

BUSINESS DAY WEEKENDER

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3 children-friendly restaurants to visit in Lagos Island this December



EDUCATION

How insecurity, infrastructure flutter Nigeria's education, 12.5% pupils in school



SPORTS

Tennis: Oshonaike drops bat, becomes first Nigerian appointed to IOC Commission

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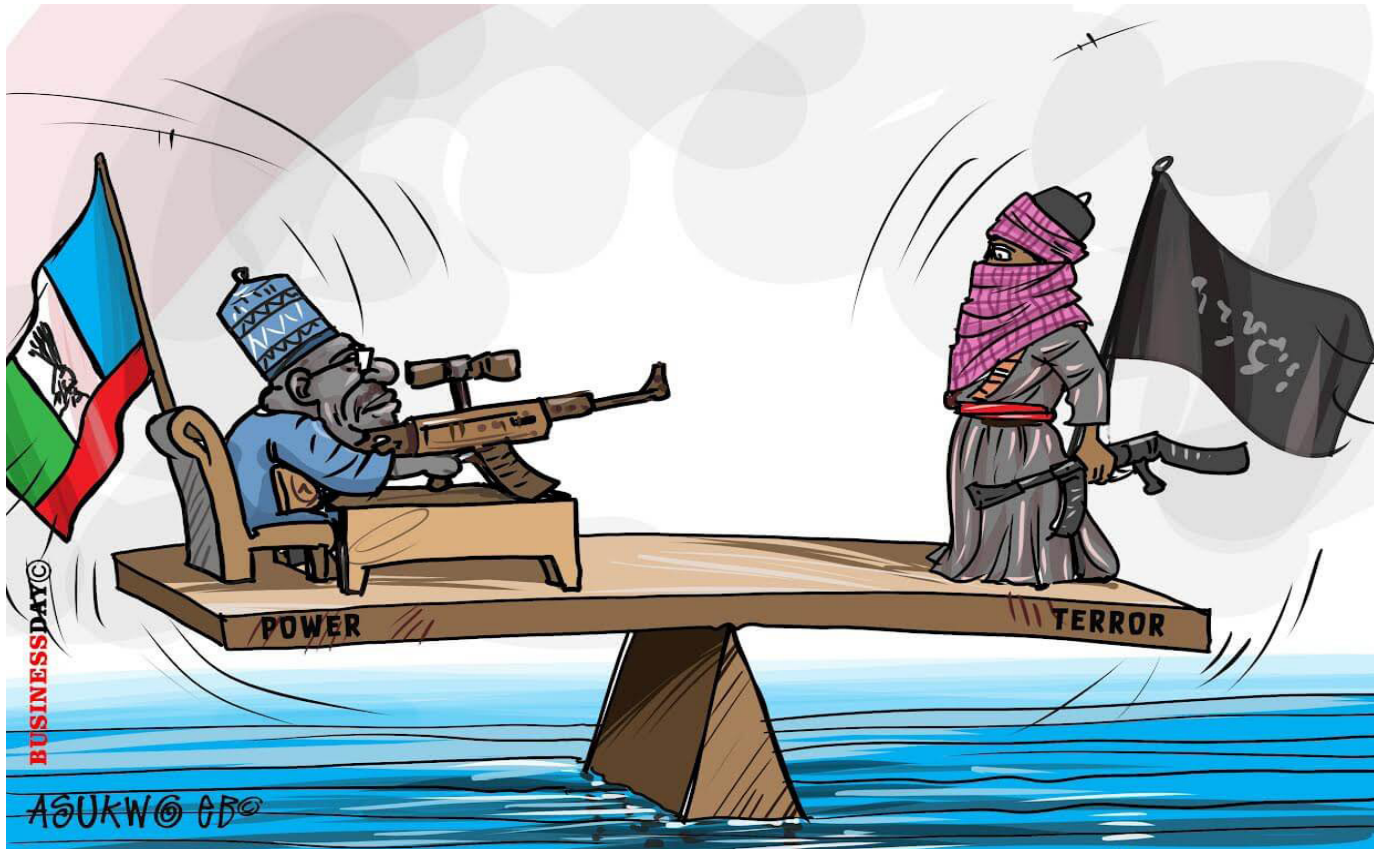


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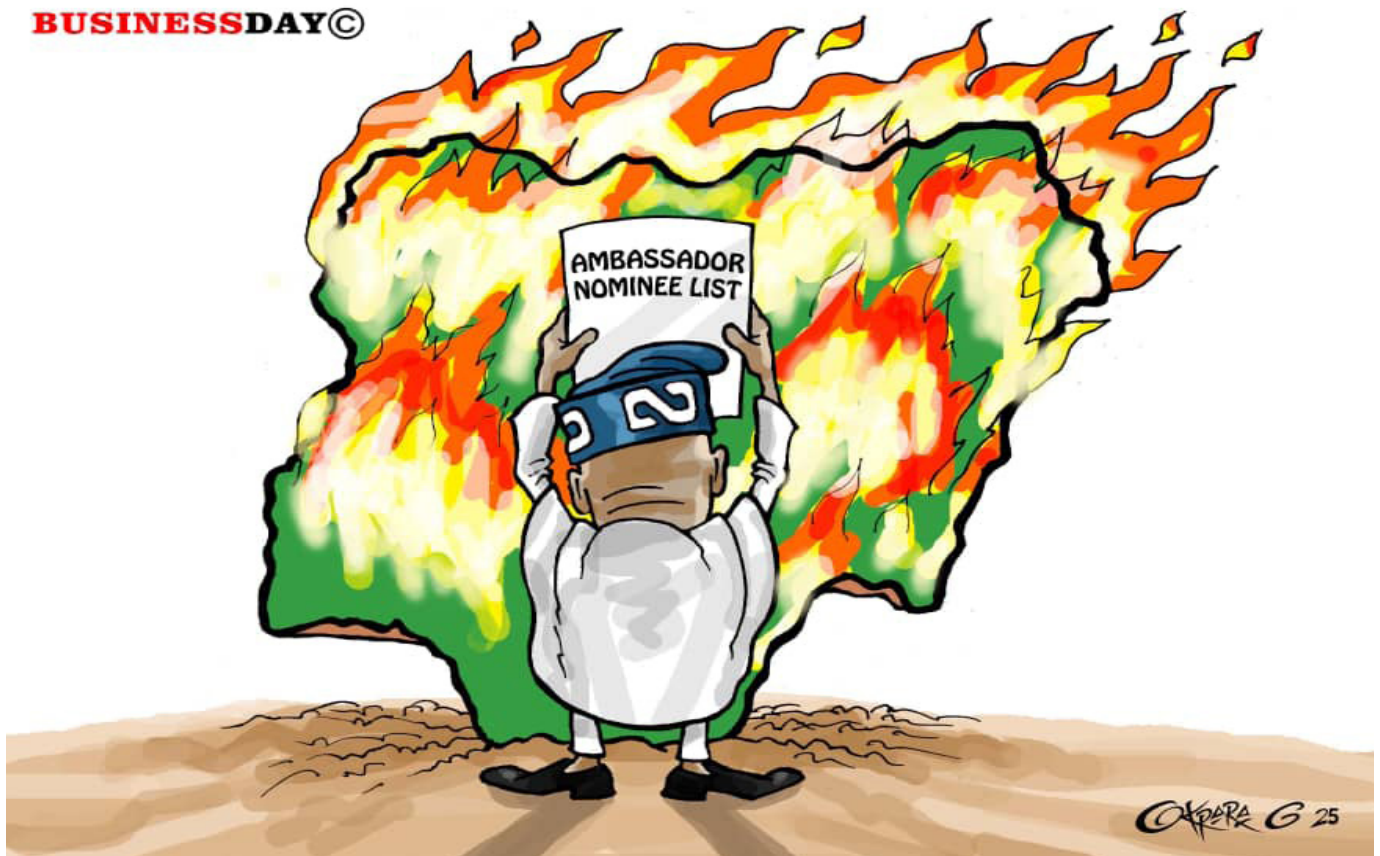
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3 CHILDREN-FRIENDLY RESTAURANTS TO VISIT IN LAGOS ISLAND THIS DECEMBER

ESTHER EMOEKPERE



December is a busy month, and families often look for places where they can relax without worrying about keeping the children entertained. A good restaurant experience goes beyond food; parents value comfort, safety, and activities that allow their children to enjoy themselves. Lagos continues to expand in this area, with more restaurants creating spaces that welcome families and provide a stress-free outing.

Choosing the right spot makes all the difference, especially when the children need room to play or menus that suit their taste. These restaurants combine convenience, thoughtful service and environments designed with families in mind.

If you want a smooth outing this festive season with your children, these places offer the right atmosphere for a pleasant visit.



Cactus

Cactus is a well-known children friendly restaurant located on Ozumba Mbadiwe in Victoria Island. The restaurant offers a dedicated kids' menu priced between ₦10,000 and ₦16,000, with options such as hot dogs, piezaro (a meat pie baked in pizza dough), chicken nuggets, burgers and several other meals that children enjoy. Families also have access to a broad range of pastries and ice cream, making it an easy stop for a full meal or a simple treat. Families can make use of the outdoor play area with swings and slides for the children to play, along with relaxed indoor and outdoor seating and a clear view of the Lagos Lagoon.



La Chaumiere

Located on Tiamiyu Savage Street in Victoria Island, La Chaumiere is a café-restaurant-bakery that caters to families in a unique way. While there isn't a dedicated kids' menu, children can still enjoy a variety of meals designed with them in mind, alongside ice cream and popsicles to satisfy their sweet tooth. The outdoor playground, complete with a trampoline, slides and a gaming house, keeps children entertained while parents relax. La Chaumiere stands out for offering a completely alcohol-free menu and can even host children's birthday parties on request, making it a lively and safe spot for families visiting Lagos this December.



Rufus and Bee

Located at Twinwaters in Lekki, Rufus & Bee is a children-friendly restaurant and entertainment centre that brings together food and fun in one space. While the venue is known for its arcade, it offers plenty of games for older kids and teens. The restaurant section is clean, well-arranged, and perfect for parents to relax while the children play nearby. Their motto, "Eat Drink Play", reflects the experience. The kids' menu starts at ₦3,000 for candy floss and goes up to ₦12,500 for kids' rice and chicken. In addition to dining, Rufus & Bee features a bowling alley and an arcade with a wide variety of games, making it a top choice for families looking for a fun and engaging outing in Lagos this December.

TENNIS: OSHONAIKE DROPS BAT, BECOMES FIRST NIGERIAN APPOINTED TO IOC COMMISSION

ANTHONY NLEBEM



Olufunke Oshonaike, a legendary figure in African table tennis and a seven-time Olympian, has etched her name into the history books once again, this time off the court.

The Nigerian icon has become the first athlete to be appointed to the prestigious International Olympic Committee (IOC) Athletes' Commission, following her nomination by IOC President Kirsty Coventry.

The appointment marks a new chapter for the 50-year-old, who has long been celebrated not only for her longevity in sport but also for her leadership and advocacy. Oshonaike is one of five new members drafted onto the Commission to complete its full composition ahead of the Milano Cortina 2026 Winter Olympic Games.

In a statement released, the IOC confirmed the inclusion of Soraya Aghaei Haji Agha (Iran, badminton), Husein Alireza (Saudi Arabia, rowing), Cheick Sallah Cissé (Côte d'Ivoire, taekwondo), Olufunke Oshonaike (Nigeria, table tennis), and Mariana Pajón (Colombia, cycling). Their appointments were made in consultation with IOC Athletes' Commission Chair Emma Terho.

"The Athletes' Commission is essential in making sure athletes remain at the heart of everything we do," Coventry said. "I am deeply grateful to our new members for their commitment and the wealth of experience they bring in service to athletes worldwide."

For Oshonaike, the appointment is a culmination of decades of service and excellence. Having competed in



seven consecutive Olympic Games, from Atlanta 1996 to Tokyo 2020, she remains one of Africa's most enduring athletes. She currently serves on both the Nigeria National Olympic Committee Athletes' Commission and the Nigeria Table Tennis Athletes' Commission, continuing her advocacy for athletes on and off the international stage.

Her fellow African appointee, Cheick Sallah Cissé of Côte d'Ivoire, is a Rio 2016 Olympic gold medallist in taekwondo and co-chair of the World Taekwondo Athletes' Commission.

With these new additions, the IOC Athletes' Commission now stands at 23 members representing all continents, including a representative from the Refugee Olympic Team. The group comprises 13 women and 10 men, spanning 15 summer sports and five winter disciplines, reflecting the IOC's push for balanced global representation.

Chair Emma Terho welcomed the new members warmly, noting, "Their diverse backgrounds, achievements, and experience will enrich our discussions and help us continue to advocate for athletes worldwide."

For Oshonaïke, the moment is personal and deeply meaningful. She attributed her appointment to years of dedication and the global support she received, especially during the Paris 2024 Olympic Games campaign.

"I am so excited because during the Paris 2024 Olympic Games campaign, I was impressed by the huge support from my country and athletes across the world," she said. "This appointment confirms that my efforts did not go unnoticed."

It has been my dream to impact the sport that has given me the rare opportunity to live well in life."

Her new role places her at the heart of decision-making within the Olympic Movement. The IOC Athletes' Commission, made up of up to 23 members, including 12 elected by athletes during the Games and up to 11 appointed by the IOC President, ensures that athletes' voices are represented in all major IOC decisions.

Oshonaïke began her table tennis journey in the early 1980s as a young girl playing on Akeju Street in Shomolu, Lagos. She has since grown into one of Africa's most accomplished athletes.

At the 2016 Summer Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, she competed in the women's singles event, defeating Mariana Sahakian of Lebanon in the preliminary round before losing to Puerto Rico's Adriana Díaz in the first round. She also carried Nigeria's flag during the Parade of Nations.

Oshonaïke went on to compete in the women's singles at the Tokyo 2020 Olympics, her seventh consecutive appearance, having previously represented Nigeria at Atlanta 1996, Sydney 2000, Athens 2004, Beijing 2008, London 2012, and Rio 2016.

For Nigeria and Africa, Oshonaïke's appointment is far more than an individual achievement. It is a powerful symbol of recognition, one that honours her remarkable journey and promises stronger representation for African athletes on the global Olympic stage.



HOW INSECURITY, INFRASTRUCTURE FLUTTER NIGERIA'S EDUCATION, 12.5% PUPILS IN SCHOOL

CHARLES OGWO



At the break of dawn, the school bell rings, but almost no one comes, and it was not because they do not like to learn, but for the fear of their lives and poor learning conditions.

In the Gidan-Bijimi community of Bwari Area Council, the LEA Primary School had only 12.5 percent of pupils attend classes as insecurity rages, amidst inadequate infrastructure.

In some parts of Abuja, Nigeria's seat of power, fear, displacement, the constant threat of attacks and poor learning environment have turned education into a gamble, exposing the devastating cost of insecurity on children's futures.

This tales of the Local Education Authority (LEA) Primary School in Gidan-Bijimi village, Kawu ward of Bwari Area Council, where the poor state of primary education continues to deteriorate as only 17 out of the 136 (12.5 percent) of the pupils enrolled in the school attend classes, reflects the travesty faced by Nigerian youngsters in pursuit of learning.

Most parents would rather keep their children at home than risk losing them to kidnapers. BusinessDay earlier reported how the federal government sent several students home as the pang of insecurity deepens across the country.

Beside the insecurity crisis, the school had dilapidated classrooms with no windows, and doors, while some of the ceilings were seen dropping.

Isaiah Ogundele, a teacher, emphasised that in a situation such as Nigeria is now, safety should be prioritised over education.

"Consider safety first, take your child to a school that is located in a safe environment, because when there is life, there is hope," he said.

As a way out of the wood, Ogundele advocates home school and online learning system where parents can enroll their children from the comfort of their homes.

This is obviously not the best of time for Nigeria bearing in mind that the strength of any nation lies in the quality of its education.



A 2025 report focusing on states such as Katsina, Zamfara, and Niger found that insecurity (banditry, kidnappings, communal conflict) has forced school closures, displacement of families, and a mass exodus of teachers and students.

Before then, a UNESCO report revealed that over 20 million Nigerian children were out of school, the highest number globally.

With the surging rate of insecurity and schools being shut down, the country will continue to lag behind in learning, especially in the northern part of the country.

Experts emphasised that for effective teaching and learning to take place, there must be a good classroom environment. They maintained that poor building conditions such as broken ceilings, dilapidated furniture, and blackboards make students feel negatively about learning.

According to a 2023 assessment of the “Minimum Standards for Safe Schools” in Nigeria, on average states meet only nine out of 21 safety/infrastructure standards.

Less than one in five schools performs well overall; only ~14 percent meet basic safety requirements such as perimeter fencing and lockable gates.

Many Nigerian schools still lack basic facilities such as toilets, libraries, science labs, potable water, or adequate classrooms. In some situations, classes are held under trees or in makeshift shelters.

Chris Nmeribe, a teacher in Lagos said that a good classroom environment is very important for learning.

“Good sitting posture will facilitate good assimilation during the lessons. Classrooms with iron sheets on top and no ceiling would make students uncomfortable, especially in the afternoon when the weather is hot,” he said.

Research has shown that good furniture, writing boards, buildings, classrooms, and other education infrastructure are crucial elements of learning environments in schools.

When students do not have access to adequate facilities, it can lead to a lack of motivation and a fragmented education experience, as noticed in Abuja.

Nigeria is struggling to develop its economy simply because those the governments at various levels have failed to provide the citizens with quality education.

Jessica Osuere, the chief executive officer at RubiesHub Educational Services, pointed out that the underlying problem in the education sector include issues such as inadequate funding and infrastructural shortage, among others.

Many schools, she said, particularly in rural areas, continued to struggle with inadequate infrastructure, poor learning environments, and a lack of resources.

The question remains, if the government cannot provide basic education and security for the citizens, which is meant to be a fundamental right, what else can it provide?



6 PLACES TO TRAVEL SOLO ACROSS EUROPE

CHISOM MICHAEL

Europe continues to attract solo travellers who want ease of movement, clear navigation, and space to explore at their own pace.

Several cities often appear in reports by publications such as Travel + Leisure and Time Out, especially for travellers seeking reliable transport systems, safe public spaces, and activities that do not require companions.

According to Quartz, here are six cities that solo and solo-female travellers frequently choose for self-guided trips.

1. Berlin, Germany

Berlin draws steady interest from solo travellers due to its broad mix of museums, historic sites, and local scenes. Travel + Leisure reports that its public transport network supports movement across districts without stress. Travellers can spend time in galleries, walk through major landmarks, or visit neighbourhoods known for open public spaces. The city's mix of day and night activities makes it easy to plan a personal schedule.



2. Helsinki, Finland

Helsinki is often mentioned in Time Out for solo and solo-female travel. Its compact layout helps visitors move between cultural spots, parks, and waterfront paths without confusion. Many travellers note the ease of entering cafés, markets, and museums alone. The city's calm pace also supports unhurried walks and reflection, which appeals to people who value quiet exploration.



3. Copenhagen, Denmark

Copenhagen's design supports independent travel. Visitors can rely on public transport or hire bicycles, which are widely used across the city. Travel + Leisure lists it among places where solo travellers find navigation clear. Canal rides, local food spots and historic areas are easy to reach, making the city suitable for those who want to explore without fixed plans.



4. Lisbon, Portugal

Lisbon remains popular for solo trips due to its hills, tram routes, and open public squares. Time Out notes that many solo travellers choose the city for its open social atmosphere, which makes it simple to enter cafés, restaurants, and local events alone. Viewpoints, riverside walks, and older neighbourhoods offer a steady flow of things to see at a personal pace.



5. Vienna, Austria

Vienna's layout, transport routes, and cultural institutions give solo visitors room to explore without pressure. Travel + Leisure highlights its cafés, museums, and music venues as places where travellers often feel comfortable on their own. Long walks between major sites allow people to take in the city gradually, with many choosing self-paced routes through central districts.



6. Reykjavik, Iceland

Reykjavik appears regularly in solo-travel rankings, especially for those who want nature access without leaving a city setting. Time Out references Iceland's low crime rate and the city's calm environment as reasons travellers feel secure moving around. Many solo visitors join organised day trips to geothermal areas, whale-watching tours, and nearby national parks, combining outdoor experiences with the convenience of a small urban base.



GREECE NAMED WORLD'S BEST PLACE TO RETIRE IN 2026

CHISOM MICHAEL



Greece has been named the world's best retirement destination for 2026, according to the latest Global Retirement Index released by International Living. The index ranks countries based on cost of living, healthcare access, climate and visa routes.

The report shows that Greece moved ahead of Panama and Portugal, which held strong positions in previous years. International Living states that Greece's mix of living costs, healthcare options and residency pathways placed the country at the top of the list.

Greece now offers multiple routes for long-term stay, including the "Golden Visa", the "Financially Independent Person" permit and a "Digital Nomad Visa". Analysts note that recent visa changes in other parts of Europe helped increase interest in Greece, as retirees seek steady policies and clear entry rules.

Healthcare remains a key factor for older adults. Greece scored 89 out of 100 for its medical system. International Living reports that doctors in the country have recognised

training, and that private healthcare services are widely used. One correspondent said private insurance for two adults came to about \$288 per month.

Living costs continue to draw attention. Rental homes near the coast can be found for \$691 to \$1,151 per month, depending on location and size. The report notes that a couple can live on less than \$2,000 per month, covering housing, food, transport and basic needs. This, the index suggests, leaves room for travel, local food and cultural experiences.

Climate also played a role in the ranking. Winters in Greece are milder than in northern Europe, and many islands offer cooler conditions during the summer months.

Panama ranked second in the 2026 index, followed by Costa Rica in third place. Portugal moved from second to fourth. Other countries in the Top 10 include Italy, France, Spain, Mexico, Thailand and Malaysia.



INNOVATION WITHOUT CARE UNDERMINES FUTURE OF MEDICAL TECHNOLOGY — AYOOLA

Biomedical innovation continues to redefine global healthcare, demanding a balance between technology and patient safety. In this interview, Abimbola Ayoola, Principal Quality Engineer at Medtronic, speaks with Ifeoma Okeke-Korieocha about her journey from Zoology to Biomedical Engineering, leadership in quality management, and driving innovation in medical technology.



Can you share your journey from studying Zoology to becoming a Principal Quality Engineer in Biomedical Engineering? What inspired this transition?

My journey into biomedical engineering started with a strong foundation in the life sciences. I come from a family of medical professionals, my dad is a medical doctor and my mum is a nurse, so I've always been surrounded by conversations about patient care and healthcare impact.

Naturally, my initial plan was to study medicine or pharmacy, which led me to pursue a degree in Zoology as a premedical path.

However, along the way, I discovered biomedical engineering, and it completely shifted my perspective.

I was fascinated by how the field blends engineering, science, and medicine, three areas I've always been passionate about. What really intrigued me was the realization that while many people focus on doctors and medicines, not many think about the medical devices that support diagnosis, treatment, and recovery. That realization sparked something in me. After doing a lot of research, I knew that this was where I wanted to make my mark to help bridge that gap and contribute to

healthcare through innovation, quality, and technology. That decision ultimately led me to pursue a master's in biomedical engineering, where I developed a strong foundation in device design, biomaterials, and process validation.

Over the years, that passion evolved into a career focused on ensuring the quality, safety, and reliability of medical devices. Today, as a Principal Quality Engineer and a quality leader, I see my role as helping to ensure that every product leaving our facility not only meets technical standards but truly improves patient lives. For me, this journey represents a full circle from curiosity about medicine to actively shaping the systems and devices that make modern healthcare possible.

How do you think your background in Zoology and Biomedical engineering has influenced your approach to quality leadership?

My background in Zoology has had a tremendous influence on my approach to biomedical engineering and quality leadership. Studying Zoology gave me a strong foundation in biology and physiology, which are at the core of biomedical engineering. It helped me understand how living systems function and how animal physiology can inform experimental studies that are essential in preclinical and clinical testing.

That early exposure to biological systems made it much easier to connect the dots between science, technology, and patient outcomes later in my career.

From a leadership perspective, my background has also shaped how I make decisions in quality. There's always a human side to every engineering or quality decision behind every device or process, there's a patient whose life may depend on it. That awareness drives how I lead my teams and approach quality.

I often remind myself that the patient who will use the device we're developing could be my loved one, or someone else's. That perspective gives deep meaning to what I do every day and reinforces why quality leadership isn't just about compliance, it's about care, responsibility, and impact.

Can you describe your leadership style and how you empower your team members to achieve their goals?

My leadership style is a blend of transformational and servant leadership. I describe it that way because I focus on empowering my team while aligning our collective goals with the broader mission of the organization.

As a transformational leader, I aim to inspire and motivate my team to see beyond their individual roles and connect their work to the bigger picture, the patients we serve. I encourage open communication, innovation, and accountability, and I make it a point to celebrate both small and big wins.

This approach helps my team members grow in confidence, skill, and leadership.

The servant leadership side of my style is rooted in support and mentorship. I lead cross-functional teams that include engineers,

microbiologists, and quality specialists, and I believe my role is to remove barriers and provide them with the tools, clarity, and resources they need to succeed. I also enjoy mentoring early-career professionals and helping them develop both technically and professionally.

What's most rewarding to me is seeing how my team's success translates directly into stronger quality performance and safer, more reliable products for patients. I've learned that when my team members feel empowered and valued, they bring their best selves to work and that ultimately drives operational excellence and advances the company's mission.

For me, leadership isn't about authority; it's about building trust, developing people, and creating an environment where everyone can contribute meaningfully and grow.

What are some key lessons you've learned from leading multimillion-dollar product launches, and how do you apply those lessons to future projects?

One of the key lessons I've learned from leading multimillion-dollar product launches is the importance of understanding your stakeholders and aligning expectations early. Every successful launch begins with clarity knowing who your key stakeholders are, what success looks like for them, and ensuring consistent communication throughout the process.

Another valuable lesson is the need to document and reflect on lessons learned. I always maintain a Plus/Delta log capturing what worked well and what needs improvement. This continuous improvement mindset has been instrumental in driving efficiency and preventing repeat challenges across projects.

I've also learned the importance of cross-functional collaboration. Large-scale launches require strong alignment between engineering, quality, supply chain, manufacturing, and regulatory teams. Creating an environment where every team member feels ownership of the outcome ensures challenges are identified early and addressed effectively.

For instance, when we launched a \$1 billion ablation device business at Medtronic, first in the Europe and later in USA both launches had different regulatory requirements and market dynamics. By leveraging insights from the first launch, including regulatory feedback, supply chain coordination, and cross-functional communication, we were able to streamline the European rollout and mitigate risks effectively.

These experiences have reinforced that successful project execution is built on stakeholder alignment, proactive reflection, strong collaboration, and adaptive problem-solving. Applying these lessons to future launches ensures we deliver safe, effective, and life-changing medical technologies while achieving organizational goals.

Can you walk us through your approach to ensuring the highest standards of safety, performance, and reliability in medical devices?

Quality engineering is critical in any industry, but it is especially important in the medical device field because human lives

are directly impacted by every quality decision we make. My approach begins with strict adherence to regulatory standards, including ISO and FDA requirements, ensuring that all processes, documentation, and operations align with these standards.

A cornerstone of my work is risk analysis. I evaluate potential risks, identify mitigation strategies, and ensure device safety at every stage of development and manufacturing.

For example, while manufacturing a neurological device, I worked closely with cross-functional teams including manufacturing, operations, and quality specialists to evaluate risks associated with device performance and patient safety. By proactively identifying potential failure points and implementing mitigation strategies, we were able to ensure that the final product met all safety, performance, and regulatory requirements before reaching patients.

Collaboration is essential. Ensuring that every department understands the quality requirements and their role in mitigating risk is key to preventing nonconforming products and maintaining consistent reliability.

Ultimately, my approach combines regulatory compliance, proactive risk management, and strong cross-functional collaboration to uphold the highest standards of quality and ensure patient safety.

How do you stay current with the latest developments and advancements in biomedical engineering and quality engineering?

I stay up to date by actively engaging with multiple sources, including scientific journals, industry news, and regulatory updates, to ensure I'm aware of evolving standards and best practices. I also monitor innovations from other companies, review new patents, and track emerging technologies to understand how the field is advancing.

In addition, I focus on several key areas shaping biomedical and quality engineering today:

Digital health and connected devices, including remote monitoring and real-time patient data analytics.

Artificial intelligence and machine learning applications in device performance, predictive maintenance, and clinical decision support.

Advanced manufacturing technologies, such as additive manufacturing (3D printing) for implants and devices.

Regulatory evolution, including updates to ISO standards, FDA guidance, and global harmonization efforts.

Sustainability and lifecycle management, ensuring devices are safe, efficient, and environmentally responsible.

By combining this continuous learning with participation in conferences, webinars, and professional networks, I ensure that my knowledge stays current and that I can apply these advancements to improve product quality, compliance, and patient outcomes.

You've mentioned that problem-solving is central to engineering in the medical device industry. Can you describe the complex challenges you've encountered in your career and how you approached resolving?

In the medical device industry, every problem has its own unique characteristics whether it's a supplier escape, a product hold, a field corrective action, or responding to an audit. Engineering in this space is fundamentally about problem-solving, and it requires a structured approach using quality tools and data-driven methods.

One of the most complex challenges I faced was pivoting into engineering within the corporate U.S. environment, which required me to unlearn and relearn how engineering technologies and processes operate at a corporate scale. During this period, I also managed responses to regulatory observations, including both FDA 483 and TUV audits. Each observation required thorough root cause analysis, corrective and preventive action planning, and close collaboration with cross-functional teams to ensure compliance and prevent recurrence.

To address these challenges, I relied on mentorship, continuous learning, and structured problem-solving tools from my quality engineering background. By combining technical rigor with proactive communication and collaboration, I successfully resolved the regulatory observations, ensured compliance, and continued to contribute to high-impact projects.

This experience reinforced a key lesson: complex problems require both adaptability and technical excellence, and the ability to continuously learn and apply quality tools is essential to delivering safe, reliable medical devices.

You're passionate about education and mentorship. Can you tell us about your experiences in these areas and how you think they can benefit the next generation of innovators?

Mentorship is extremely valuable to me because I am a product of mentorship. It's played a key role in the rapid growth of my career and in gaining broad exposure across the medical device industry. Beyond traditional education in a university setting, I've learned that education also comes from learning from cross-functional teams, reading, and participating in professional development courses. These experiences have not only helped me grow personally and professionally but also allowed me to contribute meaningful value to the organizations I work with recognition I've been fortunate to receive from senior leadership.

I believe mentorship and education are equally critical for the next generation of innovators. Mentorship acts as a shortcut to success, allowing young professionals to learn from those who have walked the path before them. It provides guidance, perspective, and clarity at every stage of one's career, helping mentees avoid pitfalls and make more informed decisions.

Education, in all its forms, is essential because knowledge fuels growth. The more you learn, the more equipped you are to innovate, solve problems, and contribute to meaningful advancements in your field. By combining mentorship with

ongoing education, we can empower the next generation to become confident, capable, and visionary leaders who will drive the future of biomedical engineering and healthcare innovation

What advice would you give to young professionals looking to pursue a career in biomedical engineering or quality engineering?

My advice to young professionals looking to pursue a career in biomedical or quality engineering starts with knowing your 'why' the reason you chose this path. Understanding your purpose will keep you motivated, especially because behind every process or device is a patient whose life depends on the quality of your work. Keeping that perspective gives your work meaning and inspires you to go the extra mile.

I'd also emphasize the importance of soft skills like communication, teamwork, and leadership. The ability to collaborate effectively and explain complex ideas clearly is critical, particularly in cross-functional environments. Mentorship is another key factor. Having a mentor who has walked the path before you can provide guidance, perspective, and constructive feedback. Don't let the idea of critique discourage you; as I always say, feedback is a blessing, and no one has all the answers.

Continuous learning is essential. Biomedical technology evolves constantly, and the most successful engineers stay open to change whether through cross-functional projects, new technologies, or professional certifications.

At the end of the day, biomedical and quality engineering are about more than compliance. They're about building trust, improving lives, putting patients first, and ensuring every product that reaches a patient does exactly what it's designed to do. Approaching your career with purpose, curiosity, and openness will set you on a path to make a meaningful impact.

What do you think are some of the most pressing challenges facing the medical technology industry today, and how do you see your work contributing to addressing these challenges?

One of the most pressing challenges facing the medical technology industry today is balancing innovation with compliance. As new technologies like AI-driven devices, connected health systems, and personalized medicine advance rapidly, ensuring they remain safe, reliable, and compliant with evolving global regulations is a major task.

Another significant challenge is maintaining consistent product quality across global supply chains. With components and manufacturing happening across multiple regions, it takes strong quality systems, close supplier collaboration, and data-driven oversight to ensure that every product meets the same high standard, whether it's in North America, Europe, or Africa.

There is also a growing need for sustainability, cost-efficiency, and accessibility in manufacturing and producing devices that are not only safe and effective but also responsible, efficient, and affordable so that more patients can benefit from them.

In my role as a Principal Quality Engineer and leader, I contribute directly to addressing these challenges by leading cross-functional teams to strengthen quality systems, drive process improvements, and ensure product reliability throughout the manufacturing lifecycle. We focus on proactive problem-solving using data analytics, root cause analysis, process validation, and corrective and preventive actions to prevent issues before they reach patients.

At the same time, I invest in mentoring and developing my teams, because sustainable quality depends on people who understand the “why” behind what they do. By building a culture of accountability and continuous improvement, I believe we can not only meet regulatory expectations but also advance innovation safely and responsibly, ultimately improving patient outcomes worldwide.

How do you see the field of biomedical engineering evolving in the next 5-10 years, and what opportunities or challenges do you think this will present?

Over the next five to ten years, biomedical engineering is poised for rapid evolution, driven not only by artificial intelligence, automation, and advanced data analytics which will be applied to areas such as personalized medicine, wearable and implantable devices, regenerative medicine, and advanced biomaterials. AI is transforming how we design, test, and monitor devices, creating opportunities for predictive, adaptive, and patient-centered technologies. Devices will increasingly learn from real-time patient data to optimize outcomes, improve diagnostics, and support more personalized treatment plans.

The opportunities are immense: digital health integration, telemedicine-enabled devices, and connected ecosystems will allow better patient monitoring and proactive interventions. Additive manufacturing (3D printing) and biofabrication will expand customization and accessibility of implants and devices. The field is also seeing growth in sustainable and cost-efficient manufacturing, ensuring that innovative healthcare solutions are widely accessible.

At the same time, these advancements bring significant challenges. Ensuring data integrity, cybersecurity, and privacy will be critical as devices become connected and collect sensitive health information. Regulatory frameworks must evolve to keep pace with fast-changing technologies. Validation and risk management for AI-driven and adaptive devices will require new approaches, while global supply chain consistency and quality assurance remain ongoing concerns.

From my perspective as a quality and engineering leader, my role is to bridge innovation with assurance. I focus on implementing robust quality systems, ethical standards, and proactive risk management, ensuring that these innovative technologies are safe, reliable, and effective for patients. I also invest in mentoring teams and fostering cross-functional collaboration, because the next generation of biomedical engineers will be critical to driving these advancements responsibly.

In summary, the next decade will be defined by technological innovation, patient-centered design, and integrated healthcare solutions and it will require engineers and leaders to balance

speed of innovation with quality, safety, and compliance to truly improve patient outcomes worldwide.

How can your experience in quality and biomedical engineering be applied to other manufacturing industries, particularly in a growing economy?

My experience in quality engineering and biomedical manufacturing is highly transferable to other industries and growing economies like Nigeria. At Medtronic, I've led cross-functional teams to implement robust quality systems, process improvements, and regulatory compliance frameworks for highly complex and life-critical products. These principles strong process controls, risk management, continuous improvement, and data-driven decision-making are essential in any manufacturing environment.

In a growing economy, where industries are scaling rapidly, my experience can help establish or strengthen quality systems, standardize operational processes, and implement best practices that improve product reliability, efficiency, and safety. For example, introducing structured risk analysis, supplier quality management, and process validation can significantly reduce defects and enhance overall performance, whether in medical devices, pharmaceuticals, or consumer goods.

Additionally, my experience in mentoring and developing cross-functional teams can help build local talent and leadership capacity. By transferring knowledge and fostering a culture of accountability, innovation, and continuous learning, I believe we can accelerate industrial growth while maintaining high standards of quality and operational excellence, ultimately benefiting both businesses and the communities they serve.



A portrait of Abiola Laseinde, a woman with dark hair pulled back, wearing a vibrant red, textured, open-front jacket over a dark top. She is wearing large, ornate gold earrings and a gold watch on her left wrist. Her hands are clasped in front of her. The background is a soft, textured brown.

FROM SHADOWS TO SPOTLIGHT: WHY ABIOLA LASEINDE CROWNS AFRICA'S UNSUNG TECH HEROES

IFEOMA OKEKE-KORIEOCHA



Tech leaders in Africa's ecosystem were long overlooked, unlike celebrated C-suite roles, until 2020 changed the narrative. Abiola Laseinde, founder and CEO of Edniesal Consulting Limited, convener of the CIO & C-Suite Awards Africa, CIO & C-Suite Club Africa, and Ladies-in-Tech Network, shares with IFEOMA OKEKE-KORIEOCHA how her initiatives spotlight these unsung heroes and drive lasting change. Excerpts:

What necessitated the idea to start the award, especially since the CIO/C-Suite is not an area that is well celebrated in Nigeria?

The idea for the CIO and C-Suite Awards wasn't some calculated business move; it was born from a feeling, a deep, almost childlike compulsion, during the darkest days of the COVID-19 pandemic. I was screaming from the mountaintop, wondering why we weren't celebrating our tech heroes! During the Ebola crisis, we honoured every medical worker, even those who died. Yet, as the COVID-19 pandemic forced everyone into the comfort of their homes, it was the CIOs and tech leaders who were silently grinding behind the scenes, literally moving their operations to secure centers to maintain critical infrastructure. Cyberattacks were spiking, and without their tireless work, our companies would have collapsed. Many of these leaders were probably losing their lives quietly, completely unseen.

I felt it was grossly unfair that these individuals, the human beings keeping our world connected, were so unappreciated and unrecognised. The CFOs and CEOs get all the awards, but the guys taking the bullet are invisible. My mission became to put a crown on their head and give them the public spotlight they deserved.

It started as a burden, a pet project I had to plead with my employer to let me pursue, but the passion was so overwhelming that I simply took the plunge, determined to fight until they were finally celebrated.

Did you face any form of challenges or resistance from companies who would rather the company is in front of the camera than the individual?

Absolutely, I faced significant resistance, and not just from external sources, but sometimes even from the people we were trying to celebrate.

The biggest challenge was wrestling the spotlight away from the Marketing people. For them, the CEO or the CFO is the natural "face and brand of the company," leveraging every event for amplification. They simply didn't understand why "James, the IT guy somewhere," who is usually behind the scenes, should suddenly be the public image.

Initially, the awardees themselves were conservative and hesitant. Many were so used to working in the shadows that they didn't even inform their companies about their nominations. Some just showed up quietly, thinking, "Let me just see what this is about, pick the award, and leave before I cause any trouble." I was genuinely naive, thinking a simple call would be enough. I quickly learned I had to force them to celebrate themselves by the second edition because they weren't accustomed to the glamour.

Ultimately, I had to convince companies that giving the individual the crown meant the company would shine too. It was a massive cultural shift we had to drive.

Why did you decide to add the conference to the event?

We started with just the awards, but soon realized the three-hour ceremony wasn't enough value for our multi-sectoral stakeholders. To give our partners and attendees a tangible return on their time and investment, we decided to add a valuable half-day conference.

This extension allows sponsors to engage, and awardees to experience a mind shift by learning new trends, ultimately making them more relevant to their organizations.

How do you source funds for this award, considering the fact that the awardees are not paying for the award?

Sourcing funds for a complimentary, high-caliber event like this was one of my biggest hurdles initially. For the very first

edition, I had to be prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice. I was ready to cash out my pension to cover the cost, because I passionately believed in honouring these unsung heroes.

However, the real solution emerged through corporate partnerships. We realized that OEMs and major companies, those selling products to CIOs and CISOs, would find immense value in partnering with us. They pay for things like the hall, meals, or branding in exchange for access and pitching slots to this influential audience. We focus on being partner-centric, ensuring their investment provides tangible returns through pre, during, and post-event engagement, which is why we have so many returning supporters.

How did you ensure the quality of the event experience from day one, despite having little or no funding initially?

Ensuring a super late classic event was non-negotiable from day one, even though I was jobless and almost went to my pension for funds! My primary focus was the quality of the experience, driven by the vision that one day, we'd be a global standard.

I was incredibly hands-on, micro-managing every detail. I fought with the decorators, insisting on professional tech-themed elements like AI or 3D carvings instead of "village things" like flowers. Crucially, I ensured the ambience and service, from the gate to the hall, were impeccable.

I selected mature ushers, not just young students, to guarantee our VIP guests, the CIOs, received the respect and experience they deserved. The entire event was about them, and I worked tirelessly to ensure their moment in the spotlight was flawless.

What are the parameters behind the selection process for the awardees?

We established a stringent, governance-focused selection process with the help of technical partners like EY. To ensure fairness and meritocracy, not just choosing someone I liked, we appointed a panel of Jurors (senior IT veterans and founders).

Nominees must submit a project executed within the last 12 months, detailing its quantitative and qualitative impact on their organization and value chain. We also require strict confidentiality clauses and subject all submissions to rigorous desktop validation to verify their claims. It's all about justifiable achievement, not popularity.

What is the impact of the award, based on testimonials and its role in elevating CIOs and C-Suite technology leaders?

The testimonials and ripple effects have been profoundly encouraging, validating our decision to celebrate these tech leaders.

Initially, awardees were so surprised, some even called back to verify the event's credibility.



Now, we receive a constant surge of requests from winners and even nominees for official certificates and letters to validate their achievements globally, for sharing with international teams or even for visa purposes.

This not only gives them personal visibility but also elevates their roles within their companies, shining a spotlight on the entire IT team. By acknowledging their crucial contributions, the award successfully fosters an environment where the CIO/CISO role is seen as essential to the C-suite, inspiring both current leaders and future talent in the often-unseen tech ecosystem.

How did you fund the inaugural awards without touching your personal pension, and what does the rise in international nominations mean for the future, including hosting the event outside Nigeria?

I didn't end up using my pension to finance the first edition of the CIO and C-Suite Awards. At the beginning, I actually filled out the withdrawal forms because I believed so deeply in the vision and I had no salary at the time.

But before I submitted them, members of our project team who were working pro bono rallied support and raised the funds we needed, almost ₦8 million, so I never had to break my pension after all. Their belief in the idea showed me that people truly valued what we were trying to build.

As for the growing international nominations, we honestly did not plan for it. Yet over the years, entries began coming from Ghana, Kenya, South Africa, Morocco and many others.

At first, we rejected them because the award was meant for Nigerian-based professionals, but a team member wisely pointed out that only a few African countries even celebrate CIOs this way. That insight shifted our mindset, and today we receive nominations from 15 countries.

The implication is that this award is now a Pan-African platform. We are open to hosting it outside Nigeria, Kenya, Rwanda, or South Africa, but the financial cost remains the major constraint, especially with foreign exchange requirements. With the right sponsorship, we're ready to take that leap.





You've expanded significantly in five years. What does female representation look like today, and what actions are being taken to improve it?

In five years, our growth has been remarkable, but one thing became clear early on, female representation was painfully low. By our second edition, about 90% of nominees were men, and it troubled me deeply. I knew talented women were doing incredible work, yet they were not putting themselves forward.

So, I created the Ladies in Tech and Leadership Network, a relaxed coaching and mentorship space where we hold honest conversations, build confidence, and push women to step into the spotlight. We've even taken the movement across Africa, Kenya last year and Rwanda next. The progress is slow but real. More women are showing up, nominating themselves, and realizing their stories deserve to be seen and celebrated.

What are your personal career ambitions, your current ambitions for the award, and your vision for its global future?

My career ambition is to serve as Nigeria's ambassador to the US, leveraging my passion for tech ecosystems and national pride to bridge continents. For the CIO and C-Suite Awards, I aim to elevate it as Africa's premier multi-sectoral platform, honoring unsung tech heroes with unmatched prestige.

Globally, I envision hosting grand ceremonies in hubs like South Africa, drawing nominations worldwide, fostering policy advocacy, and positioning Nigeria as the epicenter of digital excellence.

INSIDE ORCA, AFRICA'S LARGEST SHOWROOM

IFEOMA OKEKE-KORIEOCHA



Standing proudly in the heart of Eko Atlantic City, the monumental ORCA Showroom is more than a landmark of retail excellence — it stands as a testament to visionary leadership, economic ambition, and confidence in Africa's future.

At its core is the foresight and determination of Ambassador Gilbert Chagoury and Ronald Chagoury (Chagoury Group), Moufid Karamah (Mikano Group), whose decades-long dedication to Nigeria's progress continues to shape the nation's urban and economic landscape, and Jamal Kawar, Founder of Orca Africa, who has successfully expanded Orca Deco across more than 22 African countries.

Orca Mall officially opened its doors on Wednesday 26th November.

Spanning four floors and more than 50,000 square meters, with over 100,000 products, ORCA is Africa's largest and most advanced home and lifestyle showroom under one roof.

With over 500 jobs created, ORCA is not only a testament to the power of innovative design but also a significant contributor to the social and economic fabric of Lagos and Eko Atlantic City.

At ORCA, the concept of "home" transcends mere physical space; it's about creating a feeling of comfort, identity, and belonging that every individual deserves. The products are carefully curated to cater to diverse lifestyles and tastes, ORCA offers shopping experience that redefines the boundaries of retail. From home and living essentials to cutting-edge home technology, ORCA's vast portfolio is a one-stop destination for anyone seeking to elevate their living spaces.

Several dignitaries graced the exclusive launch of ORCA including Babajide Sanwo-Olu, Governor of Lagos State; Kadri Obafemi Hamzat, the Deputy Governor; Babatunde Raji Fashola, Former Governor; and Aisha Rimi, the CEO of the Nigerian Investment Promotion Commission, alongside many distinguished guests.

From inspiring speeches to the ceremonial ribbon-cutting and guided tours through our premium showroom, the opening marked the beginning of a bold new chapter for retail, design, and innovation in Lagos.

ITB Construction and the Eko Atlantic City development team, whose world-class craftsmanship, vision, and execution played a defining role in bringing this milestone project to life.



David Frame, managing director, Eko Atlantic Management Limited who also spoke during the launch said Orca Mall joins a growing list of completed projects that signal to local and international investors that Eko Atlantic is not for the distant future, but a functioning, expanding and vibrant city now with each completed building, each new business, and each investment that takes root here strengthens its position as one of the country's most dynamic growth corridors.

"Orca Mall is now complete today, we can appreciate what it represents. It is not just a building; it's Africa's biggest showroom and a practical contribution to the ongoing development of Eko Atlantic," Frame said.

He acknowledged the work carried out by ITB Nigeria Limited, stressing that their professionalism, attention to detail, and delivery capacity are evident in every part of the building.

"Completing a project of this scale requires coordination, discipline, and consistency and ITB has shown all of these throughout the process" Frame said.

According to him, Eko Atlantic stands as one of the most technically advanced city developments in Africa built with modern infrastructure designed for efficiency, reliability, and long-term sustainability.

Aisha Rimi, CEO Nigerian Investment Promotion Commission, (NIPC) said.

ORCA's opening in Eko Atlantic adds a major chapter to that story and firmly places Nigeria at the centre of ORCA's continental footprint.

According to Rimi, the investment is a clear vote of confidence in the country and the opportunities it presents.

"It reflects trust in an economy that represents one of the continent's largest, most aspirational and upwardly mobile consumer markets, and it aligns with the positive economic reforms being implemented by this Administration," she said.

She explained that combining a showroom of this size with smart logistics, digital catalogues and online channels means an ecosystem is being built that serves today's customer in ways that create a modern, seamless experience that e-commerce can only complement but not replace.

Babajide Sonwo Olu, Governor Lagos State, who was also at the launch of the showroom said they are not just handing over a building but showcasing a symbol of what trust is in a Nigerian economy.



“We’re showing that there’s a big testament when we collaborate, when we all have bold ideas and bold declarations of the future. We’re also re-emphasizing that we believe in the space and in the economy,” Sonwo Olu said.

He acknowledged President Bola Ahmed Tinubu who has created the needed enabling environment for businesses to thrive and for the private sector to make that investment.

Sonwo Olu who described the showroom as ‘world class’ edifice, commended ORCA Group for their vision, resilience, and confidence in the Lagosian story.

“We believe it will strengthen the economy, it will help to also enrich the life of our people.

This establishment, for us, is a good of confidence, it reflects on the policies, it strengthens our commitment as a

government, and it helps us to deepen the small interventions that we’re doing in infrastructure, security, in real or big things,” he said.

Abbas Haidar, Projects Director, ITB Nigeria FZE said while this project presented its share of challenges, it was approached with effective solutions, upholding the client’s vision to deliver Africa’s largest showroom built to outstanding standards of quality and safety.

“We trust that this achievement will bring lasting benefits to the Lagosian community,” Haidar added.

He thanked everyone who contributed to the success of the project.

ORCA Deco Mall is now open and every is invited to experience it.

HOW NIGERIAN SCIENTIST, GIDEON AMEH IS TACKLING GLOBAL DISEASE THREATS THROUGH ONE HEALTH RESEARCH

IFEOMA OKEKE-KORIEOCHA





As the globe is still grappling with the aftermath of COVID-19 and recurring outbreaks of animal-borne diseases, a Nigerian scientist is working to close the gap between human, animal, and environmental health.

Gideon Ameh, an American based Evolutionary Biologist is investigating how biodiversity loss and land-use change drive the spread of infectious diseases, an approach grounded in the global “One Health” framework.

Currently, the World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that three out of every four emerging diseases originate from animals, Gideon's work shows a growing urgency to understand and prevent such cross-species transmissions.

He studies how deforestation, urban expansion, and agricultural pressure create conditions that allow viruses to leap from wildlife to humans, a process scientists refer to as spillover (the transmission of diseases from animals to humans).

“You cannot separate human health from the environment that sustains it,” Gideon says. “Our choices about land, food, and energy directly influence the chances of the next outbreak. That's what drives my research.”

At the George Mason University, Virginia, USA, Ameh serves as a PhD student and Instructor of Record in the Department of Biology.

His ongoing research assesses how shifts in land use alter the relationships among wildlife, pathogens, and humans. Using geospatial modeling and computational tools, he maps disease-risk hotspots and examines how biodiversity conservation can reduce transmission potential.

His current project integrates data on species diversity, deforestation rates, and viral genomes to predict how changes in local ecosystems might trigger new infections. “We're trying to give policymakers a visual map of risk,” he explained. “If you can show that protecting forest corridors lowers exposure to pathogens, then conservation becomes a public health investment, not just an environmental goal.”

This approach mirrors a rising movement within the scientific community that connects ecology to health policy. A 2023 United Nations Environment Programme report noted that global land degradation affects over 3.2 billion people and increases vulnerability to emerging pathogens. Ameh's work aims to turn such data into practical prevention strategies.

Ameh's dedication to applied science has not gone unnoticed. His recent paper on biodiversity and animal-borne disease transmission risk was presented at two of the world's most respected scientific

gatherings in the field of public health and infectious diseases: the American Public Health Association (APHA) Annual Meeting held November 4, 2025 in Washington, D.C. USA, and the American Society for Tropical Medicine and Hygiene (ASTMH) Conference, held on November 10, 2025 in Ontario, Canada.

According to the young researcher, these conferences are where some of the most critical discussions on global health take place.

“For me, it's not only about sharing research; it's about amplifying the role of African scientists in global conversations about prevention and policy.”

He has also collaborated with researchers in the United Kingdom and Australia, focusing on how nations can adapt the One Health model for local realities. His findings contribute to the global understanding of how environmental management can serve as an early warning system against future pandemics.

Ameh was also a research fellow with Australian Academy of Science under the Future Earth Australia platform where he was involved in bridging the gap between biodiversity and policy making in the transition towards renewable energy.

Beyond academia, Ameh's influence extends to leadership and mentoring. Earlier in Nigeria, he supported community health education programs and environmental monitoring efforts, these are experiences that affected his view of research as a service to society. “The goal is not to publish papers for the shelf,” he said. “It's to produce knowledge that saves lives and ecosystems.”

Ameh's practical orientation echoes the ethos of the One Health movement, which advocates that preventing disease requires collaboration across sectors from veterinarians and ecologists to public health planners and local communities.

Asked how Africa can strengthen its position in global health research, Ameh pointed to both opportunity and challenge. “Africa holds some of the richest biodiversity on Earth, but that also means we face higher risks if we keep losing natural habitats,” he said.

“If we align health, agriculture, and environment under one coordinated policy, we could become a model for disease prevention rather than reaction.”

He believes that countries like Nigeria could lead continental innovation in One Health policy through local data generation, improved surveillance, and early-warning systems. According to the Africa CDC, animal-borne diseases account for over 60 percent of reported epidemics on the continent in the last decade, a figure that underscores the urgency of his research focus.

“The lesson from COVID-19 is clear,” he added. “Waiting until an outbreak happens is too expensive. Prevention is the real solution.”

For Ameh, global collaboration remains central to scientific progress. He credits his professional exposure from Nigeria to the United States and the UK for broadening his outlook on how interdisciplinary teams can tackle health threats.

His vision is to strengthen predictive modeling frameworks for animal-borne disease risk, allowing governments to make informed land-use and health decisions. “We need systems that tell us, with evidence, what choices today will prevent the next disease tomorrow,” he emphasised.

Through his work, Gideon Ameh remind the world that sustainable health begins long before a hospital ward, it begins with the environment itself. His blend of ecological insight and public health expertise positions him among those shaping the future of disease prevention.

YUTEE RONE EXPLORES DEPTH AND DETAIL IN 'TEXTURES OF THE OCEAN' SHOWCASE IN LAGOS



Luxury womenswear designer Yutee Rone unveiled her new collection titled Textures of the Ocean at Pitstop Village in Ikoyi, delivering an immersive runway experience that blended fashion, sound, spatial design and storytelling with meticulous attention to detail.

Guests began the evening with a welcome cocktail inside Phoenix before moving poolside for the main runway presentation. The runway was set against a digital backdrop of seas, stones and shifting currents.

The setting reflected Rone's inspiration from a recent trip to Mykonos and her long-standing

fascination with the natural world. With the pool mirroring the changing light and the projections reinforcing the theme, the venue became a calm coastal environment designed to draw the audience into the emotional world of the collection.

The show opened with a short film recorded by Yutee Rone that set the tone for the evening. Immediately after, four classical musicians began a live performance from their seats beside the pool.

Their music guided the start of the runway and created a sensory rhythm that complemented both the atmosphere and the movement of the garments. The performance softened and

intensified in harmony with the presentation, adding an elegant layer to the overall experience.

The collection marked a confident evolution in Rone's design language. Known for her refined craftsmanship, she explored a wider range of engineered pleating techniques that recalled the architectural precision associated with designers like Issey Miyake.

Some pleats expanded gently with movement while others held sharp, controlled lines that suggested rising tides or seashells shaped by nature. She combined mesh fabrics with her signature structured textiles to create silhouettes inspired by coral formations, water foam and the shifting depths of the sea.

Her colour palette moved through greens, blues and blush tones that mirrored the shifting moods of seawater. The progression began with calm, mossy greens, transitioned into deep sapphire hues and ended with soft sunset shades.



The show unfolded in phases that moved from sculptural outerwear to chic occasion wear, followed by more youthful and energetic silhouettes. It closed with a swimwear segment designed with a sculptural and elevated approach that differed from traditional resortwear.

Several Nigerian celebrities and cultural figures attended the event, and a number of them appeared on the runway. Among the notable figures who walked were Idia Aisien, Dabota Lawson and Rita Dominic. Dominic closed the show in a yellow beaded gown that moved with the fluidity of falling water and provided a memorable final moment for the evening.



The evening was supported by Martell, which provided the welcome cocktail experience and the post-show afterparty. Essenza served as the official makeup partner, bringing a polished beauty direction that aligned with the overall mood of refinement.

Textures of the Ocean represents a new creative chapter for the Yutee Rone brand.

The collection reflects a designer who is advancing both her technique and her storytelling while shaping a more expansive narrative within contemporary Nigerian luxury.

Guests left the showcase with the sense that they had witnessed a complete artistic experience where fashion, sound and environment were woven into a singular expression of elegance.

The event reinforced the possibilities of immersive fashion presentations in Lagos and showcased the growing ambition of designers who are defining the next era of African creativity.



WISCAR SETS NEW BENCHMARK FOR NIGERIAN WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP, POLICY REFORM

...graduates the first cohort of WILMP in 2025 conference

CHARLES OGWO



At a time when Nigeria is seeking inclusive leadership, Women in Successful Careers (WISCAR) is stepping into the gap, empowering women to take their place at decision-making tables, changing leadership landscape with transformative programmes, and renewed focus on policy reform.

This was made known by Amina Oyagbola, the founder and chairperson of WISCAR, in her address at the 2025 edition of the annual conference, when she emphasised that gender inclusion is both a national and economic imperative.

“For seventeen years, WISCAR has equipped women with the competence, confidence, and courage to lead. Beyond empowerment, we must claim our future through leadership, accountability, and collective action.

“Global evidence shows that closing gender gaps in labour participation could add \$28 trillion to global GDP,

and Africa could gain \$316 billion by 2030 by increasing women’s economic participation. Companies with gender-diverse leadership are also more profitable, more innovative, and better governed,” she said.

Folasade Ogunsola vice-chancellor of the University of Lagos, in her keynote address at the 2025 Distinguished WISCAR Awardee reflected on the transformative power of purposeful female leadership.

Ogunsola emphasised that Nigeria’s progress depends on creating enabling systems where women can lead, influence, and innovate at scale, noting:

A “Nigeria’s future cannot be built without women at the decision-making table. When women lead, institutions become stronger, communities become safer, and societies become more prosperous. Our work and impact continue to demonstrate that women are essential to Nigeria’s progress,” she said.

Babajide Sanwo-Olu, the governor of Lagos State, represented by Bimbola Salu-Hundeyin, secretary to the Lagos State government, in his remarks, reaffirmed the state's commitment to strengthening gender-responsive governance and supporting institutions like WISCAR that are shaping the next generation of female leaders.

"Lagos State remains committed to building an inclusive and competitive economy where women's leadership is recognised as a strategic national asset.

"We are proud to support platforms like WISCAR that are shaping the future of governance and professional excellence," he said.

The conference further amplified the bold, collective agenda of the Nigeria Women in Leadership Coalition, comprising WISCAR, WIMBIZ, WILAN, and the Nigeria Governors Forum.

United by a shared vision for systemic transformation, the coalition is advocating for three critical national reforms: 35 percent female representation in federal and state cabinets, 35 percent women on boards and in executive management of listed companies, and the adoption of a modern labour policy guaranteeing at least 16 weeks paid maternity leave and 14 days of paid paternity leave by 2027.

These reforms, which have been endorsed and embraced by Nkiruka Onyejeocha, the minister of State for Labour and Employment, are essential to building institutions that reflect Nigeria's talent, diversity, and governance aspirations.

The 2025 ALMC also celebrated excellence and allyship through two institutional recognitions. The Ambassador Abdullahi & Amina Atta HeForShe Award was established to honour a distinguished male ally annually who has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to gender equity.

The 2025 Grace Alele-Williams Alumni Impact Award was presented to Oluwaseyi Kehinde-Peters, a WISCAR alumni, and founder of PAWEN, in recognition of her outstanding leadership, integrity, sector-wide transformative contributions, and paying forward the WISCAR ideals of mentorship.

A key milestone of the event under the theme, "Claiming Our Future: Women in Leadership and Policy Transformation" was the graduation of the first cohort of the Women in Law Mentoring Programme (WILMP), a transformative initiative implemented in collaboration with FIDA Nigeria.

Developed to address the critical gaps in women's representation and leadership within Nigeria's legal and public sector ecosystem.

The programme equipped 105 mid-career legal professionals with a robust blend of structured mentorship, leadership training, and exposure to policy and justice sector reforms.

Rooted in the urgent need to strengthen women's capacity to champion, implement, and enforce gender equitable laws and policies, this pilot graduation marks a significant step toward building a strong pipeline of female leaders who can help shape Nigeria's judiciary, legislature, executive arm of government, and legal practice.

Beyond its immediate impact, WILMP establishes a scalable model that WISCAR intends to expand to other sectors such as engineering, media, and finance, deepening its mission to accelerate gender equality and strengthen governance across Nigeria.

WISCAR 2025 Annual Leadership and Mentoring Conference, was a landmark gathering that reaffirmed the organisation's commitment to strengthening women's leadership, driving policy reform, and accelerating national transformation.

The conference brought together policymakers, business leaders, development partners, civil society actors, and emerging professionals who engaged in insightful dialogues and engagement.

The conference recorded the presence of distinguished dignitaries, including Abubakar Suleiman, the CEO of Sterling Bank; Edward Fagbohun, head of programme implementation at MTN Nigeria Foundation; Abosede George-Ogan, executive director at WILAN; Maupe Ogun-Yusuf, Channels Television; Jumoke Oduwale, minister of trade and industry represented by Teju Abisoye, special adviser at the Office of the Minister and national coordinator at National Talent Export Programme, among others.

Their attendance underscored the growing national consensus that women's leadership is central to Nigeria's political stability, economic growth, and institutional advancement.

WISCAR is a leading non-profit organization dedicated to empowering and developing professional women across Nigeria. With over 17,000 women empowered since inception, WISCAR continues to serve as a catalyst for national transformation.

WHERE POVERTY BLOCKS THE DOOR, TECHNOLOGY BREAKS A WINDOW

...Students in Lagos village fight to stay connected

ROYAL IBEH



O kun-Ajah Community Senior Secondary School, is situated in a place where electricity is a luxury, laptops are scarce, and poverty dictates the rhythm of life, yet, students are daring to chase the future.

“You can see that our school is serene, very conducive. For us to be selected as one of the schools to roll out the Nigerian Learning Passport (NLP) is a great privilege,” principal Bridget Oyedele told BD Weekender.

It does not take long to realise that behind that pride lies a daily struggle, a battle fought with outdated computers, flickering power, and the harsh realities of rural education. Yet it is also a battle strengthened by the quiet resilience of teachers and the hunger of students eager to join a world racing ahead.

“Education is a passport, and technology makes it possible for every child, either rich or poor, to reach the world,” Oyedele said.

To her, the Nigerian Learning Passport, a digital learning platform backed by the federal government in collaboration with the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), is more than software. It is a window for her students, many of whom have never left the village, to see what lies beyond the ocean that borders their school.

“The innovations we see today, the technology, these digital tools... they open wide corridors of exposure for our children. What we see today is a testament to the power of digital learning. Most of us didn’t have these opportunities growing up, but our students now benefit from them,” she added.

Innovation meets harsh reality

But every innovation that reaches the school arrives burdened by the weight of the community’s challenges.

“There is no stable electricity in this village. Even when we try to empower ourselves, we rely on fuel. And fuel today is expensive. Parents do not fully understand how these technologies can lift their children out of poverty, so buying devices is difficult,” a teacher who asked not to be named tells BD Weekender.

In Okun-Ajah’s computer laboratory, there is more dust than digital capacity. Some computers are so old that teachers jokingly call them first-generation fossils.

“Many of them are obsolete. The school does not have enough computers. Some students don’t even have Android phones,” the teacher says.

However, one of the few students who owns a functional phone is Divine Chioma Ikechukwu, an SS3 student whose calm confidence belies the hurdles she faces.

“The Nigerian Learning Passport has changed my life. When I don’t understand a topic in class, I go there for explanations. Before, I could read three textbooks and still score maybe 80 percent. Now I study faster and understand better,” she said.

Ikechukwu uses the Learning Passport as a personal tutor, breaking down complex topics in physics and chemistry. But her experience is not shared by many.

“I have a personal phone, but many students don’t. Some can’t even find where to charge their phones. That is the real problem,” she said.

Adewoye Emmanuel Ayomide, her classmate, agrees. “The Nigerian Learning Passport has helped us a lot. Unlike some apps that don’t explain concepts well, the Learning Passport is different. It is very educational. We learn a lot from it,” he said.

Across the school, curiosity is high, but access is painfully low. Students share phones, sit close to the windows for better light, and race against sunset to complete digital tasks before darkness turns the community into a quiet, powerless silhouette.

“We don’t have stable electricity. Without power, we cannot use computers or systems to access the Learning Passport. We need standard ICT equipment. We want to learn,” says Okejevwa-Frank Wisdom, another SS3 student.

A Village that refuses to stand still

Despite these challenges, Okun-Ajah is not entirely alone. In this community, survival is communal, and progress is collective.

“We leverage outside stakeholders because these children are our children. When they do well, we all do well,” principal Oyedele said.

Support has trickled in from foundations, old students, and organisations such as the Sean and Tara Ajayi Foundation, which continues to invest in the school’s welfare.

The Parent Forum, Okun-Ajah’s version of a PTA, remains active, offering both moral support and small but meaningful financial interventions.

Corporate partners have also stepped in. MainOne recently provided a solar inverter and pledged to paint the school. Talks are ongoing for the development of a digital library. “We keep reaching out. If we get it right with these children, society benefits,” Oyedele averred.

A National push that offers hope

Across Nigeria, the digital learning movement is gathering momentum. At a two-day media dialogue, Celine Lafoucriere, UNICEF chief of Lagos field office, revealed that the Nigerian Learning Passport has already reached more than two million children and young people across 21 states, including 62,000 girls and women who have completed digital courses.

“We must prepare young people for jobs that do not exist yet. We need to close the gender gap and reach the most marginalised,” Lafoucriere said.

Her words echo strongly in a village like Okun-Ajah, where marginalisation is not an abstract concept, but a daily lived reality.

State officials also acknowledge the urgency. Martins Opeyemi, director of planning, policy, research and statistics at the Lagos State Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, said digital learning has been fully embedded into the school curriculum under the THEMES Agenda.

“For us, digital learning is not optional. It is the foundation for every child’s future,” he said.

At Okun-Ajah Community Senior Secondary School, about 600 students are determined to keep that foundation intact, despite electricity shortages, device scarcity, and the everyday challenges of rural life.

For them, technology is not just a tool. It is a chance to rewrite their future.

A window has been opened. And even if poverty blocks the door, these students, armed with a single phone, an outdated laptop, or a shared solar inverter, are determined to climb through it.



MARA MANIA' SHOW BRINGS STREET DANCE, MUSIC AND FRENCH SUPPORT TOGETHER IN LAGOS



A new exhibition in Lagos is shining a global light on “Mara,” a fast-rising street dance and music movement born in the city’s crowded neighborhoods.

The Mara Mania exhibition opened on Saturday at Alliance Française de Lagos in Ikoyi, drawing artists, diplomats and young creators who say the culture deserves national and international respect. The event was free to the public.

French Consul General Laurent Favier told guests that France supported the project because Mara represents “raw artistic energy from the streets of Lagos,” adding that he was surprised to learn the name means “street” and “madness.” He said the high-speed beats and wild dance steps show “a pure artistic language” that should be documented and shared.

“We support the creative industries because they carry talent, identity and exchange,” Favier said. “Nigeria and France share a creative ecosystem, and this exhibition shows what can happen when these worlds meet.”

The exhibition was supported by the France-Nigeria Cultural Exchange Programme and the Creation Africa Fund, which identifies and promotes emerging African talents.

The fund recently sponsored Nigerian DJs at the Nyege Nyege Festival in Uganda, where global electronic producer Shree Lex sampled Mara sets on the main stage. Favier said the recognition was “a very exciting moment” for the dancers and young producers pushing the culture.

Curators said the exhibition was built to feel like Lagos itself, loud, honest and full of motion. Visitors stepped into a multi-sensory space with music, documentary screenings, beat-making tools and installations inspired by the streets.

There were charging-station displays, TikTok video walls, dance tutorials, graffiti-style sticker boards, and a beat-box station built with sound stems from DJ Khalifa, one of the genre’s leading voices.

Creative director and co-curator Anthony Dike said the goal was to take people inside the world that shaped Mara. "Someone walked in during our setup and said, 'This is Lagos.' That was the energy we wanted," he said. "We wanted something curated, but not detached. Something that feels like the community."

Dike said the team spent over a year documenting the culture with local artists, dancers and DJs who helped shape the movement. He noted that Mara is more than entertainment. It reflects the environment, the soundscape, the pace, and the daily struggles of people living and working in Lagos.

Dike thanked the production team, acknowledging the long list of collaborators who carried the vision for over a year and a half. He lauded the French Embassy for supporting "emerging cultures" and helping create an archive that lives beyond hype. "For people who don't know this community, I want them to leave with respect," he said. "The next time they see a Mara DJ, dancer or producer, they should understand the craft."

The exhibition also walked visitors through a history of street dance in Lagos, from early styles in the late 1990s, to the rise of Zanku in 2018, and the mainstream breakthrough driven by producers such as DJ YK, DJ Cora, DJ Khalifa, and viral TikTok creators like Poco Lee and Zazu. Today, some Mara tracks earn more than 29,000 streams on Spotify, curators said, and interest continues to grow.

Also at the event, Dolapo Amusat, founder of WeTalkSound, said the exhibition was created to show "the beauty, the story, and the depth of Mara to the world," especially to people who underestimate it. He called Mara "the pulse of the streets today in Lagos" and said it is already shaping mainstream pop music.

He noted their biggest goal is to credit the creators who built the movement. "Songs like Oblee by Rema are already borrowed from Mara. Many times these street sounds enter the mainstream, but the people who shaped them never get their credit. That's why we're doing this," he said.

Amusat added that France's involvement shows the movement already has global momentum. "With France involved, it's already beyond Nigeria at this point. There's no limit to where it can get to."

Adding his voice, Dunsin Bankole, head of operations at WeTalkSound, said Mara is popular because it gives

people creative freedom. "For me, Mara means freedom. Freedom to express," he said. "There's a raw energy in it that people connect to."

Bankole said interest from Europe is not surprising. "Mara is mostly beats. Europeans already have house music, so Mara feels like a localised Nigerian version of that," he said. "There's something familiar yet new, and that's part of why the appeal exists."

He said international cultural groups often support sounds they believe can grow and capturing the real origins of Mara is important. "They like to spotlight new movements," he said. "They see something special in Mara and want to help push it to the next level. If Mara becomes a billion-dollar industry in 10 years, we want people to know who deserves the credit, the royalties, and the recognition," he said. "That's why we did this."

"We are cultural architects. It's our job to document the times," he said. "So many Nigerian stories were lost because nobody documented them. We want to fix that."

The exhibition also encouraged participation. Guests were invited to learn Mara steps through a motion-capture screen, create digital mixes with DJ Khalifa's sound stems, place stickers on a simulated Lagos bus, and design personalized postcards showing what the movement means to them.

The event closed with a documentary screening and a live performance at Freedom Park. The film, which explores the origins, people and evolution of Mara, will be released on YouTube after the premiere.



OFE OWERRI MADE EASY: A CLEAN, AUTHENTIC COOKING GUIDE

CHINONYE ISIDIENU



Blended Fresh pepper
Uziza leaves (optional)
Seasoning cubes
Salt
Water

Preparations

Start by boiling your coco yams first in a pot until it is very soft

In a separate pot, add your meat, snails, stock fish and dried fish with seasoning cubes, blended pepper mix and salt, add little water to the pot and boil for 5 minutes first, to allow the meat to soak up the ingredients then add enough water to the soup to get the desired quantity you are making and allow to boil until soft.

Peel off the back of the coco yam and pound till it is in paste form make sure it is soft before pounding.

Check the meat pot, if it's tender, add the palm oil and ede together or any other thickener of choice like Ofo or Achi and allow it to dissolve.

Go in with your crayfish, blended pepper, ogiri igbo and okazi leaves,

allow to heat for 3 minutes (the okazi leaf is added now because it takes time to get soft)

*Taste to know if you need to add salt or seasoning to it, then add your ugu and uziza leaf to it (it makes the soup have a pungent flavor kick).

Allow it to boil for a minute, bring it down from the heat and food is ready

*Pair this with any swallow of your choice

Tips for the perfect Ofe-Owerri

Do not add onions to the soup, authentic ofe-owerri recipes generally avoid onions, as they can add an unwanted sweetness that is not traditional to the dish

Aim for a thick but not overly dense consistency; the soup thickens further as it cools.

Use quality ingredients, the rich assortment of proteins is what makes this soup special, so use a variety of quality meats and fish if you can.

Ofe Owerri is a rich, flavorful traditional Nigerian soup, indigenous to the Owerri people of Imo State. It is known as one of the most luxurious soups in Eastern Nigeria due to its expensive assortment of meats and seafood. Igbo people say that "Onye n'eri ofe Owerri, obughi onye ogbenye" (one who eats Ofe Owerri is not poor). It is a way to show warmth and generosity to family and guests. The delicacy is typically made with a thickener like "ede" (cocoyam), "ofo" or "achi" and features a unique blend of vegetables, like "ugu" and "okazi".

Ingredients

Assorted meat (cow meat, goat meat, cow leg, cow skin, etc)
Dried fish
Stock fish (Okporoko)
Snails
Coco yam
Sliced ugu leaves
Thinly sliced okazi leaves
Palm oil
Ogiri Igbo
Grounded Crayfish

WHY AFRICAN ART IS THE NEW CULTURAL CAPITAL

African art is having a moment right now. And it's not a small moment. It's a global wave. You see it in museums, galleries, fashion shows, films, and even digital spaces. The world is paying attention in a way we have not seen before. Collectors are buying more African art, big museums are making space for African narratives, young people are showing pride in their heritage, and global culture is shifting with it.

This rise is not hype. It is a big cultural change. People want real stories today. They want voices that are bold. They want art that holds meaning. African art brings all of this with ease. It carries history. It carries memory. It carries energy.

In this digest, we will discuss why African art is now seen as the new cultural capital and why the world is finally embracing its power.

TOP PICKS FROM OUR COLLECTION



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: Boxed up (Red)
 Artist: O'dare Adenuga
 Medium: Terracotta
 Dimensions: 9 in H
 Available on Request



Title: Separation Anxiety
 Artist: Emmanuel Dudu
 Medium: Oil on canvas
 Dimensions: 30 x 30 in | 76 x 76 cm
 Available on Request



Title: Solitude
 Artist: Justine Gaga
 Medium: Posca and collage on canvas
 Dimensions: 9 x 13 in | 23 x 33 cm
 Available on Request

1. African Art Holds Stories the World Wants to Hear

African art has shaped global creativity for centuries, even when the world refused to give it credit. Picasso, Matisse, and Modigliani all drew inspiration from African forms. Africa influenced modern art long before the world admitted it. Today, people want authenticity again. And African artists offer just that.

Their work feels human. It feels honest. It carries identity, struggle, pride, faith, and heritage. Modern African artists are also addressing politics, social issues, and change in ways that resonate globally. People want art that reflects the real world, and Africa gives them that clarity.

2. Africa's Art Market Is Growing - and Fast

Across the continent, creative industries are rising. Lagos, Dakar, Accra, Nairobi, Addis Ababa, and Johannesburg now host major art fairs. Young collectors are emerging, and diaspora buyers are returning home for art. Global auction houses are paying attention.

This growth is not accidental. African artists are pushing boundaries. They mix tradition with digital tools and explore themes like identity, migration, and the future of Africa.

Their work feels new, fresh, and relevant. The result? Higher demand and rising global value.

3. African Art Shapes Global Culture Today

Look around; African influence is everywhere. Fashion houses borrow African prints, music videos borrow African colour palettes, and films draw on African mythology. Even interior design trends echo African textures and patterns.

This cultural flow shows one thing clearly: Africa is no longer following global trends. It is leading them. The

world is learning from Africa's creativity, rhythm, confidence, and voice. That influence makes African art cultural capital, because it sets the tone for culture today.

African art is shaping conversations, shifting narratives, and redefining global taste. It holds power, presence, and pride. And the world is finally listening. That is why African art is—and will remain—the new cultural capital.



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

THE FOUR QUESTIONS EVERY BRAND NEEDS TO ANSWER

FEYISITAN IJIMAKINWA

I have four questions for you. These are questions that every world-class brand knows their answers to. What am I talking about? Brand strategy, of course. That is because all any business needs to do to create a brand strategy is to answer these four questions.

Brand strategy is the answer to the following four questions:

WHY - you exist

WHO - you are

HOW - you do things, and how you look, feel and sound

WHAT - you do

Now you can call these whatever you want. You can call the answer to WHY you exist your brand purpose or your mission. You can call the WHO, your values, principles, or philosophy. You can call your HOW your behaviours, or mantra, or principles.

Contrary to what you might see elsewhere – what you call these things does not matter! But what matters very much, is your answers to these questions, and that you answer all of them. So, why do we have to answer each of these questions? Because the answers help to do different things for your business.

How brand strategy builds your business

The WHY is where you need to start. This impacts everyone and everything. It defines the ultimate value you provide your customers, and hence what you need to live up to as a business, both right now, and in the future. So it's also critical to help guide your future innovations.

And your why is just as important for your employees, to inspire and motivate them to come to work for a bigger cause.

It's important to start with why. You may have heard Simon Sinek's often quoted phrase, "People don't buy what you do, they buy why you do it". That's why the 'WHY' is the first question in my model, and the 'WHAT' is at the bottom.

But it's not enough to only answer why. Start with WHY, but do not stop there, WHO you are is important to answer because it helps you clarify your culture. You have to figure out and define this because it helps you identify what sort of people you want to attract. Who's the right fit for your company, and who isn't?

HOW you do things follows on from this. It helps guide employee behaviours and recruitment, and helps you set goals for job reviews, job chats, reward and recognition programs, performance reviews etc.

All of this needs to be answered with your WHY as the guidepost. Defining WHO you are, and HOW you do things, in order to live up to WHY you say we exist.

What goes wrong with brand strategy?

Two big mistakes often happen.

Firstly - marketing go off and do the WHY statement. HR do the WHO and HOW.

None of it is connected. Epic brand strategy fail. Secondly, you also need to answer how you look, feel and sound. This is a piece of brand strategy that many companies miss out. Then they get to a point where they want to redo their logo, website, packaging etc. and they just don't have the right words to help inspire designers, or copywriters, or any creative partners, to bring their brand to life.

Then they look at what they get back and blame the creatives. "It just doesn't look like us or feel like us!"

Well, no wonder. You didn't give them guidance on how to look and feel like you.

Last, but not least

Finally, WHAT you do is the place where most companies mistakenly start when they describe themselves.

Of course, you have to have a way to describe what you're selling - your products, services, experiences and the industry that you're in - you just shouldn't start here. But that's not to say that defining it is unimportant. If you take the time to think about it creatively, you can often describe what you do in a way that helps you stand apart from your competitors.

It's why McDonald's don't call themselves a fast-food chain, but rather an 'informal eating-out chain'. It's the difference between calling yourself a hairdresser vs., (as I saw the other week), 'a hairdressing retreat'. Putting some thought into how you describe what you do can suggest a different, and better, type of customer experience. Let me end this by showing you a real example to help bring this to life.

Whether you love it or loathe it, McDonald's is one of the 35 most valuable brands in the world. And they have developed very clear answers to these questions.

WHY they exist: to make delicious feel-good moments easy for everyone

WHO they are: People focused on: Responsible leadership; Inclusiveness; Progressiveness; Local integration

HOW they do things and HOW they look, feel and sound: Light-hearted. Playful. Welcoming. Dependable. Unpretentious.

WHAT they are: The world's largest "informal eating-out" chain

Just take a moment and look at these words and think about what they help them to do. 'Delicious feel-good moments'. 'Light-hearted' and 'Playful.' What comes to mind?

Their whistling theme tune. The Happy Meals. How their ad copy is always unpretentious, ("100% Arabica beans, We just call it coffee. How every employee has an official 'Welcome Meeting'. Why they have the Teriyaki McBurger in Japan, the Greek Mac, Gazpacho soup in Spain.

Local Integration.

Their whistling theme tune. The Happy Meals. How their ad copy is always unpretentious. ("Expertly roasted, freshly ground, South and Central American 100% Arabica beans. But we just call it coffee.") How every employee has an official 'Welcome Meeting'. Why they have the Teriyaki McBurger in Japan, the Greek Mac, Gazpacho soup in Spain: 'Local integration'. You may not love McDonald's but you have to respect their brand-building prowess. None of what they do is by accident. It all stems from their answers to their four brand strategy questions

Last line

These questions that must be answered form the bedrock of any brand strategy.



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

PORTFOLIO STRATEGY IS NIGERIA'S NEXT BATTLEGROUND - NDUPANA



The excitement was high, but retention was low – not because the products were wrong but because the strategy behind them wasn't always complete.

A new wave of brand professionals are stepping up to solve this gap, focusing on product lifecycle thinking, portfolio clarity, and go-to-market execution that blends global standards with local nuance.

One of those professionals is Ndupana Koji, who is now the Brand Marketing Manager – Portfolio Strategy & Innovation for Red Bull Nigeria. Her role includes leading the strategy for the Editions (flavoured) range and core variants, driving the innovation pipeline end-to-end — from global alignment and concept development to launch execution and post-launch optimization.

For her, the opportunity lies in tightening the link between culture, sports, media, and product experience—an area she believes has been under-explored in the market.

“Innovation is not just about launching something new; It's about launching something relevant, intentional, and clear” she notes.

“Nigeria moves fast. Consumers move even faster. They respond to clarity, consistency, and stories that they feel connected to”

Her entry into Red Bull signals a broader shift: portfolio strategy is becoming one of the most important competitive levers in Nigeria's beverage industry is finally being treated as a discipline, not an afterthought.

Nigeria's energy drink and flavoured beverage space is evolving – and it's becoming clearer that growth will come not just from launching more products, but from smarter portfolio decisions, better media alignment, and innovation that genuinely reflects how Nigerian live, choose, and consume.

For a long time, brands introduced flavors and limited editions without clear long-term plan.

Lifecycles were short, priorities shifted too quickly, and communication often missed the connection between culture and actual consumer behaviour.

LOVE IN A HEARTBEAT

UDY OSARO-EDOBOR



They met in the most unlikely way—one alighting from the train, the other boarding. Just a fleeting second. Mofe stepped down as Sylvia stepped in. Their eyes locked. Everything else blurred. Noise dissolved. Time paused, just long enough for a small smile, a warm spark, a silent pull neither of them understood. And then the doors closed. The train moved. And the moment was gone. But the feeling wasn't.

For more than a year, they both returned to that same train route every week, hoping—praying—to see each other again. It never happened. Yet neither forgot.

Mofe had never felt something that pure, that electric, that instant. He didn't believe in instant connections until that day. But after that brief encounter, he was sure she was his soul mate.

Sylvia carried the memory everywhere. The stranger on the train. His eyes. His smile. He felt familiar, like someone she knew in another lifetime. She replayed that moment for months, wondering why it refused to fade. And everytime she remembered him, she would smile.

Life moved on but that day lived quietly inside both of them.

Three years later... Mofe was engaged. He and his fiancée, Nike, had done everything "right"... met the families, chosen dates, booked halls and informed the church. Nike was calm, hardworking, respectful and everything society described as a perfect wife material. Mofe cared for her genuinely and believed he was making the right decision. Everything was set.

Then the church requested mandatory medical tests. They visited the hospital chosen by Nike's church and the moment they walked into the lab, everything changed. Mofe froze at the door. The lab technician looked up. It was the lady from the train station. She was smiling before she even knew why. He was staring like he had seen a ghost—no, a miracle. Their eyes met again. That same spark. That same impossible pull. Nothing was said but their eyes exchanged the recognition their mouths couldn't form.

The tests were done but Mofe's mind was gone. What were the odds that the stranger he had searched for would appear on the same day, at the same time, in the same hospital chosen by his fiancée's church? He was confused, caught somewhere between the present and the woman in that white lab coat.

Nike noticed his reaction and quietly asked who Sylvia was. He stuttered, "Someone I've been searching for." It made no sense to her but she let it go, what else could she do?

The next day, Mofe returned. Sylvia was there. Almost like she was expecting him. And the moment he saw her, everything inside him settled in a way he couldn't explain. Their connection picked up like it had only been ten seconds not three long years. They talked like old friends. They laughed like lost lovers reunited. He felt completely at home with her.

They exchanged numbers. Calls stretched deep into the night. Emotions built faster than they should have. They spoke about everything and nothing, yet it always felt like they had known each other forever.

And that was when Mofe's doubts began. Nike was a good woman. She deserved stability, loyalty and clarity. But every time he spoke with Sylvia, something inside him shifted. The feeling he had buried for three years was now alive and impossible to ignore. Fate had handed him a woman who felt like a missing rib. The chemistry with Sylvia was undeniable and he didn't want to lose her.

He tried to continue with the wedding plans but the closer the date approached, the more he felt he was walking into a life that wasn't truly his. He found himself stalling, avoiding conversations and postponing meetings. He was losing sleep, losing clarity and losing the ability to pretend.

Then he made the hardest decision of his life. Mofe called off the wedding. His family exploded. Nike's family was devastated. Both families felt insulted, embarrassed and betrayed. He was accused of wickedness, irresponsibility and emotional instability. No one understood his reasons—he barely understood them himself. How do you explain a connection that made no logical sense but refused to die? No explanation made sense to anyone. How could he tell them that one second at a train station had shaped his heart more deeply than three years of knowing Nike.

Nike broke down. She almost lost her mind trying to understand what went wrong. Mofe's vague explanation only deepened her pain. He couldn't give her answers without sounding cruel or insane.

Sylvia felt guilty—she never wanted to break anyone's heart. But what she felt with Mofe... she couldn't deny it. Couldn't hide it. Couldn't run from it. She couldn't deny the chemistry between her and Mofe. She had tried to suppress it but fate had refused to let them escape each other.

They gave things time. Allowed tempers to cool. Let the dust settle. Eventually, they tied the knot quietly. It wasn't fancy. No noise. No drama. Just peace, warmth and certainty. They both knew they could never be happy with someone else. That one second encounter at the train station had chosen them long before they knew each other's names.

Their journey became a quiet reminder that first impressions carry a strange kind of truth. That one second spark at the train station had spoken louder than years of routine and responsibility. And when fate offered them a second chance at the hospital, they both embraced it with trembling hands and hopeful hearts.

What their families once dismissed as impossible later became the love story everyone admired. The same union they feared would collapse became a gentle testimony that some hearts are designed for each other, no matter how long the road bends.

Some love stories take time. Some take effort. But a rare few take only a second and last a lifetime. Their love wasn't just romantic, it was destiny... delayed but undeniable. And sometimes, that's all a heart needs.



Udy Osaro-Edobor

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The Madness, The Mischief, The Man-A Review of
Tonwa Anthony's *The Crazy Nigerian*

Title: *The Crazy Nigerian*
Author: Tonwa Anthony
Number of Pages: 135
Year of Publication: 2012

CORNERED

TITILADE OYEMADE

Tonwa Anthony is one of those people Nigerians fondly call an IJGB, I Just Got Back. Some IJGBs are amusing, others can be a bit much, but Tonwa is in a league of his own. Perhaps that's why he boldly titles his book *The Crazy Nigerian*.

And honestly, who wouldn't want to read about a fellow "crazy" Nigerian? Nigerians are known for having a little streak of madness, usually the fun, harmless kind. If a Nigerian doesn't pick up this book, a curious foreigner certainly will, eager to uncover what truly makes a "crazy Nigerian."

Thankfully, Tonwa doesn't disappoint. This is one book you can breeze through in one sitting and still laugh out loud.

Tonwa is indeed "crazy" not in a worrying way, but in a brilliantly humorous, wildly relatable way. At some point, you might wonder what the overall purpose of the book is, but the message is right there, tucked neatly between his countless stories... that is, if you don't get carried away by the sheer entertainment of it all.

What truly sets this book apart is his ability to hide deep, meaningful themes inside playful, mischievous storytelling. His jokes and stories about growing up in Nigeria, navigating adulthood, and working in the UK are so funny that you could miss the subtle message woven into every chapter.

The book itself refuses to be boxed in. Is it a memoir? An autobiography? A collection of gist? Don't bother trying to label it, the real joy lies in how clearly it reveals the man behind the madness. And if you share even a fraction of his craziness, you'll probably wish you could meet him in person.

A few pages in, it becomes obvious that Tonwa was and perhaps still is a rebel. Teenagers will love him instantly and feel that immediate, almost personal connection. He is as real as real gets.

If you grew up in the '80s or '90s, you'll enjoy his gist the most. Younger readers might think he's exaggerating and in fairness, he sometimes does but

you won't mind. You're too busy enjoying the ride. His similes pop up everywhere, almost like he's "dropping it like it's hot" in every chapter, and the cute sketches scattered throughout the book will make you smile. Honestly, only someone very serious-minded would find this book boring.

After everything, one thing is clear: Tonwa truly is a "crazy Nigerian," and we're more than happy to indulge his brand of craziness. In fact, he definitely owes us a sequel, we need the latest gist about his life. He can't just leave us hanging like this, craving more of his mischief and madness.



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