” he said.

The winners are Ada Ossa, a JSS 2; Falaye Rachael, SSS 2; Nnam Chioma, JSS3; Adaramola Oyindamola, SSS2; Toki Grace, JSS2; Adama Daniella, SSS2; Ayowole Elizabeth, Ogunmolw Daniel, SSS2; and Kaeem Desayo, all from Royalty International School.

Others are Agoha Michelle, SSS1; Shotinrin David, SSS3; Victory Sanni, SSS2; Popoola Omowunmi, SSS2; Bojowa Emmanuel, SSS3; Elijah David, JSS2; Wasiu Imoleayo, JSS3; Lawal Okunola, SSS3; Peace Oduwale, JSS2; Bojowa Elisha, SSS1; and Oyewo Greatman, SSS3, from Great Elshadda School.

The convener emphasised the need for youngsters to have dreams, but reiterated that having the courage to carry on through challenges is very important.

Students were encouraged to quote works such as “Our Deepest Fear” by Marianne Williamson and Muhammad Ali’s “Last Night, I Had A Dream”.

Tobi reflected on one of the poems which he said mirrors resilience, and spark creativity. “‘Last Night, I Had A Dream’ was a daring poem.

“It was about facing an oppressive system and a strong opponent. If you listen carefully, the poet talks about defeating impossible odds. Poetry shows you the state of things and inspires action,” he noted.

Agoha Michelle, one of beneficiaries, applauded the initiative, describing the competition as an avenue to discover oneself as a student.

“It is a very good competition, and unfortunately, we don’t have much of such a contest that encourages youngsters to write.

“I’m grateful to Tobi, the convener, for giving us such a platform to express our creative ideas through writing; and this has inculcated the spirit of seriousness and determination in me,” she said.



TACKLING GRADUATE UNEMPLOYMENT: NIGERIA NEEDS TARGETED SKILLS EDUCATION

CHARLES OGWO



As Nigeria grapples with rising unemployment and a widening gap between graduates' skills and industry needs, experts emphasise the need for targeted-skills education to equip graduates with practical and in-demand skills that align with the evolving job market.

According to a World Bank report, one of the striking signs of failure of the skills development system in place is reflected in the inability of many educated Nigerians to find productive work, a problem that appears to be worsening.

Study shows that about 50 percent of all jobs requiring university education and 30 percent of all jobs requiring at least a polytechnic diploma also require computing and analytical skills.

Experts argue that Nigeria can upskill its workforce through targeted education by focusing on industry-academia partnerships, integrating practical, real-world learning into curricula, leveraging technology and e-learning platforms, investing in digital infrastructure, promoting vocational training and specialised fields such as artificial intelligence (AI), and fostering a culture of lifelong learning and continuous professional development.

Olajumoke Familoni, a professor of entrepreneurship/president of ICLED Business School, emphasised the need to bridge the gap between graduates and employability.

Familoni said that Nigeria needs a training system that transforms students into confident, skilled professionals who are prepared to compete in today's global workforce and contribute solutions to Nigeria's economic challenges.

Omowale Ogunrinde, founder of Field of Skills and Dream (FSD), said, "Nigerian youth waste years in universities paying so much for studies and graduate without jobs.

We are a people who do not believe in skills acquisition; however, that's what keeps everybody who is somebody in business.

Our youth need to get the type of skills industries need to be employable, and that is where tech-education comes in," she said.

Christopher Itua, head of industrial services and development at the Institute for Industrial Technology (IIT),



Maintenance Engineer, and Partner at Laborda Associates, said, “Nigeria needs to train graduates on skills and ethics to know how to do things well. Skill makes one employable; employers have jobs, but many employees have no skills to do the jobs.”

Rwanda, Ghana, Tunisia, and Lesotho lead African countries that have curbed graduates’ unemployment and unemployability with targeted education programmes.

In 2014, Rwanda adopted competency-based modular programmes with industry participation to ensure that training curricula were aligned with labour market needs to expand opportunities for the acquisition of quality, market-relevant skills in selected economic sectors.

Rwanda’s targeted education operated through policies that promote free, compulsory 12-year basic education, aiming for universal primary enrollment and improved quality through curriculum changes and teacher development.

The government strategically uses digital learning technologies such as laptops to foster computer literacy and has invested heavily in infrastructure and training for ICT skills.

Besides, Rwanda’s government focused on vocational education, equitable access for vulnerable children, and peace education to support post-conflict reconciliation and economic growth.

It ensured that faculty members gained hands-on experience through industry attachments, enhancing the relevance of instruction and improving programme delivery.

Not less than 80 percent of the beneficiaries who had participated in the short-term training under the ‘Rapid Response Training’ window found permanent jobs after completing their training.

Ghana embraced the Nation Builders Corps (NABCO) initiative to tackle youth and graduate unemployment. The initiative tailored to give temporary employment to unemployed graduates while also improving their skills.

In 2024, 34,000 Ghanaian graduates got employed through the NABCO initiative. The beneficiaries were deployed in sectors such as education, health, agriculture, technology, governance, and digitisation.

The government provides training, equips work tools, and deploys graduates so that they gain practical experience, improving employability as they transition to more permanent roles.

Lesotho declared a state of emergency on youth unemployment through its Entrepreneurship and Seed-Finance Projects.

The “Bacha Entrepreneurship Project” (BEP): supports young people, including graduates aged 21-35, to submit business proposals, giving seed capital or “capital boost” + training and mentorship.

Lesotho’s youth unemployment rate was 35.3 percent in 2022, according to the World Bank, which is a decrease from the 2021 rate of 38.1 percent.

Consequently, in July 2025, the government took a drastic step to curb the surging unemployment, especially the youth unemployment which was as high as, nearing 50 percent according to report from Anadolu Ajansi.

How to make targeted education work in Nigeria

To make targeted education work in Nigeria, the government must collaborate with educators and communities in some crucial areas, such as investing in continuous teacher professional development and retraining, leveraging technology to bridge access gaps and deliver tailored learning, among others.

Besides, they say, the government must focus on student-centred learning and skills development, creating inclusive and supportive learning environments, and strengthening data systems for better resource allocation and monitoring.



HOW IMAGINE WORLDWIDE SOLUTION IS TACKLING AFRICA'S MOST CRUCIAL CHALLENGES IN LEARNING

CHISOM MICHAEL

Imagine Worldwide, an organisation set up to tackle, literacy and numeracy crisis for millions of children in Sub-Saharan Africa has won the inaugural Global EdTech Prize in the Non-Profits category.

According to the organisers, the Global EdTech Prize founded by T4 Education with the support of Owl Ventures and Digital Promise, recognises those trailblazing solutions that are driving change and grappling with the most crucial challenges in today's classrooms.

Making the announcement at the World Schools Summit at Yasmina British Academy, Abu Dhabi, UAE, recently, the organisers observed that Imagine Worldwide's learning solution is designed to work in the most challenging environments and operates without internet connectivity and does not require grid-power or highly-skilled teachers.

A child who has never seen technology and is illiterate can start their literacy and numeracy journey by listening to their own teacher avatar, via headphones, guiding them in the national language of instruction, from how to use tablets to basic literacy concepts and ultimately to fluency.

The Global EdTech Prize is awarded annually in three categories: Non-Profits, Start-Ups, and Majors. The Top 10 finalists for each of the three categories were invited to the World Schools Summit – hosted by T4 Education, Aldar Education and the Emirates Foundation and supported by Cliff, Google, Microsoft, and HP – where they showcased their work before an Expert Panel comprising leading figures in the technology and education sectors including investors and policymakers from around the world.

Vikas Pota, founder of T4 Education and the Global EdTech Prize, commended Imagine Worldwide Tablet-Based Foundational Learning Programme from Imagine Worldwide in Africa for winning the inaugural Global EdTech Prize and to the Global Community of Practice from Team4Tech Foundation for making the Final 3.

According to Pota, the work of Imagine Worldwide is a crucial contribution to the cause of improving education, and everything that can achieve for all of humanity.

"We established the Global EdTech Prize to help scale the innovations that are making a real difference to the most intractable educational challenges, from enhancing literacy development to building lifelong skills, supporting social mobility, and closing learning gaps.

And we ensured it is judged by educators themselves, because they know what works best in their classrooms. I hope this award will now allow you to spread your impact across the world," Pota said.

Amit A. Patel, Co-founder and managing partner of Owl Ventures, said that by harnessing technology in the service of education, the work of Imagine Worldwide deserves recognition worldwide.

"I hope that through this prestigious award, policymakers, educators, and changemakers alike see the impact of your innovation and help scale the transformation we need," Patel added.

Aside from Imagine Worldwide, other winners at the event include: Brisk from Brisk Teaching in the USA, winner in the Start-Ups category; Matific Maths Game from Matific in Australia in the Majors category.

The Expert Panel then narrowed down the Final 3 per category, who went on to present their products and tools before educators at the World Schools Summit. Educators voted by secret ballot to determine the winner of each category, with the winners announced live on stage at the culmination of the summit.

Meanwhile, the Global Community of Practice from Team4Tech Foundation, which operates in many African countries, made the Final 3 for the Global EdTech Prize in the Non-Profits category.

Team4Tech Foundation is a global impact accelerator for education-focused NGOs, providing them with technology-supported, evidence-based practices to advance education for employability.

It currently supports 1,000+ NGOs from more than 100 countries in a free online community of practice, with courses, learning cohorts, toolkits, webinars and pro bono consulting from skilled volunteers, so that they can build employability skills with their 43M+ learners. Its content and tools are developed by expert educators and localised by its regional hub leads in Africa, South Asia, and Latin America, to ensure that they are responding to local needs.

PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY: CREATING SAFE SPACES FROM A FEMALE LEADER'S PERSPECTIVE

EKEMINI AKPAKPAN

I've been reflecting on the phrase psychological safety because it perfectly captures certain experiences I've struggled to articulate. It can be incredibly deflating to be surrounded by people who consistently miss the point — who never quite recognize your intent. It feels like 'all your glory in the mud'.

They don't create an empowering space to be yourself. Sometimes they simply derail something meaningful and strip it of its essence. All you want is to be reminded of your most powerful, truest self. And the interesting thing is: it doesn't always mean they don't hold you in high regard.

Sometimes it's their reaction or the timing of it. And it's not about needing their validation, it's about an empowering environment. Beyond being seen, it's being strengthened. And it clicked — I've been searching for the word psychological safety.

For example, that's what this space can be for me sometimes. I'm not just sharing expertise — I'm reflecting, thinking aloud... And now I want to do a mix of both.

Because the phrase psychological safety led me to think about how, as a female leader, I can intentionally cultivate this in my own workplace. Psychological safety is a shared belief within a group that it is safe to speak up, ask questions, make mistakes, and offer new ideas without fear of embarrassment, punishment, or negative consequences.

How Female Leadership Creates Psychological Safety

Female leadership often tends to bring unique strengths — collaboration, empathy, nurturing, and inclusivity — that position women to create psychologically safe environments. Inclusion isn't just about representation; it's about valuing different perspectives, acknowledging limitations, and challenging groupthink.

Women leaders are also well placed to normalize vulnerability. My boss models this beautifully: she asks honest questions that often reflect what others were silently wondering. Trust grows when teams establish norms of mutual respect, support, and non-judgment, creating space for diverse voices and perspectives. Empathy becomes a tool for amplifying those voices that might otherwise go unheard. Research shows that psychological safety bridges inclusive leadership and performance: when people feel safe, they contribute, innovate, and collaborate at higher levels.

How Female Leaders Can Make Psychological Safety a Cultural Standard

1. Set Clear, Shared Team Norms

For me, co-creating simple behavioural agreements, especially during moments of tension, helps bring everyone back to centre. Things like "we are on the same team" or "we assume positive intention" or "2 wrongs don't make a right" remind us that we are in this together and create an environment where support is the default.

2. Normalize Vulnerability and Mistakes

In some teams, I've heard leaders share "mistake stories" so the whole team can reflect together on what went wrong and what they learned. It makes vulnerability normal, not exceptional. I intentionally model this by sharing what I learned from a situation and what I'm doing to correct it. This keeps my personal drive for excellence from sliding into perfectionism.

3. Encourage Open, Inclusive Communication

Because I don't want silence disguised as agreement, I ask people for their thoughts when decisions are being made. I create space for honest opinions, questions, and even "half-baked ideas." This lets people speak without feeling like they have to be perfect before contributing.

4. There Is No Need for Perfection

I don't want people walking on eggshells around me — that's how things get covered up, even things that are unethical. I learned in one of my business classes that inclusion means bringing all of yourself to work. Deadlines can be missed for legitimate reasons. Mistakes happen. Honesty is welcome. Communication should be direct, not fearful. It gives people permission to breathe, recalibrate, and see mistakes as data — not identity.

5. Co-Creating Through Reflection

You can't know everything — and that's okay. I let my team know that immediate answers are not required. Reflection is allowed. Sometimes I say, "Let's think through this together." I also encourage early-stage or rough ideas, because innovation often begins from something that isn't fully formed yet. This removes the pressure to be perfect in order to be heard.

6. One-on-Ones & Private Check-Ins

I use one-on-one conversations — either directly or through peers — as a safe space where team members can share things they may not say in a group setting. Concerns, pressures, work-life balance challenges, or even questions they feel shy to ask publicly. It helps me understand the person behind the task.

7. Introspection & Blameless Reflection

Regular "retrospectives" — What worked? What didn't? What can we improve? — allow the team to reflect without blame. These rituals create predictability, and predictability creates safety. I also try to identify people's strengths and match them with leadership moments so they feel stretched to bring out their best possible selves.

8. Establish Rituals That Signal Safety

This is still aspirational for me, but I've learned how much small rituals can shift culture. Emotional check-ins before a meeting help everyone pause and acknowledge how they're entering the room. Humor also comes naturally to me, so I use it to set a relaxed tone. Work is already hard — it's literally called hard work.

10. Remove Unrealistic Expectations

I know in Naija "suffer-head" is almost a cultural mantra, but leadership must create environments that set people up for success, not failure. One of my favourite sayings is: it takes 20 years to be 20 years old a.k.a every task has a gestation period. We often ignore that some people are overachievers — they are outliers. It is unrealistic to expect everyone to process information or complete tasks at the same pace. Setting humane, achievable expectations acknowledges human limitations, prevents information and work overload, and is a core part of psychological safety.

11. Be Approachable and Accessible

I have learned that being a leader is also about how we show up - that accessibility is as much in your tone, gestures, and disposition as it is in your availability. Warmth, a calm tone, or even a simple nod can signal: "You're welcome here." Some leaders notice instinctively that a tense posture can unintentionally put people on edge, or when their voice or energy rises during stressful moments, and they consciously bring it down, creating a safe space. Let our energy not create an environment that instills fear.

12. Share Feedback — Not Judgment

Feedback is a cornerstone of growth, but it only builds psychological safety when it is delivered thoughtfully. Sometimes, even I, with the best intentions, can spiral without thoughtfully processing my feedback. The other thing is to consider the full picture, not relying on assumptions, nor letting our own biases shape the message. I often practice seeking the other person's perspective before concluding: "Here's what I observed, how did you see it?"

This article is not about lowering standards or dropping the ball. It's about creating a space where people can thrive, bringing their full humanity to work, and giving grace — especially to those who are giving their best, their all. Psychological safety is the foundation for authentic leadership. By cultivating it, women leaders can build teams that are resilient, engaged, and empowered to do their best work.

WHY COLLECTORS ARE TURNING TO DIGITAL ART IN AFRICA

Digital art is gaining strong attention across Africa today. Collectors are showing fresh interest in this fast-evolving space. And many are now shifting from traditional art forms to digital work. This change is happening for good reasons. Technology is growing fast on the continent. Young artists are experimenting with new tools. And global buyers are paying close attention to Africa's creative wave.

Digital art also gives African artists more reach. It allows them to break past borders. It helps them show their work to global audiences with ease. Many collectors now see digital art as a way to support new African talent. They also see value in work that blends culture with technology. And with digital spaces expanding across Africa, the shift feels natural. This growing interest tells a deeper story about access, innovation, and the future of African art.

In this digest, we will discuss why collectors across Africa —and beyond—are turning to digital art and what makes this space so exciting right now.

TOP PICKS FROM OUR COLLECTION



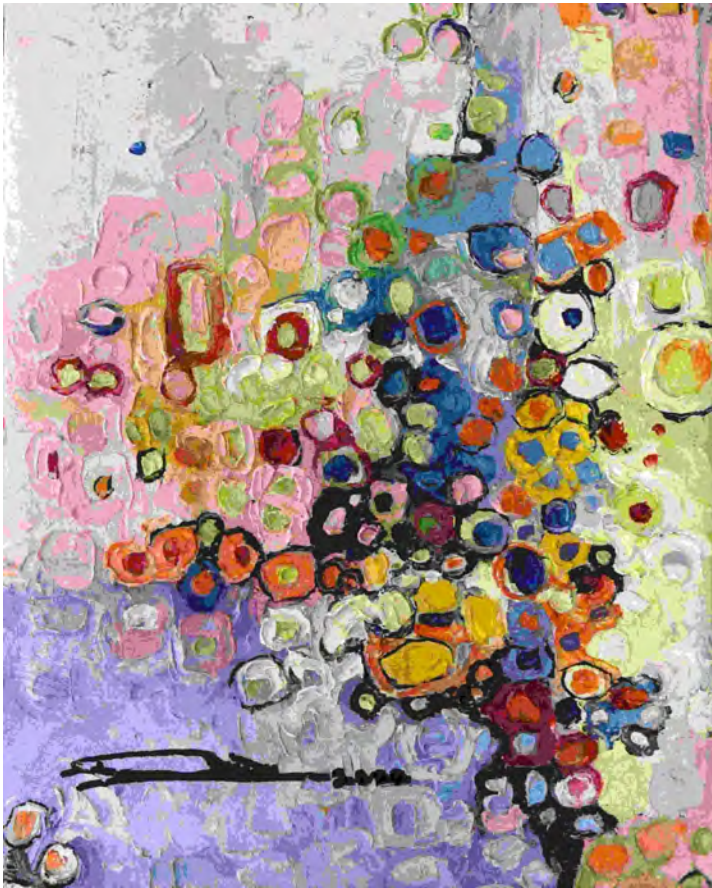
Title: Age Group 2
 Artist: Fidel N. Oyiogou
 Medium: Mixed Media
 Dimensions: 48 x 48 in | 122 x 122 cm
 Available on Request



This digest is brought to you by Patrons MCAA. Think African art, think Patrons. Patrons is Africa's leading art advisory and dealership firm with deep expertise in African art, helping private and corporate art collectors diversify their wealth through art collection, appraisal, packaging & transportation, storage, insurance, maintenance, and restoration. Purchase or general inquiry? Reach out: art@patronsmcaa.com.



Title: Life Palava
 Artist: Nathalie Djakou Kassi
 Medium: Bonded stone
 Dimensions: 20 x 10 x 9 in | 51 x 25 x 23 cm
 Available on Request



Title: Midday Stars 2
 Artist: Emmanuel Dudu
 Medium: Oil on Canvas
 Dimensions: 8 x 11 in | 20 x 28 cm
 Available on Request

1. Digital Art Is Rising Fast Across Africa

More African artists are using tablets, software, and 3D tools to create. They explore bold colours, surreal worlds, and modern African identity. Digital tools give them freedom and speed. They also give them a global audience in one click.

A report from the UNESCO Digital Creativity Initiative shows that digital creativity in Africa is growing quickly and opening new income paths for artists.

Collectors notice this growth. They see how digital art reflects Africa's young, tech-savvy population. They see talent rising on Instagram, Behance, and digital galleries. And they want to be part of that movement.

2. Accessibility and Low Barriers for Collectors

Digital art is easy to access. A collector only needs a screen and a connection. They don't need storage or special lighting. This makes collecting easy for people across Africa. Digital platforms also allow clear proof of ownership. Some artists use blockchain to verify work. This builds trust. And collectors appreciate that.

McKinsey notes that Africa's digital economy is expanding fast. This growth makes digital art more visible and trusted.

3. A New Market for African Creativity

Digital art also brings new earning paths for artists. They can sell across borders without travel. They can reach collectors who prefer digital ownership. Collectors love this. They want to support modern African voices. They want art that reflects today's world. Digital art offers that. It feels current, bold, and limitless.

This shift is not replacing traditional forms. Instead, it expands the African art story. It adds new layers of expression. And it helps Africa claim its space in global digital culture.

Collectors are turning to digital art in Africa because the space is fresh, accessible, and full of promise. It reflects a continent that is young, creative, and deeply connected to technology. And as more artists explore digital tools, collectors will keep following the movement. Digital art is not just a trend. It is a powerful new chapter in Africa's creative journey.



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

BRAND AND CUSTOMER BEHAVIOUR

FEYISITAN IJIMAKINWA

Customer behaviour is the series of actions or patterns customers follow when deciding to buy products or services. These behaviours change depending on multiple variables, such as life experiences, age, environment, beliefs, knowledge, memories, mood, and much more.

Understanding what motivates customers is vital for companies because it helps recognise consumers' expectations and how they satisfy their needs, allowing you to act accordingly. The most crucial advantage to understanding customer behaviour is that it allows you to create and market your company more effectively.

When you understand how customers behave, you spend the money where it matters, you connect deeply with the audience, and the information you share has a meaning and purpose — when you understand customers, nothing is by chance.

Factors that affect customer behaviour

Everything in the world is constantly shaping customer perception and, as a result, their behaviour. More importantly, the way we were brought up, our life experiences, our beliefs and other internal factors play a crucial role in our decision-making process.

So, being aware of how customers make decisions allows you to create a brand that can connect with them emotionally and build an everlasting relationship. When you understand people's behaviour, you can say the right thing at the right time. As a result, you can make customers feel understood, heard, and encouraged, inspiring them to talk about your brand, generating deals and word of mouth.

Let's talk about the five factors that influence customer behaviour.

1. Psychological factors

Human psychology has become one of the foundations of branding because it helps

companies understand at a deep level why people do what they do and what they are looking for. The following are some psychological factors that you must be aware of and use to position your brand. **Motivation:** Motivation is a crucial factor that affects customer behaviour because it is associated with the most basic human needs.

Perception: Remember that perception is what customers feel and believe your products or services represent. So, when people see something about your company, they form an idea/image that will dictate how they feel about your company.

Learning: When customers buy products, they learn about them through experience. However, when people haven't experienced anything similar to what you offer, they seek external resources to get that knowledge.

Attitudes and beliefs: Everything people believe will affect their behaviour both consciously and subconsciously. The way customers see life will dictate absolutely everything they ever purchase.

2. Social factors

Humans are social beings and we are constantly interacting with others. Some people are like us, some are not. However, the key to social factors is that humans continuously compare themselves with others and seek social acceptance.

Therefore, whoever customers interact with shapes their behaviour, for better or for worse. This is where branding becomes more potent because when your brand has a positive perception, everyone will want to be part of it.

Family: Depending on the type of relationship we have with family members, their actions towards some brands will affect our own behaviour.

Reference groups: These are groups of people

with whom customers associate themselves. The members will usually have similar purchase patterns, behaviour, and have an influence on each other.

3. Cultural factors

Our values and beliefs are often shaped by our environment and the community we belong to. For example, people from Africa will behave entirely differently from those from Asia. South Americans will probably jump and hug you to say hello, whereas Asians will respectfully say hi from one meter away.

Having a brand creates a common culture that people can feel like they belong to, no matter where they are from.

Here are some cultural factors.

Culture: Cultural factors are strong influencers of customer behaviour. Here we find basic values, wants, preferences, needs, perceptions, and even behaviours obtained through observing family members and other important people in customers' lives.

Subculture: These are small groups among the cultural group. Usually, people from subcultures have a stronger and more specific set of values and beliefs. The groups can be created by people from different religions, nationalities or geographies.

Social class: Whether we like it or not, society is segmented by social classes. Social class is associated with customer occupation, background, profession, education, residence location, and more.

4) Personal factors

Although social, psychological, and cultural factors constantly shape and adjust customer behaviour, personal factors can be decisive when thinking about how people behave. These are unique, internal beliefs of how life should be.

The following are some of these factors.

Age: This is one of the most fundamental differences in customer behaviour. Purchasing decisions of teenagers, middle-aged people, and the elderly are dramatically different.

When positioning your brand, you have to make sure that you know your audience's age and adapt your message to resonate with them specifically.

Income: The amount of money people have also impacts their behaviour. The higher the income, the higher the purchasing power. When people have more money, they get access to more luxurious items, whereas people with less would go for more affordable products.

Occupation: People tend to buy things that are appropriate for their professions. For example, a business person would probably choose different clothes than an artist or musician.

Lifestyle: The most critical behaviour creator is how people live and what they do daily. For example, if customers follow a healthy lifestyle, every single decision they make will be based on that way of living — prioritising products and services that represent them the best.

LAST LINE

Big corporations spend billions of dollars studying customer behaviour because they know that understanding people is key to thriving in today's business. You might be wondering how can this help my business? And the truth is that this information is all you need to create a successful business. Remember, customers create your brand, not you.



FEYISITAN IJIMAKINWA

Feyisitan Ijimakinwa is a Reputation and Perception Management expert. He is a prolific writer and researcher who, at different times, served as Head of Corporate Communications of top brands quoted on the Nigerian Stock Exchange. A versatile communications specialist, he practiced extensively as a print journalist and was variously engaged in the broadcast media, working on radio and television. Feyisitan continues to write on corporate communications, brand reputation and perception management, and brand intelligence, among others. He organises the 'Brand Intelligence and the Marketplace' masterclass. Feyisitan advocates a pollution free and sustainable environment

FOR BETTER OR WORSE

UDY OSARO-EDOBOR



Henry was the kind of man everyone in The Sword of God Ministries admired. Charming, confident and ever present. He was the first to arrive for service and usually the last to leave. He was in almost every department but functioned more in the ushering, sanitation and prayer team. He was always willing to lend a hand.

He could sing, pray, preach and quote scriptures effortlessly. His charisma and dedication earned him admiration, especially from the ladies in church. But Henry only had eyes for Sister Sarah, a vibrant, soft spoken woman known for her humility and commitment to the work of God.

They looked perfect together. Everyone said they were two model believers destined for a beautiful union. When Henry declared his intention to marry Sarah, the church buzzed with excitement but Sarah wasn't as enthusiastic. She liked Henry as a friend but she didn't see him as her husband. She made that clear to him but everything changed after Pastor Mrs, the First Lady of the church called her aside.

"I have peace about it," Pastor Mrs said with confidence. "Henry is your husband." Sarah hesitated. She didn't feel the same way but she trusted her spiritual mother.

After all, Pastor Mrs had always guided her right. So, against her instincts, she accepted Henry's proposal.

Their courtship was a dream. Henry was attentive, loving and patient. He sent her flowers, prayed with her every morning and called several times a day. Sarah began to look forward to spending forever with him.

Their wedding was a warm and intimate affair. Every detail was perfect, from the decorations to the songs. Henry played the perfect groom and everyone wished them a blissful "happily ever after."

But the fairytale ended too soon.

Barely weeks after the wedding, Henry changed. He stopped Sarah from going to church and when members of The Sword of God Ministries visited, he chased them away and warned them never to return.

The loving man she courted and married vanished, replaced by a cold, controlling stranger.

Sarah was devastated. She couldn't recognize him anymore. She spent her days in deep thoughts and her nights crying. Maybe she should have trusted her instincts. Maybe she should never have listened to Pastor Mrs.

Henry became hostile. He nagged constantly, kept late nights and came home smelling of alcohol and female perfume. He was dismissive, verbally abusive and often cruel. Sarah endured it all quietly, holding on to her wedding vow — for better or worse.

Her only comfort came from her two daughters, whose births were almost miraculous because intimacy between them was rare.

After contracting several infections from Henry's reckless lifestyle, she cut off any form of closeness and he didn't even care.

Soon, things grew worse. Henry began bringing other women into their home. Sarah was too afraid to confront him. His temper had grown violent and she feared for her life and her children's safety. One morning, she packed her bags, took the girls and left.

Henry was furious. He threatened her repeatedly but Sarah was prepared. She filed for divorce and during the court proceedings, Henry received the shock of his life. Quiet, submissive Sarah came armed with evidence... text messages, photos, videos, voice recordings and receipts of his atrocities.

She had documented everything. The court granted her the divorce, restricting Henry's contact with the children and placing conditions on his visits.

But Henry wouldn't let go. He stalked her, called at odd hours and threatened anyone he saw around her. Sarah moved to a new town to start afresh but the harassment continued.

The police dismissed her complaints calling them "domestic issues." Even the restraining order she obtained only fueled his rage.

Pastor Mrs, on her part was consumed with guilt. She had been the one who convinced Sarah to marry Henry. She saw that her decision had cost this young woman her peace, her health and her faith. She begged Sarah for forgiveness and eventually, Sarah forgave her. They became close friends and Pastor Mrs witnessed first hand how deep Sarah's fear had grown. Every sound startled her. She double locked her doors, avoided going out late and struggled with declining mental health.

Then came the incident that broke her. One of Sarah's gym buddies, a cheerful young man, was attacked on his way home after visiting her. He was badly beaten and barely survived. When he regained consciousness, he told the police he couldn't recognize his attackers but remembered one man giving instructions, a man whose description fit Henry's perfectly but the police said there wasn't enough evidence. Henry's alibi checked out, so nothing was done.

Sarah was drained and terrified. Pastor Mrs could no longer sit back. Her conscience wouldn't let her. Then she remembered her past, the life she had left behind before she became "Pastor Mrs."

Back then, she had powerful friends, people who quietly handled delicate "situations" for politicians and the wealthy. Though she had walked away from that world, she still had their numbers because they had been kind to her in the past. And now, she decided to call in a favor.

Months passed and slowly, Sarah noticed something. There was silence. Henry had stopped calling. No more messages. No more stalking. No more threats. It was as though he had vanished. She didn't know what happened but she was extremely happy. Pastor Mrs didn't know what happened too and she never asked. But one thing was sure... peace had finally returned.

Sarah began to smile again. She returned to church and joined the children's church. She found joy in simple things. Life was slowly falling back into place.

One Sunday morning after service, a widower approached Pastor Mrs. His voice was gentle, "Ma," he began, "I've been observing Sister Sarah for some time now. She's a remarkable woman. If she's open to it, I'd like to get to know her better."

For a moment, Pastor Mrs' heart clenched. She remembered the nights Sarah had cried, the fear that had gripped her and the chaos that had nearly destroyed her life, a life she had unknowingly pushed her into.

She turned back to the widower and smiled politely. "Brother," she said, her tone firm, "let that woman be. She's just finding her footing again. Please let her rest."

The man nodded respectfully. "I understand, Ma." He gave a small bow and walked away quietly.

As Pastor Mrs watched him leave, she made a silent promise right there, never again would she involve herself in anyone's love life. No matter how spiritual it sounded or how clear the "revelation" appeared, she would never play matchmaker again. Matters of the heart were not to be interfered with.

Henry was never seen again and no one asked questions. For the first time in years, Sarah could breathe. She had learned painfully, that for better or worse was never meant to be a life sentence. It was a vow not a prison. And sometimes... for better or worse is overrated or exaggerated.

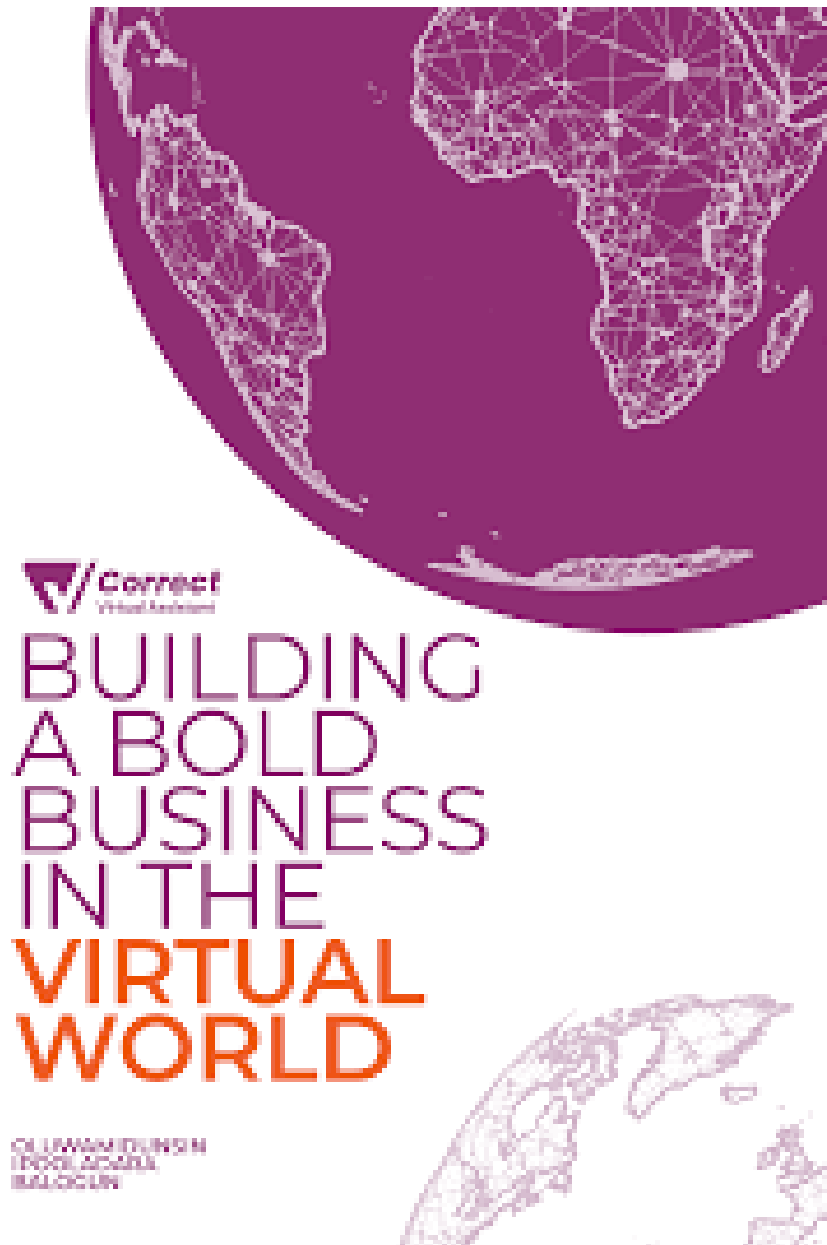


Udy Osaro-Edobor

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

She has several stories to her credit which she posts for free on her Ebook called Udy's Chapter. She is currently working on two short movies. Udy is also a wife, mother, and a "serial entrepreneur".

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Why this Book is a Must-Read for Aspiring Virtual Assistants -A Review of Oluwamidunsin Ipooladara Balogun's Building a Bold Business in the Virtual World

Title: Building a Bold Business in the Virtual World
Author: Oluwamidunsin Ipooladara Balogun
Number of Pages: 63
Category: Self Help

BUILDING A BOLD BUSINESS IN THE VIRTUAL WORLD

TITILADE OYEMADE

In a world moving faster than ever, working smart has become more valuable than simply working hard. Oluwamidunsi Ipooladara Balogun captures this truth in *Building a Bold Business in the Virtual World*, a compact but insightful guide for anyone curious about the opportunities technology has created.

The author didn't begin with a perfectly crafted plan. She discovered her path in the middle of uncertainty, turning what seemed like a difficult period into a doorway to purpose. Her story shows how innovation often appears when life feels most unpredictable.

From the opening chapter, she guides you through the virtual assistant world with clarity and warmth. The book may be small, but every page is intentional, designed to help you understand quickly and take action without delay.

What makes the book especially practical is how generously she shares her methods. Her step-by-step approach is simple enough for beginners to follow yet detailed enough to build confidence. This is a book for people willing to start the virtual assistant business, those ready to take the first step and learn the skills that will set them apart.

Her storytelling adds a relatable touch, blending real experiences with useful lessons. Though you may find yourself wishing she shared even more about her client interactions and early challenges, the insights she offers are still rich and transformative.

A standout feature is her openness. Many business owners guard their secrets, but she lays out what works with sincerity and a genuine desire to see others succeed. However, the book speaks most to readers who are serious about growing. If you're not ready to learn or invest in yourself, you may miss the depth of what she's offering.

The tone shifts beautifully between practical advice, motivation, and personal stories, making the reading experience dynamic and engaging. Even if you're completely new to the virtual assistant world, her explanations ensure you won't feel overwhelmed.

Students, freelancers, stay-at-home parents, anyone searching for a flexible, rewarding way to earn, will find a clear roadmap here for building a career straight from their laptop.

This is the kind of book you'll keep close, returning to whenever you need a nudge, clarity, or a boost of inspiration. It's not just a guide; it's a companion for your journey into smart, purposeful work.



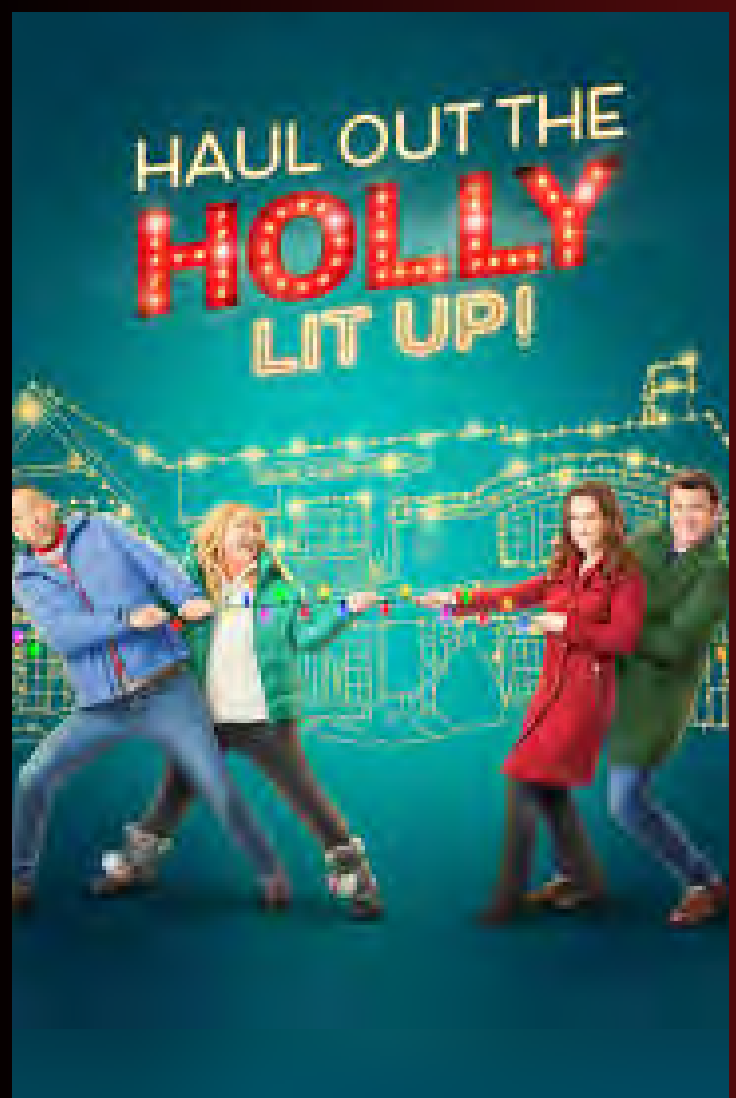
Titilade Oyemade is a business executive in a leading organisation and holds a degree in Russian Language. She's the convener of the Hangoutwithtee Ladies Event and the publisher of Hangoutwithtee magazine. She spends her weekends attending women conferences, events and book readings. She loves to have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

WEEKENDER

MOVIE REVIEW

HAUL OUT OF THE HOLLY-LIT UP (2025)

So, if you have had the opportunity to watch part 1, it would be nice to also check out part 2 "LIT UP". I watched both back-to-back so I could bring the reviews to you immediately, so if you enjoyed part 1 this edition would be worth your while. After staying back and enjoying the Christmas Holiday, Emily decided to stay back as she also found a new boyfriend" Jared" who was also the new president of HOA. This Christmas Emily must work closely with Jared to make this Christmas Memorable. What was meant to be very simple Christmas season quickly became chaotic and complicated, because of the new family "The Jolly Family" who moved into the new house, this family came and wanted to take over the entire street, activities and win every competition a street that lived in peace and harmony became a street of competition, fighting and enmity. You will need to check out this edition to see how all these were managed or resolved. The 86m romantic comedy film, comedies romance movie was directed by Maclain Nelson, they featured actors like Lacey Chabert, Wes Brown, Melissa Peterman, Stephen Jobolowsky, Ellen Travolta, Seth Morris, Jenniffer Aspen, Peter Jacobson, Carrie morgan, Eliza Hayes Maher and many more.



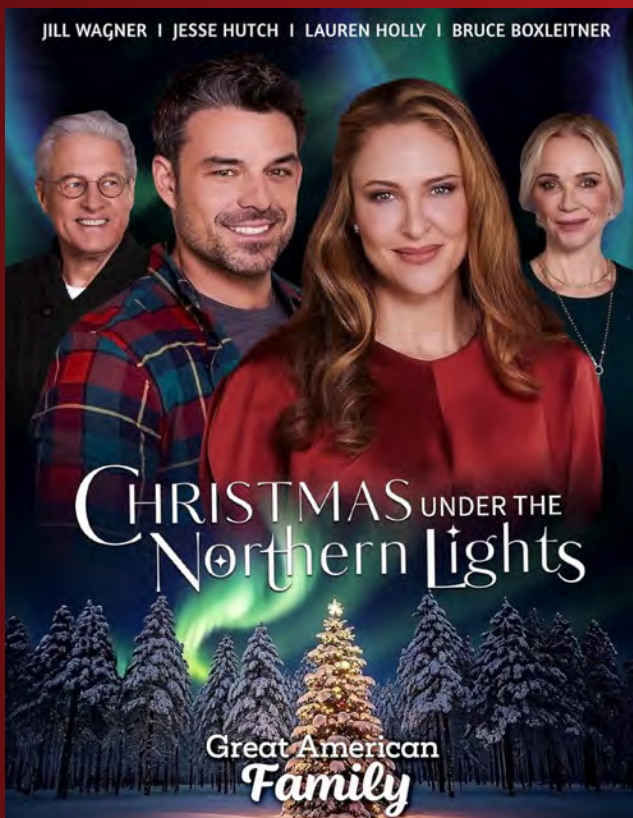
FRANKENSEIN (2025)

This was a very deep movie, I honestly couldn't get the hype till I watched this movie myself and I was amazed, perplexed and intrigued with the insane storyline, the deep question for me still playing in my head days after is how does one man want to play "GOD"? How do you think you can just create another human and stop death? In this life there are so many mysteries we can never fully understand or comprehend, in this movie Victor Frankenstein was a very brilliant and arrogant Scientist who was earnestly desperate to proof a point that he could create another "human" just like man in the process he ended up creating a terrible monster that hunted him till he destroyed him. Victor wanted to be famous, he wanted to create a ground breaking product from his scientific experiment, but it turned out to be Victor's most terrible nightmare, Victor saw no peace till death finally took him. You will need to watch this deep movie to discover how what was supposed to make him famous ended up destroying him, Victor learnt in a better way that he couldn't play God. The 149m horror/sci-fic movie was directed by Guillermo del Toro, they featured actors like Jacob Elordi, Mia Goth, Oscar Isaac, Christop Waltz, Felix Kanmerer, Charles Dance, Ralph Ineson, Sofia Galasso, David Bradley, Burn Gorman, Laura Colins etc.



CHRISTMAS UNDER THE NOTHERN LIGHTS (2025)

It's that time of the year and everyone should be ready for loads of Christmas movies, guess it's going to be a back-to-back review of Christmas movies, for the romantic movie lovers, grab your popcorn, drinks, and buckle up because it will be a roller coaster of Christmas movies. In this new movie Erin who was a renowned book writer was suffering from a condition called writer's block, she needed to write a new book but got stuck and couldn't progress further. To help her do better her dad proposed that they traveled to Aurora a very cold city somewhere in Canada. She takes up the offer hoping it will make her feel better and complete the book. Well, you will need to go check out the movie to discover if she was able to witness the famous Northern lights, how she managed to navigate the city, how she connected with the people and how she found love in the most unexpected way. The 89m drama, holiday movie was directed by Ernie Barbarash, the movie featured actors like Jill Wagner, Jesse Hutch, Lauren Holly, Bruce Bexleitner, Josh Bainbridge, Terersa Parlinek, Paloma Nunez, Doug Macleod, Allan MacAskill, David Gringrich etc.



WEEKEND QUOTES



1

Your sad story is in your mind; people have long moved on to new gist. Clear your head fast!

.....WhispersbyTEN

3

Remember that being cast down is not being destroyed or forsaken. Keep learning and winning

.....WhispersbyTEN

2

When you are sent by God, you will be equipped for the assignment. Just stay available!

.....WhispersbyTEN

4

No cause for regret once you know whom you have believed-God

.....WhispersbyTENTEN