

BUSINESS DAY WEEKENDER

EDITION 300 | 04, JULY 2026



How Jeremiah Musa, a Lagos street hawker became Africa's top tech media voice



ART

From Scrap to Sanctuary:
The Reclaimed Wood Art of
Rang Iliya



FOOD

These 10 countries supply
nearly half the world's food
exports

PUBLISHER/EDITOR IN CHIEF
Frank Aigbogun

EDITOR
Lolade Akinmurele

FOUNDING EDITOR BD WEEKENDER
Lehlé Balde

DEPUTY EDITOR BD WEEKENDER
Ifeoma Okeke-Korieocha

CHIEF SALES AND MARKETING OFFICER
Ijeoma Ude

ADVERTISEMENT MANAGER
Queen Nkwocha

COPY SALES MANAGER
Florence Kadiri

DIGITAL SALES MANAGER
Linda Ochugbua

HEAD OF DIGITALS
Nduka Asoh

DESIGN AND ART DIRECTION
Emmanuel Odo
(officialedenis@gmail.com)

CONTRIBUTORS

Linda Ochugbua
Chisom Michael
Feyisitan Ijimakinwa
Ekemini Akpakpan
Adedayo Olalekan
Favour Okpale
Chinonye Isidienu
Tomilayo Imade
Charlse Ogwo
Royal Ibeh

ENQUIRIES

weekender@businessday.ng

ADVERTS

Ijeoma Ude
+2348033225506

PUBLISHED BY

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

LEGAL ADVISERS

The Law Union

BUSINESS DAY
WEEKENDER

C O N T E N T



5

LAUGHTER IN THE MIRROR



11

INTERVIEW

Technology Can Be Purchased But Culture, Competence Must Be Developed — Bukola Bakare



16

ENTERTAINMENT

From Ojude Oba to the big screen: Seaman's Schnapps backs Nollywood epic 'Iwe Ala'

22

ENTERTAINMENT

TRACE Live and Lord's Dry Gin Deliver Memorable Music, Lifestyle Experience with Spyro in Lagos

24

FASHION

Office to Dinner: The Art of the Effortless Outfit Transition

30

FEATURE

Lagos Leather Fair 2026 Charts New Frontiers for African Fashion Through AI, Exportation,

49

BOOK REVIEW

It happens every day: a potential customer fills out your contact form, downloads your resource, or walks

51

MOVIE REVIEW

53

BD QUOTES





An increasing number of top Nigerian companies use Businessday group subscription to enhance performance and achieve corporate goals.

Gain unlimited access to our award-winning insights and analysis, and empower your organization with the political, economic, and business knowledge you need.

Subscribe to our corporate digital subscription package today to stay informed with trusted news wherever you go.

FORM 9
IN THE FEDERAL HIGH COURT
IN THE LAGOS JUDICIAL DIVISION
HOLDEN AT LAGOS

Petition No: FHC/L/CF/26/2023

IN THE MATTER OF PETROLEX OIL AND GAS LIMITED
AND
IN THE MATTER OF THE COMPANIES AND ALLIED MATTERS ACT, 2020

BETWEEN
PETROLEX OIL AND GAS LIMITEDPETITIONER
AND
ENERGY LINK INFRASTRUCTURE LIMITEDRESPONDENT

ADVERTISEMENT OF PETITION

Notice is hereby given that a petition for the winding-up of the above named Energy Link Infrastructure Limited by the Federal High Court Justice in Lagos, was, on the 10th day of January 2023, presented to the said Court by Petrolax Oil and Gas Limited of 3C, Aso Street, Parkview Estate, Ikoyi, Lagos and that the said petition is directed to be advertised and an order for hearing before the Court sitting at Lagos on the 12th day of October, 2023, and any creditor or contributory of the said company desirous to support or oppose the making of an order on the said petition may appear at the time of hearing in person or by his counsel for that purpose, and a copy of the petition will be furnished by the undersigned to any creditor or contributory of the said company requiring such copy on payment of the regulated charge for the same.

Dr C.O. Ukattah
Dr C.O. Ukattah
Petitioner's Counsel
OLANWUS AJAYI LP
The Admirals,
Plot L2, 401 Close,
Banane Island,
Ikoyi, Lagos
Tel: 01-2612094/99

Note: Any person who intends to appear on the issuing of the said petition must serve on or send by post to the undersigned, notice in writing of his intention so to do. The notice must state the name and address of the person or, if a firm, the name and address of the firm, and must be signed by the person or firm, or his or their solicitor (if any), and must be served, or if posted, must be sent by post in sufficient time to reach the above-mentioned not later than 48 working hours before the date the petition is for mention in Court.

IN THE FEDERAL HIGH COURT
IN THE LAGOS JUDICIAL DIVISION
HOLDEN AT LAGOS
PETITION NO: FHC/L/CF/ 26 /2023
IN THE MATTER OF PETROLEX OIL AND GAS LIMITED
AND
IN THE MATTER OF THE COMPANIES AND ALLIED MATTERS ACT 2020

BETWEEN
PETROLEX OIL AND GAS LIMITEDPETITIONER
AND
ENERGY LINK INFRASTRUCTURE LIMITEDRESPONDENT

PETITION TO WIND UP ENERGY LINK INFRASTRUCTURE LIMITED PURSUANT TO SECTIONS 571(D), 572(A) AND 573(1)(B) OF THE COMPANIES AND ALLIED MATTERS ACT, 2020

The humble Petition of Petrolex Oil and Gas Limited of 3C, Aso Street, Parkview Estate, Ikoyi, Lagos, shows as follows:

STATUS & CAPACITY

- Energy Link Infrastructure Limited, the Respondent herein, was incorporated on 19.02.2016 under the Companies and Allied Matters Act as a private company limited by shares with RC - 1316587.
- The registered office of the Respondent is at 11 Abimbola Awoniyi Street Off Kasumu Ekemode Street, Victoria Island, Lagos and it carries on business at 77b, Sinarf Daramfo Street, Victoria Island Annex, Lagos.
- The nominal capital of the Respondent is N25,000,000 (Twenty-Five Million Naira) divided into 25,000,000 (Twenty-Five Million) ordinary shares of N1(One Naira) each. The amount of the capital paid up or credited as paid is N25,000,000 (Twenty-Five Million Naira).
- The object for which the Respondent was incorporated is to carry on and engage in the business of construction, maintenance, and management of infrastructures, civil works, projects, and facilities.

RESPONDENT'S INDEBTEDNESS TO THE PETITIONER

- The Respondent is indebted to your Petitioner in the sum of **USD4,980,749.87 (Four Million Nine Hundred and Eighty Thousand Seven Hundred and Forty Nine Dollars and Eighty Seven Cents)** (the "Debt"), for services provided by your Petitioner under the contracts between the parties.
- Your Petitioner and the Respondent entered into two charterparty dated 27.07.21 and 01.06.2022 (the "Contracts") for the Respondent's hire of, *inter alia*, eight (8) barges (the "Vessels") owned by your Petitioner, for cruise transportation in Akoya/Donny Interactions, Rivers State, operating trips between manifolds at Cawthorne 1, Cawthorne 2, Cawthorne 3, Alshiri, Krakama and the Mother Vessel Loading Point within ORL 10. The Contracts are attached hereto as Annexures 1 and 2.
- Under the Contracts, the parties agreed that interest shall accrue on overdue payments upon the expiration of a 7-day grace period from the due date of settlement of an invoice at the rate of London interbank Offered Rate (LIBOR) plus 2%.
- Your Petitioner provided the Vessels to the Respondent and performed its obligations under the Contracts.
- Despite your Petitioner fulfilling its obligations under the Contracts, the Respondent failed and neglected to pay the accrued sums under the Contract as at when due.
- On 26.08.2022, a reconciliation schedule was agreed upon between the Petitioner and the Respondent for the monthly payment of the Respondent's indebtedness to the Petitioner with respect to the charterparty dated 27.10.2022. The payment schedule is attached hereto as Annexure 3.

- As of 26.08.2022, the Respondent's debt to the Petitioner under the Contract of 27.10.2021 is the sum of **\$3,828,749.87 (Three Million, Eight Hundred and Twenty-Eight Thousand, Seven Hundred and Forty-Nine Dollars, Eighty-Seven Cents)** as at 31.08.2022. As part of the scheduled payments, the sum of **\$1,500,000.00 (One Million, Five Hundred Thousand Dollars)** was due on 30.09.2022, but the Respondent still defaulted in its payment.
 - Further, the Respondent was obligated to pay the sum of **\$3,000 (Three Thousand Dollars)** per day as the cost of hire with respect to the Contract of 01.06.2022, however, the Respondent refused to pay. Currently, the Respondent is indebted to your Petitioner in the sum of **\$432,000 (Four Hundred and Thirty-Two Thousand Dollars)** being the cost of hire between 01.09.2022 and 18.10.2022.
 - Your Petitioner states further that under the Contracts, the Respondent's total indebtedness is the sum of **\$4,980,749.87 (Four Million Nine Hundred and Eighty Thousand Seven Hundred and Forty-Nine Dollars and Eighty-Seven Cents)** (the "Debt"), which the Respondent has refused to pay, despite the Default Notice dated 11.10.2022 and Termination Notice dated 18.10.2022 (the "Notices") issued by the Petitioner's solicitors, demanding for its payment. The Notices are attached hereto as Annexures 4 and 5.
- DEMAND FOR PAYMENT OF THE DEBT**
- Further to the above, your Petitioner, also, personally made a demand on the Respondent for the payment of the Debt by a letter dated 11.11.2022 (the "Statutory Demand Notice") and which was duly served on the Respondent on 11.11.2022, but the Respondent has failed and neglected to pay the Debt or any part thereof. The Statutory Demand Notice dated 11.11.2022 is attached hereto as Annexure 6.

FAILURE TO PAY THE DEBT

- Despite the receipt of your Petitioner's Notices and Statutory Demand Notice, the Respondent has for more than three weeks, from the date of the receipt of the Demand Notice, failed and neglected to pay the Debt.
- The Respondent is insolvent and unable to pay its debts.

MISCELLANY

- It has therefore become necessary for your Petitioner to present this petition to this honourable Court for an order winding up the affairs of the Respondent on the ground that the Respondent is unable to pay its debts.
- In the circumstances, it is just and equitable that the Respondent be wound up.

PRAYER

- Your Petitioner therefore humbly prays this honourable Court as follows:
 - That **ENERGY LINK INFRASTRUCTURE LIMITED** be wound up by this honourable Court under the provisions of the Companies and Allied Matters Act, 2020; and
 - FOR SUCH FURTHER OR OTHER ORDERS** as this honourable Court may deem fit to make in the circumstances.

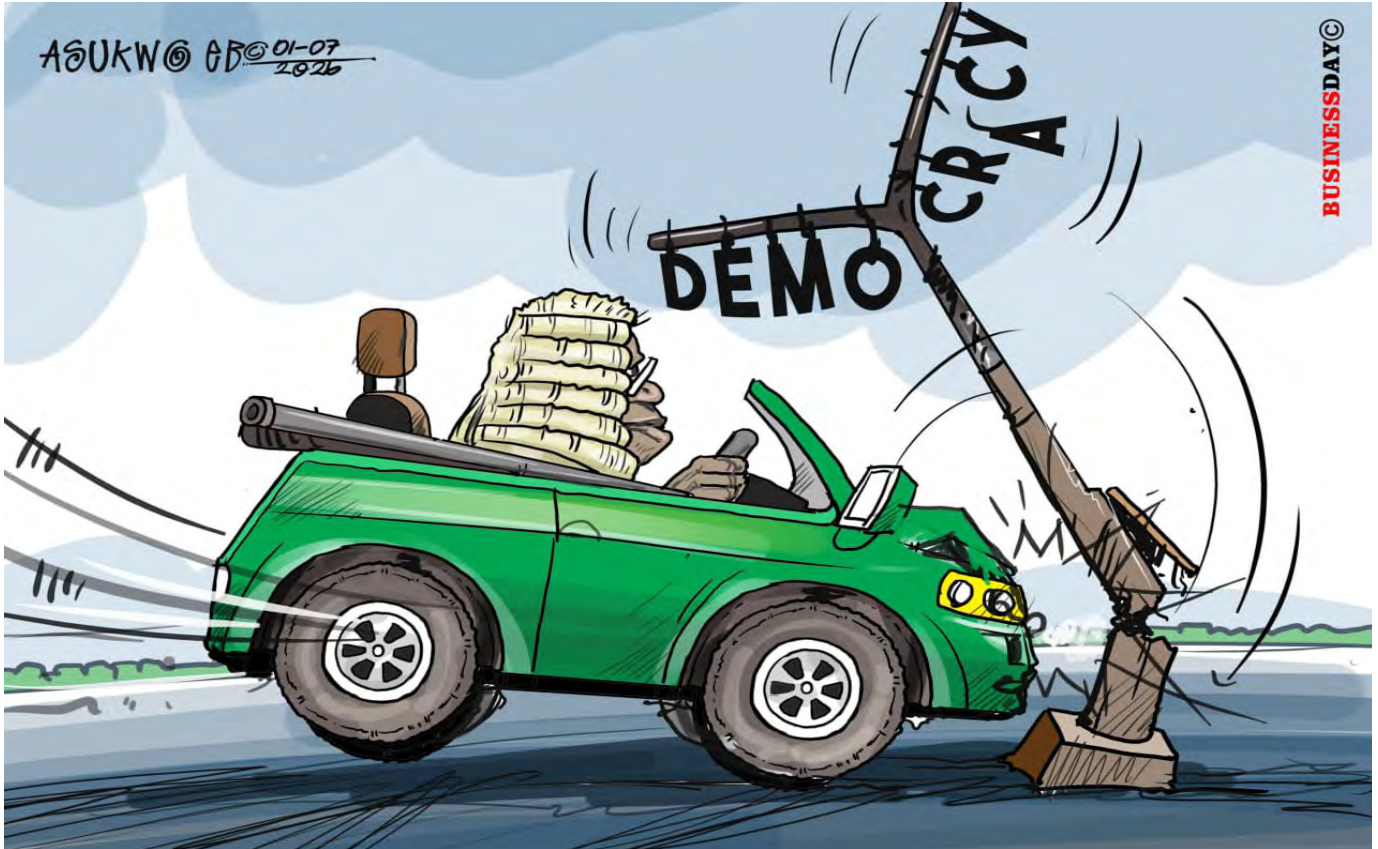
NOTE: It is intended to serve this Petition on **ENERGY LINK INFRASTRUCTURE LIMITED** of 11 Abimbola Awoniyi Street Off Kasumu Ekemode Street, Victoria Island, Lagos.

Dated the 13th Day of December 2022

Dr C.O. Ukattah
Dr C.O. Ukattah [Signed]
Petitioner's Counsel
OLANWUS AJAYI LP
The Admirals,
Plot L2, 401 Close,
Banane Island,
Ikoyi,
Lagos - Nigeria.
E: oip@olanwusajayi.net | P: 08029305505



For Service On:
The Respondent
11, Abimbola Awoniyi Street
Off Kasumu Ekemode Street
Victoria Island
Lagos.



HOW JEREMIAH MUSA, A LAGOS STREET HAWKER BECAME AFRICA'S TOP TECH MEDIA VOICE

...Honoured as Most Influential African Business, Communications Leader

IFEOMA OKEKE-KORIEOCHA





Jeremiah Musa, founder and publisher of The Bit Gazette, grew up as one of nine children in Agbado-Crossing, a working-class community on the outskirts of Lagos.

He attended primary school without shoes. He hawked sachet water on the streets to contribute to a household where every naira had a destination before it arrived.

By the time he reached college, the ambition was clear but the resources were not. He borrowed from fellow students across multiple terms to stay enrolled. When final examinations arrived, those same peers moved to block his entry to the hall: the balance still unpaid, the sum impossibly small by any external measure, insurmountable by his own.

One person intervened. A lecturer named Boye Ola permitted Jerry to sit his exams on the strength of a single verbal commitment: settle the balance after graduation. Musa did. He has been settling debts of a different kind ever since.

The publication Africa needed

Jerry entered Nigerian media through broadcast, building his early career at Raypower FM, AIT and ITV. When the global digital economy began its rapid expansion, he identified a

structural gap that most Western publications had either missed or chosen not to address. Africa was being discussed in crypto circles as a use-case. Not as a participant. Not as a builder. As a problem to be solved by people elsewhere.

“I realised that if we waited for others to tell our story, it would never get told right,” Jerry said.

He launched The Bit Gazette to correct that. The publication operates from Dubai but runs on what Jerry describes as a “Remote-First, Naija-Best” model, deliberately employing Nigerian writers and editors rather than sourcing talent from the Middle East.

The institutional knowledge of financial exclusion that sits inside that editorial team is not academic. It is lived. That is the difference readers feel, even when they cannot name it.

The Bit Gazette has since become a professional entry point for emerging African journalists, giving them international bylines and placing them inside the global digital-asset conversation rather than outside it looking in.

Jeremiah Musa was named the Most Influential African Business and Communications Leader for 2026 at the 9th Annual MEA Markets African Excellence Awards, an honour that lands differently when you know that classmates once physically blocked him from his university finals over an unpaid \$100 debt, and that a single lecturer’s decision to let him sit those exams anyway is the reason he was able to graduate at all.

He had also won the Forty Under 40 Africa award in February, a recognition that pushed his name across borders.

That origin is not metaphor. It is the operating system behind everything Musa has built since.

A dedication to the streets

Receiving his award, Jerry did not dwell on the distance he had travelled. He looked back toward the distance that remains.

He dedicated the honour to underprivileged African children sitting in classrooms with leaking roofs, or not in classrooms at all, selling on pavements, wondering whether a better life exists beyond the circumstances they were handed.

His message to that generation was three lines and needed no elaboration:

“Refusal to accept that where you start is where you finish.”

For Jeremiah Musa, that is not inspiration content. It is a documented fact.

FROM SCRAP TO SANCTUARY: THE RECLAIMED WOOD ART OF RANG ILIYA

IFEOMA OKEKE-KORIEOCHA





In a quiet studio in Aberdeen, Scotland, discarded timber finds a second life. Offcuts that would otherwise end up in a skip are sorted, sanded, and reshaped into wooden signs, sculptural pieces, and gallery works that have found their way into exhibitions far beyond the city's craft fairs.

This is the practice of Rang Iliya, founder of HOP Creations, an artist who has built a career, and a philosophy, on the belief that nothing should go to waste, least of all stories.

Iliya's path to woodworking began far from a workshop bench. Trained in architecture, she has long been drawn to the place where art, design, and function meet: the conviction that an object should do more than simply exist. "I've always been fascinated by the intersection of art, design, and functionality," she says of her early influences.

That architectural sensibility, proportion, structure, and intention, still shapes the way she approaches a piece of wood today. In 2016, she founded HOP Creations with a clear mission: to give creativity and bold thinking a home, particularly for young people searching for an outlet.

The studio, built on local resources and a restless curiosity, became a gathering place for art enthusiasts. It was during the stillness of the 2020 lockdown that Iliya turned her attention to sign making, a craft that let her translate architectural precision into something tactile and lasting.

What sets Iliya's work apart from much of the wood-craft world is where her material comes from. Rather than working with new stock, she actively sources scrap and reclaimed wood, offcuts, discarded timber, and materials others have set aside, and transforms them into finished, exhibition-ready pieces.

"There's something quietly powerful in taking what's been set aside and shaping it into work meaningful enough to stand in an exhibition space," Iliya explains.

For her, sustainability isn't a marketing angle layered onto the work after the fact; it's the starting point. Every commission begins with the question of what materials already exist, what's been overlooked, and how it might be made useful again.

That ethos has carried her work into gallery and exhibition spaces, where pieces built from reclaimed timber sit alongside more conventional fine art, proof, in Iliya's eyes, that material origin doesn't dictate artistic value. If anything, the history embedded in salvaged wood, its prior life, its wear, its grain, gives her finished pieces a depth that new lumber simply can't replicate.

Running parallel to her environmental commitment is a deep investment in cultural awareness and retention. Many of Iliya's pieces draw directly on heritage, faith, and identity, among them her "True Story Nativity Hut" and a series of faith-rooted wooden plaques bearing phrases like Blessed Beyond Measure and God is Within Her.

For Iliya, these works function as small acts of memory-keeping. They hold onto stories, traditions, and beliefs that might otherwise fade, and place them in front of new audiences, in a home, in a nursery, on an exhibition wall. Craft, in her hands, becomes a vessel for continuity, a way of ensuring that culture isn't just remembered, but actively passed forward.

That commitment to passing things forward extends beyond the artworks themselves and into Iliya's teaching practice. Alongside her commissioned pieces, she runs hands-on workshops, including African pot crafts, string art, and tote bag design sessions, designed to introduce participants to new making skills in a communal, low-pressure setting.

"Creativity should be accessible, communal, and a little fearless," Iliya says. Her workshops are deliberately structured to guide without dictating, giving participants room to explore their own patterns and styles rather than replicate hers. It's an extension of the same founding impulse behind HOP Creations: unlocking creativity in young minds, and ensuring the techniques she has built her practice on don't end with her, but continue with whoever picks them up next.

Taken together, Iliya's body of work resists easy categorization. It is craft and fine art, commerce and community practice, sustainability project and cultural archive.

A wood sign destined for a nursery wall and a reclaimed-timber piece destined for a gallery floor emerge from the same studio, the same hands, and the same underlying conviction: that materials, stories, and skills are worth saving, and worth handing on.

"My journey is rooted in empowering creativity," Iliya reflects. "I'm committed to delivering unique, handmade wooden art that inspires and elevates any space."

Increasingly, that space extends beyond living rooms and nurseries and into galleries, proof that what begins as scrap, in the right hands, can become a masterpiece.

THESE 10 COUNTRIES SUPPLY NEARLY HALF THE WORLD'S FOOD EXPORTS

CHISOM MICHAEL



Food moves across borders every day, connecting farmers, businesses and consumers in ways that often go unnoticed. While many countries produce enough food to meet local demand, a much smaller group supplies a large share of the products traded on the global market.

New data from the World Trade Organization shows that just 10 countries accounted for nearly half of global agricultural exports in 2024. Together, they played a central role in supplying food to millions of people beyond their borders.

The figures come from an analysis of the world's 30 largest food exporters. Collectively, these countries made up more than 80 per cent of the global agricultural export market, which was valued at about \$1.5 trillion.

The findings also show how concentrated the global food trade has become. As shipping costs, fertiliser prices and geopolitical tensions continue to affect international commerce, decisions made by a small number of exporting countries can influence food availability and prices across many regions.

1. United States – \$181.3 billion

The United States ranked first, exporting agricultural products worth \$181.3 billion in 2024. It accounted for 12.1 per cent of global agricultural exports, making it the largest supplier in the international food trade. The country's exports include grains, soybeans, meat, dairy products and processed food sold across several continents.

2. Brazil – \$144.4 billion

Brazil secured second place with agricultural exports worth \$144.4 billion, representing 9.7 per cent of the global total. The country remains one of the world's main exporters of soybeans, beef, poultry, sugar and coffee. Agriculture continues to play a major role in Brazil's export earnings.

3. China – \$74.8 billion

China exported agricultural products valued at \$74.8 billion, accounting for five per cent of global exports. Although China produces large volumes of food, much of its agricultural output is consumed within the country because of its large population. Its export portfolio includes vegetables, seafood, tea and processed food products.

4. Canada – \$66.3 billion

Canada recorded agricultural exports worth \$66.3 billion, representing 4.4 per cent of global exports. Wheat, canola, pulses, pork and seafood remain among its leading export products, serving markets in Asia, Europe and the Americas.

5. Mexico – \$49.9 billion

Mexico exported agricultural goods valued at \$49.9 billion, accounting for 3.3 per cent of global trade.

The country is known for exporting fruit, vegetables, avocados, berries and beverages, with the United States remaining one of its largest trading partners.

6. Indonesia – \$49.7 billion

Indonesia followed closely with exports worth \$49.7 billion, also representing 3.3 per cent of global agricultural exports. Palm oil remains one of the country's leading agricultural exports, alongside coffee, cocoa and seafood.

7. Australia – \$45.8 billion

Australia exported agricultural products worth \$45.8 billion, contributing 3.1 per cent of global exports. Beef, wheat, barley, wool and dairy products continue to support the country's agricultural trade with markets across Asia and the Middle East.

8. India – \$45.5 billion

India recorded agricultural exports valued at \$45.5 billion, accounting for three per cent of global exports. Rice, spices, sugar, tea and seafood remain among the country's leading agricultural exports, reaching consumers in many parts of the world.

9. Thailand – \$41.8 billion

Thailand exported agricultural products worth \$41.8 billion, representing 2.8 per cent of global exports. Rice, rubber, seafood, fruit and processed food products continue to support the country's position in international food markets.

10. France – \$38.7 billion

France completed the top 10 with agricultural exports worth \$38.7 billion, accounting for 2.6 per cent of global exports. The country exports wheat, dairy products, wine and processed food across Europe and other international markets

TECHNOLOGY CAN BE PURCHASED BUT CULTURE, COMPETENCE MUST BE DEVELOPED

— Bukola Bakare





From managing the high-stakes security realities of premium corporate assets to overseeing a vast network of humanitarian clubs across Lagos and Ogun states, Bukola Olabisi Bakare represents the modern face of strategic leadership. Bakare officially assumed office as the District Governor for Rotary District 9111, capping off a remarkable journey of selfless service and strategic leadership. But Bakare is no ordinary diplomat; she is a battle-tested entrepreneur who built a premier domestic security empire from the ground up upon her return from the United States in 2004. Speaking with IFEOMA OKEKE-KORIEOCHA, Bakare opens up about the weight of fulfilled expectations, her global grant strategy for mental health advocacy, and the profound lessons gathered from traveling through 108 countries across six continents.

You returned to Nigeria in 2004 from Miami, Florida, to establish Around 'D' Clock Security (ADCS) and pushed it into the Top 10 domestic security service firms within four years. What specific operational frameworks or service-delivery standardizations did you bring from your experience at Gabriel Securities USA that allowed you to break through this executive glass ceiling so rapidly?

When I returned to Nigeria in 2004, I brought with me a strong appreciation for systems, processes, accountability and professionalism. My experience at Gabriel Security and Vanguard Security inc. in Miami exposed me to a very structured way of doing business. There were

clear operating procedures, measurable performance standards, continuous training programmes and strong client-service culture. However, one of the biggest lessons I learned very quickly was that I could not simply copy and paste an American model into Nigeria. The realities were completely different.

In America, many workplace behaviours are reinforced by culture and institutions. In Nigeria, business leaders often have to spend considerable time building workplace discipline, professionalism and accountability. Building systems was important, but building culture was even more important.

One of the challenges many employers face is strengthening workplace culture and long-term professional commitment. People are dealing with significant economic and social pressures, and sometimes that affects workplace behaviour. Staff turnover can be high. Employees may leave unexpectedly. Continuous retraining becomes necessary.

As a result, our focus was not just on security operations but on creating a culture of professionalism. We invested heavily in training, supervision, client reporting, quality assurance and performance monitoring.

I also insisted that ADCS should not be seen as a guard company but as a professional security solutions provider. We focused on client relationships, responsiveness and service excellence.

Looking back, I believe our success came from combining international best practices with a deep understanding of local realities. We built systems, but we also built people.

Over the past two decades, ADCS has scaled across physical, digital and facility security. Given the current economic landscape—with shifting corporate security needs and cost-cutting pressures—how are you adapting your workforce development and technology integration strategies?

The security industry today is very different from what it was twenty years ago. Clients are under increasing pressure to optimise costs while still maintaining high security standards. At the same time, security threats are becoming more sophisticated and technology-driven. Our response has been to focus on both people and technology.

Technology can be purchased. Culture and competence must be developed.

One of the realities of operating in Nigeria is that organisations often need to invest continuously in training and retraining. Technical skills can be taught relatively quickly, but accountability, attention to detail, ownership and professionalism require constant reinforcement.

We have strengthened our workforce development programmes because technology is only as effective as the people managing it.

On the technology side, we are increasingly integrating surveillance systems, access control, remote monitoring, digital reporting platforms and data-driven security solutions.

The future of security is not human versus technology. It is human expertise supported by technology. The organisations that will succeed are those that can combine both effectively.

How does a premium security company maintain bulletproof operational precision when institutional clients are scaling back budgets?

It certainly is not easy.

Many people assume the biggest challenge is maintaining profitability during difficult economic times. In reality, the bigger challenge is maintaining service quality while balancing client expectations, employee welfare and operational realities.

Clients want more value for less money. Employees are dealing with rising living costs. Regulatory requirements continue to evolve. Yet service standards cannot drop. The solution is efficiency rather than compromise.

We continuously review our processes, optimise deployment strategies and invest in technologies that improve productivity without reducing effectiveness. We also spend a lot of time educating clients. Security is one area where cutting corners can become extremely expensive. A security breach can cost significantly more than the savings achieved from reducing security investments.

Another important factor is trust. Many of our clients have remained with us for years because they understand that we are not simply vendors; we are partners committed to protecting their people, assets and reputation.

Your investiture as District Governor for Rotary District 9111 fulfills a remarkable 2015 prophetic declaration by the late Rotary International President, Jonathan Babatunde Majiyagbe—the first African to hold that office. Looking back at that exact moment, did you see it as a distant honorary nod, or did you immediately begin mapping out a long-term strategic timeline toward the district governorship?

To be honest, I did not immediately begin planning a path to the district governorship. When the late Jonathan Babatunde Majiyagbe made that statement, I received it with gratitude and respect, but I saw it more as encouragement than a prediction.

At that stage of my life, I was focused on serving Rotary, building my business and supporting my family. What happened over the years was not the pursuit of a title. It was the pursuit of service.



I accepted assignments, took on responsibilities and continued learning from exceptional Rotary leaders. Looking back now, I can see that every experience was preparing me for greater responsibility.

Jonathan Majiyagbe was a remarkable leader with an extraordinary ability to identify potential in people.

Perhaps he saw something in me that I had not yet fully recognised in myself.

Today, I feel humbled that his words became reality, but more importantly, I feel grateful for the opportunity to serve.

What are your specific plans to leverage this global spotlight to attract significant international grants and cross-border project collaborations directly to District 9111?

One of the greatest strengths of Rotary is its global network. As District Governor, I intend to leverage relationships across Rotary districts worldwide to attract not only funding but also expertise, partnerships and long-term collaboration.

Our flagship project, the 60-bed Rotary Wellness Centre for Mental Health at the Federal Neuropsychiatric Hospital, Yaba, is already attracting international attention and support.

We have engaged Rotary partners from different parts of the world because mental health is a global issue that requires collaborative solutions.

We are also exploring opportunities for additional Global Grants in healthcare, education, economic empowerment and disability inclusion.

The reality is that international partnerships are built on credibility and relationships. Fortunately, Rotary provides both.

My goal is to position District 9111 as a district known for innovation, accountability and impactful projects.

When partners see results, they are more willing to invest and collaborate. I want District 9111 to become a destination for meaningful Rotary partnerships globally.



You have built relationships with financial institutions, corporate organisations and development partners that have translated into significant support for community-impact initiatives. What is your strategy for securing and sustaining these partnerships, and what lessons can other NGOs learn about corporate relationship management?

One of the first things I learned many years ago is that people do not invest in projects; they invest in confidence, credibility and relationships.

Many organisations approach corporate institutions with a funding request. I approach them with a partnership opportunity.

There is a significant difference between the two. When I sit across the table from the leadership of a financial institution, corporate organisation or development partner, I am not simply asking for support. I am presenting a shared opportunity to solve a problem, create impact and leave a lasting legacy.

Corporate organisations are under increasing pressure to demonstrate measurable social impact. They want to know that their resources are being deployed responsibly, efficiently and transparently. They want evidence that the project will create meaningful outcomes and not simply become another cheque-writing exercise.

Over the years, I have found that credibility is one of the most valuable currencies in partnership building. Organisations are more willing to support initiatives when they trust the people leading them. Trust is built through consistency, transparency, accountability and delivering on promises.

Another important lesson is that partnerships should never be transactional. Too often, organisations approach corporate institutions only when they need funding.

Sustainable relationships require continuous engagement. You must keep partners informed, share successes, acknowledge their contributions and demonstrate the impact of their investment.

I also believe strongly in aligning interests. Before approaching any organisation, I take time to understand its priorities, values and areas of focus. The most successful partnerships occur when there is a natural alignment between what the organisation cares about and the impact you are trying to create.

Perhaps the most important lesson for NGOs is this: stop viewing corporate organisations as donors and start viewing them as strategic partners.



When people feel they are part of a meaningful mission rather than simply writing a cheque, they become more invested in the success of the project.

Long-term partnerships are built on trust, mutual respect, transparency and measurable impact. Those principles have served me well throughout my business career and my Rotary journey.

As you transition from managing a club to overseeing the vast network of clubs across District 9111, how do you plan to scale up fundraising strategies to meet your target goals for The Rotary Foundation?

Fundraising at the district level requires both strategy and education. One of the challenges we face is that many people see fundraising as asking for money. I see it differently. Fundraising is about inspiring people to invest in impact.

The Rotary Foundation has transformed lives across the world. It has funded hospitals, educational initiatives, water projects, disease prevention programmes and countless humanitarian efforts.

When people understand that every dollar donated can eventually return to communities in the form of life-changing projects, giving becomes much easier.

We are also broadening participation. While major donors are important, I want every Rotarian in District 9111 to feel that they have a role to play regardless of the size of their contribution. We are approaching fundraising the same way we approach service—through inclusion, engagement and ownership.

We are also engaging corporate partners, friends of Rotary and philanthropic individuals who share our commitment to service. Most importantly, we are leading by example. People are more likely to support a cause when they see leaders investing their own time, resources and energy into it.

Your travels have taken you across six continents and 108 countries, exposing you to diverse global leadership, security and humanitarian models. When you return to the realities of local governance, emergency response and community development within Lagos and Ogun states, what is the most critical lesson from your international travels that directly shapes your agenda for District 9111 over the next twelve months?

Without question, the most important lesson is that sustainable development happens when communities take ownership of solutions. Across the world, I have visited countries with different cultures, economic realities and political systems. Yet the most successful projects always have one thing in common: the people affected by the problem are actively involved in the solution.

I have learned that meaningful change is rarely about money alone. It is about leadership, collaboration, accountability and community ownership. Another lesson is that no organisation succeeds in isolation. Governments, businesses, NGOs and communities must work together.

That philosophy is shaping my agenda for District 9111. Whether it is our Mental Health Wellness Centre, Mega Medical Mission, Mission for Vision, Ability Without Limits Initiative, Teacher Training Programme or Economic Empowerment Programme, collaboration will be central to our approach. My travels have also reinforced something very important: many of the solutions we seek already exist somewhere in the world. We do not always have to reinvent the wheel. Sometimes we simply need to adapt proven ideas to local realities.

Over the next twelve months, my focus will be on bringing together Rotary, government, businesses, development partners and communities to create sustainable solutions that continue delivering value long after the projects have been completed. That, to me, is what creating lasting impact truly means.

FROM OJUDE OBA TO THE BIG SCREEN: SEAMAN'S SCHNAPPS BACKS NOLLYWOOD EPIC 'IWE ALA'



Fresh from delivering one of the most talked-about brand experiences at the 2026 Ojude Oba Festival, Seaman's Schnapps further strengthened its commitment to celebrating culture, heritage and community as the Official Cultural Partner of Iwe Ala (The Book of Dreams), a Nollywood film inspired by the richness of Ijebu tradition and the enduring legacy of Ojude Oba.

The partnership culminated in a successful premiere recently, followed by the film's nationwide cinema release, bringing together filmmakers, cultural enthusiasts, traditional leaders, industry stakeholders and members of the public to celebrate a story deeply rooted in Yoruba heritage, identity and values.

One of the most memorable moments of the evening was the ceremonial opening of the premiere by the Elegushi of Egushi Otta, Alayeluwa Oba Maroof Adio Alagbe, who offered traditional prayers for the success of the film and its impact on cultural preservation using Seaman's Schnapps 75cl.

In a symbolic gesture reflecting the passing of cultural values from one generation to another, the monarch

concluded the rite with Seaman's Schnapps 20cl, which he presented to one of the film's producers, Kene Egbue.

The moment served as a powerful representation of the connection between older and younger generations and underscored the importance of preserving and transferring cultural heritage through storytelling and shared experiences.

Directed by acclaimed filmmaker Adeoluwa Owu, Iwe Ala is set against the vibrant backdrop of the iconic Ojude Oba Festival and explores themes of family, identity, legacy and betrayal through the story of a respected tailoring dynasty navigating conflict and protecting its reputation in the lead-up to the celebrated cultural event.

Featuring a stellar cast including Mercy Aigbe, Owobo Ogunde, Dele Odule, Demola Adedoyin, Tobi Makinde, Eniola Ajao, Aishat Isiaka, Tolu Otebiyi and Farooq Oreagba, the film has continued to generate excitement among audiences for its compelling storytelling, striking visuals and authentic portrayal of Yoruba culture.

As the Official Cultural Partner of the premiere, Seaman's Schnapps played a key role in celebrating and amplifying



the cultural significance of the film, reinforcing the brand's longstanding commitment to preserving and promoting African traditions through meaningful experiences and platforms that connect generations.

Speaking on the partnership, Gbemileke Lawal, Marketing Manager at Nigerian Distilleries Limited, said cultural storytelling remains an important vehicle for preserving identity and inspiring pride among younger generations.

"At Seaman's Schnapps, we believe culture is one of our greatest assets as a people. It shapes who we are, preserves where we come from and guides where we are going. Our role as the Official Cultural Partner of the Iwe Ala premiere reflects our commitment to supporting authentic stories that celebrate our heritage and inspire deeper appreciation of our traditions. We are proud to be associated with a project that shines a light on the beauty, values and enduring legacy of Yoruba culture."



Also speaking on the collaboration, Nnenna Uche-Onyenacho, Senior Brand Manager, Seaman's Schnapps, said the partnership reflects the brand's continued commitment to championing platforms that keep culture alive through contemporary expressions.

"From cultural festivals to film, music and community celebrations, Seaman's Schnapps continues to support initiatives that honour our traditions and strengthen cultural connections.

Iwe Ala is a celebration of identity, legacy and the stories that define us as a people. Through our partnership with the premiere, we were able to contribute to a cultural moment that not only entertains but also preserves and promotes our heritage for future generations."

The collaboration comes on the heels of Seaman's Schnapps' impactful presence at Ojude Oba 2026, where the brand captivated festival-goers through immersive cultural experiences and a landmark drone spectacle celebrating Seaman's Bless Omo Agba.

The partnership with Iwe Ala further demonstrates the brand's commitment to supporting platforms that showcase the richness of Nigerian culture and elevate indigenous stories to wider audiences.

By serving as the Official Cultural Partner of the Iwe Ala premiere, Seaman's Schnapps continues to reinforce its position as a proud custodian of culture, championing initiatives that preserve tradition, celebrate identity and strengthen cultural pride across generations.

As Iwe Ala continues its cinema run across the country, Seaman's Schnapps remains committed to supporting initiatives that celebrate culture, preserve tradition and inspire meaningful connections through the stories that define who we are.

BODY SHAMING IN NIGERIA: WHEN WILL WE LEARN TO MIND OUR BUSINESS?

TOMILAYO IMADE

“Ah, you’ve added weight!” “Your stomach is too big.” “You look like a bag of beans.”

For many Nigerians, these comments are so common that they hardly raise an eyebrow. They are often delivered with laughter, disguised as concern, or presented as harmless jokes. Yet, behind these seemingly innocent remarks lies a troubling culture of body shaming that continues to damage self-esteem, mental health and relationships.

In Nigeria, body shaming has become deeply ingrained in everyday interactions, especially within families. Family gatherings, which should be safe spaces filled with love and acceptance, often turn into platforms for unsolicited comments about people’s bodies. It is almost impossible to attend a wedding, burial, Christmas celebration or family reunion without someone commenting on another person’s weight.

One family member is often singled out and made the butt of jokes. Some relatives cannot greet you without first commenting on your appearance: “You’ve become too fat,” “You’ve become too slim,” or “What happened to your body?” Sadly, even those who dislike such remarks often repeat them to others, perpetuating a cycle of emotional harm.

The problem extends beyond the family setting. In workplaces across Nigeria and among Nigerians living abroad, comments about body size are commonplace. Many Nigerians working overseas have found themselves in uncomfortable situations because remarks considered normal back home are viewed as offensive and discriminatory elsewhere. Some have even faced disciplinary action at work after repeatedly making comments about colleagues’ bodies.

For those living in Nigeria, there is often no escape. At work, colleagues constantly comment on one’s appearance. On the streets, strangers feel entitled to make remarks. At home, family members offer endless “advice” on how to lose weight. What should be a person’s refuge becomes yet another source of pressure and anxiety.

What many fail to understand is that weight gain or loss is not always a matter of lifestyle choices. A person’s body may change due to medical conditions, hormonal imbalances, side effects of medication, pregnancy, stress, depression or other underlying health issues. Yet, rather than showing empathy, society often rushes to judge.

Mental health professionals have repeatedly warned about the psychological effects of body shaming. Persistent negative comments can lead to low self-esteem, anxiety,

depression, social withdrawal and eating disorders. Some people become so traumatised by constant criticism that they avoid social gatherings altogether.

Imagine someone who is already making efforts to improve their health—going to the gym, dieting, exercising regularly and making significant lifestyle changes—only to continue hearing, “You are still fat.” Such comments can be deeply discouraging and emotionally devastating.

In extreme cases, societal pressure has pushed individuals towards drastic and sometimes dangerous measures, including unregulated weight-loss products, excessive fasting, unsafe medical procedures and cosmetic surgeries. Across the world, there have been reports of complications and even deaths linked to desperate attempts to meet unrealistic body standards.

It is worth asking: how many people have suffered silently because of our careless words? How many have battled depression, anxiety or poor self-image because family members, friends or strangers repeatedly mocked their bodies under the guise of “advice”?

There is a difference between genuine concern and cruelty disguised as concern. True care does not humiliate. Genuine love does not ridicule. Advice should only be given when it is requested, and even then, it should be delivered with compassion and respect.

Perhaps it is time Nigerians embraced a simple principle: mind your business.

Every adult has a mirror. People are generally aware of how they look. They do not need constant reminders about their body size. What they need is kindness, understanding and acceptance.

Words have power. They can heal, but they can also wound deeply. Before making comments about someone’s body, Nigerians must ask themselves one simple question: Is what I am about to say necessary, helpful and kind? Because until we walk in another person’s shoes, we may never truly understand where it hurts.

Tomilayo Imade is a Nigerian writer and project management professional based in England. Passionate about social justice and human-interest stories, she writes thought-provoking articles on culture, mental health, gender, and public affairs. Through her writing, she seeks to challenge harmful social norms, amplify everyday experiences, and inspire meaningful conversations that drive positive change.

TRACE LIVE AND LORD'S DRY GIN DELIVER MEMORABLE MUSIC, LIFESTYLE EXPERIENCE WITH SPYRO IN LAGOS



TRACE Live, in partnership with Lord's Dry Gin, brought music, entertainment and premium consumer experiences together at Terra Kulture, Victoria Island, Lagos, recently, as Afrobeats star Spyro headlined the latest edition of the live music platform.

The event attracted music enthusiasts, creatives and lifestyle consumers, reinforcing TRACE Live's reputation as one of Nigeria's leading platforms for intimate live performances while highlighting how brands are increasingly using experiential engagements to connect with audiences.

Spyro headlined the evening with an energetic performance that featured some of his biggest hits, including *Who Is Your Guy?*, *One Million*, *Count Your Blessings* and *Only Fine Girl*. Throughout the performance, the audience sang along, danced and interacted with the singer, creating an atmosphere that kept the venue animated from start to finish.

One of the evening's standout moments came during the performance of *One Million*, when Spyro surprised two audience members with cash gifts of N1 million each. Earlier, during *Who Is Your Guy?*, the singer reflected on

the friends who supported his career before his rise to fame, while *Only Fine Girl* became an emotional highlight as he invited his wife on stage and thanked her for standing by him throughout his journey.

The evening also featured performances by emerging talents, with Spyro offering young artists an opportunity to perform before the audience, while comedians I Go Save and Pencil opened the show with a series of comic performances that set the tone for the night's entertainment.

As the event partner, Lord's Dry Gin curated a series of premium consumer experiences designed to complement the performances. Guests engaged with interactive cocktail stations, a spin-the-wheel activation and experiential lounges that served as social spaces throughout the evening.

Consumers also sampled products across the Lord's portfolio, including the flagship Lord's Classic Dry Gin, Ready-to-Drink cocktail cans available in Lemon, Blueberry and Ginger flavours, and the Lord's Chocolate Dry Gin variants, as the lounges became gathering points for guests between performances.



Speaking after the event, Gbemileke Lawal, Marketing Manager at Nigerian Distilleries Limited, said the partnership reflects the brand's continued focus on creating premium lifestyle experiences for consumers.

"TRACE Live continues to provide an environment where music, entertainment and social experiences come together naturally," Lawal said. "For Lord's Dry Gin, the partnership aligns with our commitment to engaging consumers through premium experiences that reflect the brand's positioning as a premium international gin."

The Spyro edition marks another collaboration between Lord's Dry Gin and TRACE Live following the April 2026 edition headlined by Zlatan. According to the organisers, the partnership continues to focus on enhancing the overall guest experience through thoughtfully curated hospitality and lifestyle activations alongside live entertainment.

As experiential marketing continues to shape consumer engagement within Nigeria's entertainment industry, collaborations between lifestyle brands and live music platforms are increasingly becoming a key feature of how audiences experience concerts beyond the performances themselves.



OFFICE TO DINNER: THE ART OF THE EFFORTLESS OUTFIT TRANSITION

IFEOMA OKEKE-KORIEOCHA



For the modern professional, the boundary between the boardroom and a high-profile social calendar is increasingly fluid. The challenge isn't just managing your time—it's managing your wardrobe.

To effortlessly transition your look from a high-stakes corporate setting to an evening occasion, the secret lies in two design fundamentals: tailored silhouettes and luxe, opaque fabrics. The strategy is to build your look around a sophisticated, modest base that commands respect at a desk, but possesses the fluid elegance needed to shine under evening lights with minimal effort.

Key Silhouette Anchors for Your Wardrobe

1. The Tailored Midi Dress (Sheath or A-Line)

A high-quality, solid-colour midi dress acts as the ultimate blank canvas. During the day, its structured cuts and modest hemline project quiet authority.

Come evening, it transforms. By swapping daytime layers for metallic heels, architectural statement jewellery, and a sleek evening clutch, the dress shifts from corporate anchor to cocktail-ready elegance.

2. The Wide-Leg Trouser and Silk Blouse

Wide-leg trousers are a timeless corporate staple that offer an instant injection of drama.

For the Office: Paired with a tailored camisole and a sharp, structured blazer, it presents a formidable, polished aesthetic.

For the Occasion: Shed the blazer to reveal the fluid drape of the silk blouse. Introduce a vibrant, artisanal statement shawl, or accent the neckline with bold jewelry to shift the energy from analytical to celebratory.

3. The Modern Wrap Dress

Universally flattering and effortlessly fluid, a premium silk, heavy jersey, or crepe wrap dress naturally aligns with a professional dress code. To pivot for an evening gallery opening, wedding reception, or dinner date, the transformation is tactical: unbutton the neckline



slightly to create a subtle V-neck, step into minimalist strappy sandals, and style your hair into a sleek, elevated updo.

4. The Monochromatic Tailored Vest & Trouser Set

A contemporary addition to the capsule wardrobe is the matching sleeveless tailored vest and trouser co-ord. For the desk, layer it over a crisp, white button-down shirt. When the clock strikes five, remove the under-layer entirely—wearing the vest as a chic, standalone top—and pair with drop earrings and metallic mules.

How to Style for the Office:

The daytime objective is structure and understatement.

Layering: Use structured, sharp-shouldered blazers to anchor softer, fluid fabrics like silk or jersey into a professional frame.

Footwear: Opt for pointed-toe closed pumps, block heels, or high-quality leather loafers.

Palette & Details: Keep hardware and prints minimal. Solid neutrals (cream, camel, charcoal), classic navy, rich black, and deep jewel tones (emerald, sapphire, burgundy) work best to project authority.

How to Style for Occasions:

The evening objective is texture and light.

The Layer Swap: Trade your rigid work blazer for an unstructured cover-up featuring subtle sequins, rich satin, or delicate lace.

The Accessories Overhaul: Trade your oversized daytime tote for an elegant clutch or a sculptural minaudière. Drop a pair of statement earrings or a chunky, layered necklace into your bag before you leave the house.

The Final Touch: A quick beauty pivot bridges the gap. Swap a daytime neutral lip for a bold crimson or deep berry rouge, add a touch of shimmer to the eyelids, and let down your hair or pin it into an intentional updo.

HOW BESPOKE TAILORING IS SHAPING THE FUTURE OF MEN'S FASHION IN NIGERIA

CHINONYE ISIDIENU



Fast fashion has transformed the global apparel industry, making stylish clothing cheaper and more accessible than ever. Yet in Nigeria, many men continue to invest in bespoke tailoring, favouring precision, craftsmanship and personal expression over off the rack convenience.

The question is why are so many men still choosing bespoke tailoring and what does that mean for the future of the fashion industry?

For many men, clothing is no longer just about covering the body. It has become a form of expression that signals identity, confidence and social positioning. Mass produced outfits often follow standard sizing that does not account for the diversity of body shapes. Bespoke tailoring, on the other hand, offers precision. For many customers, the difference is not subtle, it is the difference between wearing something that simply fits and something that feels built for them.

Men want to also buy into identity. What they wear is tied to how they want to be seen as, professional, refined, creative, traditional, or modern. Bespoke clothing allows room for that interpretation. Fabric choice, cut, embroidery, and detailing all become decisions that reflect personal taste rather than mass market design.

They allow control enabling personal expression, the customer is part of the process, from selecting materials to approving final adjustments. Experimenting with style in ways that were once more common among women's fashion, mixing fabrics, adjusting silhouette and pushing beyond traditional norms.

This involvement creates a sense of ownership, personal style than trend that ready to wear rarely provides. For example, Standard suits are designed for average body types, which means they rarely provide a perfect fit for all body types but a bespoke suit, on the other hand, is tailored precisely to your body measurements.

It complements your shape, enhances your posture and creates a clean, structured silhouette.

The economics of menswear is increasingly shaping the choice between bespoke tailoring and ready to wear clothing. A major factor is the rising cost of imported fashion, driven by import duties, shipping costs, currency fluctuations, and retail markups.

As a result, premium imported ready to wear brands are often more expensive than locally tailored outfits while the cheaper imported and second-hand clothing okirika remain more affordable. This shift is changing how consumers evaluate value. Many men are no longer paying for brand names or standardized sizing alone, but are instead focusing on what they get for their money, especially fit, durability, and personal relevance.

In many cases, bespoke tailoring offers better value because it provides a garment designed specifically for the individual at a comparable, slightly higher or a lower cost. Because of this, local tailoring is increasingly seen as a practical alternative rather than just a cultural or luxury option. It offers more predictable pricing, direct communication with tailors, and greater control over design and fit.

Leonel Udebuani creative director of Leo Bespoke says that bespoke garments are generally more expensive to produce than RTW because they require skilled craftsmanship, individual pattern making, and more production time. While quality fabrics increase costs for both, bespoke offers better fit, durability, and personalization, making it a better long term value.

In this recent times Technology has amplified bespoke tailoring making it more central to the future of men's fashion



by removing its traditional limits and modernising how it operates giving these bespoke designers a modern and sophisticated brand Social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok now allow tailors to reach wider audiences, showcase their work, and attract clients beyond physical locations, while tools like WhatsApp and video calls make consultations, measurements, and approvals faster and more flexible.

Clients also bring global fashion inspiration directly from online platforms, linking tailoring more closely to real

time style trends obtained from ready to wear brands or designers. In some cases, digital tools improve accuracy and efficiency in production.

What this means for the fashion industry is a structural shift rather than a trend, shifting the demand away from purely mass produced clothing toward more personalized, value driven consumption. Pushing brands to adopt hybrid models that include made-to-measure services and customization, while also changing competition from price and trends to fit, service, and customer experience.

Brands like Mia Atafu, Yomi casual and the rest. At the same time, it is strengthening sustainability and longevity in fashion by encouraging fewer but higher quality purchases. Signaling a fragmented but evolving industry where fast fashion, luxury ready to wear, and bespoke tailoring coexist with personalization increasingly becoming a key driver of value and uniqueness.

As global fashion embraces speed and convenience, Nigeria's bespoke menswear industry is proving that craftsmanship and personalization remain valuable. From corporate professionals and entrepreneurs to grooms and young creatives, many consumers are still choosing custom-made clothing despite the growing availability of ready to wear alternatives.

Their preference is shaping not only how men dress, but also how fashion businesses compete, innovate and grow. So wearing bespoke clothing makes a quiet statement. It pushes against the notion that fashion must always be new and mass-produced. It says that quality matters, that style is personal, and that not everything needs to follow the same pattern.

HOW OLUWATOBI FELICIA OJO IS STITCHING DREAMS INTO NIGERIA'S FASHION FUTURE

FAVOUR OKPALE





While her course mates chased white-collar jobs, Ojo Oluwatobi Felicia, University of Abuja English Education graduate traded textbooks for a sewing machine, a needle, and a dream.

That dream became Towbee Stitches, a label proving that clothes can do more than cover the body, they can build confidence, identity, and opportunity.

“For me, fashion was never just about aesthetics. It was about the quiet power you feel when you wear something made just for you,” Oluwatobi said.

What began as a personal passion less than a decade ago has blossomed into a respected Nigerian brand known for elegant bespoke outfits, bridal wear, and custom designs.

Today, Towbee Stitches outfits clients in Nigeria and across the diaspora, with every piece carrying her signature blend of quality craftsmanship and meticulous detail.

According to her, behind the seams is a bigger mission, to create garments that empower the wearer and systems that empower the people behind the scenes.

“In Nigeria’s multi-billion-naira fashion industry, where trends change weekly, Towbee Stitches chose the road less traveled: bespoke.

“Bespoke is slow, deliberate, and personal. You’re not just selling a dress. You’re solving a problem,” she said

Sometimes that problem is a bride who wants to feel regal. Sometimes it’s a professional who needs authority stitched into every seam.

The result is hand-finished work, custom embroidery, and made-to-measure fits designed to last years, not just a season.

Her bridal collections have become a cult favorite, with clients citing the rare mix of structure, comfort, and intricate detail.

Growth came not from billboards, but from whispers. Satisfied clients kept referring to others without being asked.

“Yes, satisfied clients kept referring others without me asking,” she recalled, adding that the referrals funded better equipment and improved operations.

She sums up her design philosophy in three words: Elegant. Timeless. Confidence.

Her process is intentional. She listens to the client’s vision, sketches the design, selects fabrics like crepe, creates the outfit, and polishes every finish.

The most thrilling test came when she delivered multiple outfits on a tight deadline for a major event and nailed it.

“That moment showed me consistency and quality will always attract the right customers. I pay attention to every detail and never compromise on standards,” she said.

She says inspiration comes from research, prayer, and simply observing everyday life.

But Towbee Stitches is not just fashion. It’s mentorship. Oluwatobi is closing Nigeria’s fashion skills gap one apprentice at a time.

Her apprentices work on real orders, learning pattern drafting, fabric sourcing, customer service, and business management.

“Many young designers have talent but don’t know how to price, manage clients, or produce without losing quality. It’s one thing to teach someone to sew. It’s another to teach them to survive as an owner,” she noted.

One of her trainees has already launched her own brand and is growing steadily, a win Oluwatobi values above awards.

In 2023, her impact was recognized with the Skywise Entrepreneurship Grant for innovation and economic contribution.

The grant helped her expand her workspace, upgrade equipment, and formalize her mentorship program.

Like many Nigerian entrepreneurs, she battles power issues, import delays, and artisans who leave for greener pastures.

Her answer is education, educating clients on the value of craftsmanship and her team on professionalism.

“Excellence is expensive, but mediocrity is costlier in the long run,” she said.

Looking ahead, she is expanding bridal lines, exploring sustainable fabrics, and building a digital mentorship module for designers outside Abuja and Lagos.

Her vision is clear: a globally recognized brand with ready-to-wear collections and international clients.

“I don’t want to just leave behind clothes. I want to leave behind designers, entrepreneurs, and a legacy of excellence,” Oluwatobi said.

LAGOS LEATHER FAIR 2026 CHARTS NEW FRONTIERS FOR AFRICAN FASHION THROUGH AI, EXPORTATION, CRAFTSMANSHIP



The Lagos Leather Fair (LLF2026) officially opened the doors of its landmark 9th edition to the general public on Saturday, June 27th, consolidating its position as the definitive pan-African platform for the leather value chain.

Attended by international buyers, policy experts, tech innovators, and hundreds of local artisans, this year's fair focused heavily on breaking global market barriers and equipping homegrown brands with advanced digital tools.

From 10:00 AM to 8:00 PM, the venue was transformed into a high-energy hub of economic dialogue, commercial exchange, and creative celebration.

The event successfully proved that the African leather industry is no longer just a local craft, but a multi-billion naira sector ready for the global stage.

Navigating the Legal and Regulatory Demands of Global Exportation. The afternoon kicked off with a highly

anticipated Panel Discussion, "Exportation & Compliance: Navigating the Legal Landscape of Exotic and Other Skins."

This crucial session addressed the strict international regulatory frameworks that often hinder African brands from entering Western and Asian markets.

Legal experts, sustainability auditors, and trade compliance officials took the stage to dissect complex trade treaties, CITES regulations for exotic skins, and ethical sourcing requirements.

Panelists emphasized that strict adherence to international environmental and legal standards is the ultimate passport for Nigerian leather to sit on premium global retail shelves.

Revolutionizing the Workshop: Data and Artificial Intelligence

Following the legal panel, the LLF2026 Masterclass took a futuristic turn with "From Workshop to World Markets: Data,



Artificial Intelligence & Export Economics – How to Drive Global Competitiveness for Nigerian Leather Brands.”

This deep-dive session provided attendees with a masterclass on integrating modern technology into traditional workshops. Industry leaders demonstrated how local brands can leverage data analytics to forecast global fashion trends, optimize supply chains, and reduce material waste.

The session specifically highlighted how Artificial Intelligence can streamline online marketing, automate custom sizing, and scale up export economics, offering a blueprint for local workshops to efficiently compete with fast-fashion giants abroad.

Immersive Craftsmanship and Democratic Design

LLF2026 balanced high-level industry discourse with hands-on, interactive experiences that engaged attendees throughout the day:

The Commerce Hub: A vibrant Exhibition & Shopping arena that allowed local designers to generate immediate revenue, network with wholesale buyers, and pitch directly to an international audience.

The Maker's Bench & The LLF Atelier: These dedicated live-action spaces pulled back the curtain on the manufacturing process.

Attendees witnessed master craftsmen demonstrating intricate cutting, stitching, and finishing techniques, emphasizing the high-quality labor behind premium African leather goods.

The LLF Signature Piece Challenge: This segment championed democratic design through “Open Box Voting.” Attendees actively participated in selecting the most innovative piece of the fair, giving emerging designers an unfiltered look at consumer preferences.

A Masterclass in Visual Storytelling: The Runway Shows

The fair reached its crescendo at with the iconic LLF Runway Shows. The runway served as a powerful visual narrative, showcasing avant-garde collections, structured luxury handbags, and bespoke footwear.

The collections, from exhibitors such as Mhose, Chrisbeks, Sole Inspiration, Zamany Accessories, FemiHandbags - the convener, seamlessly blended traditional African heritage with contemporary global aesthetics, earning standing ovations from fashion critics and closing out the fair on an undeniable high note.



In 2017, Lagos Leather Fair (LLF) was launched as Nigeria's first dedicated platform focused exclusively on the leather industry.

Founded by Femi Olayebi, a premium leather goods designer based in Ibadan, Nigeria, LLF was born out of both frustration and possibility - frustration with the structural gaps holding the industry back and belief in the immense, untapped potential of the Nigerian leather ecosystem.

At the time, industry projections suggested that Nigeria's leather sector could generate up to one million USD by 2025.

Yet the pathway to that growth was unclear. Misconceptions, limited public awareness, fragmented supply chains, and the absence of a unifying platform to spotlight its talent and capacity burdened the industry.

Across the value chain - from raw material sourcing to design and finished products - creatives faced systemic barriers to visibility, scale, and global competitiveness.

LLF was created to change that narrative. More than an event, it became a convening force - bringing



together designers, manufacturers, suppliers, policymakers, and investors under one roof.

By highlighting both the challenges and opportunities within the sector, LLF set out to bridge gaps, strengthen linkages, and position Nigerian and African leather as a competitive force on the global stage.

THE INVISIBLE CRISIS ON AFRICA'S PLATE FUELING HIDDEN HUNGER

ROYAL IBEH



Across Africa, millions of children go to bed with full stomachs but undernourished bodies.

They eat enough cassava, rice, maize, yam or other staple foods to satisfy hunger, yet many remain dangerously short of the vitamins and minerals needed for healthy growth, learning and productivity.

Unlike famine, this crisis is largely invisible. There are no haunting images of empty plates or severely wasted bodies. Instead, there are children who struggle to concentrate in school because they lack iron, pregnant women battling anaemia, and workers whose productivity is reduced because their diets fail to provide the nutrients their bodies require.

Nutrition experts call it hidden hunger, and increasingly, economists say it is becoming one of Africa's least discussed barriers to economic growth.

According to estimates from the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the Global Nutrition Report, about 1.9 billion people worldwide suffer from micronutrient deficiencies. Sub-Saharan Africa bears the heaviest burden, with West and Central Africa accounting for more than 45 percent of the region's micronutrient deficiency burden.

The challenge extends beyond health. Poor nutrition affects educational outcomes, weakens labour productivity, increases healthcare costs and slows economic development. A child who is unable to develop cognitively because of chronic iron deficiency today may become a less productive worker tomorrow.

The numbers tell a troubling story.

Regional nutrition data show that anaemia affects 69 percent of children under five in Nigeria, 60 percent

in Ghana, 72 percent in Côte d'Ivoire, 77 percent in Burkina Faso, 79 percent in Mali, 72 percent in Niger, 71 percent in Benin, 68 percent in Senegal, 70 percent in Togo, and 59 percent in Cameroon. Across many of these countries, deficiencies in iron, zinc, iodine, vitamin A and folate remain widespread, limiting healthy development during the most critical years of life.

For Margaret Mary Tohouenou, nutritionist at Nestlé's Research and Development Centre in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, the problem begins with a misunderstanding of what nutrition really means.

"Nutrition is not just about eating until you are full. It is about nourishing the body," she said during a media engagement at the company's regional research facility.

She explained that many households across Africa are forced by economic realities to prioritise foods that provide calories at the lowest cost. Rice, maize, cassava and yam become the centre of most meals, while fruits, vegetables, fish, eggs and dairy products, which supply many essential vitamins and minerals, are often consumed less frequently because they are more expensive.

"You may have enough food in your stomach, but still lack the nutrients your body needs to function properly," she said.

According to Tohouenou, micronutrients such as iron, zinc, iodine, vitamin A, vitamin C, vitamin D and the B vitamins are required only in small quantities, but they perform some of the body's most critical functions.

Iron helps produce haemoglobin and prevents anaemia. Zinc strengthens immunity, supports growth and aids wound healing. Vitamin A protects eyesight and immune function. Iodine is essential for thyroid function and brain development, while B vitamins help convert food into energy and support the nervous system.

"When these nutrients are missing, the consequences are enormous, particularly for pregnant women and young children," she said.

She noted that iron deficiency remains one of the region's biggest concerns because anaemia during pregnancy can affect both mothers and unborn children, increasing health risks and impairing early childhood development.

Recognising the scale of the problem, governments across Africa have increasingly turned to food fortification as a public health intervention. Salt is fortified with iodine, vegetable oils with vitamin A, while wheat flour in many countries is enriched with iron and other micronutrients.

The private sector has also begun investing heavily in nutrition science. Rather than encouraging consumers to completely change their eating habits, food manufacturers are seeking ways to improve the nutritional value of foods people already consume every day.

Nestlé says this strategy has become central to its nutrition programme across Africa.

According to the company, more than 95 percent of its product portfolio in Nigeria is fortified to provide at least 15 percent of the Nutrient Reference Value (NRV) for key vitamins and minerals per serving, while remaining within internationally recognised safety limits.

One of its biggest interventions involves Maggi bouillon cubes, one of the most widely used cooking ingredients in Nigerian kitchens and across West Africa.

Each standard 4-gram Maggi cube contains about 2.1 milligrams of iron and 0.10 milligrams of iodine, nutrients intended to help reduce iron-deficiency anaemia and iodine deficiency disorders among populations that consume the seasoning regularly.

The company has also fortified Golden Morn, its maize and soya breakfast cereal, with iron, vitamin A and calcium. According to Nestlé, every 100 grams contains about 5.9 milligrams of iron, 300 milligrams of calcium and 920 International Units (276 micrograms) of vitamin A, nutrients that support healthy blood formation, stronger bones, improved vision and immune function.

Other products have been designed for specific population groups.

Cerelac infant cereal is fortified with iron, zinc, vitamins A and C, while Milo contains iron, B vitamins and vitamin C to support energy metabolism. More recently, Maggi Soy Chunks, a plant-based protein alternative introduced in Egypt, has been fortified with iron and zinc.

Tohouenou stressed that fortification is not intended to replace healthy diets but to complement them.

"The objective is not simply to provide food that satisfies hunger. We want to provide products that nourish the body and help prevent nutrient deficiencies," she said.

Behind those fortified foods is a significant scientific infrastructure.

According to Jeroen Muller, head of research and development for Nestlé Sub-Saharan Africa, the

company's research centre in Abidjan is the only regional Nestlé R&D hub dedicated to serving the African continent.

"Our centre here in Abidjan is one of our regional innovation hubs and the only one serving Africa," Muller said.

He explained that Nestlé operates around 22 research and development centres globally, each serving different functions within the company's innovation network.

While the central research centre in Switzerland conducts clinical studies, develops food safety technologies and investigates emerging issues such as contaminants and microplastics, the Abidjan facility focuses on adapting scientific discoveries to African realities.

Researchers study local crops, consumer behaviour, nutritional deficiencies and food preferences before developing products for African markets.

The centre also works with cocoa and coffee farmers to improve crop yields and climate resilience while operating pilot production facilities where new food concepts can be tested before commercial launch.

"We work closely with consumers, universities and research institutions to understand local nutritional needs and translate science into products that respond to those realities," Muller said.

Beyond product development, the centre collaborates with universities across Africa through postgraduate research partnerships, internships and food science programmes aimed at building local scientific capacity.

For Florence Kacou, regulatory and scientific affairs cluster manager for Sub-Saharan Africa, ensuring that nutrition claims are backed by science is equally important.

"Consumers choose products because they trust them. What they often don't see is the extensive scientific work happening behind the scenes before those products reach supermarket shelves," she said.

Kacou said every product undergoes rigorous assessments covering food safety, ingredient approvals, nutritional claims, labelling accuracy and compliance with regulations across multiple countries.

Nestlé's global Regulatory and Scientific Affairs network comprises about 400 scientists and regulatory specialists who work across different markets to ensure innovations remain both scientifically sound and legally compliant.

"Safety and innovation must move forward together," she said.

She cited the development of standards for recycled plastics used in food packaging as an example of years of scientific collaboration involving regulators, researchers and industry experts before consumers ever saw the final product.

According to Kacou, maintaining public confidence depends on ensuring that every claim appearing on a product label can withstand scientific scrutiny.

"If claims are misleading, consumer trust is lost," she said.

Nutrition specialists, however, insist that food fortification alone cannot solve Africa's hidden hunger crisis.

The WHO continues to recommend balanced diets rich in fruits, vegetables, legumes, dairy products and animal proteins alongside food fortification, improved sanitation, disease prevention and regular healthcare.

Experts also argue that reducing poverty remains fundamental because healthier diets often become possible only when household incomes improve.

Food systems must also become more resilient, agriculture more productive and nutrition education more widespread.

For Africa, where nearly one in four people will live by 2050, investments in nutrition are increasingly being viewed as investments in economic competitiveness.

Healthy children are more likely to perform well in school. Healthy adults are more productive in the workplace. Stronger nutrition reduces healthcare costs, strengthens human capital and improves national productivity.

Economists say the continent's demographic dividend, will depend not only on creating jobs but also on ensuring that the people who fill those jobs are healthy enough to realise their full potential.

That makes hidden hunger more than a health challenge.

It is an economic challenge hiding in plain sight, one that governments, businesses, researchers and development partners must confront together if Africa is to fully unlock the promise of its young and growing population.

FROM REPORTING TO RESPONSIVENESS: WHAT WOULD IT TAKE FOR NIGERIA TO DELIVER ON AGENDA 2063?

EKEMINI AKPAKPAN

Every day, I find myself wondering how ambitious plans like Agenda 2063 would become real for women and girls because it is much harder to build institutions that deliver them. How does it move from a beautifully written framework into something that changes the life of a woman in Kano, a farmer in Benue, or a young girl growing up in Bayelsa? Like the Sustainable Development Goals before it, Agenda 2063 is one of those ambitious continental blueprints that promise to transform Africa. Every few years, we celebrate milestones, publish progress reports, and count down to another deadline. But I often find myself asking a different question: as these deadlines get closer, are we actually getting closer to the outcomes?

That question became even more interesting when I looked at the African Union's aspirations for gender equality.

What surprised me was that the problem is not the absence of a framework. In fact, the African Union has gone much further than simply declaring that gender equality matters.

Through Goal 17 of Agenda 2063, Full Gender Equality in All Spheres of Life, it has developed a comprehensive accountability architecture. Countries are assessed against measurable indicators such as women's political representation, ownership of land and financial assets, access to economic opportunities, protection from gender-based violence, and other sex-disaggregated development outcomes. Member States are expected to collect harmonised data, submit national progress reports, undergo continental validation, and participate in peer review through the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM).

The more I read, the more I realised that Africa's challenge is not that we do not know what to measure. We do. The real question is whether countries like Nigeria have built domestic systems capable of responding to those measurements.

While policies and strategies exist, enforcement remains weak. International assessments consistently show that Nigeria performs better on having gender-related laws and policy frameworks than on building the institutions responsible for implementing them.

Women's representation in elected office remains far below the ambitions of Agenda 2063. Administrative data are inconsistently collected across states and local governments. Gender programmes are frequently underfunded, and in many cases progress cannot even be verified because the underlying data simply do not exist.

The more I reflected on this, the more I became convinced that Nigeria has largely approached Agenda 2063 as a reporting obligation rather than a management system. Countries that perform well do not wait until reporting season to think about gender equality. They build institutions that generate progress every day, with evidence emerging naturally as a by-product of implementation. That shift from reporting to responsiveness is where I believe Nigeria's greatest opportunity lies.

1. Translate continental indicators into institutional responsibilities

Every indicator under Goal 17 should have a clearly identified institutional owner within Nigeria.

Take women's land ownership. Improving this indicator cannot simply become another performance target for state land agencies. Nigeria's land administration is constrained by the Land Use Act, customary inheritance systems, and, in some regions, religious legal frameworks. Progress will therefore require coordinated legal reform, stronger enforcement of existing protections, and sustained engagement with traditional institutions alongside improvements in land administration.

The same principle applies elsewhere. Women's financial inclusion should sit within the mandates of financial regulators and financial institutions. Reducing gender-based violence should become a justice and public safety outcome shared across policing, health, justice, and social protection systems.

2. Build a national gender data architecture

One of the greatest barriers to implementation is the absence of reliable administrative data. Nigeria needs an integrated gender data system that connects

the National Bureau of Statistics with ministries, departments, agencies, state governments, and local government authorities through a common reporting architecture.

Without credible, sex-disaggregated data, policymakers cannot identify where women are being left behind, allocate resources effectively, or demonstrate progress to continental institutions.

But data collection itself also needs incentives. If gender reporting remains an additional administrative task with no influence on institutional performance, it will remain inconsistent. Progress is more likely when the quality of gender data is reflected in institutional assessments, senior management performance, and the budget approval process.

3. Connect financing to measurable outcomes

Many gender strategies do not fail because they lack good intentions. Every ministry, department, and agency should identify which Agenda 2063 indicators fall within its mandate and demonstrate how its budget contributes to measurable outcomes. But this conversation must also acknowledge Nigeria's current fiscal realities. With increasing pressure on public finances, gender-responsive implementation cannot rely solely on government expenditure.

This creates an opportunity to leverage development financing, results-based funding, philanthropic partnerships, and public-private partnerships that already support gender equality, financial inclusion, digital access, education, and health. Nigeria can use the Agenda 2063 framework to better coordinate and attract investments that are already flowing into these sectors.

Ultimately, budgets should not only tell us how much money was spent. They should tell us what changed. How many accessed finance? How many girls remained in school? How many women entered leadership? Those are the outcomes that matter.

4. Strengthen implementation where women actually live

Nigeria cannot improve its continental performance without strengthening the capacity of states and local governments to deliver gender-responsive services and generate accurate administrative data. National ambitions will always depend on local institutions.

Most Goal 17 indicators are produced long before they appear in national reports. Girls attend neighbourhood schools. Women receive care in primary healthcare centres. Land administration takes place largely within states. Cases of gender-based violence are handled

through local justice systems. Economic opportunities are created within communities.

5. Create a Nigerian Gender Scorecard

The African Union already publishes continental scorecards. Nigeria should build on this by publishing its own Gender Equality Scorecard, comparing the performance of every state against the indicators contained in Goal 17. Imagine if governors, commissioners, legislators, development partners, civil society organisations, researchers, and citizens could see in one place which states were improving women's access to finance, expanding land rights, reducing child marriage, strengthening political participation, and responding to gender-based violence. One lesson from development is remarkably consistent: what gets measured gets discussed, what gets discussed gets managed, and what gets managed is far more likely to improve.

6. Move from ministerial ownership to whole-of-government ownership

Perhaps the biggest institutional mistake is treating gender equality as the responsibility of one ministry. Agenda 2063 does not approach gender equality as a standalone social programme. It recognises that it cuts across governance, justice, finance, education, health, agriculture, labour, digital transformation, and economic development. That means every ministry has a role. The Ministry responsible for Women Affairs should remain the national champion and coordinator. But implementation must extend far beyond one institution. Finance, Budget and Economic Planning, Justice, Agriculture, Health, Education, ICT, Labour, Interior, state governments, and local governments all influence whether Goal 17 succeeds or fails.

Beyond Reporting

Agenda 2063 is often criticised because the African Union has limited enforcement powers. That criticism is fair. But perhaps we have been asking the wrong question. The real value of Agenda 2063 is not that it can compel governments to act. It is that it already provides a shared language, measurable indicators, and a continental accountability framework.

Nigeria's challenge is therefore less about producing another strategy document and more about building institutions capable of responding to what those indicators reveal. Ultimately, our success will not be measured by the number of reports we submit to the African Union.

It will be measured by whether more Nigerian women own land, access finance, participate in leadership, live free from violence, and enjoy greater economic opportunity than they do today. That, after all, is what Agenda 2063 was always trying to measure.

NINE OF WORLD'S TOP 10 PASSPORTS BELONG TO EUROPE, INDEX SHOWS

CHISOM MICHAEL



third, sitting 4th for mobility, 28th for investment and 1st for quality of life. Germany takes fourth place overall, with rankings of 15th for mobility, 20th for investment and 3rd for quality of life. The Netherlands and Denmark share fifth position, while Ireland, the United Kingdom, Norway and Singapore fill the remaining spots down to tenth.

The United Kingdom sits in 8th place overall, supported by a quality-of-life score among the highest recorded. Its mobility ranking, however, sits around 30th, a gap GCS links directly to Brexit. "The United Kingdom passport held firm in the global top ten throughout the period, ranked 8th overall in 2026, anchored by a quality-of-life score that sits among the world's very best," Casaburi said. "Yet for a passport of such standing, its mobility rank is conspicuously modest, around 30th, well adrift of the elite tier it otherwise occupies. That gap is the quiet signature of Brexit. The index measures visa-free travel, where the

British passport remains strong, but it cannot capture what was actually lost: the automatic right of UK citizens to live, work and settle across twenty-seven European states."

GCS also flagged a drop for the United States, describing it as the steepest five-year fall among G7 nations. The US held first position in 2021, posting a composite score of 96.45, the highest ever recorded on the index at that point. By 2025 it had slipped to 14th place before climbing back to 12th this year. The shift follows a series of bilateral decisions by other governments to reinstate visa requirements for American travellers. Brazil, for instance, brought back visa rules for US citizens last April.

The rankings suggest that passport power now depends on more than border access alone. Investment routes, healthcare systems and living conditions all factor into how citizens can move, settle and build a life abroad. For Europe, that combination continues to set the pace, even as individual countries face their own pressures, from the effect of Brexit on UK mobility to shifting relations affecting the US.

Whether this pattern holds will depend on decisions made well beyond travel policy, from investment migration programmes to bilateral agreements between nations reconsidering old visa arrangements. For now, the message from GCS is that no single factor explains Europe's hold on the top of the table; it is the combination of access, opportunity and living standards together that keeps these passports ahead of the rest of the world.

Europe holds nine of the ten positions in the latest Global Passport Index (GPI), with Sweden taking first place. Singapore is the only non-European country to reach the top ten, landing in tenth position.

The index, now in its fifth year, comes from Global Citizen Solutions (GCS). Unlike the Henley Passport Index, which measures visa-free access alone, the GPI adds investment potential and quality of life to its calculations. Researchers looked at tax systems, innovation, economic competitiveness, healthcare, safety, climate and social infrastructure to reach their conclusions.

Patricia Casaburi, CEO of Global Citizen Solutions, said Europe's position at the top of the index rests on balance rather than a single factor. "The nine most powerful passports in the world in 2026 are all European, led by Sweden, Switzerland and Finland," she said. "On pure travel freedom Singapore beats every one of them, and on raw investment pull several Gulf and Asian states rival them. Europe's edge lies elsewhere: it is the only region that pairs near-maximum global access with the world's highest quality of life, the one dimension no government can create through treaties or tax incentives."

Sweden's overall position stems from placing 11th for mobility, 9th for investment and 2nd for quality of life. Switzerland follows in second, ranking 7th for mobility, 2nd for investment and 36th for quality of life. Finland completes the podium in

RIVERS, OANDO FOUNDATION BRIDGE 'STEAM' GAP, TRAIN 1,500 STUDENTS

CHARLES OGWO & KELECHI NWAUCHA



No fewer than 1,500 students in Rivers State public schools have received Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics (STEAM) training under a partnership between the state and Oando Foundation to expand access to quality science and technology education.

Rivers State government pledged to sustain and expand collaboration with relevant stakeholders to achieve universal access to basic education and improve the quality of learning for school-age children in the state, following a 30-school pilot programme, tagged the 'School STEAM Project,' funded by Oando Foundation.

Samuel Ogeh, executive chairman of the Rivers State Universal Basic Education Board (RSUBEB), speaking at the close-out ceremony held recently in Port Harcourt, assured that the board will integrate the project's initiatives into the state's teaching and learning processes.

Ogeh commended Oando Foundation for funding and organising the School STEAM Project. "RSUBEB will consider the quality of learning and teaching established by the project as a standard for basic education in the state," he said. However, he emphasised the importance of sustaining the

initiative and urged Oando Foundation to keep the School STEAM Project running beyond the 'close-out' ceremony.

"When I saw the word 'close-out', it sounded like an ending. We must not allow this project to end with a ceremony.

"We will integrate your team into our teaching and learning process and take extra steps to protect the infrastructure you have put in place," he assured.

The board chairman applauded Oando Foundation's focus on early childhood and practical learning methods. He urged parents, volunteer teachers, and other stakeholders to join efforts to sustain and expand the initiative.

Tonia Uduimoh, head of Oando Foundation, explained that the project was created to improve access to basic education and strengthen learning quality for pupils already in school, especially in public schools where gaps still exist.

"We have desired to see children of the so-called less privileged, the underserved, children who may not have access to interventions such as this, be able to compete favourably with their peers," she said,



Uduimoh further said, “Nigeria has the highest number of out-of-school children globally.

“The core of our work is simple: provide access for children who do not have access to basic education, and more importantly, improve the quality of learning for those who are in school.”

Besides, she said that the foundation’s mission is to complement government efforts, not replace them, by helping to bridge the learning gap, and emphasised that the initiative started as a primary-school pilot but has already shown strong results.

Moreover, Uduimoh applauded the staff and volunteers, who, she said, served as mentors across the schools as they played major roles in translating the project’s ideas into practical classroom learning.

Solomon Ikanada-Agba, Oando Plc’s general manager, base & district, represented by Boniface Nwachukwu, the operations divisional manager, disclosed that the programme was designed to encourage children to develop an interest in learning and to prepare them for future leadership roles in Nigeria.

He commended Oando Foundation and its parent company, Oando Plc, for supporting the pilot project aimed at deepening children’s learning, emphasising that the foundation’s efforts were especially meaningful given the current state of public education in the country.

“We at Oando Plc will continue to do our best to support the foundation. What the foundation has done is very good. This is just a pilot project, so it means that in the future the foundation is going to do more,” he said.

Nimi Davies, a director at RSUBEB, said, “Our teachers and learners were guided through practical experiences in problem identification and solving, design thinking, creativity and innovation.

“This journey commenced with an intensive capacity-building training held between November 4 and 11, 2025. 300 teachers from 30 pilot schools were equipped with modern pedagogical skills in science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics.”

In addition, she said, “The training laid a solid foundation for what has become a highly impactful initiative. The next phase began on 16 February 2026 with a mentorship programme themed ‘Oando Design Thinking’.

Jadesola Adedeji, co-founder of STEM METS, the implementing partner of the School STEAM Project, said the initiative involved training 300 teachers and 1,500 students across 30 schools, with 50 students selected from each school.

She said that after the training, the pupils had only five weeks to identify a problem in their environment and return with a solution.

Adedeji said the children performed well and demonstrated significant talent, noting that 30 projects were submitted and selection was difficult because of the quality of work presented.

Adedeji revealed that the organisation has spent the last 12 years running STEM-focused programmes that have reached over 50,000 children and over 2,000 teachers.

Clara Obianyi, winner of the STEAM Teacher of the Year Award, from State Primary School 1, Olanada, and Maxson Edmond, winner of the Head Teacher Leaders Award from State Primary School (UBE) Elekahia, thanked Oando Foundation for the opportunity.

“For us, it has been a journey of inspiration, commitment and dedication. The project has transformed their approach to learning and teaching.

“It has already started impacting our approach to teaching. The training changed our mindset and the way we lead the learners,” they said.

The five schools that made the finals were State Primary School (UBE) Elekahia, project on biogas and digester; State Primary School, Rumuokwurusi, sustainable playground; State Primary School, Rumueme, table fan and lemon-powered bulb; State School (UBE) Choba, water dispenser and hydro-generator; and All Saints’ Model Primary School, Rumuokwurusi, Smart Bin (the odour eliminator).

State Primary School, Rumueme, got N2.5 million for emerging top with 178 points; State Primary School (UBE) Elekahia got N2 million as second place with 173 points; and State Primary School, Rumuokwurusi, received N1.5 million for third position with 157 points.

NIGERIA'S FIRST LADY 'AKARA' PARADOX: SMALLEST BUSINESSWOMEN EMPOWERED TO CROAK

CHARLES OGWO



Nigeria's first lady, Oluremi Tinubu, urged women to weather the country's economic hardship by starting low-cost ventures such as selling akara, kuli-kuli, and roasted corn, portraying micro-enterprises as a practical path to self-reliance.

However, for many women who already earn a living from such businesses, the bigger challenge is not starting up, it is surviving a barrage of local government revenues, levies and enforcement drives that critics say are squeezing the very enterprises the government claims to be promoting.

Critics argue that Remi Tinubu's advice shows a substantial disconnect from the harsh microeconomic realities currently facing everyday Nigerians and that the advice is a suboptimal solution to a systemic economic crisis.

Inflation and Erosion of Low-Capital Assumptions

Anti-first lady's comments argue that due to hyperinflation, no business is truly "low-capital" anymore in Nigeria.

The skyrocketing costs of basic inputs, such as beans, vegetable oil, charcoal, and cooking gas, mean that even starting a roadside akara stall requires substantial money that vulnerable people do not have.

BusinessDay survey finding of what it takes to start an 'Akara' business in Lagos shows that one needs about N400,000 to begin, depending on the part of the state the business is located.

According to BusinessDay market research, a half-bag of beans costs between N35,000 to N40,000, depending on the type, groundnut oil for a starter will cost N13,500, a 12.5 KG gas is at N21,000, Frying pan costs N18,000, trays to display the fried akara N6,000 to N8,000, container shed/shop, N120,000; and other ingredients such as onions, N2,000, pepper, N2,000.

For those who may want to get built shops, in one of estates within Oshodi/Isolo, renovated market shops are sold at the rate of N3 to N5 million per shop, while the form is obtainable at the cost of N50,000, non-refundable fee.

Besides, those who are selling by road sides are subjected to an unfriendly business ecosystem by the local government authorities. A woman in one of the estates built by late Pa Jakande, told BusinessDay that she pays N120,000 per year because she is an old tenant.

"Someone who wanted to rent a space was told to pay N200,000 besides the agreement fee," she said.

Florence Ubong, a mother of two, who was selling vegetables at the Jakande Estate Gate market, Oke Afa, Isolo in Lagos State, shared story.

"We're beaten and our goods thrown away by officials of the Ejigbo Local Government Development Authority on Saturday, June 27, simply because they want to force us to pay for the new market space under high-tension cables, which they initially demolished.



“The new shops they built inside the estate market are beyond the financial capacity of a small income businesswoman,” she said.

The emotional feeling associated with the first lady’s statement goes beyond whether she meant to encourage self-resilience among women or otherwise. If such a statement is coming from someone-else, it could be easily understood, but from a first lady, it is not acceptable.

It is obviously strange that the mother of the country is pushing for low-income empowerment without structures. Tokenization empowerment cannot sustain hungry Nigerians.

In fact, one would have expected that the first lady should first get the business environment friendly to the low income earners, before preaching self-resilience with akara and kulikuli business.

According to Claude Akee, a political scientist, “This amounts to democratization of disempowerment.” How can the first lady give out money for smallest income businesses in a system where the government will not allow the business to thrive because of their revenue drive?

Besides, there is a need to change the people’s thinking about what they should expect from the government. Did the people elected you into office to share tokens to them or to make the environment comfortable for businesses to flourish.

Industry experts believe that even if the women were to start an akara or corn-roasting business, the bigger economic adversity means that the target customer base is cutting back on spending.

That is what is called in the local palace, “from-hand- to- mouth”, because of the severe conditions of doing business obtainable in Nigeria today.

When Goodluck Jonathan handed over power to Muhammadu Buhari in 2015, the exchange rate was \$1 to N198, the national minimum wage was N18,000, while a litre of petrol cost N87. A bag of Thailand rice was N7,500, One carton of silver spaghetti was N1,900, one carton of Golden Penny macaroni at N1,900, a litre of petrol at N87, and refill a 12.5KG gas cylinder costed N2,500.

Today, in 2026, ten years later, Nigerians find themselves in a very different situation. A N70,000 minimum wage can no longer buy even a bag of Thailand rice, a litre of petrol is sold at N1,200, 12.5 KG gas cylinder refills at N21,000.

There is hardly any country experiencing this level of economic decline and the first lady will come out to call the women lazy people, because according to her, they could not start akara or kulikuli businesses amid the tokens she was giving to them.

Many young Nigerians believe that the government should be championing structural economic reforms, high-yield agricultural investments, technology, and manufacturing opportunities.

They argue that pushing for informal, subsistence-level street trading is a low-bar ambition that keeps the population trapped in poverty rather than fostering a modern SME sector.

Across the state and many other states, small business owners are not allowed to operate by the road side. And where this is allowed, the LGA authorities squeeze the little incomes via their rates and revenue drives.

Some school of thoughts argue that Nigeria cannot pull itself out of a austere macroeconomic slump by simply multiplying micro-retailers.

Hence, the government should focus on structural solutions, such as stable electricity, lower transportation costs, and large-scale industrialization, rather than directing women toward survivalist trading.



THE CANDIDATE WHO SAW IT COMING: INSIDE ADEWOLE ADEBAYO'S THREE-YEAR CASE AGAINST NIGERIA'S DECLINE

ADEDAYO OLALEKAN



In Nigerian politics, consistency is often the rarest political currency. Positions change with opinion polls, convictions shift with alliances, and campaign promises are sometimes crafted only after candidates secure their party tickets.

Prince Adewole Adebayo has tried to chart a different course. Long before the Social Democratic Party (SDP) returned him unopposed as its presidential candidate for the 2027 election, Adebayo had already spent nearly three years articulating what amounts to a governing philosophy—one that cuts across the economy, democracy, security, healthcare, and national identity.

Rather than presenting isolated criticisms of government policies, his public interventions reveal a single recurring theme: Nigeria's decline is not inevitable. It is the consequence of political choices, and different choices can produce different outcomes.

Beyond the Fuel Subsidy Debate

When President Bola Tinubu announced the removal of fuel subsidy in 2023, political reactions quickly split into two familiar camps—those who praised the decision and those who condemned it.

Adebayo chose another path.

He argued that what Nigerians called “fuel subsidy” was, in reality, the cost of decades of government failure to maintain the country's own refineries. According to him, citizens were paying not for cheap petrol but for institutional incompetence.

His prescription was equally straightforward: revive Nigeria's refineries, reduce dependence on petrol through mass transportation and alternative energy, and only then allow market forces to determine prices.

With fuel prices remaining one of the biggest pressures on household incomes three years later, that argument has become one of the defining pillars of his economic message.

Measuring the Economy from the Kitchen

Unlike many politicians who discuss economic performance using statistics and macroeconomic indicators, Adebayo often frames hardship through everyday family experiences.

His recurring question is simple: Can parents feed their children? Can families pay school fees? Can ordinary Nigerians afford medical treatment?

To him, those questions represent the true scorecard of governance.

He has also maintained that government should improve tax collection rather than grant generous waivers and incentives, arguing that efficient revenue generation—not heavier burdens on struggling citizens—is the more sustainable path to fiscal stability.

The Question That Resonated Beyond Nigeria

Among Adebayo's most memorable public remarks is a question that has travelled far beyond political rallies. "Why should a Nigerian be hiding from immigration officers in another country?" The question was directed at the growing number of Nigerians forced into undocumented migration in search of better opportunities abroad.

For Adebayo, the issue is not merely migration. It is a reflection of a country that has failed to provide enough reasons for its own citizens to stay. His argument reframes migration as a governance issue rather than simply an economic one.

Warning Against the Concentration of Power

At the SDP convention in Bauchi, where he emerged once again as the party's presidential candidate, Adebayo shifted attention from partisan rivalry to what he described as a deeper democratic concern.

Nigeria, he argued, is drifting not merely toward one-party dominance but toward the concentration of power in the hands of a few individuals.

He has consistently advocated a competitive multiparty democracy driven by ideas rather than personalities and has dismissed proposals for a single six-year presidential tenure as secondary to the more urgent challenge of restoring credible elections.

For him, electoral integrity remains the foundation upon which every other democratic reform must stand. Security Beyond the Battlefield. On insecurity, Adebayo has repeatedly argued that Nigeria's crisis cannot be solved solely through military operations.

He contends that insecurity persists because of institutional weaknesses and has publicly alleged that elements within the system have, at different times, maintained troubling relationships with criminal groups—an allegation that naturally demands careful scrutiny and evidence.

Nevertheless, the broader message remains consistent: security failures are symptoms of governance failures. Healthcare as a Measure of Leadership
Another recurring feature of Adebayo's public interventions is healthcare.

He frequently contrasts political leaders who seek medical treatment abroad with ordinary Nigerians who struggle to access basic healthcare services at home.

For him, the disparity illustrates misplaced national priorities.

A country whose leaders rely on foreign hospitals while citizens die from preventable conditions, he argues, has fundamentally abandoned the principle of equal citizenship.

Building More Than a Presidential Campaign

Adebayo insists that the SDP is not preparing merely to contest the presidency.

He has repeatedly pledged that the party intends to field candidates across all elective offices nationwide, including every governorship, all 109 Senate seats, and all 360 House of Representatives constituencies.

The objective, he says, is to build a truly national political alternative rather than a personality-driven movement centred on a single election.

A Political Record, Not Just Campaign Promises

Taken together, Adebayo's public statements over the past three years present less of a conventional campaign and more of a sustained political argument.

Whether discussing fuel prices, democratic reforms, insecurity, healthcare, taxation, or the migration of young Nigerians, he repeatedly returns to the same conclusion: Nigeria's challenges are products of human decisions, not unavoidable destiny.

As the countdown to the 2027 presidential election gathers momentum, that consistency may become one of his strongest political assets.

For supporters, it demonstrates conviction. For critics, it provides a record against which every claim can be tested.

Either way, Prince Adewole Adebayo enters the 2027 race with something increasingly uncommon in Nigerian politics—not merely a manifesto, but a three-year public record inviting Nigerians to judge both his ideas and his consistency.

DON'T GHOST YOUR CUSTOMERS!

FEYISITAN IJIMAKINWA

It happens every day: a potential customer fills out your contact form, downloads your resource, or walks out of your meeting saying they'll "think about it." And then... silence. In business, disappearing without a follow-up is the fastest way to lose a connection.

From first contact to loyal client, consistent communication is what builds trust, credibility, and measurable results.

Timing also plays a major role. Research shows that conversion rates are eight times higher when you respond within the first five minutes, yet only 0.1% of inbound leads ever receive a reply that quickly.

Don't let your opportunities turn into ghost stories. Don't ghost your customers. Let us be real, follow-up strategies actually work. Follow along as we share seven simple ways to stay top of mind without scaring off your audience.

1. Time it right before the trail goes cold

Timing is everything when it comes to follow-ups. Wait too long, and your prospect might already be chatting with your competitor. Jump in too soon, and you could come off as too eager. So what do you do?

New inquiries: Follow up within 24 hours, preferably within the first hour.

After a proposal: Check in within three days.

Post-event or meeting: Reach out within the week while your conversation is still fresh.

If you're using a Customer Relationship Management or e-mail platform, set reminders or use tracking tools to know when someone opens your e-mail or clicks your link. That's your cue to follow up while interest is high.

Pro tip: Fast responses show reliability, and reliability is what turns prospects into clients.

2. Make every message meaningful

There's nothing scarier than a "just checking in" email. If your follow-ups don't have a purpose, they'll vanish into the inbox abyss. Before hitting send, ask: What's in it for them?

-Share a helpful blog or resource that solves their problem.

-Offer new insights or updates related to their industry and needs.

-Provide clarity on next steps or timelines.

Every touchpoint should feel helpful, not hollow.

Aim to add value each time, so your message stands out as a welcome reminder, not background noise.

3. Add a personal touch

No one likes being treated like a faceless name on a list. Personalised outreach shows you're paying attention and helps build a genuine connection.

Try these ideas:

-Reference a previous conversation or project detail.

-Mention something they've shared on LinkedIn or in a meeting.

-Send a quick thank-you note after an event or purchase.

Even a small effort, like remembering a milestone or sending a friendly message, can go a long way toward keeping your relationships warm. This thing works even if you think you get them from your bank, insurer or telco company regularly. They have simply discovered how to keep you in the loop.

Bonus idea: A light-hearted greeting or seasonal message is an easy, authentic way to reconnect without a hard sell.

4. Use the right communication channel

Some people prefer a quick e-mail, while others respond better to a phone call or SMS message.

If your prospect prefers one channel and you continue to use another, your messages may never

reach them. When possible, ask how they'd like to stay in touch, and stick to it. Meeting people where they are shows respect for their time and communication style.

Tip: If your e-mails keep getting buried, try something different like a personalised video message. It's unexpected, in a good way.

5. Automate (without losing your human side)

Automation tools are great for keeping follow-ups consistent, but they shouldn't feel robotic. Set up reminders, templates, and scheduling systems, but always customise your messages before sending.

Your audience should feel like you're talking to them, not at them. Use automation to stay organised and efficient, but let empathy and personality drive your outreach.

Think of automation as your sidekick, not your replacement. It helps you manage timing and scale while you focus on crafting messages that sound human.

6. Re-engage before it's too late

Just because someone hasn't replied doesn't mean they're gone for good. Sometimes leads go quiet because the timing wasn't right, or they simply got busy. Resurrect those cold connections with something new and valuable:

- Share a recent case study, testimonial or update.
 - Reintroduce yourself with a new offer or piece of content.
 - Check in with a friendly "It's been a while. How's your [specific project or goal] going?"
- Even if they don't need your services right away, your thoughtful follow-up might bring you back to mind when they do.

Remember: Sometimes the "dead" leads just need a little spark to come back to life.

7. Keep the conversation alive (and measurable)

Don't let your follow-up efforts vanish into thin air. Track what's working, such as response rates, timing, conversions, and overall engagement, to refine your approach.

Pay attention to:

- Which messages get the most replies
- How long does it take to get responses
- Which channels perform best (email, phone, or social)

Use this data to strengthen your process and stay connected in smarter, more strategic ways. Because when you treat follow-up as an ongoing relationship, not a one-time task, your customers won't disappear. They'll come back for more.

LAST LINE

Stay in touch, not out of sight. When you show up consistently, thoughtfully, and with purpose, your leads stay warm and your clients feel valued. Avoid being the ghost in someone's inbox. Be the brand that stays connected long after the first hello



FEYISITAN IJIMAKINWA

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

THE LEOPARD AND IT'S SPOTS.

UDY OSARO-EDOBOR

Father's Day has always made me reflect on the life we lived with our father.

My father was a clergyman and a civil servant. We never really understood the nature of his job because he was always travelling.

His relationship with my mother was distant. I cannot remember seeing them sit together and have a normal conversation like husband and wife.

Every interaction between them felt forced. As a child, I often wondered how they managed to have four children when they barely related to each other.

I knew my mother was unhappy because during one heated argument many years ago, she finally expressed her disappointment. She reminded my father how she had worked tirelessly through her petty trade to pay his way through school. The same small business that fed him and raised their children was the one he looked down on. After that day, something changed in her. She withdrew into herself and never truly came out again.

Outside our home, my father was known as a respected reverend gentleman. Inside the house, he was a completely different person. The moment he returned home, everyone quietly left the sitting room. He preferred his own company and seemed completely uninterested in his wife or children. Yet he was always available to help people in the church and in the community.

My mother carried the entire burden of raising us. She paid our school fees from primary school to university and made sure we lacked nothing despite her own struggles.

I still remember my final day at the university. I had just finished signing out and was celebrating the end of my undergraduate years when I received a message asking me to come home immediately.

When I got there, I met our belongings packed outside the house. My mother looked completely broken. She could barely think straight. She simply told me that we had to leave. Only then did I learn what had happened while I was away at school. She had deliberately hidden everything from me so I would not lose focus on my studies.

My father had brought a young woman and a baby into our family home, claiming they were his wife and child. Shortly afterwards, another man arrived, saying he was the new owner of the house. My father had secretly sold our family home and moved into another house with his new family without telling any of us.

Overnight, we became homeless.

My mother moved in with a friend while the rest of us struggled to find somewhere to stay. That arrangement did not last because her host made her uncomfortable. She eventually

moved into her small shop. Every morning, she woke before daybreak, used a public bathroom and toilet, then opened her shop for business.

Fortunately, I left for my NYSC shortly afterwards, so accommodation was not an immediate concern for me. When I returned a year later, my siblings had rented a small apartment for my mother but she had become a shadow of herself. She had aged far beyond her years and was beginning to struggle mentally. Her business suffered because people took advantage of her condition and cheated her.

She later became seriously ill. There was never a clear diagnosis but I knew her mind had simply become exhausted. Years of disappointment, betrayal and hardship had finally caught up with her. Before she completely lost her memory, she made us promise that if our father ever came asking for forgiveness, we should forgive him. She was a good woman. It was heartbreaking to know that she still loved her husband.

A few months later, my mother passed away. Not long after her death, my father returned. He begged for forgiveness and blamed everything on his mistress. He claimed she had bewitched him, manipulated him into selling our house and ruined his life. He admitted the child was his but insisted he did not know how everything had happened. None of it made sense to me.

Still, because of the promise we made to our mother, we accepted him. Even after everything he had done, we still fulfilled our duty to him because our mother raised us to be better than the pain we experienced.

Our relationship with him remained distant but we did what we could.

The painful irony was that the woman who sacrificed everything to raise us was gone while the man who contributed almost nothing now depended on us for care.

Eventually, he became terminally ill. The responsibility of looking after him fell on us and his treatment was expensive. At one point, my brother asked whether he had any savings. He broke down and claimed he had lost everything after investing in a failed business because of his mistress.

I never believed him.

There was always something about his stories that did not add up. My siblings thought I was unforgiving and hard hearted but I ignored them. I contributed towards his upkeep whenever I could but I never allowed his needs to consume my life.

Eventually, he died. His burial was organised quickly according to his last wishes and afterwards we all returned to our separate lives.

Some time later, my brother received a call from a lawyer informing him that our father's will was ready to be read. He had a will? Oh wow!

I had no interest in attending because I had an important speaking engagement that day, so I switched off my phone and focused on my assignment.

When I got home that evening, I found over a thousand messages and dozens of missed calls from my siblings. Everything had changed.

The mistress we had been made to believe abandoned him years earlier had walked confidently into the lawyer's office for the reading of the will. She was certain that she and her children would inherit everything. Yes children, she had given birth to two more children for my father. She had remained a well-kept secret until that day. Then one clause in the will changed the atmosphere completely. My father instructed that DNA tests must first be carried out on all of her children. Only after the results confirmed they were biologically his would they be entitled to any inheritance. Her confidence disappeared immediately. Ironically, the woman who had cared for him in his final years also received a share of his estate. She was his live-in lover. He was a dirty old man.

His own biological children received absolutely nothing.
Not a house.
Not a piece of land.
Not even a word of appreciation for caring for him all those years.
Nothing.

At that moment, my siblings finally understood why I had always questioned his stories. I had never believed he was a victim. There had always been something calculating about him.

What hurt the most was that he trusted us enough to abandon every responsibility on our shoulders. He trusted us enough to spend our money caring for him. Yet he never trusted the woman for whom he destroyed his own family.

About a year later, the lawyer contacted my brother again. The DNA tests had finally been completed. None of the children belonged to my father. The lawyer wanted to know whether we were available to discuss the next steps regarding the estate.

As far as I was concerned, there was nothing left to discuss. If my father had not made provision for such an outcome in his will, then that was not our responsibility. We had spent enough years carrying burdens that were never ours. His manipulation ended with him. We were done.

Looking back now, I realise my father did not only abandon his family. He abandoned every responsibility that came with being a husband and a father. He left my mother to carry burdens that should have been shared. He watched her struggle, sacrifice and eventually break, yet he never seemed moved by her pain.

What I still struggle to understand is this: he never doubted that we were his children. Yet he neglected us while pouring his time, attention and resources into another family. And in the end, the woman he trusted enough to destroy his own home for was the same woman he did not trust enough to inherit his estate without demanding DNA tests on her children.

This Father's Day, my brother announced that he had legally dropped our father's surname. The rest of us had already changed ours through marriage.

It was not an act of hatred.
It was simply the closing of a chapter that had brought far more pain than peace.

For years, I wondered what we had done to deserve the life we lived with our father. Today, I no longer ask that question. Some questions have no answers. Some people leave behind houses, wealth and cherished memories while others leave behind broken hearts, unanswered questions and lessons their children never asked to learn.

My father's greatest legacy was not the property he fought so hard to protect.
It was the family he slowly allowed to slip through his fingers.

I have come to realise that the greatest inheritance a father leaves his children is not land, money or a surname. It is love. It is presence. It is the memories they carry long after he is gone. Because when a father is remembered only for the pain he caused, no amount of wealth can rewrite that story.

Children will always remember who showed up. Who protected them. Who made them feel safe and who loved them unconditionally.



Udy Osaro-Edobor

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

She has several stories to her credit which she posts for free on her Ebook called Udy's Chapter. She is currently working on two short movies. Udy is also a wife, mother, and a "serial entrepreneur".
udy1717@gmail.com



The Grandma Who Refused to Retire-A Review
of Behind the Curtain Aderonke Fetuga's A
Leadership Story

Title: Behind the Curtain: Aderonke Fetuga, A
Leadership Story

Year of Publication: 2025

Number of Pages: 115

Category: Self Help

BEHIND THE CURTAIN: ADERONKE FETUGA, A LEADERSHIP STORY

TITILADE OYEMADE

Many Nigerians, especially women in their 50s and 60s, quietly begin to disappear. They start saying things like, “My time has passed,” or “I’m too old for that now.” They slowly pack away the dreams they once had. Aderonke Fetuga clearly missed that meeting.

Even in her 70s, she is still living life on her own terms and doing exactly what makes her happy. From the moment you see the book cover, with her stylish hat sitting proudly on her head, you already know this is not your regular Nigerian grandma. She gives off the energy of someone who has stopped asking for permission and has absolutely no interest in what people think. If society says, “Act your age,” Aderonke simply smiles, adjusts her hat and carries on. That same confidence runs through every page of this book.

Aderonke tells her story with honesty. She is outspoken, but never harsh. She says what she believes, shares her experiences without holding back, and is refreshingly honest about both her successes and her mistakes. She doesn’t pretend to have all the answers, and that makes her even more believable.

One thing becomes obvious almost immediately: Aderonke Fetuga is deeply in love with books. Not just reading them, but everything they represent.

Books have shaped her life, influenced her thinking and even become part of her life’s work through publishing. Her love for reading shines through the pages, and by the time you finish the book, you may find yourself wanting to visit the nearest library or bookshop. Her enthusiasm is infectious. But she isn’t only passionate about books.

She is passionate about life. She plays golf, enjoys meaningful friendships, builds businesses, mentors younger people and continues to embrace new experiences with the energy of someone decades younger. It is almost unbelievable that someone in her 70s is still so curious, active and full of life. Age, for her, is simply another number, not a limitation.

As she reflects on her journey, she freely offers advice to younger generations, but never in a way that feels preachy. Instead, her stories gently encourage readers to think differently about purpose, relationships and personal growth. Her empathy comes through clearly, making her feel less like a lecturer and more like the wise mentor everyone wishes they had.

The book moves quickly and never feels weighed down by unnecessary details. Her passion jumps off every page. When she is excited, you become excited. When she faces uncertainty, you find yourself hoping everything works out. That emotional connection makes the memoir difficult to put down.

There may be moments when readers disagree with some of her opinions, but that is part of the book’s charm. Aderonke never claims to know everything. She simply shares what life has taught her and leaves readers to draw their own conclusions.

Perhaps the biggest lesson from the book is that reinvention has no expiry date. Many people spend their later years counting what they have lost. Aderonke spends hers discovering what is still possible. That is inspiring.

Whether you are 25, 45 or 75, her story reminds you that there is always another dream to chase, another skill to learn and another chapter waiting to be written.

Young Nigerian women, in particular, will find much to admire in her journey. She proves that success is not just about building a career but about building a life you genuinely enjoy.

By the final page, it is difficult not to wish you could sit down with and listen to more of her stories. She has the warmth of a favourite aunt, the wisdom of a grandmother and the curiosity of someone who still believes the best is yet to come.

Behind the Curtain, Aderonke Fetuga’s A Leadership Story is more than a memoir. It is a joyful reminder that life does not end at 50, 60 or even 70. As long as you are willing to keep learning, keep reading, keep dreaming and keep showing up, there is still plenty of living left to do.

And if Aderonke Fetuga can keep chasing life with such enthusiasm in her 70s, what excuse does anyone else have?



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

WEEKENDER

MOVIE REVIEW

I WILL FIND YOU (2026)

If you enjoyed “His & Hers”, and “Run Away” from earlier this year, then you might want to jump on this movie quickly as it has being on Netflix Top 10 list for weeks now. In this fantastic movie David Burroughs was visited by his ‘ex-wife’s sister’ Rachael who revealed a picture to him that changed his entire mood. In this picture Rachael showed him a boy that looked so much like his boy who was murdered 5 years ago. David was totally confused how can Theo be alive, he was serving a jail term for killing his own son. This picture left David restless, David decided that he must go out and won’t stop until his son is brought home. You must go check out this movie to find out if David’s son Theo was actually alive and if he found him, this movie will leave you speechless, because every scene and episode had a new suspect, but the main culprit wasn’t revealed till the very last scene and I just couldn’t comprehend why he did that, so check it out for yourself. The 8 episode Avg 45m was directed by Robert Hull, they featured actors like Sam Worthington, Britt Lower, Chi McBride, Logan Browning, Erin Richards, Jonathan Tucker, Milo Ventimiglia, Greg Bryk, Kate Vernon, Peter Outerbridge etc.



THE CONTRACTOR (2007)

This movie took us down memory lane to way back 2007. If you haven't seen this action movie, then you need to go check it out. In this movie James Dial played the role as the main Contractor "he was sent to execute a job" that one job was to take out one popular man in another city. He came, met his partner and prepared for the job, he did complete the job, but then suddenly he became the target, he became the most wanted. The FBI, Police force and even the CIA that sent him, wanted him dead so that the secret could remain covered. Well, you need to go check out this movie to find out if he was able to escape the city and also discover how an unexpected friend he met helped him throughout his escape journey. The 105m spy, action, drama, thriller movie was directed by Josef Rusnak and featured actors like Wesley Snipes, Eliza Bennett, Lena Headey, Ralph Brown, Charles Dance, Yasmin Khalaf, Gemma Jones, Iain Robertson, Richard Harrington, Ryan McClusky and many more.



BLENDED (2014)

If you enjoy movies where Adam Sandler plays the lead role then this comedy, romantic movie would make your weekend, nothing so serious, just funny and witty. If you are looking for something to keep you entertained and relaxed, this movie would solve that. In this movie Jim and Lauren were set up on a blind date and this first date was a total tragedy, but their friend decides to give them a getaway tickets to go on a vacation in Africa with their family, what started out as a disaster and chaos ended up being the best thing that happened to both families. Jim and Lauren during this trip got to know each other better and understood that they both needed a father and mother figure in both families. You will need to go check out this movie to find out if they were able to settle their disputes and if both families got blended and how they moved on with their lives, this movie left me really smiling, how 2 different families could blend together. The 117m feel-good romance, comedy movie was directed by Frank Coraci, they featured actors like Adam Sandler, Drew Barrymore, Wendi McLendon-Covey, Kevin Nealon, Terry Crews, Bella Thorne, Joel McHale, Abdoulaye N'Gom, Jessica Lowe etc.



WEEKEND QUOTES



1

Celebrate the dreams of *your children in prayer because they will definitely be greater than you
.....WhispersbyTEN

2

There are problems money can't solve; only wisdom
.....WhispersbyTEN

3

Be calm, your prayer is valid. It's just that God wants to show forth with great acts of judgment over the enemies
.....WhispersbyTEN

4

You're a god over this situation. Exercise your dominion!
.....WhispersbyTEN