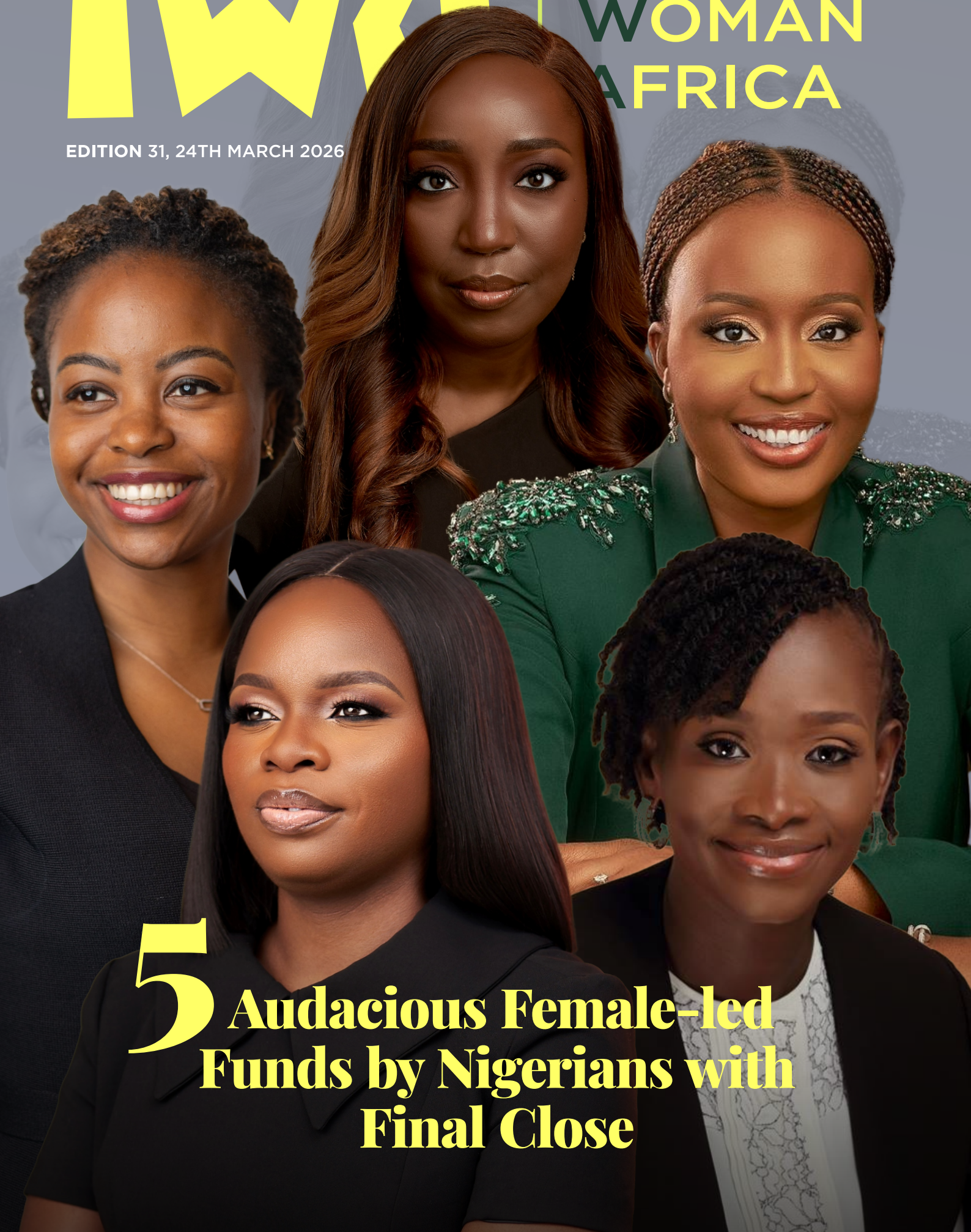


iWA

**INSPIRING
WOMAN
AFRICA**

EDITION 31, 24TH MARCH 2026



**5 Audacious Female-led
Funds by Nigerians with
Final Close**

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**Kemi
Ajumobi**

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Welcome!

Dear Readers,

Hello gracious people! How are you doing? I know you are on your grind ensuring you stay in line with meeting your goals. I am hopeful for you that you will find ease, and like the women we are celebrating in this edition, honour and rewards will find you too.

I am encouraged by the increase in numbers of women-led funds that are closing. We aren't there yet in terms of the expected increase but so far, so good. With the results we are seeing, it can only get better. On this edition of our cover are women, who through their companies are clear examples of never giving up. Their determination is admirable and we applaud their process. We present to you 5 Audacious Female-Led Funds By Nigerians With Final Close: **ADESUWA OKUNBO RHODES** (\$55m), Founding Partner & CEO, Aruwa Capital Management, **ABIOLA OJO-OSAGIE** (\$2.3bn), Senior Partner & Managing Director, Anglophone West Africa, AfricInvest Capital Partners, TOSIN OJO (\$129m), Partner, Sahel Capital, **OGUGUA OSAKWE-ADEGBITE** (\$443m), Head of Strategic Partnerships, Partech Africa and **ELOHO OMAME** (\$300m+), Partner, TLcom Capital & Co-Founder, FirstCheck Africa. We share their experiences and beneficial nuggets. Congratulations to them all.

Here are other articles in this edition:

FINANCIAL AdviseHER: Dear Salary Earner: Your Salary Is Power. By Sola Adesakin.

HER POINT OF VIEW: Unshakable Confidence: The Career Woman's Quiet Superpower. By Chinyere Okorocha.

WOMAN EXECUTIVE: The "Invisible" CEO: Leading From The Middle. By Wola Joseph-Condotti.

GENDER INSIGHT: Nigeria's Multi-Front Security Crisis. By Asmau Benzie-Leo.

HOLISTIC LIVING: Confidence Begins In The Body: The Holistic Path to Reclaiming Self-Worth. By Dr. Maymunah Yusuf Kadiri.

TRIBE WITH THE VIBES: Excellence, Skill or Value? By Zainab Aderounmu.

WE'VE GOT MEN: John Chigbu, Chairman/CEO, Cassona USA Inc & Managing Partner, Chigbu & Co LLP

WOMAN AT THE HELM: Joyce-Ann Wainaina, Managing Partner, Chui Ventures, Nairobi, Kenya.

See you next week for another powerful edition.

Take care!



ADESUWA OKUNBO RHODES (\$55m)

FOUNDING PARTNER & CEO,
ARUWA CAPITAL MANAGEMENT

Kemi Ajumobi



Adesuwa Okubo Rhodes is an experienced finance professional with a demonstrated

track record over the last 15 years in investment banking and private equity from global institutions such as J.P Morgan. She is the Founder of Aruwa Capital Management, one of the few women owned and managed early stage growth equity funds in Africa investing into untapped investment opportunities in West Africa in the small to lower mid-market.

Adesuwa is an entrepreneur, CEO, mother, investor and women's empowerment advocate. She founded Aruwa Capital in order to make an impact in society with her skills and track record and change the narrative for women and small businesses across Africa. She is one of the youngest female private equity fund managers in Africa having launched Aruwa Capital at 29 years old. Adesuwa is the first female solo GP to raise more than \$10 million in an institutional first fund in Nigeria.

Adesuwa is a big believer that investing in women is not only the moral thing to do given the role women play in society and the multiplier it can have in terms of poverty alleviation for families, but also because investing in women and for women, has been proven to deliver outsized and superior returns.

Adesuwa is focused on using Aruwa Capital Management's investments as a case study to illustrate the business case



to invest in women as fund managers, entrepreneurs, consumers and stakeholders in society. She is a recipient of several outstanding awards.

► **What is the fund for?**

Aruwa Capital Management is designed to provide access to growth capital to high-potential small and medium-sized businesses across Africa, that otherwise won't have access from other sources, particularly in sectors that drive economic development and job creation.

What differentiates our approach is that we invest with a gender lens. This means we intentionally back businesses that either have women in leadership, serve women as a core customer base, or create significant employment opportunities for women.

The goal is not only to deliver strong financial returns, but also to demonstrate that investing in inclusive businesses can generate meaningful economic and social outcomes across the continent.

► **How tedious was the process and what do you think they always look out for?**

Fundraising is rarely straightforward, particularly for emerging fund managers. It is a rigorous and often lengthy process that requires persistence, credibility, and a very clear investment strategy.

In my case, it took nearly eight years to close my first fund. I began this journey in 2014 with an earlier fund platform before ultimately rebranding and launching Aruwa Capital Management in 2019. The process involved engaging with a wide range of institutional investors, each with their own investment criteria, diligence frameworks, and timelines. While the journey can be demanding, it ultimately strengthens the fund because it forces you to continuously refine your strategy, governance structures, and reporting frameworks.

There are also structural realities that make the process particularly

challenging. As a young Black woman raising what would be considered a “small” fund by global industry standards, accessing institutional capital was not straightforward. When I launched Aruwa in 2019, only 10 female-led funds had reached a final close globally since 2008, which highlights how limited representation has been within the asset management ecosystem.

When evaluating a fund, investors typically focus on several key factors: the strength and experience of the investment team, the clarity and credibility of the investment thesis, the ability to consistently source high-quality deals, and the robustness of governance and risk management systems. They also look for strong alignment between the fund manager

In my case, it took nearly eight years to close my first fund. I began this journey in 2014 with an earlier fund platform before ultimately rebranding and launching Aruwa Capital Management in 2019

and investors, alongside a clear pathway to delivering both strong financial performance and measurable outcomes.

► **Who can have access to the funds and how?**

At Aruwa Capital Management, the fund is designed to support high-growth businesses operating in sectors that address essential needs within the economy. We typically focus on areas

such as essential consumer goods, healthcare, clean energy access, Agro-processing and fintech, particularly businesses providing defensible, mass-market products and services with resilient demand characteristics. In line with our investment mandate, we review and invest in companies with a strong operational presence in Nigeria or Ghana that have demonstrated traction and a clear pathway to scale.

Entrepreneurs can access the fund through several channels. Some companies reach out directly to our investment team, while others come through referrals from our network of partners, investors, and ecosystem stakeholders. We also proactively source opportunities through sector research and market engagement.

Once a potential opportunity is identified, it goes through a structured evaluation and due diligence process where we assess the strength of the business model, governance structures, market opportunity, and long-term growth potential before making an investment decision.

► **Compared to before, would you say the numbers of women closing in on fund sourcing has improved?**

Yes, the numbers have improved, though progress is gradual. When we first started tracking in 2019, only 10 female-led funds in Africa had successfully reached final close since 2008. By 2026, that number has grown to 45, reflecting steady year-on-year growth.

This improvement is driven by deliberate actions: women fund managers building credibility and track records, leveraging networks, seeking mentorship, and clearly articulating their investment theses. Investors are also becoming more intentional about backing female-led funds, recognising both the financial and societal benefits. Each fund that reaches final close is more than a milestone, it represents capital mobilised for African businesses, institutions being strengthened, and women stepping into



roles as capital allocators. At Aruwa, we are committed to continuing to amplify our success stories and track record to ensure the next female fund manager does not take eight years to raise her first fund like I did. To accelerate progress further, we need continued ecosystem support: access to capital, and structures that remove systemic barriers. Representation alone is not enough; measurable opportunities and support are what drive tangible results.

► **What's next?**

At Aruwa Capital Management, Fund I has now been fully deployed across 11 companies, demonstrating the strength and resilience of our investment strategy. Fund II is already in active deployment, with investments across 4 companies that align with our focus on high-growth, essential sectors and inclusive business models.

Looking ahead, we will continue partnering with great founders to help them institutionalise and scale their businesses, while also identifying new opportunities to deploy Fund II. Beyond investing, we remain committed to strengthening the ecosystem, mentoring emerging fund managers, and ensuring capital reaches businesses that create both financial and social value.

► **What does this year's International Women's Month theme mean to you?**

This year's 'United Nations theme- Rights. Justice. Action. For ALL Women and Girls' speaks to the fundamental work that still must be done to ensure women everywhere can fully exercise their rights, access justice, and participate equally in economic life. It's a reminder that equality isn't automatic; it's something we must build through deliberate systems, policies, and actions.

Alongside that, the concept of 'Give to Gain' reinforces that real progress

comes when we intentionally invest- not only funds, but time, networks, mentorship, and leadership opportunities - into women. And the returns from that investment aren't just financial; they ripple outward into stronger, more inclusive economies and societies.

At Aruwa Capital Management, both ideas are central to how we operate. When women have access to capital and decision-making power, we see not only better financial outcomes, but also more resilient value chains, stronger institutions, and broader impact across communities.

So, this theme is both a call to secure rights and justice, and a reminder that investing in women is not a cost but a catalyst for collective gain.

► **Advice to all women struggling to achieve any goal in life**

My advice is simple: stay deliberate, persistent, and intentional. Every meaningful goal comes with challenges, doubts, and moments where progress seems slow, that's normal. What matters is continuing to take action, refine your approach, and seek the right support.

Surround yourself with mentors, allies, and peers who challenge and inspire you. Build networks, ask for guidance, and don't wait for permission to step forward. Remember that measurable progress requires measurable action, whether it's learning new skills, taking calculated risks, or creating opportunities where none exist. Most importantly, stay the course. Persistence ultimately determines your outcomes. In my own fundraising journey, I met 85 institutional investors before securing the first close of Aruwa Capital Fund II. Many of those conversations came with some version of "not yet." Success often comes from showing up to meeting number 85 with the same conviction, preparation, and belief in the opportunity.





ABIOLA OJO-OSAGIE (\$2.3bn)

SENIOR PARTNER & MANAGING DIRECTOR,
ANGLOPHONE WEST AFRICA,
AFRICINVEST CAPITAL PARTNERS

Kemi Ajumobi

With over 28 years in financial and business advisory services, Abiola Ojo-Osagie is a trusted leader in business and investment across Africa.

In her current role, she is responsible for deal origination, market and deal analysis, investment structuring, negotiation, investment decisions, active portfolio management, value creation and investment exits. She performs board and committee functions, participates alongside senior management teams in developing strategies for profitable growth, and leads stakeholder engagements for positive policy impact.

Before AfricInvest (joined 2009), she

was an Associate Partner at Phillips Consulting Limited (11+ years), external consultant on the World Bank-funded Federal Government MSME Project, and Business Support Officer at Mobil Producing (now ExxonMobil).

A natural leader with a positive attitude, Abiola has a passion for creating wealth in Africa by providing support to businesses seeking opportunities for profitable engagement of ideas and capital. She is a First Class graduate of Computer Science & Accounting and a Fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria, and has attended several executive management courses including the Corporate Restructuring, Mergers & Acquisitions Executive Programme (Harvard Business School)

and the LBS Chief Executive Programme amongst others.

Based in Lagos, Nigeria, Abiola is married and blessed with two adult daughters. A lover of God and children, she has spent over 20 years teaching in the children's ministry of her church.

► What is the fund for?

The fund is designed to channel capital into businesses that create sustainable economic impact while delivering strong financial returns. For our company specifically, the focus is on supporting growth-stage businesses that can scale, create jobs, and strengthen local value chains. We are particularly interested in sectors that drive long-term development such as



retail, consumer goods, agriculture, and services, where investment can catalyse productivity, improve market access, and build resilient enterprises. Beyond capital, we also see the fund as a platform for governance improvement, strategic support, and long-term value creation.

▶ **How tedious was the process and what do you think they always look out for?**

Raising capital is naturally a rigorous and detailed process, because investors are ultimately committing resources for the long term. The process typically involves multiple stages of diligence — on the strategy, the track record of the team, governance structures, pipeline quality, and risk management. From experience, investors tend to look closely at three key things:

- Credibility of the team – experience, integrity, and execution capability.
- Clarity of strategy – a well-defined investment thesis and disciplined approach
- Governance and transparency – strong processes that ensure accountability

Ultimately, investors want to see alignment, competence, and a clear pathway to impact and returns.

▶ **Who can access to the funds and how?**

Access to funds like this is typically through structured investment channels, rather than individuals applying directly.

Eligible participants usually include:

- Institutional investors such as development finance institutions, pension funds, and family offices.
- Qualified investment partners aligned with the strategy of the fund.

For businesses seeking investment, access usually comes through demonstrating strong fundamentals — a scalable model, good governance, credible management, and the ability to

deliver sustainable growth.

In many cases, engagement starts through networks, professional introductions, and formal investment evaluation processes.

▶ **Compared to before, would you say the numbers of women closing in on fund sourcing has improved?**

There has certainly been progress, but the pace still needs to accelerate.

We are seeing more women stepping forward as fund managers, entrepreneurs, and investment leaders, and this is encouraging. What has helped is:

- Greater access to networks and mentorship.
- More intentional focus on diversity from investors.
- Women building stronger professional visibility and track records.

However, structural barriers remain — including limited access to networks, capital, and sponsorship.

To improve participation, we need:

- More mentorship and sponsorship from experienced leaders.
- Deliberate allocation of capital to women-led funds and businesses.
- Stronger ecosystems that support women entrepreneurs and investors.

When women are given equal access to opportunity and capital, the results are often transformative.

▶ **What's next?**

What's next is continuing to create wealth the way we know how!

For us, the focus is on:

- Identifying high-quality investment opportunities.
- Strengthening governance and operational excellence.
- Supporting businesses to grow sustainably and create long-term value.

At a broader level, the goal is to contribute to building stronger institutions and more resilient economies across Africa.

▶ **What does this year's International Women's Month theme mean to you?**

International Women's Month is a powerful reminder that progress requires intentional action. To me, the theme represents empowerment through opportunity — ensuring that women have the tools, platforms, and confidence to lead, innovate, and shape the future. It is also about recognition and responsibility — celebrating achievements while committing to creating pathways for the next generation of women leaders.

▶ **Advice to all women struggling to achieve any goal in life**

My advice would be three things:

- Believe in your capacity — sometimes the greatest limitation is self-doubt.
- Be consistent and resilient — meaningful achievements rarely happen overnight.
- Surround yourself with the right people — mentors, supporters, and collaborators who uplift you.

Most importantly, is the Favour of God when you stay faithful to your purpose and values.

We are particularly interested in sectors that drive long-term development such as retail, consumer goods, agriculture, and services, where investment can catalyse productivity, improve market access, and build resilient enterprises



TOSIN OJO (\$129m)

PARTNER, SAHEL CAPITAL

Kemi Ajumobi



Tosin Ojo heads the private equity team, at Sahel Capital. She has 18+ years, multi-sector experience

in investment management, financial advisory, and impact investing across Africa. She has spent the last 5+ years focusing on the agribusiness sector at Sahel Capital, overseeing fund raising and launch of Sahel Capital's successor \$75m growth equity fund - Sahel Capital Agribusiness Fund II (SCAF II), deal origination and execution (with \$50+ million in active deal pipeline) and has led the deployment of ~\$20m in investments in the food and agribusiness sector in Nigeria. She's also overseeing exits from the portfolio companies of Sahel Capital's maiden private equity fund - Fund for Agricultural Finance in Nigeria (FAFIN) and serves on the board of Dayntee Farms Limited. Tosin has also led the incubation, registration and launch of Sahel Agribusiness Private Debt Fund - a dedicated local currency debt fund investing in agribusiness SMEs in Nigeria. Prior to Sahel Capital, she worked at CardinalStone, Chapel Hill Denham, Vetiva and Stanbic IBTC Bank.



Tosin is board director at Private Equity and Venture Capital Association of Nigeria (PEVCA), independent chair of the Mutual Funds Investment Committee (MFIC) of ARM Investment managers overseeing ~\$200m in publicly listed assets and the independent investment committee member of PV Capital - the investment arm of Piggytech Global, Nigeria's leading savings and investment platform.

She is a Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA®) charter-holder, holds a first-class bachelors' degree from Obafemi Awolowo University, Nigeria and an MBA from Said Business School - University of Oxford, UK.

▶ **What is the fund for?**

We have three funds at Sahel Capital - Fund for Agricultural Finance in Nigeria (FAFIN) - an agribusiness private equity fund which reached second close of \$65.9m in 2017, Social Enterprise Fund for Agriculture in Africa (SEFAA) - an evergreen private credit fund which has raised a total of \$34m (\$24m in 2022 and \$10m in 2025) and Sahel Capital Agribusiness Fund II (SCAF II) - the successor

private equity fund to FAFIN which reached a first close in December 2025 with commitments of \$29m. We focus exclusively on the food and agribusiness sector and invest in companies in this sector - through debt and equity like instruments primarily in West and East Africa.

▶ **How tedious was the process and what do you think they always look out for?**

Fund raising is a very tedious process, it requires significant endurance - usually over 3-4 years to reach a final close, sometimes even longer. The institutional pool of capital that invest in private equity funds in Africa come from foreign development finance institutions, sovereign wealth funds, foundations and pension funds. Investors always look for track record - usually in the form of capital deployment traction, fund performance and exit. Sometimes, certain investors also have specific impact or ESG mandates that they have to balance alongside financial performance.

Our funds are accessible to entrepreneurs and companies in the food and agribusiness sector in 13 African countries either through SEFAA, our credit fund or SCAF II - our equity fund

▶ **Who can have access to it and how?**

Our funds are accessible to entrepreneurs and companies in the food and agribusiness sector in 13 African countries either through SEFAA, our credit fund or SCAF II -

our equity fund. We back agribusiness entities and entrepreneurs across the food value chain to improve value chain efficiency, drive import substitution, provide affordable healthy packaged foods to Africa's fast urbanising population while driving climate resilience. More information can be obtained from our website: www.sahelcapital.com

▶ **Compared to before, would you say the numbers of women closing in on fund sourcing has improved?**

There has definitely been an increase in the number of female GPs (general partners) raising and closing funds in the last 10 years. Despite the improvement, it's a long road ahead, as only 12% of senior partners in Sub-Saharan Africa Private Equity firms are women (according AVCA). More support is needed to back female GPs and fund managers. To increase access to capital for women, we need more female capital allocators at the most senior level. For those who have closed or have been able to successfully raise funds, tenacity has been critical. They also focused on demonstrating track record quickly on a small scale with a small amount of capital before raising a bigger fund. Collaborations are also critical.

▶ **What's next?**

We are still focusing on reaching final close for our newest fund - SCAF II. We have also recently launched a new fund - which is a local currency fund solely dedicated to Nigeria - Sahel Agribusiness Private Debt Fund. The medium term plan for us is to have final close on SCAF II, successfully raise the target set for Sahel Agribusiness Private Debt Fund from domestic pension funds and continue to deploy capital to high potential, high impact opportunities in our target sector and markets.



OGUGUA OSAKWE-ADEGBITE (\$443m)

HEAD OF M&A, EXITS & STRATEGIC
PARTNERSHIPS, PARTECH AFRICA

Kemi Ajumobi



gugua Osakwe-Adegbite is a member of the Partech Africa leadership team and serves as

Head of M&A, Exits & Strategic Partnerships, leading exit processes, secondaries, M&A and strategic partnerships across some of Africa's leading technology companies. She also represents Partech on the boards of a number of portfolio businesses.

Previously, she held senior roles at M-PESA Africa, Vodafone Group and Bain & Company. At M-PESA, she led international expansion for the Africa franchise, including the launch of M-PESA in Ethiopia. At Vodafone, she drove digital transformation across the Group's \$10 billion Africa, Middle East and Asia Pacific portfolio, with responsibility for strategy execution on opco divestments and post-merger integrations.

She also serves as a Board member of Food for the Hungry, an international non-profit organisation. Her experience across investing, operating leadership and governance gives her a distinctive perspective on what it takes to build, scale and back high-growth businesses

► What is the fund for?

Partech Africa exists to back ambitious African technology founders building businesses with the potential to become global category leaders. The fund is not just there to provide capital, but to help companies scale with the right strategic support, networks, and long-term perspective. At its best, venture capital should accelerate the growth of



businesses that expand access, improve productivity, create jobs, and generate meaningful economic value across the continent.

▶ **How tedious was the process and what do you think they always look out for?**

I should say upfront that I was not directly involved in fundraising for Partech Africa Fund II, which was the last Partech Africa fund, so I would not want to overstate my role in that process. That said, fund sourcing is always demanding. It requires a clear strategy, strong internal alignment, a credible track record, and the ability to explain why your team is well positioned to win in a competitive market. Investors are ultimately looking for conviction. They want to know whether you have a differentiated strategy, the discipline to execute it well, and the judgment to deploy capital responsibly and generate strong outcomes over time.

▶ **Who can have access to the fund and how?**

From Partech Africa's perspective, the fund is accessible to founders building scalable technology or tech-enabled businesses across Africa. In practice, that usually means companies operating in large or fast-growing markets, led by strong founders, with a compelling product or service and clear evidence of traction. Access can come through direct outreach, warm introductions, ecosystem relationships, or referrals from other investors and operators. But ultimately, access is driven by the quality of the company. Strong businesses tend to find their way into the conversation.

Compared to before, would you say the numbers of women closing in on fund sourcing has improved?

I do think there has been progress, and one of the most encouraging shifts has been the fact that many more women

are now in senior positions across African funds. That increased representation matters because it helps broaden access, expand perspective, and improve decision-making within investment teams. Part of this shift is likely linked to the growing number of women graduating with STEM degrees, which has strengthened the pipeline of analytically rigorous female talent entering the ecosystem. There is also a greater appreciation today for the value of experiential diversity within investment teams. Different lived experiences often lead to better judgment, stronger pattern recognition, and a more rounded view of both risk and opportunity.

That said, there is still a long way to go. Progress at the senior level has not fully translated into a deep enough pipeline at the junior and mid-career levels. Better mentorship for early-career investors will be critical to bridging that gap. We need to be much more intentional about supporting women earlier, giving them access to the right training, networks, sponsorship, and stretch opportunities so that more of them can progress into leadership over time.

▶ **What's next?**

I look forward to seeing more female representation within the startup founder pool. In the latest Partech Africa venture Capital report, we show

that in 2025, female-founded startups captured 10% of total equity funding in 2025; an increase from 2024 when this figure was 7% however no clear long term trend as it was 17% in 2023. There is still significant work to do in order to improve female participation in VC. On the theme of participation, I am excited about the current trend in African LP participation in venture capital fundraising. According to the African Venture Capital Association, African investors accounted for 45% of total venture fund commitments in 2025. That is the highest share on record and up from an average of 23% between 2022 and 2024.

▶ **What does this year's International Women's Month theme mean to you?**

To me, the theme is a reminder that progress does not happen through sentiment alone. It requires intention, structure, and action. Celebrating women is important, but the more important question is whether women are actually gaining greater access to capital, leadership, influence, and opportunity. In that sense, the theme is a call to move beyond visibility and focus on outcomes: who is being backed, who is being trusted with responsibility, and who is being given the platform to lead.

▶ **Advice to all women struggling to achieve any goal in life**

Be clear about what you want and honest about what it will require. Ambition matters, but discipline is what moves things forward. Keep building capability, keep improving your judgment, and do not allow temporary setbacks to define your long-term trajectory. Not every closed door is a rejection of your potential. Sometimes it is simply a test of whether you have the resilience to keep going. Above all, do not adjust your ambition to fit other people's expectations of what is realistic for you.

From Partech Africa's perspective, the fund is accessible to founders building scalable technology or tech-enabled businesses across Africa



ELOHO OMAME (\$300m+)

PARTNER, TLCOM CAPITAL & CO-FOUNDER,
FIRSTCHECK AFRICA

Kemi Ajumobi



Eloho Omame is an Africa-focused technology venture capital investor. A

Partner at TLcom Capital, a seed-to-early growth-stage firm, and co-founder of FirstCheck Africa, a female-focused pre-seed firm, she advocates for diversity, equity, and inclusion in Africa's technology ecosystem.

TLcom Capital invests in Africa's best entrepreneurs tackling the continent's

biggest challenges. Across two funds with approximately \$250 million in capital under management, the firm's investment portfolio includes high-growth companies in Nigeria, Kenya, and Egypt. Eloho represents TLcom Capital on the boards of companies in Nigeria, Egypt and Côte d'Ivoire.

In 2021, she co-founded FirstCheck Africa, one of only a few female-led and female-focused technology venture capital firms operating on the continent. FirstCheck Africa's investment portfolio includes early-

stage startups with category-defining potential in Nigeria, Kenya, Egypt and South Africa. Through FirstCheck Africa, she is committed to helping Africa's exceptional female entrepreneurial talent build great companies.

Eloho has helped shape Nigeria and Africa's technology ecosystem for many years. From 2018 to 2021, she worked as launch Managing Director & CEO of Endeavor in Nigeria, creating the most sought-after community for technology entrepreneurs in West Africa. Endeavor



is the world's largest support organisation for high-growth technology companies at the scale-up stage.

In 2017, she delivered "Lagos Innovates", a first-of-its-kind portfolio of support programs for early-stage innovation-driven enterprises (IDEs) in Africa, on behalf of the Lagos State Employment Trust Fund (LSETF). Lagos State is one of Africa's largest subnational governments. She conceptualised, designed, and implemented Lagos Innovates, which has supported hundreds of entrepreneurs and created thousands of jobs.

An inaugural member of Nigeria's National Council for Digital Innovation and Entrepreneurship, established under the Nigeria Startup Act, Eloho represented the interests of the technology and innovation ecosystem in matters of public policy at the national level. She's a member of the Steering Committee of the Digital Economy Policy Commission of the Nigerian Economic Summit Group (NESG). In 2018, Eloho also served as a member of the Presidential Advisory Group on Technology & Creativity.

Deeply committed to Africa's technology and venture capital ecosystem, Her views have been featured numerous times in regional and global publications with respect to Africa's entrepreneurship, technology and VC ecosystem, including TechCrunch, the Financial Times, the Economist, Quartz Africa and Tech Cabal.

Eloho began her investing career in the U.K. as a Vice President at General Atlantic, a global growth equity firm. Before that, she was Head of Corporate Development at First Bank of Nigeria, leading the bank's first cross-border M&A and executing inorganic growth projects across multiple financial services verticals. She started her professional career as a London-based

The focus remains the same: backing companies that matter and being the kind of investor founders want on their cap table when conditions get difficult

investment banker, supporting corporate finance and M&A advisory mandates at Credit Suisse and Renaissance Capital, focused on TMT and FMCG.

Eloho holds an MBA from the London Business School and a BSc. in Economics from the London School of Economics and Political Science.

▶ What is the fund for?

TLcom Capital backs early-stage technology companies across Africa, primarily at seed and Series A. The core thesis is that Africa's structural gaps create real technology opportunities, and our job is to find the founders building into those gaps before the market fully prices them in.

Alongside that, I've spent a meaningful part of my career working to ensure that female-led companies get access to early capital on the same terms as everyone else. That work includes co-founding FirstCheck Africa with Odunayo Eweniyi, one of the most respected female founders in the African technology ecosystem. For me, that sits at the intersection of good investing and fixing something that has been structurally broken for too long.

▶ How tedious was the process and what do you think they always look out for?

Fundraising is a test of conviction before it becomes a reward for it, and that is as true as raising a fund from

LPs as it is raising a round from investors. In that sense, investors who have been through their own fundraising process know exactly what it feels like to sit on the other side of the table from where they usually operate.

The process is rigorous by design. What separates successful fundraises isn't polish. It's specificity. Whether you are a fund manager or a founder, the people writing the cheque are looking for evidence that you understand your market better than anyone else, that your team can execute under pressure, and that the numbers are honest. Vague answers to hard questions are a red flag at any table.

▶ Who can access the fund and how?

We back early-stage technology startups operating across Africa. Founders can reach us through our website, through the ecosystem, or through direct introductions, but we also source proactively. We are not sitting back and waiting to be found. The bar is high and the criteria are consistent: a large addressable market, a credible and committed team, and a technology edge that makes the business genuinely harder to replicate over time.

▶ Compared to before, would you say the numbers of women closing in on fund sourcing has improved?

Yes, meaningfully, but the baseline was low enough that the improvement has to be kept in perspective. The founders breaking through now are doing so partly because the information environment has changed. More visible role models, more investors who have made public commitments, more data making the business case impossible to ignore.

What still needs to catch up is the composition of decision-making tables across the industry globally. That is a slow shift. The progress is real but it is not yet self-sustaining.



► **What's next?**

The focus remains the same: backing companies that matter and being the kind of investor founders want on their cap table when conditions get difficult.

The opportunity in Africa is still significantly underwritten by global capital relative to the fundamentals. Closing that gap requires consistent proof of returns. That is what we are working toward.

► **What does this year's IWD theme mean to you?**

There are actually two themes this year. The IWD campaign theme is "Give To Gain," which speaks to reciprocity and what happens when you invest in women. The UN official theme is "Rights. Justice. Action. For ALL Women and Girls." That one speaks to me more directly.

What I find compelling about it is the sequencing. Rights without justice are theoretical. Justice without action is just language. In the context of what I do, access to capital is a rights question. The fact that female-led businesses have historically received a fraction of available venture funding is a justice question. Action is the part most people skip. It is easier to talk about the gap than to do the unglamorous work of closing it. That is what I show up for.

► **Advice to women struggling to achieve any goal in life**

It is a lesson that took me far too long to learn: in every room, choose yourself. Get specific about what you actually want. Not a version of it that feels safer to say out loud. The real thing. Once you are clear on that, everything else becomes a navigation problem rather than a self-worth problem. And navigation is solvable.





WOMAN EXECUTIVE

The "Invisible" CEO: Leading from the Middle

By Wola Joseph-Condotti



We often celebrate those at the top (the CEO, the Chairperson, the Visionary

Founder). But there is a hidden class of leaders: those who carry the weight of execution, culture, and cohesion without occupying the highest seat. They are the "invisible CEOs." Women leading from the middle. Not the face of the organisation. But often, the backbone.

These are the women managing up to Senior Executives, CEOs, Boards, managing down to junior staff, and managing across to peers—all while managing the unspoken politics, invisible expectations, and quiet chaos that come with mid-tier leadership. It is the most demanding seat in the house. And too often, the most under-affirmed.

The Myth of Positional Power

The world defines leadership as a title. But real leadership is tested where titles do not protect you. Where you must speak with wisdom to people above you, lead with clarity for those below you, and navigate competition beside you all at once. In this space, your leadership cannot lean on authority. It must rest on credibility. You do not lead because you "said so." You lead because people trust what you

stand for. That is why leading from the middle is not for the faint of heart.

When You are Not the Final Voice

What happens when you are convinced of a better path... But you are not the final decision-maker? What happens when values are clashing... But your voice is still "junior" in the room? These moments are make-or-break for many women. Do I shrink to keep the peace? Do I overcompensate to be heard? Do I disengage emotionally to survive? Here is the truth: You do not need the final say to carry final impact. Your influence is your currency. And when wielded with wisdom, influence changes outcomes without shouting for credit.

Integrity in the Messy Middle

Middle leadership is where conviction is tested. You are often the one enforcing unpopular decisions. You are the one absorbing pressure from the top and translating it with compassion to those below. You are the one keeping culture alive when morale is low. That is holy work. But it requires boundaries. It demands internal clarity. And it calls for a deep commitment to integrity even when the system does not reward it. Because integrity in the middle becomes stability at the top.

Joseph: A Biblical CEO Without a Title

Joseph in Scripture never called himself CEO. Yet he managed Pharaoh's affairs with wisdom that saved nations. Before he sat next to the throne, he led from Potiphar's house. From prison. From obscurity. His leadership was not made in palaces. It was proven in the pit. And even when falsely accused and forgotten, he carried excellence, humility, and discernment. He did not need a title to lead. He only needed a calling and the character to steward it. That is what it means to be an "invisible CEO."

Final Thoughts

To every woman leading from the messy middle: You are not invisible to God. You are not insignificant to the organisation. You are not insufficient in your impact. Your presence matters. Your posture matters. Your perspective matters. Leadership is not a seat. It is a stewardship.

And even when you do not have the final word, you can still shape the final outcome if you lead with integrity, influence, and intentionality. So lead, not for applause. Lead, not for a title. Lead because it is who you are. Called, credible, and committed to building even when no one is watching. Because the truth is: You do not have to sit at the top to lead from the centre.



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



Nigeria's Multi-Front Security Crisis

Asmau Benzies Leo

Nigeria's security crisis has entered a far more dangerous and emotionally charged phase, marked by the resurgence of insurgency in the North East, particularly in Borno State. Recent bomb attacks in Maiduguri once considered relatively stabilised, have shattered assumptions of progress and exposed the persistence and adaptation of groups such as Boko Haram and ISWAP. Even more

troubling is the deliberate and increasingly sophisticated targeting of Nigerian armed forces through ambushes, improvised explosive devices, and coordinated assaults on military formations.

These attacks are not random. They reflect a strategic recalibration by insurgent groups aimed at weakening state authority, undermining military morale, and projecting continued relevance. The destruction of military convoys, forward operating bases, and patrol teams sends a chilling message: that the conflict is far from over, and that Nigeria's

security architecture remains under significant strain.

The consequences of these attacks reverberate far beyond the battlefield. Every fallen soldier represents not just a national loss, but a deeply personal tragedy. Behind each casualty is a family, wives suddenly widowed, children left as orphans without guidance or support, and parents confronted with irreversible grief. In many cases, these families face delays in accessing entitlements, limited psychosocial care, and uncertain livelihoods, compounding their trauma. Communities that host military personnel also absorb these shocks, experiencing a decline in morale and an erosion of confidence in protection systems.

At the same time, the renewed wave of bombings, particularly in civilian populated areas reintroduces fear into everyday life. Markets, places of worship, and public gatherings once again become spaces of

vulnerability. Women and children, who make up the majority of civilian populations in these settings, bear disproportionate risks: from displacement and economic disruption to heightened exposure to exploitation and abuse.

A gender responsive perspective makes clear that this crisis is not experienced uniformly. Men are predominantly the direct targets of armed violence, particularly as soldiers, vigilantes, and community defenders. Their deaths and injuries represent a visible dimension of the conflict. Yet, women carry the enduring burden of its aftermath as caregivers, economic providers, and stabilising forces within fractured households. Widows of fallen soldiers often navigate stigma, financial hardship, and institutional neglect, while also supporting children dealing with trauma and disrupted futures.

This interconnected reality demands a more deliberate and inclusive response.

First, Nigeria must urgently reform and strengthen military welfare and casualty response systems. The sacrifice of military personnel must be matched with a structured, transparent, and timely support system for their families covering compensation, education, healthcare, and long-term livelihood assistance. This is not only a moral obligation but a strategic necessity for sustaining morale within the armed forces.

Second, the resurgence of attacks underscores the need for enhanced intelligence and adaptive security strategies. Military operations must be complemented by robust, community based intelligence systems that integrate local actors including women who often possess critical knowledge of emerging threats. Civilian Joint Task Forces and local security networks should be professionalised, regulated, and supported within a clear accountability framework.

Third, the North East requires renewed stabilisation efforts that go beyond military presence. The return of attacks in

some parts of the north east suggests gaps in holding and recovery phases. Investments in early warning systems, urban security planning, and community resilience must be scaled up, alongside efforts to counter violent extremism narratives targeting youth.

Fourth, regional dynamics cannot be ignored. The Sahelian spillover of arms, fighters, and extremist ideologies continues to fuel instability. Nigeria must strengthen cross-border security collaboration while addressing internal vulnerabilities such as poverty, unemployment, and weak governance that make recruitment into armed groups easier.

Finally, a broader gender-responsive security framework must be institutionalised. This includes fully implementing the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda in a way that recognizes:

- * Men as both protectors and victims of direct violence
- * Women as both affected populations and critical actors in peace-building, intelligence, and recovery

Policies must deliberately support widows of fallen soldiers, protect women and girls in conflict zones, and engage men and boys in preventing cycles of violence.

Nigeria's current moment is not merely a security challenge, it is a test of national resilience and responsibility. The resurgence of attacks in Maiduguri and the targeted killing of military personnel remind us that victory cannot be measured only in territory regained, but in lives protected, families supported, and communities restored.

A response rooted only in force will remain incomplete. What is required now is a human-centered security approach one that honors sacrifice, addresses structural gaps, and builds a future where both women and men can live free from fear.



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.

HER POINT OF VIEW

Unshakable Confidence: The Career Woman's Quiet Superpower

Chinyere Okorochoa

There is something I have learned over the years, through boardrooms, courtrooms, global conferences, and countless conversations with women across different industries and countries.

Confidence is often the difference between a woman who is capable... and a woman who is visible. And visibility, my dear, is what changes everything.

I remember a moment early in my career that has stayed with me. I was in a room filled with senior professionals, brilliant minds, experienced voices. I had prepared. I knew my material. But when the moment came to speak, I hesitated.

Not because I did not know what to say. But because I questioned whether I should say it.

And in that moment, someone else spoke. And said something very similar to what I had been thinking. That was my wake-up call.

I realised then that competence is not enough. If you do not express it with confidence, it can remain hidden.

And many women are walking around with brilliance that the world has never fully experienced, simply because they are waiting to feel "ready."

Let me say this to you as a big sister: You may never feel 100% ready. And that is okay.

Confidence is not about having all the answers. It is about trusting yourself enough to show up anyway.

Over time, I began to understand that confidence is not loud. It is not arrogance. It is not perfection. Confidence is self-trust.

It is the quiet assurance that says, "I may not know everything, but I am capable of figuring it out."

And once you begin to operate from that place, everything starts to shift.

You speak differently.
You carry yourself differently.
You make decisions differently.

And most importantly, people respond to you differently.

One of the biggest misconceptions I see among women is this belief that if they just keep doing good work, someone will notice. Sometimes they will. But many times, they won't.

Not because your work is not good. But because confidence is what gives your work a voice.

I have seen incredibly talented women hold themselves back from opportunities simply because they felt they did not meet every requirement. Meanwhile, someone else, less prepared but more confident, steps forward and takes the opportunity. That is not a competence issue. It is a confidence gap.



And if we are honest, many of us have struggled with this at some point.

Imposter syndrome creeps in. You begin to question whether you truly belong. You downplay your achievements. You overthink your contributions.

Then there is perfectionism. That quiet voice that tells you, "It has to be flawless before you present it."

And before you know it, you are holding back... again.

But here is what I want you to understand. Growth does not happen in perfection. It happens in motion.

Some of the most defining moments in my career did not come because I felt fully prepared. They came because I showed up anyway.

I spoke when I was unsure. I accepted opportunities that stretched me. I walked into rooms where I was not the most experienced person.

And each time, my confidence grew, not because I got everything right, but because I proved to myself that I could handle more than I thought. So how do you begin to build this unshakable confidence?

It starts with how you think.

Instead of asking, "Am I ready?" ask, "Am I willing?"
Instead of saying, "What if I fail?" ask, "What will I learn?" Then take action.

Speak in that meeting.
Apply for that role.
Share your ideas.
Put yourself forward.

Confidence is built through doing, not waiting. You must also learn to own your wins. Many women have a habit of brushing off compliments or minimising their achievements. My dear, stop doing that.

Keep a record of your progress. Celebrate your milestones, no matter how small they seem. Because every step forward is evidence of your growth. And let me say this as well, the company you keep matters.

Surround yourself with women who are bold, who are growing, who are not afraid to take up space. Confidence is contagious. When you see other women stepping into their power, it reminds you that you can too.

Finally, carry yourself with intention. Even before you feel confident, act like a woman who belongs. Walk into the room with presence. Make eye contact. Speak clearly.

Your body often communicates before your words do.

And over time, what you practice externally begins to take root internally.

As I reflect on my journey, one thing is clear.

Every new level I have stepped into required a new level of confidence.

Not because I had become perfect. But because I had learned to trust myself more.

So if you take nothing else from this, take this:

You do not need to wait to feel ready. You do not need permission to step forward. You do not need to have it all figured out.

You only need to believe that you are capable of growing into the woman you are becoming.

Confidence is not something you are born with. It is something you build. And once you do, it becomes your quiet superpower, opening doors, amplifying your voice, and positioning you for the opportunities you deserve.

So go ahead. Speak up. Show up. Step forward. The world is waiting to hear from you. And trust me, you are more ready than you think.



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.

FINANCIAL AdviseHER

Dear Salary Earner: Your Salary Is Power

By Sola Adesakin



In many conversations about wealth, salary earners are often made to feel small. Entrepreneurship is celebrated loudly, while paid employment is sometimes spoken about as though it is a limitation. But the truth is this: your salary is power.

If you are earning consistently, something enters your account every month. That may sound ordinary, but it is not. Many people live with unpredictable income streams, uncertain payment cycles, and irregular cash flow. Predictability is an asset.

The question is not whether your salary is powerful. The real question is what you are

doing with that power. Here are a few things every salary earner should remember.

1. Predictability Is Power

A salary gives you something many investors and business owners crave: visibility. You know when money will arrive. You can plan around it. You can structure your financial life around predictable inflow.

Some people dismiss their salaries as “small,” but consistency is one of the most underrated advantages in wealth building. A predictable income allows you to save, invest, and plan with confidence.

Consistency may not look glamorous, but it builds momentum.

2. Small Savings Are Not Small

Many people delay saving because they believe their income is too small to matter. But N10,000 saved from N100,000 is still a seed. Discipline begins with small numbers.

If you cannot manage small money, large money will misbehave in your hands. Financial character is developed in small amounts long before it is tested in larger ones.

The real question is this: are you training your discipline muscle or your enjoyment muscle?

One grows your future. The other consumes it.

3. Your Salary Proves You Have Value

Every salary represents value exchanged. Someone is paying you because you solve problems.

Your job is not just to collect that salary. Your job is to increase your value.

Skills can grow. Expertise can deepen. Experience can expand. Negotiation can improve. When your value increases, your earning power follows.

Ask yourself a simple question: what skill are you developing this year that will increase your income?

Income growth rarely happens by accident. It happens through intentional improvement.

4. Salary Is Seed Capital

A salary is not just for survival. It can become the seed capital for your future.

Beyond paying bills, your income can fund meaningful progress. It can support a side business, finance investments, pay for professional certifications, or help you acquire your first asset. But this only happens when you budget intentionally.

Too many salaries disappear into lifestyle without building anything lasting. When the month ends, nothing remains except receipts.

Your salary should not only maintain your present. It should also build your future.

5. Do Not Jump Blindly

In recent years, there has been a lot of encouragement around quitting jobs quickly to “follow your passion.” But decisions like that require structure.

Except you have strong counsel, financial preparation, and a clear plan, do not dump predictable income for uncertainty. Ideally, secure another opportunity or build a stable

transition before leaving your job.

This is not a movie script where everything works out in the final scene. Real life requires planning.

Before you exit a salary, make sure your exit plan is strategic, not emotional.

6. How You Show Up Matters

Some employees carry a dangerous mindset: “Whether the company succeeds or not, my salary must land.”

That attitude quietly damages your reputation.

Your work ethic today is planting seeds for tomorrow's opportunities. People notice integrity. They remember diligence. They trust consistency.

If your employer evaluated your value today, would they fight to keep you?

Your reputation in the workplace is an invisible asset that can open doors long after the job itself ends.

7. Comfort Is Dangerous

A salary can also create a false sense of security.

Income risks exist, companies restructure, industries shift and life happens.

This is why salary earners must build shock absorbers.

An emergency fund. Investments. Insurance. Assets that protect your future. If life happened tomorrow, how prepared would you be?

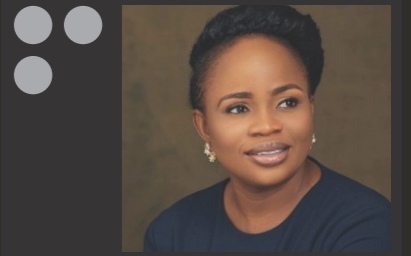
A salary is not just income. It is leverage.

It is predictable fuel that can power savings, investments, skill development, and long-term financial freedom.

Many people do not have that certainty.

The question is simple: what are you building with it?

Because the true power of a salary is not what it pays today. It is what it helps you build for tomorrow.



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.



WOMAN AT THE HELM

Joyce-Ann Wainaina

Managing Partner, Chui Ventures, Nairobi, Kenya

Joyce-Ann Wainaina is a pan-African investor, board director, and institutional builder with a distinguished career spanning global banking and venture capital. She is the Managing Partner of Chui Ventures, a pan-African seed-stage venture capital firm backing African founders building scalable, mass-market solutions in fintech, B2B Software, digital commerce, and climate tech. Their growing team has over 60 years of combined experience in global corporate banking, private equity and wealth management across Africa, USA and the UK.

Under her leadership, Chui Ventures successfully raised and closed an oversubscribed Fund I, investing across multiple African markets with a strong emphasis on disciplined capital, gender equity, and long-term value creation. She is currently leading the launch of Chui Ventures Fund II.

Ever grateful for every progress made, she says “I am proud and deeply grateful to share the

final close of Chui Ventures Fund I at US\$17.3M, surpassing our original US\$10M target. This milestone reflects the power of belief from our anchor LPs, Mastercard Foundation Africa Growth Fund and Michael & Susan Dell Foundation, and an extraordinary community of African family offices and HNWIs.

I’m especially proud that 60% of our individual investors are African women leaders. This is what hashtag#ForAfricaByAfrica truly looks like in action.

As we celebrate this chapter, we are already building toward Chui Ventures Fund II, targeting \$60M (with a \$100M hard cap) scaling our impact and deepening our commitment to exceptional African founders shaping the next decade of Africa’s growth.” She stated.

Joyce-Ann was named Woman Investor of the Year 2023 by the East Africa Venture Capital Association (EAVCA).

Prior to venture capital, Joyce-Ann spent over three decades at Citibank, where she served as CEO in multiple African markets and held senior regional roles overseeing corporate banking and transactions services. Her background provides deep expertise in institutional leadership, governance, capital allocation, and risk management.

Joyce-Ann serves on boards where strategic oversight, strong governance, and sustainable growth are critical. She is increasingly focused on elevating African capital, strengthening institutions, and shaping boardroom conversations that drive durable economic impact across the continent.

She is a Senior Fellow at Yale University’s Jackson School of Global Affairs. She holds an MSc. in Financial Economics from SOAS, University of London, and a B.Sc. in Finance from Duquesne University, Pittsburgh.



WE'VE GOT MEN

John Chigbu

Chairman/CEO, Cassona USA Inc & Managing Partner,
Chigbu & Co LLP

John Chigbu is Managing Partner at Chigbu & Co, and they specialise in tax planning (Domestic & International), compliance and tax controversy representation. In his practice, he also acts as contract tax director of his clients' tax departments.

John is a dynamic and results-driven International Corporate Tax Lawyer and CEO with 25+ years of experience leading multinational operations, healthcare ventures, and complex cross-border transactions across the U.S., Europe, Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. He is a former General Tax Counsel and Tax Executive for multiple Fortune 500 companies, and is globally recognised for delivering operational scale, governance excellence, and innovative business models in emerging markets.

Prior to founding Chigbu & Co, John was the Global Vice President of Tax and Treasury

for Sanmina-SCI Corporation, a \$12 billion multinational electronic manufacturer. Before that, he was the General Tax Counsel and VP for Business Objects SA, a \$5 billion French software company headquartered in Paris, France.

As Founder, Chairman & Chief Executive Officer at Cassona USA Inc., the company is a U.S.-based healthcare solutions company transforming diagnostics access across sub-Saharan Africa through affordable equipment, structured financing, and professional training.

John spearheaded pivot from green energy project finance to healthcare logistics and infrastructure post-COVID, oversaw expansion into West Africa with incorporation of Cassona Global Imaging Ltd Ghana (2022) and Cassona Global Imaging Nigeria Ltd

(2024), built strategic partnerships with OEMs (Neusoft Medical Systems and Mindray), securing exclusive regional distribution rights, designed and launched lease-to-own programmes and diagnostic centre models tailored to local market needs.

John was educated in London School of Economics, University of Texas, Louisiana State University Law Centre and New York University School of Law. He holds a combined Bachelors (BA) degree in Economics and Political Science, Juris Doctor (JD) degree and a Master at Law degree in Taxation (LLM). He is admitted to practice law in the States of California and New York.

John was a flight Pilot in the Nigerian Military Police before he commenced studying of law.

HOLISTIC LIVING

Confidence Begins in the Body: The Holistic Path to Reclaiming Self-Worth

By Dr. Maymunah Yusuf Kadiri



In a world powered by comparison, many people quietly wrestle with how they see themselves. Social media images, cultural expectations, and unspoken pressures shape our ideas of beauty, productivity, and success. Slowly, these influences begin to whisper dangerous messages: you are not doing enough, you are not attractive enough, you are not successful enough. Yet holistic living offers a deeply liberating truth—confidence is not built through perfection. It is built through care: care for the body, care for the mind, and care for the life we are living.

Consider the story of Chidinma, a young professional navigating life in the vibrant

city of Lagos. She was intelligent, ambitious, and filled with ideas that could transform the organizations she worked for. On paper, she was doing well. But internally, she carried a quiet doubt that followed her everywhere. Chidinma compared her appearance, her stamina, and even her daily productivity with those around her. These silent comparisons gradually chipped away at her confidence.

She began avoiding social gatherings, worried about being judged. In meetings, she hesitated before speaking, even when she had valuable insights to share. Though she possessed leadership potential, she often felt like someone watching her

own life from the sidelines.

One morning, during her usual rush to work, Chidinma noticed a bright poster announcing the opening of a community wellness center called Vitality Haven. The message on the poster stood out because it promised something different. It did not promote unrealistic beauty standards or instant transformation. Instead, it spoke about strength, balance, and holistic well-being.

Curiosity led Chidinma to attend one of the classes. The first few sessions were far from glamorous. Her muscles protested. Her endurance was lower than she expected. Yet, something

surprising began to unfold. Every small improvement, walking a little longer, lifting slightly heavier weights, breathing more deeply during exercise felt like a quiet victory. These victories, though small, began shifting how she saw herself.

The human body has a remarkable ability to influence the mind. When we move our bodies, exercise releases endorphins, the natural chemicals that elevate mood and reduce stress. These chemicals create a sense of emotional balance and accomplishment that strengthens self-belief. Exercise also activates the brain's reward system. Each completed workout sends a signal to the mind that progress is possible.

For Chidinma, this realisation was transformative. But physical health extends far beyond exercise alone. Nutrition also plays a vital role in shaping how we feel both physically and emotionally. The brain relies on a steady supply of nutrients to regulate mood, maintain energy levels, and support focus. Diets rich in vegetables, fruits, lean proteins, healthy fats, and whole grains nourish both the body and the mind. When the body receives proper nourishment, energy stabilises, concentration improves, and emotional resilience grows.

Chidinma began paying closer attention to how she fueled herself. Instead of rushing through meals, she started choosing balanced foods and drinking more water throughout the day. These changes were simple, yet powerful. Her energy no longer crashed in the middle of the afternoon,

and she found herself approaching challenges with greater clarity.

Another essential pillar of holistic health is self-care. Unfortunately, self-care is often misunderstood as indulgence or luxury. In truth, it is a declaration of value. When we intentionally care for our bodies, through rest, relaxation, and wellness practices—we reinforce the belief that we deserve care and attention.

Chidinma gradually introduced small rituals into her routine. Gentle stretching in the morning helped her wake her body with intention. Evening walks allowed her to decompress from the pressures of the day. Occasionally, she spent quiet moments journaling about her thoughts and experiences. These simple practices helped her reconnect with herself beyond external expectations.

Sleep soon became another priority. Quality sleep remains one of the most underestimated pillars of health. When the body rests well, the brain processes emotions more effectively, concentration sharpens, and resilience increases. As Chidinma improved her sleep routine by reducing late-night screen time and creating a calm bedtime environment—she noticed a dramatic improvement in her mood and productivity.

Yet the most powerful transformation occurred within her mindset. At the wellness centre, group conversations explored topics such as body acceptance, self-respect, and emotional well-being. Participants openly shared their personal struggles, creating an atmosphere of empathy and understanding. Listening to others speak honestly about their insecurities helped Chidinma realise that she was not alone in her experiences.

Confidence, she discovered, does not emerge from flawless appearance. It grows from recognizing one's worth beyond comparison. Weeks turned into months, and the changes in Chidinma became increasingly visible. Her posture improved. Her energy returned. She began contributing more confidently during meetings and reconnecting socially with friends. Her laughter regained its warmth.



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 for 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.



TRIBE WITH THE VIBES

Excellence, skill or value?

By Zainab Aderounmu

Excellence has become a buzzword; everybody claims to value excellence and to do things excellently. It's such a coveted value that it appears to be something you either have or don't have. But the art of being excellent isn't innate or genetic; it's a skill that can be mastered through practice and commitment to the process.

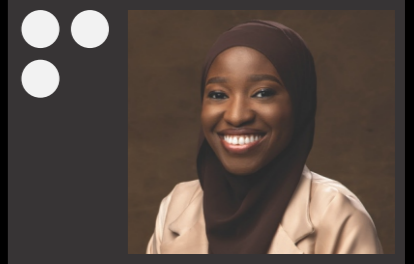
The first and most important thing to know about building a culture of excellence is that it is in the process of how you do things, not the outcome. I'll explain that. Imagine you're asked to prepare a document; what is your disposition towards the process? Do you just slap something together and submit it for the sake of doing, or are you committed to the step-by-step method?

Choosing to execute a task at the highest point possible does a few things for you. First, it boosts your self-confidence. Knowing you have high performance standards helps you believe in your own success, and it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. The more you reach for the best version of something, the more you attain success. Second, excellence also sustains your professional integrity and reinforces your reputation. People know that when they want high-quality work, they can always turn to you. Therefore, you become highly sought after.

In her book, 'E for Excellence', award-winning author Temilade Salami says that when you're known for excellence, people stop questioning or second-guessing your work and instead rely on it immediately. This high level of trust yields significant rewards, enabling you to outpace peers who do only the bare minimum.

However, if excellence is a skill, not an innate ability, how exactly do you master such a rewarding skill? Think back to a work that you're most proud of. I remember when I wrote my undergraduate thesis, I wanted to produce the best attainable work. That single mindset reflected in everything I did, including how often I edited the title. Each paragraph was carefully written and reconsidered for publishing. The first question in determining if you've done excellent work is 'Am I truly proud of this work?' or "If my name is slapped across this document, will I proudly defend it?" That changes everything. Then, ask yourself, "Is this the best I can produce with the resources available?"

Many articles tell you why it's important to build a culture of excellence, but not enough say how. Temilade asks to check three things: Is the content factual? Is the mode of delivery efficient? And, will it outlive you? Inherently, you want to ensure that every assumption you make is accurate and relevant. Then, ensure the presentation is easily digestible; finally, build systems that sustain your

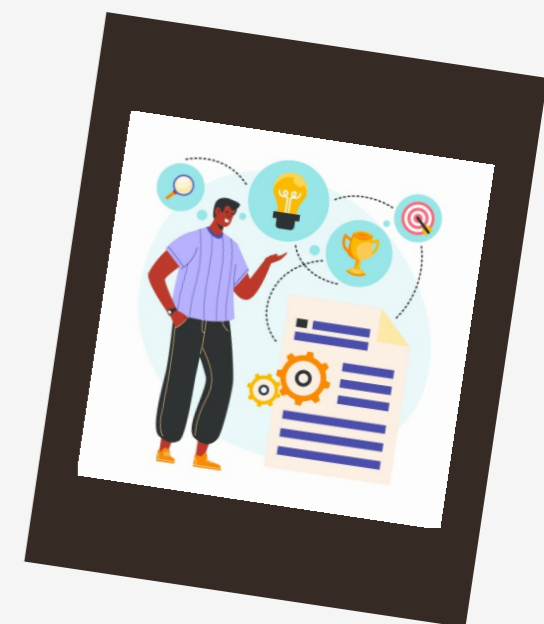


Zainab Aderounmu

Zainab Aderounmu A. W. is a First Class graduate of English Language and the Overall Best Graduating Student from the Lagos State University, Lagos Nigeria. She's a professional Master of Ceremonies, known as "The Hijabi Comper", a public speaking coach and Communications Professional. She is currently a Youth advisor to the European Union where she doubles as the Spokesperson and Head of Communications & PR for the Youth Sounding Board.

work. Building a culture of excellence is not a once-in-a-blue-moon endeavour; it must be reinforced with every decision and action. Define your ideal, and do not deviate from it.

Excellence is not a gift, but a skill that takes practice. We do not act "rightly" because we are "excellent"; in fact, we achieve "excellence" by acting "rightly".
☒Plato





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.

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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.

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