



INSPIRING
WOMAN
AMERICA

EDITION 24, 3RD FEBRUARY 2026

UUCHE
RALPH-OPARA

A portrait of Uche Ralph-Opара, a Black woman with her hair styled in braids, wearing a patterned blazer with pink and black floral designs. She is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile.

ADDRESSING HEALTH ACCESS, POLICY, AND COVERAGE ON A GLOBAL LEVEL

CONTENTS

COVER INTERVIEW

UCHE RALPH-OPARA 4

WOMAN EXECUTIVE

The Integrity Gap:
Why Doing What is Right Still Matters in a Compromised World 12

GENDER INSIGHTS

The Hidden Cost of Leadership:
How Nigerian Women Are Forced to Lead from the Sidelines 14

FINANCIAL AdviseHER

Why Financial Education Is the
Real Shortcut to Financial Freedom 16

MADE FOR MORE

From Dream to Done (Part 3) 18

HER POINT OF VIEW

Mentorship From Afar: The "Silent Teachers" Who Shape Our Careers 20

WOMAN AT THE HELM

Tsitsi Mutendi 22

WE'VE GOT MEN

Dr. Tunji Olowolafe 24

HOLISTIC LIVING

Fuel and Motion: Why What You Eat
and How You Move Shape Your Whole Life 26

LETS TALK ABOUT IT

It's a New Year, Invest in your mind... intentionally 28



▶ 14

GENDER INSIGHTS

The Hidden Cost of Leadership: How Nigerian Women Are Forced to Lead from the Sidelines



▶ 16

FINANCIAL AdviseHER

Why Financial Education Is the Real Shortcut to Financial Freedom



**Kemi
Ajumobi**

Publisher/Editor-in-Chief, IWA Magazine
Founder/Group CEO, IWA Group
www.theiwagroup.com
✉ contact@theiwagroup.com

Welcome!

Dear Readers,

February is here! Feels so unreal...I thought we all just wished ourselves a Happy New Year...didn't we? Well, this is just a reminder that time waits for no one. Do what you need to do and don't be a procrastinator.

I always love to hear from Nigerians in the diaspora doing great things. I love to ask them questions, to find out how we can become better as a nation and what we can learn from their present reality and work, wherever they are around the world.

Our cover personality for this week is one of such distinguished women doing well on the global scene. She is Uche Ralph-Opara, a physician and global health expert with over two decades of experience across clinical care, health systems strengthening, and large scale programme delivery in low and middle income countries.

She currently serves as Chief Health Officer at Project HOPE, where she oversees a global health portfolio spanning infectious diseases including HIV, TB, malaria, also reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health, nutrition, mental health and psychosocial support, climate and health, and health workforce development. Her work focuses on ensuring that strategy, evidence, and partnerships translate into practical impact at country and community levels. From IWA to you Uche, Thank You for sharing with us and for representing Nigeria well around the world.

Here are other articles in this edition:

FINANCIAL ADVISEHER: Why Financial Education Is The Real Shortcut To Financial Freedom. By Sola Adesakin.

WOMAN EXECUTIVE: The Integrity Gap: Why Doing What is Right Still Matters in a Compromised World. By Wola Joseph-Condotti.

HER POINT OF VIEW: Mentorship From Afar: The "Silent Teachers" Who Shape Our Careers. By Chinyere Okorocho.

GENDER INSIGHT: The Hidden Cost Of Leadership: How Nigerian Women Are Forced to Lead From Sidelines. By Asmau Benzies-Leo.

MADE FOR MORE: From Dream to Done (Pt 3). The Mindset Structures Required to Expand Into Your More. By Ifeoma Chuks-Adizue.

HOLISTIC LIVING: Fuel and Motion: Why What You Eat and How You Move Shape Your Whole Life. By Dr. Maymunah Yusuf Kadiri.

LET'S TALK ABOUT IT: It's A New Year, Invest In Your Mind...Intentionally. By Toyosi Etim-Effiong.

WOMAN AT THE HELM: Tsitsi Mutendi Co-Founder African Family Firms.

WE'VE GOT MEN: Dr. Tunji Olowolafe, Chairman of Deux Project Limited.

Ensure you enjoy every bit of what you do. This week, go harder and remain optimistic. As you celebrate love this season, remember those who have nothing and those who need loving. Don't only be a receiver, be a giver too.

See you soon!

Ciao!



COVER INTERVIEW

UCHE RALPH-OPARA

ADDRESSING HEALTH ACCESS, POLICY,
AND COVERAGE ON A GLOBAL LEVEL

Kemi Ajumobi



Uche Ralph-Opara is a physician and global health expert with over two decades of experience across

clinical care, health systems strengthening, and large-scale programme delivery in low and middle income countries.

She currently serves as Chief Health Officer at Project HOPE, where she oversees a global health portfolio spanning infectious diseases including HIV, TB, and malaria, reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health, nutrition, mental health and psychosocial support, climate and health, and health workforce development. Her work focuses on ensuring that strategy, evidence, and partnerships translate into practical impact at country and community levels.

Throughout her career, she has worked closely with bilateral and multilateral donors, foundations, governments, and front-line teams to design and implement programmes that strengthen health systems and expand access to quality care. Her perspective to complex challenges is commendable, including a strong focus on workforce resilience, service integration, and sustainable country ownership.

Uche is particularly motivated by work that centers equity, supporting underserved and crisis affected communities, investing in frontline health workers, and advancing better outcomes for women, children, and adolescents.

Alongside her professional work, she is



“The combination of competence and compassion shaped how I came to understand leadership and service”



“Grateful to lead programmes that translate strategy, funding, and innovation into tangible health outcomes”

compassion shaped how I came to understand leadership and service. I grew up in Nigeria and was fortunate not to grow up in scarcity. We weren't wealthy, but I had stability, exposure, and opportunity. That awareness has remained with me, and the understanding that access changes outcomes, and that privilege carries responsibility.

Those early years shaped me into someone pragmatic, values-driven, and deeply conscious of how systems, families, and social structures influence people's lives. It's a lens that continues to guide how I work and how I lead.

► **Passion for global health and defining moments that shaped your journey**

My journey into health felt natural. Growing up with a mother who was a doctor, from an early age, medicine represented purpose, dignity, and service. I was drawn to the human connection, and the way care could restore not just health, but hope. The turning point toward global health came during my house job after medical school in Nigeria. I encountered patients who were dying from conditions that were entirely preventable. It wasn't because science didn't exist, it was because the systems weren't working. Access was limited, referral systems were weak, supplies were inconsistent, and care was fragmented.

Those experiences affected me deeply. I realised that while clinical care mattered, it could only go so far if the broader system failed patients. Global health became my way of reaching beyond individual encounters to address root causes, including access, coverage, policy, and systems strengthening.

That realisation led me to pursue public health training at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and eventually into a career across NGOs working in infectious diseases, nutrition, maternal, newborn and child health, nutrition and health systems strengthening. Over time, I became more systems- and programme-facing,

deeply committed to mentoring young women, supporting their leadership journeys, and helping them translate ambition into opportunity.

Uche values thoughtful collaboration, clear execution, and leadership that is grounded in real world experience. She enjoys working with partners and teams who are serious about bridging ambition with what actually works on the ground.

Uche is driven by work that strengthens systems, develops people, and delivers results where they matter most.

► **Growing up and influences till date**

I grew up in a close-knit family where service was not something that needed explanation. It was simply how life was

lived. My parents were deeply values-driven, generous with their time, and intentional about raising children who understood responsibility, empathy, and contribution. My siblings and I were very close (still are), and that sense of community and mutual accountability shaped how I show up in relationships, work and leadership to this day.

My mother, a medical doctor and public health physician, was especially influential. Watching her practice medicine left a deep imprint on me. Sometimes I followed her during calls, and what stood out wasn't only the clinical side of care, but the humanity. It was how she spoke to patients, how she listened, how people felt seen and reassured in her presence. That combination of competence and

and that's where my purpose became clear.

► **Most significant achievements in your career and challenges you overcame to reach those milestones**

One of my most meaningful achievements has been helping design and lead programmes that translate strategy, funding, and innovation into tangible health outcomes, especially for vulnerable populations. Much of my work involves supporting country and regional teams to design programs that are effective, efficient, and responsive to local realities.

I'm particularly proud of work that integrates innovation thoughtfully, strengthens systems rather than bypassing them, and keeps people (not projects) at the center. Supporting teams from a headquarters (in Washington DC) or regional level is not about hierarchy for me, it's about partnership, problem-solving, and enabling impact.

The challenges are persistent. Global health work is often constrained by funding cycles, shifting donor priorities, and fragile systems, particularly across Africa where domestic financing for health remains limited. Balancing ambition with realism, and sustainability with urgency, requires constant navigation.

► **What exactly is Project HOPE about and what is your role as Chief Health Officer?**

Project HOPE is an international humanitarian and global health organisation working across emergency response, recovery, and long-term development. What distinguishes Project HOPE is our ability to operate across this full continuum, responding to crises while also building durable health systems solutions.

Our work spans infectious diseases, maternal, newborn and child health, non-communicable diseases, mental health, health security, and humanitarian response. Central to our approach is partnership. Working with governments and local organisations to

strengthen systems, not create parallel ones.

I've been with Project HOPE for over five years, starting as Country Director for Nigeria, then Deputy Regional Director for Africa, and now Chief Health Officer. In this role, I oversee the Global Health Technical Unit, including infectious diseases, Maternal Newborn and Child Health (MNCH), Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs), health security, health systems strengthening, monitoring, evaluation and learning, and digital health integration portfolios. My focus is

ensuring our teams are technically strong, well supported, and positioned to deliver real impact across the countries where we operate.

► **Elaborate on some specific projects you've led at Project HOPE, including challenges and successes**

One project especially close to my heart was the Integrated Child Health and Social Services Award (ICHSSA 2) in Nigeria, which focused on orphans and vulnerable children affected by HIV.

“An intervention must be grounded in data and best practice, but it also has to be realistic within the country's context”





The project was implemented through a consortium led by the Association of Reproductive and Family Health (ARFH) and funded by the USAID (now the U.S. Department of State). Within this effort, Project HOPE led the health systems strengthening and private-sector engagement components, working closely with government counterparts and community-based organisations. What stood out most was how intentionally we brought the private sector into public health programming. We partnered with institutions like Access Bank to deliver financial literacy training and support economic strengthening for

caregivers and households. Companies such as Nestlé and Airtel also provided in-kind support that helped stabilize vulnerable households and strengthen the broader ecosystem of care. This approach went beyond service delivery. It strengthened caregiver resilience, complemented government-led HIV and OVC responses, and demonstrated that private-sector actors can meaningfully contribute to public health outcomes when engagement is intentional and well-coordinated. The main challenge was alignment, bringing together government priorities, donor requirements, community realities,

and private-sector interests in a way that felt coherent and mutually reinforcing. Navigating those dynamics required patience, trust-building, and constant coordination.

Ultimately, the success of ICHSSA 2 reinforced for me the importance of partnerships in driving sustainable impact, and it continues to shape how we think about scale, collaboration, and long-term sustainability across Project HOPE's work.

► **Prioritising health issues in your portfolio, and what criteria do you use?**

For me, prioritisation always begins with context. As an international NGO, Project HOPE does not operate in parallel to national systems, so our first point of reference is the country's national health strategy and government-defined priorities. Alignment with what governments are already trying to achieve is non-negotiable for us.

From there, we look at a set of core criteria. The first is burden and urgency; where the health need is greatest and where delays would cost lives. The second is equity, who is being left behind and whether the intervention meaningfully reaches underserved or marginalised populations. The third is systems impact; whether the work strengthens the health system or simply addresses symptoms in the short term.

Evidence and feasibility are equally important. An intervention must be grounded in data and best practice, but it also has to be realistic within the country context (financially, politically, and operationally). We also consider added value; whether Project HOPE's technical expertise and partnerships can genuinely improve outcomes rather than duplicate existing efforts.

Even in emergency and humanitarian settings, these criteria still apply. While the response must be rapid, we remain intentional about how short-term interventions link to recovery and longer-term resilience. Ultimately, prioritisation is about balance -between urgency and sustainability, global standards and local realities, and ambition and what can truly be delivered on the ground.



“When people see themselves reflected in programmes, when they recognise their voices, experiences, and priorities, trust grows”

▶ **Applying a systems perspective to address complex health challenges**

Applying a systems perspective means starting with the understanding that health outcomes are never the result of a single intervention. They are shaped by how multiple parts of the system interact (governance and leadership, the health workforce, financing, supply chains, data, community trust), and the broader social context in which care is delivered. When one of these elements is weak, the entire system feels it.

In practice, this means we resist the temptation to focus on only one piece of the puzzle. Guided by global standards such as the WHO health systems building blocks, we deliberately design interventions that strengthen several components at the same time. For example, training health workers is important, but training alone does not change outcomes if providers lack the right tools, commodities, supervision, or decision-making authority to apply what they've learned.

A systems lens forces us to ask harder questions: Is the supply chain reliable? Are referral pathways functional? Is data being used to inform decisions? Are leaders at facility and district levels empowered to act? We also pay close attention to trust; between communities and providers, and between frontline workers and the systems they operate within, because without trust, even well-designed programmes struggle to succeed. This approach is especially important in fragile and crisis-affected settings, where systems are already under strain. By strengthening governance, workforce capacity, data use, and accountability alongside service delivery, we aim to ensure that interventions are not just effective in the short term, but resilient over time. That integrated way of working is what allows impact to last beyond a single project or funding cycle.

“Data helps us identify gaps, but listening to communities helps us understand the realities behind the numbers”

▶ **Strategies crucial for ensuring sustainability of health programmes in low- and middle-income countries**

Sustainability begins and ends with government ownership. Without it, no program -no matter how well designed can be sustained. The past year has made this reality impossible to ignore. As funding landscapes shift and external assistance becomes less predictable, it has become clear that long-term dependence on donor financing is not viable for health systems.

What has been encouraging, particularly across Africa, is seeing governments increasingly step into leadership roles around their own health agendas. There is a growing recognition that countries must define their priorities, mobilise domestic resources, and be accountable for outcomes. Initiatives such as the Accra Reset reflect this shift toward sovereignty, transparency, and innovative approaches to financing health and development.

For international NGOs, this moment requires a fundamental rethinking of our role. Sustainability is not about doing more but about doing differently. Our value increasingly lies in technical assistance, capacity strengthening, and partnership, supporting governments to lead, rather than implementing in parallel or filling gaps indefinitely.

True sustainability also requires alignment across stakeholders, long-term thinking beyond project cycles, and investment in systems, particularly the health workforce, data systems, and governance structures. When programmes are designed with ownership, accountability, and local capacity at the center, they are far more likely to endure beyond donor funding and deliver lasting impact.

▶ **Ensuring programmes are equitable, especially for underserved and crisis-affected communities**

Equity is not accidental. It requires deliberate, intentional design. In my work, ensuring equity means starting with a clear understanding of who is being left behind and why. Too often,

programmes are designed for the “average” population, which almost always excludes those living in remote areas, displaced communities, women, adolescents, children, and people affected by conflict or crisis.

We rely heavily on needs assessments, disaggregated data, and direct community engagement to guide our targeting. Data helps us identify gaps, but listening to communities helps us understand the realities behind the numbers which include barriers related to access, trust, gender norms, mobility, and safety.

In crisis and fragile settings, equity often means rethinking how care is delivered. This includes bringing services closer to communities through mobile clinics, integrating mental health and psychosocial support at the community level, and using digital health and telemedicine solutions to extend reach where physical access is limited.

Technology, when applied thoughtfully, can be a powerful tool for reducing inequities rather than widening them. Ultimately, equity is about dignity. It is about ensuring that programs are designed not just to reach people, but to meet them where they are and respond to their realities. When equity is treated as a core principle rather than an afterthought, programs are more trusted, more effective, and more impactful.

▶ **Engaging local communities and stakeholders in programme design and implementation**

We take a deeply person-centered and community-centered approach to our work, and engagement begins with listening -long before any program is designed or implemented. That means taking the time to understand local priorities, social and cultural context, power dynamics, and the realities people face in their daily lives. Even within the same district or community, needs can vary significantly, and we are intentional about recognising and responding to those differences.

Communities and local stakeholders are not treated as passive beneficiaries; they are active partners in co-designing

solutions. This includes engaging community leaders, frontline health workers, civil society organizations, and local authorities in shaping program priorities, defining what success looks like, and identifying practical ways to deliver services.

Importantly, engagement does not stop at design. Communities are involved throughout implementation and adaptation, providing feedback that allows programmes to evolve in real time. This ongoing dialogue helps ensure interventions remain relevant, culturally appropriate, and responsive to changing needs.

When people see themselves reflected in programmes, when they recognise their voices, experiences, and priorities, trust grows. That trust drives uptake, strengthens accountability, and ultimately makes sustainability possible. For me, meaningful community engagement is not just good practice; it is essential to delivering quality, equitable health outcomes.

▶ **Effective approaches to supporting frontline health workers**

Supporting frontline health workers requires looking at the full continuum - recruitment, retention, and quality, and recognizing that no health system can function without an adequately supported workforce. Too often, we focus on training alone, without addressing the broader conditions that determine whether health workers can actually do their jobs well and stay in the system.

On the quality side, training must move beyond traditional, one-off, didactic models. We need more innovative and practical approaches including blended learning, mentorship, supportive supervision, and peer-to-peer models that work across all cadres of health workers, from clinicians and nurses to community health workers. Learning should be continuous, context-specific, and designed to fit into real-world workloads rather than pulling providers away from already overstretched services.

Community health workers are especially critical. They are closest to communities,

particularly in rural, underserved, and crisis-affected settings, and they play a central role in advancing equity.

Strengthening their capacity is not optional, it is foundational. They must be equipped not just with basic skills, but with the tools, supervision, and confidence to deliver care, collect and use data, and serve as trusted links between communities and the health system.

Technology and AI present important opportunities here. When used thoughtfully, digital platforms can help scale training, standardise quality, provide real-time decision support, and

extend reach to health workers who would otherwise be left out. But technology must be an enabler, not a replacement for human connection and mentorship.

Retention is just as critical as recruitment and training. Health workers need safe working conditions, psychosocial support, fair compensation, and recognition for the work they do—especially in high-stress and humanitarian environments.

Burnout, moral distress, and attrition are real threats to health system resilience. If we do not take care of the people delivering care, the system itself will not hold.



“What I hope for is a Nigeria where healthcare works for people, not just in moments of excellence, but consistently”

Ultimately, supporting frontline health workers is about valuing them, not just as implementers of programmes, but as human beings carrying the weight of the health system. When health workers are supported, motivated, and trusted, quality improves, communities benefit, and systems become more resilient.

▶ **Define effective leadership in global health**

For me, effective leadership in global health begins with authenticity. Everyone has a different leadership style, but I believe it's important to lead in a way that is true to who you are. I lead with empathy and vulnerability (that's the Uche style), and I try to show up fully as myself, especially in spaces where the work is complex, the stakes are high, and the answers are rarely straightforward. Leadership in global health carries a unique responsibility. The decisions we make influence not just programs, but systems, policies, and ultimately the lives of entire populations. That requires humility, the ability to listen, to learn, and to adjust when something isn't working. It also requires emotional intelligence, because we are often working in fragile contexts, across cultures, and with teams carrying significant pressure and responsibility.

I also believe strongly that leadership is not static. It must be continually developed. Participating in the Gates-funded WomenLift Health leadership programme was transformative for me. While I had been leading teams and programmes for years, the structured coaching, mentorship, and space for reflection, particularly alongside other women leaders in global health deepened my self-awareness and sharpened how I lead.

That experience reinforced an important lesson - investing intentionally in leadership, especially for women, is not a luxury. It is essential for building resilient health systems and for shaping a future of global health that is more inclusive, thoughtful, and effective.

▶ **Lessons learnt from working with donors and partners**

One of the most important lessons I've learnt is that the strongest partnerships are built on trust, transparency, and co-creation. The global health landscape has evolved, and the traditional top-down model where solutions are designed far from the communities they are meant to serve is increasingly ineffective. Shared problem-solving leads to stronger, more relevant programmes.

Seeing donors as partners rather than just funders change the nature of the relationship. It creates space for honest conversations about constraints, trade-offs, and what is realistically achievable in complex settings. When partners are aligned around outcomes rather than activities, there is more room for innovation, adaptation, and learning along the way.

I've also learnt that good partnerships require mutual accountability. Clear roles, open communication, and a willingness to course-correct when something isn't working are essential. When trust is present, partners can move beyond compliance toward collaboration, and that is where meaningful, lasting impact is created.

▶ **Aligning ambitious goals with practical execution**

Ambition is important, but ambition on its own doesn't deliver results. For me, alignment happens when bold goals are paired with structure, clarity, and strong communication. It requires having the right people in place, being honest about timelines and constraints, and ensuring that everyone understands not just what we are trying to achieve, but why.

Practical execution also depends on meaningful inclusion. The people delivering services on the ground and the communities receiving them must have a seat at the table. When those perspectives are missing, even the most

well-intentioned goals can become disconnected from reality.

I'm also a strong believer in learning as part of execution. We pilot ideas, test assumptions, and adapt based on what is working and what isn't. Scaling comes later, once there is evidence that an approach is both effective and feasible. This cycle of piloting, learning, adapting, and scaling helps ensure that ambition is not diluted, but rather grounded in real-world experience.

Ultimately, aligning ambition with execution is about discipline, being clear about priorities, making thoughtful trade-offs, and staying focused on outcomes rather than optics. When that alignment is done well, ambitious goals become achievable, and impact becomes sustainable.

▶ **What burdens your heart about Nigeria's healthcare system, and what do you hope for?**

As a Nigerian doctor who trained and practiced in Nigeria, what burdens my heart most is that we are still losing people to deaths that should never happen.

Preventable deaths. Deaths linked not to a lack of medical knowledge, but to weak systems, poor coordination of care, inadequate resourcing, and inconsistent attention to patient safety.

Health workers are often under-supported and overburdened. Facilities struggle with staffing, supplies, and supervision. Patient safety and quality of care are not always treated as non-negotiable, and when systems fail, it is families who carry the consequences.

This is deeply personal for me. When my father underwent hip replacement surgery in Nigeria, I found myself constantly advocating, monitoring his care, questioning decisions, coordinating support, and stepping in when I felt standards were slipping. I remember arranging for an endocrinologist to be involved because I knew how critical it was to manage his diabetes and hypertension alongside his surgery. Even then, I was not at ease. I should not have had to fight that hard for safe, coordinated care. No family should.

In recent months, reading about

“Through my ‘Dreams to Reality’ initiative with ‘WomenLift Health,’ I mentor young girls in Lagos and Anambra, supporting them as they navigate education, technology, health, and leadership”

preventable deaths within health facilities has been particularly painful, especially knowing, as a clinician, how many of these outcomes could have been avoided with better systems, accountability, and attention to care. It forces difficult reflection about how far we still have to go.

What I hope for is a Nigeria where healthcare works for people, not just in moments of excellence, but consistently. A system that is properly resourced, where health workers are skilled, motivated, and supported, and where patient safety is central (not optional). We speak often about strengthening health systems, my hope is that we move beyond language to real, sustained action, from the community level to tertiary care. Nigeria can do better. We must do better. Our people deserve nothing less.

► **What is the greatest lesson life has taught you?**

The greatest lesson life has taught me is the power of listening (deeply, intentionally, and with humility). Listening not just to respond, but to understand. Listening to people's experiences, to context, to what is being said and what is left unsaid. Over time, I've learned that real insight, good leadership, and meaningful impact often come from listening more and (sometimes) speaking less. I've also learnt the importance of empathy and authenticity, of showing up as your (authentic) self, even when it's uncomfortable. Life and work have taught me that you don't have to have all the answers to lead well, but you do have to be present, honest, and willing to learn. Giving back has become central to how I measure purpose. No matter where I live or work, my heart remains anchored in

Nigeria and across Africa. That sense of connection and responsibility shapes how I make decisions, how I mentor others, and how I continue to show up in this work. It reminds me that success is not just about personal achievement, but about contribution and impact.

► **What day will you never forget, and why?**

I will never forget the day I had my first child (May 28, 2005). I was young, emotional, and completely unprepared for the sudden realization that I was now responsible for an entire human being who had just come out of me. One moment I was myself, and the next moment I was someone's mother - permanently!

Growing up, I wasn't the first child, and I had a big sister who carried a lot of responsibility, so I was used to being cared for in that way. But holding my own child for the first time was different. It felt like awe, joy, fear, and love all at once. I remember crying (a lot) partly from happiness and partly from the panic of realizing there was no instruction manual and no return policy. Motherhood changed me in ways I couldn't have imagined. Yes, I went on to have three more children, but that first moment of becoming a mother marked a new sense of purpose and responsibility. It was the beginning of learning how to show up even when you're tired, unsure, and still figuring things out which, as it turns out, is excellent training for both leadership and life.

That day remains unforgettable, not just because of what I gained, but because of who I began to become.

► **Concluding words**

I am still evolving. I've become far more intentional about how I spend my time, my energy, and my voice. I'm learning to stay with the journey, not just the parts that look good on paper, but the parts that stretch you, humble you, and change you. The good, the difficult, and the deeply uncomfortable have all shaped who I am becoming. If I had another life, I would still choose medicine and global health. This work is



demanding and often imperfect, but it allows you to stand at the intersection of people, systems, and possibility. It allows you to touch lives in ways that matter. Most importantly for me, it allows me to model purpose for my children. They see that I love what I do (not because it's easy, but because it's meaningful). And I hope that love translates into their own commitment to service, integrity, and impact.

I am deeply passionate about Nigeria, about Africa, and about mentoring young girls. Through my 'Dreams to Reality' initiative with 'WomenLift Health,' I mentor young girls in Lagos and Anambra, supporting them as they navigate education, technology, health, and leadership. I didn't have the benefit of structured mentorship growing up, and I don't believe any young girl should have to figure life out alone when guidance, community, and belief can change the trajectory entirely. If there is one thing I hope to be remembered for, it is this- that I lived a life rooted in purpose, guided by service, and grounded in care - for people, for systems, and for the future we are building together. Not perfectly, but intentionally.

WOMAN EXECUTIVE

The Integrity Gap: Why Doing What is Right Still Matters in a Compromised World

By Wola Joseph-Condotti

In today's hyper-competitive world, results often speak louder than values. Targets are celebrated. Performance is rewarded. But integrity? Integrity is applauded only until it becomes inconvenient. We see it every day. Corners cut in the name of efficiency, truths bent in the name of strategy, values traded for visibility or short-term gains. In many boardrooms and business deals, the question is no longer "Is this right?" but "Can we get away with it?" But leadership (true, transformative

leadership) is not just about what you achieve. It is about how you achieve it.

The Quiet Power of Integrity

Integrity is what you do when no one is watching. It is the alignment between your values, your words, and your actions. And in a world that rewards performance over principle, integrity has become the most undervalued currency of leadership. Yet it is also the most enduring.

Reputation may open doors, but character is what keeps them open.

Skills may earn you a seat at the table, but it is your values that determine the legacy you leave behind.

I have sat at many tables, in rooms of influence, negotiation, and governance and I have learned this truth: What you compromise to get, you will eventually compromise to keep.

The Cost of Doing Right

Let us be honest: integrity costs something.

It may cost you a contract, a promotion, an opportunity. It may cost you popularity in rooms where silence is

easier than truth. It may mean standing alone when others are choosing what is easy over what is right.

But the cost of not walking in integrity is far greater. Because compromise chips away at confidence. It erodes credibility. It undermines the trust of those who follow you, work with you, and believe in you. As women in leadership, especially in systems that were not always designed with us in mind, we are often pressured to play the game. To look away. To go along so we can get ahead.

But if we lose our voice to gain visibility, we have lost more than we gained.

Moral Courage and the Faith Factor

There is a form of courage that does not always look bold. It does not always show up in public. It shows up in quiet decisions. Like not inflating numbers, not leaking strategy, not aligning with the popular narrative when it compromises truth.

That is moral courage. And for those of us who walk by faith, it is also spiritual obedience.

Scripture reminds us in Proverbs 11:3, "The integrity of the upright guides them, but the unfaithful are destroyed by their duplicity."

Think of Daniel, who stood firm in Babylon (a culture of compromise) and yet rose to the highest levels of leadership because of his integrity, not in spite of it. Or Joseph, who chose righteousness over revenge, and character over convenience, even in prison. His integrity became the foundation for divine elevation.

Their stories remind us that doing right is never wasted. It may not yield instant results, but it births enduring impact.

Integrity as Leadership Infrastructure

For any organisation, team, or leader, integrity is infrastructure. It is the unseen scaffolding that holds everything up. Without it, everything collapses eventually.

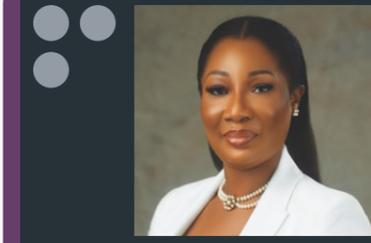
It shapes culture. It earns trust. It invites accountability.

And most importantly, it builds something bigger than success: it builds legacy.

Final Thoughts

We live in a world where grey zones are growing, and ethical ambiguity is normalized. But now more than ever, we need leaders who lead with light. Let your yes be yes. Let your no be no. Let your voice be clear, even if it is the only one speaking truth. Let your legacy not just be what you built, but how you built it.

Because at the end of the day, it is not the applause of the crowd, but the quiet approval of God that matters most. And in a compromised world, that approval is still worth everything.



Wola Joseph Condotti

Chief Executive Officer, Eko Electricity Distribution Company

Wola is the CEO of Eko Electricity Distribution Company (Eko Disco).

Prior to her current role, she was the Group MD/CEO of West Power & Gas Limited, the parent company of Eko Electricity Distribution PLC (EKEDP) and six other affiliate companies with interests in both conventional and renewable energy sectors. In addition to this role, she serves as the Director of the Power and Renewable Division at the Women in Energy Network (WIEN) in a non-executive capacity.

Wola Joseph Condotti was also the pioneer Chief, Legal & Company Secretariat at EKEDP. During her tenure, she also held multiple key positions simultaneously including Head of Regulatory Compliance, Chief Human Resources and Administration Officer, Supervising Chief of the Customer Service Department, and Data Protection Officer. Her previous experience includes roles as General Counsel/Company Secretariat Lagoon Home Savings and Loans, and Legal Associate at Banwo & Ighodalo.

Wola holds a law degree from the University of Ibadan, an LLM in International Finance Law from Harvard Law School, and an MBA from INSEAD Business School. She is also an International Finance Corporation (World Bank) Board Evaluation Certified Professional and Corporate Governance Trainer.

Wola's achievements have earned widespread recognition. Most recently, she received the inaugural Leadership Excellence Award of the Year at the Legal Era Africa Awards 2024, becoming the first-ever recipient of this category. The award celebrated her historic transition from General Counsel to Group MD/CEO, a milestone applauded for redefining leadership pathways in the legal profession.

She is a member of the Institute of Directors and the Society for Corporate Governance Nigeria. Additionally, she is an associate member of the Institute of Chartered Secretaries and Administrators of Nigeria, and Women in Management, Business, and Public Service.



GENDER INSIGHTS

The Hidden Cost of Leadership: How Nigerian Women Are Forced to Lead from the Sidelines

Asmau Benzies Leo

In Nigeria, women's leadership is frequently celebrated in rhetoric but punished in practice. Across politics, public service, civil society, media, academia, and community leadership, women who step into positions of authority quickly learn that representation does not come with protection. Instead, it comes with a hidden cost, one that many are forced to pay in silence.

Women leaders face multi-dimensional violence that extends far beyond physical threats. It includes online harassment, cyber stalking, character assassination, political intimidation, economic sabotage, threats to personal and family safety, and exclusion from key decision-making spaces. These acts are often dismissed as "part of politics" or "normal criticism," yet they operate as a deliberate system designed to delegitimize women's authority and push them out of power.

Unlike their male counterparts, women leaders must constantly defend their competence, manage reputational attacks, and navigate unsafe physical and digital environments, often without institutional backing. Political parties rarely provide protection for female candidates or officeholders. Public institutions lack safeguarding and reporting mechanisms. Law enforcement responses to threats and harassment are weak, inconsistent, or

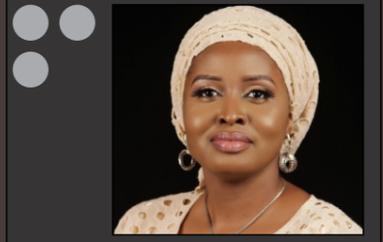
dismissive. As a result, many women resort to self censorship, reduced visibility, or informal influence, making them lead from the sidelines rather than being at the center of power.

The personal toll is profound. Leadership under constant hostility produces burnout, anxiety, and emotional exhaustion, yet mental health remains largely absent from governance conversations. When women step back or opt out, the narrative often blames individual "capacity" or "commitment," ignoring the hostile conditions that made sustained leadership untenable.

Violence against women in leadership is often seen strictly a women's issue, but I can say it is a democratic and governance failure. A system that cannot protect women leaders cannot claim to be inclusive, accountable, or resilient. Addressing this issue requires deliberate institutional and policy action.

Nigeria must adopt mandatory safeguarding frameworks for women in leadership across political parties, public institutions, and civil society organizations. Political parties and public institutions should establish enforceable codes of conduct, sanctions, and protection mechanisms for female candidates and officeholders. Existing legal frameworks, including laws on cybercrime, office harassment, sexual exploitation and abuse and electoral violence, must be implemented and enforced through a gender responsive lens. Leadership institutions must integrate psychosocial and mental health support as part of governance infrastructure, not as an afterthought.

Until these protections exist, Nigerian women will continue to lead with intimidation and from the sidelines. This is not inevitable; it is a policy choice. Protecting women in leadership is a test of political will, institutional maturity, and democratic seriousness. Nigeria must decide whether women's leadership is merely symbolic or truly worth defending, safeguarding, and sustaining.



Dr. Asmau Benzies Leo

Executive Director, Centre for Nonviolence and Gender Advocacy in Nigeria (CENGAİN)

Dr. Asmau Benzies Leo is a development practitioner with extensive national and international expertise in gender equality, peace-building, governance, and humanitarian action.

She holds a PhD in Public Governance and Leadership, a Master's degree in Conflict Management and Peace Studies, and executive certifications from leading institutions including Howard University, Harvard University and Glasgow Caledonian University.

As Executive Director of the Centre for Non-violence and Gender Advocacy in Nigeria (CENGAİN), she has led ground-breaking advocacy initiatives on women's political participation, gender-based violence prevention, and security sector reform across multiple World Bank, UN and EU-supported projects.

Internationally, Dr. Leo has represented civil society at the United Nations, contributed to regional dialogues on Women, Peace and Security, and partnered with global networks advancing gender justice and inclusive governance.

She is a UN Recognised Global Ambassador on Women, Peace and Security. Her expertise bridges grassroots action with policy advocacy, making her a respected voice in advancing gender equality and sustainable peace in fragile and conflict-affected contexts.





FINANCIAL AdviseHER

Why Financial Education Is the Real Shortcut to Financial Freedom

By Sola Adesakin

The longer I work in finance, the more convinced I become of one truth: lack of financial education is the number one reason most people never reach financial freedom. This has nothing to do with intelligence. Some of the most educated people earn well but still live with financial anxiety. Others make decent money yet have nothing to show for it after years of work. The problem is not income alone.

It is understanding. Money rewards clarity. Confusion is expensive. Financial education does not magically make you rich, but it removes the blindfold that keeps people running in circles. Here are five powerful things financial education will do for you, and why it matters more than ever.

1. Financial Education Helps You Stop Making Costly Mistakes

Many financial setbacks are not caused by bad luck. They come from poor decisions made without enough information. High-interest debt, impulsive investments, lifestyle inflation, and falling for “too good to be true” schemes are common examples. When you understand money, you pause before you commit. You ask better questions. You recognise red flags early. You learn the difference between a risk and a trap. Financial education saves you money not by increasing your income, but by reducing avoidable losses.

2. It Turns Income Into Progress, Not Just Survival

Earning money is one thing. Using it well is another. Without financial education, income often disappears into expenses with no clear direction. Bills get paid, life continues, but nothing is being built. With education, every pound or naira begins to serve a purpose. You learn how to allocate money intentionally: what to spend, what to save, what to invest, and what to delay. Income stops being something you chase and starts becoming something you deploy. That shift from earning to building is where progress begins.

3. It Gives You Confidence, Not Guesswork

Many people feel anxious about money because they do not understand it. They rely on advice from friends, social media trends, or fear-driven decisions. This creates financial stress, even when income is steady. Financial education replaces guesswork

with confidence. You understand why you are making a decision, not just what you are doing. You are less shaken by market noise and less tempted by shortcuts. Confidence does not mean knowing everything. It means knowing enough to make informed choices and adjust when necessary.

4. It Helps You Build Assets, Not Just a Lifestyle

Lifestyle upgrades are easy. Asset building takes intention. Financial education teaches you the difference between things that consume money and things that multiply it. It shifts your focus from appearance to sustainability. You begin to prioritise assets; investments, businesses, skills, systems that can generate income or grow in value over time. You stop measuring success only by what you can buy and start measuring it by what you own and what works for you. This is how people move from working forever to having options.

5. It Gives You Control Over Your Future

Perhaps the most powerful benefit of financial education is control. When you understand money, you are less at the mercy of circumstances. You can plan ahead, adapt to change, and recover faster from setbacks. You know how to prepare for emergencies, opportunities, and transitions. Financial freedom is not always about never working again. For many, it is about choice; the ability to make decisions without panic or pressure. Education gives you that leverage. Financial education does not promise overnight success. What it offers is something more valuable: direction. It helps you see clearly, act intentionally, and build steadily. Over time, small informed decisions compound into meaningful results. If there is one investment that pays dividends across every stage of life, it is learning how money works. Because when you understand money, you stop chasing freedom and start building it.



By Sola Adesakin

Founder and Lead Coach,
Smart Stewards

Sola Adesakin is a highly respected wealth coach and chartered accountant with over two decades of transformative impact in the finance industry. As the visionary founder of Smart Stewards Financial Advisory Limited and Smart Stewards Advisory LLC, she has revolutionized the financial wellbeing of countless individuals and businesses across 40 countries. Her methodical approach to ‘make-manage-multiply’ money principles has elevated many from financial stress to prosperity, and mediocrity to exceptional achievement.

Sola is a strong supporter of SDG5 and SDG10, as she seeks to close the gender gap and reduce inequality through financial education, financial technology, and access to funding. Sola’s dedication to achieving gender equality and reducing inequality is evident in her work as an alumna of the Academy for Women Entrepreneurs, an initiative of the US Embassy in Nigeria, and the Cherie Blair Foundation’s Road to Growth Program. She is also an alumna of Goldman Sachs 10,000 Women program and a member of the Select Global Women in Tech (SGWIT) Mentorship Network of the United States of America. Through the FRUIT Foundation, which she serves as Founder and CEO, she has partnered with the US consulate in Nigeria to champion the economic empowerment of women, assisting them to start and scale their business ventures.

Her impressive academic credentials include a BSc and an MBA degree from Oxford Brookes University and Edinburgh Business School, respectively. She is a fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria (ICAN), the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants of the United Kingdom (ACCA), and a member of the Chartered Professional Accountants of Canada (CPA). In addition to her impressive credentials, Sola Adesakin is also a Certified Financial Education InstructorSM and a member of the Personal Finance Speakers Association.



MADE FOR MORE

From Dream to Done (Part 3)

By Ifeoma Chuks-Adizue

The Mindset Structures Required to Expand Into Your MORE

In Parts 1 and 2, we explored the external structures that help purpose scale and the personal structures that help you sustain calling without losing yourself. BUT there is one more layer that determines how far your purpose can actually go..and that is YOUR MINDSET because no matter how strong your systems are, you will never build beyond the version of yourself you believe is possible.

This is where the Igbo girl in me can't help but go GBAM!
In my work with Career Women seeking

to birth purpose beyond their 9-5, I have seen that most career women don't stall because they lack vision or competence, they stall because their thinking has NOT yet expanded to carry what they are being called into....

...and this sadly manifests as procrastination and a bunch of other excuses.

So today, let's deal with this. Here are three mindset structures every purpose-driven career woman must build if she's going to expand into her MORE.

▶ 1. YOU MUST SEPARATE YOUR IDENTITY AND CALLING FROM YOUR CAPACITY

One of the most limiting beliefs Career women carry is confusing current capacity with true identity. Your calling does not change because your life is full. What changes and must be built is your capacity - directly or indirectly. In your career, you already know this. When scope expands, you don't quit. You hire, delegate, automate, restructure and rethink how work gets done. This same mindset must apply to purpose. You don't shrink the assignment to fit your

life. You expand capacity to carry it - intelligently, strategically and over time.

▶ 2. YOU MUST NORMALISE GROWTH DISCOMFORT AND FACE IT STRATEGICALLY

Discomfort is not a sign you're failing. It's often a sign you're growing. It's important to note though that growth discomfort does not always mean doing more yourself. It could also mean thinking differently about how the work gets done. In your career, when pressure increases, you don't panic. You step back, assess the problem, bring in expertise, redesign the approach and then move forward strategically right? That same leadership mindset must apply to your purpose work! Instead of abandoning your purpose work when things feel heavy, ask:

- What is this phase asking me to learn?
- What support or structure is missing?
- What would a wiser version of me do next?

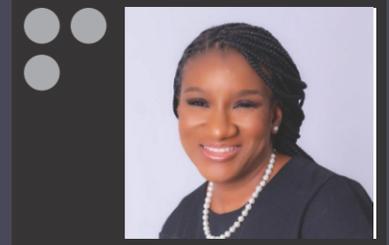
▶ 3. RELEASE THE NEED FOR PERFECTION BEFORE VISIBILITY

Our careers have conditioned us to ensure all is perfect before presenting to the world, and this level of excellence has served you well. However, when it comes to your purpose work, perfection can be a hindrance. Many career women delay starting because they want their work to be "ready," but readiness is not the requirement...obedience is as there are lives tied to you. By the way, what feels imperfect to you is often more than enough for the people you're meant to serve. Your experience, clarity and maturity mean that even your "first draft" is already valuable. What are you still refining that could already be serving someone today?

In Closing...

Your purpose requires you to think at the level of who you already are becoming. You've built systems in your career and navigated complexity. Apply that same mindset to your assignment. That is how dreams move from idea... to done.

Until next week, keep saying YES to your MORE.



By Ifeoma Chuks-Adizue

Managing Director Africa at Global Citizen

Ifeoma Chuks-Adizue, fondly known as Iphie, is a seasoned professional with a rare mix of experience in brand management, sales, media and over 20 years' experience building global brands across Africa.

Iphie is the Managing Director Africa at Global Citizen - an international advocacy organisation focused on ending extreme poverty now.

Prior to this role, Iphie was the Executive Director Commercial at CAP PLC, makers of Dulux Paint where she led the Sales and Marketing teams to quadruple the business in 4 years.

A graduate of Economics from the University of Jos, Iphie started her career with Procter & Gamble Nigeria where she held several leadership positions, before moving to Cadbury Nigeria, then CAP PLC, and now Global Citizen.

Iphie Chuks-Adizue is the author of two books - The Uncommon Woman and Made for More, and is Founding President of the Uncommon Woman Movement,

She is a wife, mother of three children and recipient of several awards, the most recent being the Exceptional Leader of Excellence Award from the Global Women Economic Forum.

HER POINT OF VIEW

Mentorship From Afar: The "Silent Teachers" Who Shape Our Careers

Chinyere Okorochoa



influential mentors in my career never sat across a table from me. They never reviewed my CV. They never gave me a direct pep talk. They never even knew they were mentoring me. They mentored me from afar. I learnt early that mentorship is not always about proximity. It's about learning.

Years ago, early in my career, there was a woman in my office building. She was a lawyer, and she embodied everything I aspired to become. She was poised, articulate, and carried herself with a quiet confidence that made people pay attention the moment she walked into a room. What struck me first was her presence. She dressed with elegance that felt intentional, not loud. Long skirts and blouses, always well put together. A stylish briefcase that somehow made even the busiest day look composed. But beyond her appearance, it was the way she carried herself. Her posture, her pace, her calm. She had that rare kind of authority that doesn't need to announce itself. Whenever she spoke, people listened. Men included.

And in those moments, I would catch myself pausing whatever I was doing, just to observe. Not in a nosy way, but in a curious way. I was studying her without realising it. How she entered conversations. How she disagreed without drama. How she made her point without apology. How she didn't shrink, even in rooms that were not designed for women to take up space. I never approached her.

We never had a mentor-mentee relationship in the traditional sense. But I watched her. And without even knowing it, she became my standard. My silent mentor from afar.

That experience shaped how I think about mentorship today, especially for women who feel stuck because they don't have access to a "big mentor." Maybe you work in an environment where senior leaders are distant. Maybe you don't have a sponsor yet. Maybe you've reached out to people who never responded. Maybe

you're in a season where formal mentorship isn't available.

I want you to know something. You can still be mentored. You can still learn. You can still grow. Because some mentorship happens through observation. Through modelling. Through intentional learning from those who inspire you.

Here are the key lessons that silent mentor taught me, without ever saying a word to me.

- ▶ **The first lesson was the power of presence.** How you show up matters just as much as what you say. Presence is not about being flashy. It is about being intentional. It is the way you carry yourself, the confidence in your posture, the steadiness in your tone, and the energy you bring into a room. People often decide how to treat you before you even speak. Presence sets the tone.
- ▶ **The second lesson was commanding respect.** I watched how her knowledge and confidence made people listen. She didn't fight for attention. She earned it through competence and calm authority. She was prepared. She was articulate. She spoke with clarity. And because she respected herself, others followed suit.
- ▶ **The third lesson was leading with grace.** Professionalism is not only about skills, it is about how you carry yourself under pressure. I watched her respond rather than react. I watched her stay composed in tense moments. I watched her handle interactions with dignity. That taught me that grace is not softness. Grace is strength under control.

And over time, those lessons became part of me. They influenced how I dressed for certain meetings, how I entered rooms, how I contributed to conversations, how I developed my own leadership presence as I advanced in my career. She shaped the lawyer I became, from a distance.

So how do you apply mentorship from afar in a practical, intentional way?

- ▶ **Start by identifying your "standard."** Choose one to three people you admire. They may be in your workplace, your industry, or even on a public platform. What matters is that they represent qualities you want to develop, not just success you want to copy.
 - ▶ **Next, observe with purpose.** Don't just admire, study. How do they speak? How do they manage pressure? How do they communicate boundaries? How do they handle conflict? How do they show confidence without arrogance? Observation becomes mentorship when it is intentional.
 - ▶ **Then translate what you see into action.** Pick one trait at a time and practice it. If it's presence, work on how you walk into rooms and introduce yourself. If it's communication, practice speaking with clarity and brevity. If it's confidence, practice owning your ideas without over explaining.
 - ▶ **Also, collect principles, not personalities.** Your goal is not to become someone else. Your goal is to learn what works and adapt it to who you are. Mentorship from afar should refine you, not replace you.
 - ▶ **Finally, when you can, honour your mentors, even if they never mentored you directly.** Sometimes a simple message like, "I've observed your professionalism over the years and it has inspired me," can be meaningful. And if you don't have access to say it, you can still honour them by becoming the kind of woman other women can learn from too. Because one day, someone will be watching you.
- Learning how you show up. Studying how you speak. Borrowing courage from the way you lead. Mentorship is not always about proximity. Sometimes, it is about paying attention. Have you ever had a mentor from afar, someone who inspired you without even knowing it? Let's celebrate them today.



Chinyere Okorochoa

Partner in the Law Firm of JACKSON, ETTI & EDU

With over three decades of experience as a trailblazer in the legal profession, Chinyere Okorochoa has established herself as a leading voice in law, leadership, and career growth for women. As a partner in one of the most prestigious law firms in the country, she has not only navigated the complexities of a competitive industry but has consistently broken barriers to become a sought-after leader, mentor, and advocate for women in the workplace.

Chinyere's career journey is a testament to her resilience, vision, and versatility. She has held numerous leadership positions, served as a director on multiple boards, and is widely admired for her strategic thinking and ability to inspire teams toward excellence. Beyond her professional accomplishments, she has also graced stages as a speaker, sharing insights on leadership, career growth, and the unique challenges women face in their professional lives.

A devoted wife and proud mother of three, Chinyere understands firsthand the challenges of balancing the demands of a thriving career with a fulfilling personal life. Through her own experiences, she has mastered the art of work-life integration, demonstrating that women can achieve extraordinary professional success without sacrificing the joys of family and personal well-being.

Her career development platform, Heels & Ladders, is dedicated to mentoring and guiding women who aspire to redefine success, achieve career mastery, and lead with purpose. Whether you're navigating leadership challenges, striving for balance, or looking to amplify your influence, Chinyere's expertise will help you transform ambition into achievement.

When we talk about mentorship, we often imagine something formal and structured. A seasoned professional agrees to mentor you. You meet monthly. You

ask questions. They give advice. You take notes. You grow. And yes, that kind of mentorship is powerful. But in my own experience, not all mentorship happens through formal conversations, coaching sessions, or one-on-one guidance. Some of the most



WOMAN AT THE HELM

Tsitsi Mutendi

Co-Founder African Family Firms

Tsitsi Mutendi is a Family Business Consultant / Family Office

Specialist who helps businesses and families set up structure, governance, philanthropy and succession strategies that help them create lasting legacies and allows them to build multi-generational wealth. She is the co-founder of African Family Firms - The African Family Business Association that is the voice of African family businesses.

Tsitsi believes family businesses hold the key to sustainable economies and solid structures that can support the SDGs set out by the UN. According to her, to do so, the families need the support, skills and knowledge to support their vision for the future and the values they believe in.

Tsitsi specialises in business continuity planning, family business services, especially structuring, family governance and succession planning, including legacy planning and

building strategies.

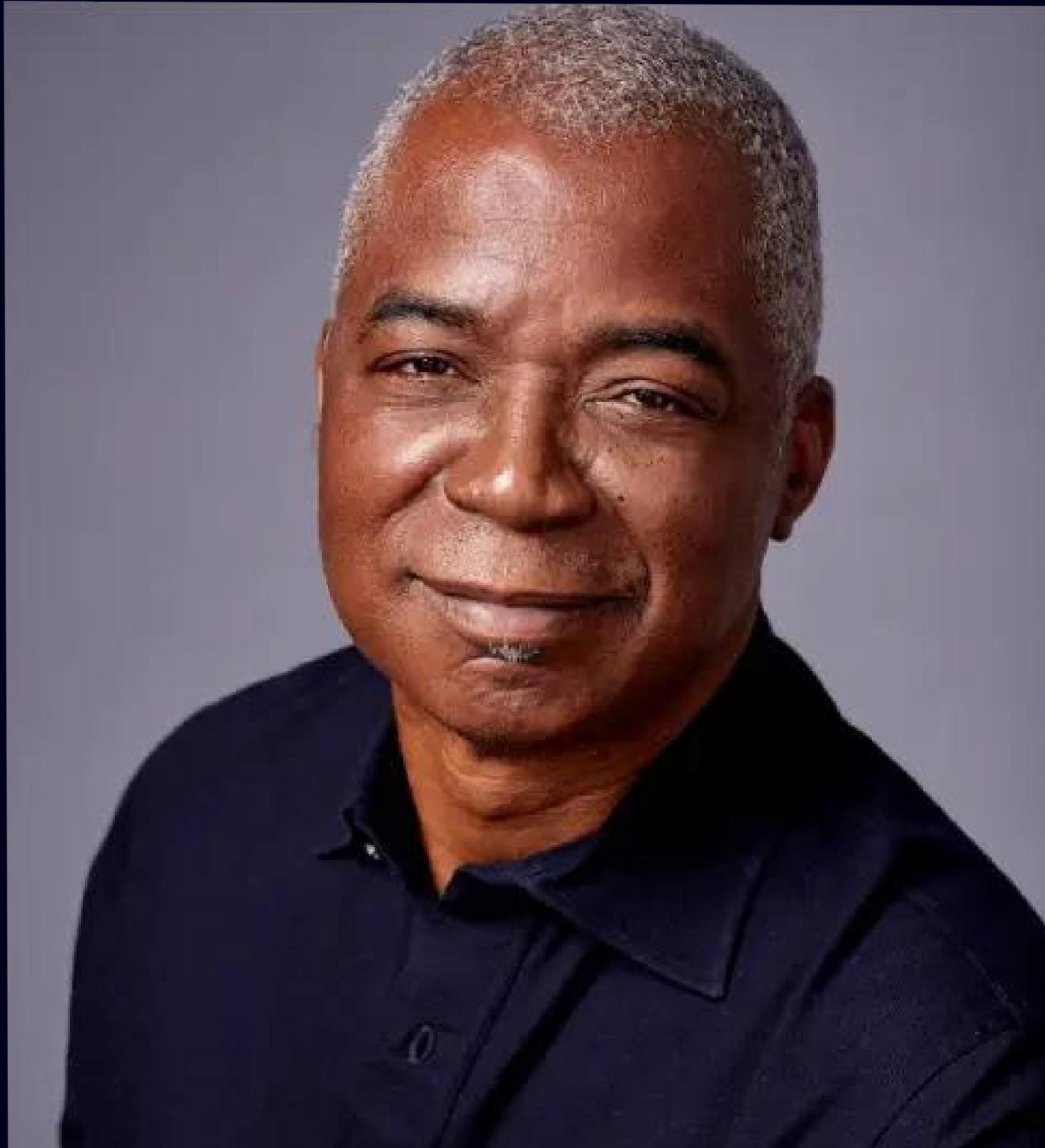
She is also Principal at Nheyo Education Fund. At Nheyo, they are on a mission to address the educational disparities across Southern Africa by financing and facilitating scalable, high-impact, and sustainable educational initiatives. Anchored in Montessori principles and powered by cutting-edge technology, their focus is on providing affordable, quality education for middle-market communities—a vital yet undeserved segment critical to regional development.

By integrating innovative teaching methodologies with advanced EdTech solutions, Nheyo is committed to equipping learners with the skills they need to thrive in a competitive global landscape while making a lasting impact on their local communities.

At African Family Firms, they support African family businesses in overcoming their challenges and help them build

lasting legacies. The organisation champions the critical role family firms play in the African continent's economies and societies. By promoting African family businesses through connections, expertise and advocacy, the organisation focuses on contributing to the intellectual progress on topics related to family business management, particularly on succession, family governance, next-generation development, and family communication. African Family Firms also endeavors to promote and facilitate the positive role of family businesses in the economy and society.

Tsitsi is an expert in family governance through SIMPLE. Simple is a next-generation insights lab focused on helping family offices and private investors to professionalise and be future-ready. Their team of bright people dotted around the globe craft simple solutions for the complex scenarios that businesses are faced with every day.



WE'VE GOT MEN

Dr. Tunji Olowolafe

Chairman of Deux Project Limited

Dr. Tunji Olowolafe is a medical doctor, who bagged his MBBS degree from the University of Ilorin, Nigeria. He practiced and later made the transition from active medical practice in 1988. He founded Deux Project Limited, which, among other things, specialises in revitalising top-tier hospitals across Nigeria. As Managing Director and Chairman of Deux Project Limited, his adaptability and forward-thinking approach prompted a strategic shift in the company's focus from healthcare to encompass civil engineering, construction, consultancy, and maintenance services. His career included not only healthcare but business sectors. He wears the entrepreneurial hat, showing expertise and guts even as a construction mogul.

He is an ardent participant in

supporting other organisations like West Power & Gas, where he serves as a non-executive Director.

Born in London and currently resides in Lagos, Nigeria, he is a seasoned investor with diverse business interests in oil & gas, power, real estate, mining, and technology, reflecting a comprehensive approach to nation-building.

In 2008, he was Chairman of the Lekki Concession Company ("LCC") and in 2009, he participated in a consortium of investors that acquired a substantial stake in GZ Industries, a local manufacturer of aluminum beverage cans.

In 2020, he was part of Ekiti State's response to the Covid-19 pandemic. As the Chair of the Medical Logistics and Project Nomination

Committee, he was responsible for enhancing healthcare facilities, including the Oba Adejugbe Specialist Hospital, and advancing the State's research and testing capabilities. Furthermore, he established a Molecular Diagnostic Laboratory in Ekiti State Teaching Hospital for COVID-19 testing.

Dr. Tunji is also the Chancellor of the Ekiti State University (EKSU). A recipient of several awards, one that stands out is his recognition as a World Fellow of the Duke of Edinburgh, an honour reserved for individuals who have exhibited extraordinary leadership and service.

There is more to Dr. Tunji. He enjoys long-distance running, and marathon training. He also loves to read and enjoys self-development.

HOLISTIC LIVING

Fuel and Motion: Why What You Eat and How You Move Shape Your Whole Life

By Dr. Maymunah Yusuf Kadiri



Muna hated queues. Lagos had taught her patience in ways she never asked for. She queued for fuel,

queued at the bank, queued to vote, queued at the embassy, even queued for her favourite Suya spot. Queues had become part of daily life.

So why did this one feel different?

Sitting quietly in the clinic, waiting to see the doctor, Muna felt her chest tighten. She picked up her phone to distract

herself, scrolling through contacts until she saw her mother's name. A tear slipped down her cheek. That was when she understood the anxiety. Just weeks earlier, Muna had lost her mother to complications from undiagnosed diabetes.

Her mother had always brushed off concern. "We have big bones in this family," she would say, laughing it off. Meals were generous, movement was optional, and check-ups were postponed. Until one day, life made a decision she never got to prepare for. That moment changed Muna.

She promised herself she would not wait for illness to teach her what health should have taught her earlier. From that day, she committed to regular check-ups, mindful eating, and consistent movement, not out of fear, but out of responsibility to herself and her daughter.

Muna's story is not unique. It reflects a quiet reality many people live with: we often underestimate the power of daily habits until their absence becomes costly.

Physical activity and nutrition are not

lifestyle trends. They are the foundations of holistic wellbeing shaping not just how long we live, but how well we live.

Movement is medicine.

Physical activity is any movement that raises the heart rate. Walking, dancing, swimming, cycling, stretching, household chores all count. Regular movement strengthens the heart and lungs, lowers blood pressure, improves circulation, and reduces the risk of chronic illnesses such as heart disease, diabetes, osteoporosis, and certain cancers.

But movement does more than protect the body.

It stabilises mood, reduces anxiety, improves sleep, sharpens focus, and releases endorphins, the body's natural mood enhancers. In a world saturated with stress, movement helps the nervous system discharge tension it was never designed to carry indefinitely.

You do not need a gym membership to move your body.

You need intention.

Nutrition is information, not just food.

What we eat becomes the raw material for every cell in the body. Nutrition influences energy levels, immunity, hormone balance, brain function, and emotional regulation.

A balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and healthy fats supports sustained energy, stable blood sugar, and better mental clarity.

Poor nutrition, on the other hand, contributes to fatigue, mood swings, inflammation, weight gain, and increased risk of chronic disease.

Food also affects mental health more than we often realise.

Emerging evidence continues to show links between diet quality and conditions such as depression and anxiety. Highly processed foods and excessive sugar may offer temporary comfort but often worsen energy crashes and emotional instability over time.

Holistic wellbeing happens at the

intersection.

Physical activity and nutrition work best together. Movement improves how the body uses nutrients. Good nutrition fuels movement and recovery. Together, they create resilience, the ability to meet life's demands without breaking down.

Importantly, this is not about perfection. It is about consistency.

Small choices compound. Taking the stairs. Choosing water more often. Adding vegetables to meals. Walking for ten minutes. These actions seem insignificant in isolation, but over time, they shape health outcomes more powerfully than occasional extremes. The cost of neglect is often delayed.

Like Muna's mother, many people feel "fine" until suddenly they are not. Chronic illnesses develop quietly, influenced by years of unmanaged habits. By the time symptoms appear, the body has often been compensating for far longer than we realise. Prevention is not fear-based. It is foresight.

Healthy living also models something important for the next generation. Children learn health behaviours by observation. When adults prioritise movement, balanced meals, and regular check-ups, they pass on more than advice, they pass on protection. The goal is not to live in restriction or anxiety. The goal is to live with awareness.

Physical activity and nutrition are not about punishment or aesthetics. They are about capacity the capacity to work, love, parent, think clearly, manage stress, and enjoy life.

Muna still hates queues. But the one at the doctor's office is no longer a source of fear. It is a reminder that choosing health early is far less costly than treating illness later.

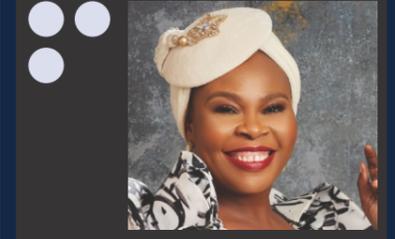
Holistic wellbeing is built daily.

With movement.

With nourishment.

With intention.

The most powerful investment you can make in your life is the one you make in your body before it is forced to ask for attention.



Dr. Maymunah Yusuf Kadiri

Psychiatrist-In-Chief at Pinnacle Medical Services

Dr. MAYMUNAH YUSUF KADIRI (aka DR. MAY) popularly referred to as "The Celebrity Shrink," is a multiple award winning Mental Health Physician, Advocate & Coach. She is the convener of "The Mental Health Conference" and the Medical Director and Psychiatrist-In-Chief at Pinnacle Medical Services, Nigeria's leading and foremost Psychology and Mental health clinic prominent in the application of innovative clinical approaches in the management/treatment of a wide range of psychological, emotional, and behavioral related disorders.

Dr. Kadiri is a dynamic Consultant Neuro-Psychiatrist and a Fellow of the National Post Graduate Medical College of Nigeria (FMCPsych) with almost 20 years' experience as a practicing Physician. She is a trained and certified Rational Emotive and Cognitive Behavioural Therapist from Albert Ellis Institute, New York, USA. She is also a certified Trauma Counsellor and Neurofeedback Practitioner.

Dr. Kadiri has wide experience in psycho-therapeutic techniques and has perfected her skills whilst in private practice and whilst working for a variety of organizations. She is a recognized radio and television guest Psychiatrist and Psychotherapist. She also contributes to articles published in magazines and newspapers.

She is the only Nigerian with the 14Ps.....Physician, Psychiatrist, Psychologist, Psychotherapist, Practitioner (NLP, BFB, NFB), Public Speaker, Published Author, Producer (movies), Proficient Coach, Parent, Philanthropist, People oriented, Public Health Advocate and Passionate about God and life.

The founder of Pinnacle Health Radio, African's #1 online health radio and a non profit organization, "Pinnacle Medicals SPEAKOUT Initiative" which is geared towards creating Mental Health literacy in Nigeria and beyond.

The Executive producer of award winning movies, Pepper soup (focused on drug abuse) and Little Drops of Happy (focused on depression, postpartum depression and suicide) and creator of the most innovative mental health app in Africa, HOW BODI.

Let's talk about it

It's a New Year, Invest in your mind... intentionally

Asmau Benzies Leo

Happy New Year,
beautiful people.
Happy 2026.

I've spent the past few weeks auditing myself. Who I was. Who I am now. Who I'm becoming. And honestly, I think I've done a good job so far. No, I'm not going to add "maybe I could have done better," because that's what we're conditioned to do, right? Downplay our progress. Shrink our wins. Believe that there's always some invisible goal we could have attained.. That won't be happening here. Should some people have done better? Yes. Do I believe I belong in that group? No. I'm stretched. I've put in so much work reshaping my mind and my thinking that sometimes it feels like my brain is in quiet protest. Imagine a mind that has processed life the same way for decades, suddenly being told, "There's a better way." If it could talk back, it would probably say, "Madam, let's leave it like this." which, if we're honest, is exactly what most of our minds say to us. Let's leave it like this. If it ain't broke, don't fix it.

But where did we learn that? When did we, as humans, start mistaking stagnation for contentment?

It's fascinating how some people upgrade everything in their lives but themselves. New gadgets. New cars. New social circles. New investments.

But a new mindset? No, no, no (like my toddler would say). Let's keep that as is. Can you see how urgent we need a rewiring?

We see clearly how upgraded devices function differently. Better cameras. Faster cars. Stronger networks. Now imagine how differently we would function if we upgraded ourselves. How differently we would move if we invested intentionally in our minds?

We spend \$2,000 on a new phone without blinking, but can we spend that on coaching or therapy?

₦65,000,000 on a new car, but on a mentor-led residential retreat? How?

Wigs and watches. Bags and brunches. Investments on body, body, body. But barely any on our soul. Can we do better this year?

Can we upgrade who we are inside? Can we focus more on lighting up our hearts than our videos?

What will rank top 10 on our list of investments at the end of the year?

Can we try living from inside out this year?

For me, I'll continue living out my upgrade lifestyle this year.

I'm attending at least one international residential coaching retreat in Q1. It's worth a pretty penny, and I'm paying it gladly. I'm continuing therapy, because clarity and emotional hygiene are non-negotiables for me. I'll be attending a minimum of four industry-related conferences this year, staying sharpened, exposed and in rooms that stretch me. I'll also be keeping my Audible subscription and "reading" consistently, separate from the podcasts I'm subscribed to. I'll be hosting my role models and mentors to lunches and brunches so I can soak in their wisdom, discipline and clarity; and I'll also be taking personal retreats, stepping away to recalibrate, so I can

remain in alignment with myself.

This is what investing from the inside out looks like for me.

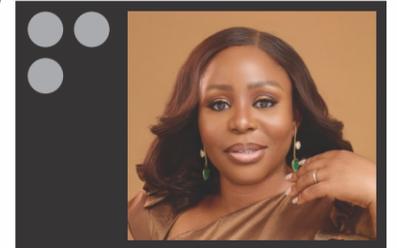
Let me be clear. This is an uncomfortable journey. Your old self will wrestle your new self and ask, "What is this upgrade? Who asked for it?" but if you stay the course and take sides with your new self at all times, you'll wish you had started the journey sooner because your new self is smarter, funnier, more confident...

more creative... You'll love your new self! So, what's it going to be this year? Will you at least think about it, and try?

Send me a message and tell me how you plan to upgrade your mind this year, and I'll respond to as many messages as I can. Thank you for considering it.

Lots of love,

Toyosi



Toyosi Etim-Effiong

Founder, That Good Media

Toyosi Etim-Effiong is a distinguished media executive who is bridging the gap between Nollywood and the global film and TV industry. With over 10 years of multifaceted experience in the media industry, she possesses the vital exposure and skills needed to drive media-related and experiential projects, as well as develop communication strategies for personal and corporate brands. She is a go-to personality and brand for anyone seeking to connect with key players in the media and entertainment industry on the African continent.

As the founder and CEO of That Good Media, a media solutions company with a talent management as well as an international partnerships division, Toyosi has successfully positioned herself as a leading expert in the African movie industry. Given her experience and expertise gained through various roles in the thriving Nollywood industry, she possesses the necessary skills and knowledge to facilitate international partnerships with investors on a global scale.



A Journey Through Traditional Beauty & Flavor

Inside Clay Food Shop & The Henna Place

“Together, Clay Food Shop and The Henna Place offer more than services. They offer belonging. A place where tradition is not just preserved, but honored, elevated, and shared”

Clayfoodshop

Clay Food Shop is more than just a restaurant, it's a cultural experience. Known for its traditional elegance and modern interpretations of Northern Nigerian cuisine, Clay is a destination for food lovers who seek authenticity in every bite.

From their signature ram suya to rich native sauces, tigernut juice, and wholesome masa, every meal evokes the comfort of tradition.

 [@clayfoodshoplagos](https://www.instagram.com/clayfoodshoplagos)
: +234909 554 4990

The Henna Place

Established in 2014, The Henna Place is Nigeria's leading traditional spa, bringing centuries old Moroccan, Northern Nigeria and Arab beauty rituals into the general wellness market. Specializing in Moroccan hammam treatments, sugar waxing, herbal hair care, and intricate henna designs, the spa provides a deeply relaxing and culturally rich self care experience.

With multiple branches across Nigeria, including three branches in Lagos, The Henna Place has become a go-to destination for brides, beauty lovers, and women seeking intentional, soul-restoring care from head to toe, it's a place to cleanse, unwind, and reconnect with yourself the traditional way.

 [@Thehennaplace](https://www.instagram.com/Thehennaplace)
: +2349095327273

