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SETUTSI GOKA IVOWI

VISIONARY BUILDER OF INTRA-AFRICAN TRADE

CONTENTS

COVER INTERVIEW

SETUTSI GOKA IVOWI 4

WOMAN EXECUTIVE

Decision, Fatigue and Weight of Final Say 15

FINANCIAL AdviseHER

Three Roads to Wealth. Same Destination 17

HER POINT OF VIEW

Let Your Value Speak:
How to Communicate What You Bring, Without Bragging 19

GENDER INSIGHTS

UNGA81: What is the Agenda for Women? 21

WOMAN AT THE HELM

Aisha Muhammed - Oyebode 23

WE'VE GOT MEN

Hisham Ezz Al-Arab 25

HOLISTIC LIVING

DIABETES: More Than the Numbers 27

TRIBE WITH THE VIBES

When will abuse, violence against women stop? 29

IN THE NEWS

Ini Abimbola's 'The Operator's Trap' to launch in October 31











▸ 17

FINANCIAL AdviseHER

Three Roads to Wealth. Same Destination



▸ 21

GENDER INSIGHTS

UNGA81: What is the Agenda for Women?



Welcome!

Dear Readers,

We are honoured to bring you another edition of IWA. It is the final edition for the month of September and we are ending on a high!

Our cover guest is indeed an exceptional CEO and business leader, one who delivers and doesn't just speak. With 20+ years of expertise spanning the UK, South Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa, she has consistently turned determination into assessable influence.

Being the first woman and first Ghanaian to serve as Executive Director at Nestlé Central & West Africa Ltd, she managed 22 countries for over 15 years. Indeed, you can call her journey a masterclass in brilliance, bravery, and aptitude. If this isn't what leadership looks like when focus, outcomes and grace meet, then what is?

Celebrate with us, SETUTSI GOKA IVOWI (Tucci), Managing Partner with Global Village Consortium, the Secretary- General of the AfCFTA Association of Commodities Exchanges (A-ACX), and the recent past Chief Executive Officer and founding member of the Ghana Commodity Exchange (GCX). Enjoy!

Here are other articles in this edition:

HER POINT OF VIEW: Let Your Value Speak: How to Communicate What You Bring, Without Bragging. By Chinyere Okorocha.

WOMAN EXECUTIVE: Decision, Fatigue and Weight of Final Say. By Wola Joseph-Condotti.

FINANCIAL AdviseHER: Three Roads to Wealth. Same Destination. By Sola Adesakin.

GENDER INSIGHTS: UNGA81: What is the Agenda for Women? By Asmau Benzies Leo.

HOLISTIC LIVING: DIABETES: More Than the Numbers. By Dr. Maymunah Yusuf Kadiri.

TRIBE WITH THE VIBES: When Will Abuse, Violence Against Women Stop? By Zainab Aderounmu.

IN THE NEWS: Ini Abimbola's 'The Operator's Trap' to launch in October.

WOMAN AT THE HELM: AISHA MUHAMMED – OYEBODE, Founder/CEO Murtala Muhammed Foundation & Chairperson, Lekoil Nigeria.

WE'VE GOT MEN: HISHAM EZZ AL-ARAB, CEO/Board Member, Commercial International Bank (CIB), Egypt.

See you in October!

Kemi Ajumobi

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COVER INTERVIEW

SETUTSI GOKA IVOWI

VISIONARY BUILDER OF INTRA-AFRICAN TRADE

Kemi Ajumobi

Setutsi Goka Ivowi (Tucci) is a Managing Partner with Global Village Consortium, the Secretary-General of the AfCFTA Association of Commodities Exchanges (A-ACX), and the recent past Chief Executive Officer and founding member of the Ghana Commodity Exchange (GCX). She played a key role in building the Exchange from the ground up, steering it to profitability within the targeted five-year period. Tucci is an experienced business leader with over 20 years of expertise in marketing, strategy, and general business management across the UK, Southeast Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa. Her career spans both private and public sectors, where she has led teams across multiple markets in various senior roles—including Business Unit Director, Marketing Communications Director, and Managing Director at one of the world's leading food and beverage companies. She was the first female and first Ghanaian to be appointed as Business Executive Officer (Executive Director) at Nestlé Central & West Africa Ltd, where she managed business operations across 22 countries during her 15-year tenure. A Chartered Marketer and Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM UK), she is a contributor to the Harvard Business Review and Catalyst Magazine, where she writes on leadership, marketing, communications, and intra-African trade. Her academic background



> **The compassion I have and my desire to pour into others are, in many ways, a small reflection of what I have seen my parents model in their own lives.**

includes a BA in Politics and French from the University of Sussex (UK), a Political Science degree from Sciences Po, Aix-en-Provence (France), an MBA from Warwick Business School (UK), and Executive Education in Leadership from the London Business School. In addition to her executive and advisory work, Tucci serves on several boards including Unilever Ghana PLC, Enterprise Trustees Ltd., and is a member of the Advisory Board of the Heritage Management Organisaton. She is also the founder of Forty Lives, a Ghana-based mental health advocacy organisation. Her contributions to business and leadership have been recognised through numerous honours.



Journey to adulthood

That journey for me was one of love and support from my parents. They encouraged us to develop our talents and be confident in who we were. They showed us what it looks like to care about people, to be kind to people, and to respect everyone.

This encouragement to develop ourselves and grow in skill and talent is something which has become a lifelong value for me. The compassion I have and my desire to pour into others are, in many ways, a small reflection of what I have seen them model in their own lives.

Global Village Consortium, your responsibilities and goals

What excites me about Global Village Consortium is the idea behind the name itself: no significant challenge (developmental, organisational, institutional) is solved by one body acting alone. We have a heavy focus on Africa, which has extraordinary talent, capital, ideas and opportunities, but they are often fragmented. The real opportunity is in connecting those pieces deliberately. My role is strategic - helping to think through positioning, partnerships, growth and how the consortium can translate good ideas into sustainable solutions and measurable impact.

My desire is for Global Village Consortium to become a platform that brings together the right people, ideas, businesses and institutions to solve meaningful problems at scale. I would like its success to be measured not simply by the number of projects it undertakes, but by what changes because it exists: businesses strengthened, opportunities created, institutions improved and lives positively affected.

As Secretary-General of A-ACX, how do you turn member exchanges' interests into collective action?

The first responsibility is listening, because our member exchanges operate in different markets, at different stages of maturity and within different regulatory environments. Collective action cannot mean pretending those differences do not exist.

Part of my role is to find the intersection; the challenges we cannot solve efficiently as individual exchanges but can tackle together.

That may mean advocating for enabling regulation, developing interoperable standards, sharing technology and knowledge, building cross-border

> ***My desire is for Global Village Consortium to become a platform that brings together the right people, ideas, businesses and institutions to solve meaningful problems at scale.***



trading relationships or creating a stronger collective voice in AfCFTA conversations.

I see A-ACX as an important piece of Africa's future market infrastructure. Ultimately, we should make it easier for a commodity produced in one African country to find a credible, transparent and efficient market in another.

The ambition is much bigger than connecting exchanges. It is about connecting African markets.

Hardest part of earning legitimacy with market actors - brokers, aggregators, regulators, farmers, or institutional buyers?

The hardest part is that legitimacy cannot be declared; it has to be earned. Every participant comes to a market with a different definition of value and a different history of disappointment. A farmer may ask, "Will I actually get a better and more reliable market?" A buyer asks, "Can I trust the quality and delivery?" A regulator is thinking about integrity and systemic risk. A broker or aggregator may wonder whether the exchange is enabling them or displacing them.

So, the challenge is not merely designing a technically sound exchange. It is demonstrating, repeatedly, that participation leaves people better off.

And that takes time. One successful transaction builds more legitimacy than fifty presentations. Markets believe what they experience. Consistency, transparency, settlement discipline and keeping promises are ultimately what convert an institution from something people have heard about into something they trust.

> *I see A-ACX as an important piece of Africa's future market infrastructure.*

If you had to choose one metric that best captures whether an exchange is actually improving real economic outcomes - not just trading volume - what would it be?

If I had to choose only one, I would look at the sustained improvement in producers' realised income from participating in the formal market. Trading volume tells me that transactions are occurring. It does not necessarily tell me that livelihoods are improving.

I would want to know whether a farmer who participates in the exchange is receiving better price discovery, experiencing fewer post-harvest losses, accessing markets more consistently and ultimately retaining more value from what he or she produces.

An exchange should not exist simply to make commodities move. It should make markets work better. If the people producing the underlying value remain chronically poor while volumes rise, then we should be asking ourselves some difficult questions.

Which part of intra-African trade do you think is most "mispriced" today - risk, information, logistics, trust, or financing - and how should exchanges shift incentives to correct that?

I would choose trust, because trust influences the price of almost everything else.

When I do not trust your quality, your documentation, your ability to deliver or your willingness to honour the transaction, I protect myself. I demand

more collateral. I charge a higher premium. I hold more inventory. I insist on advance payment. Suddenly what appears to be a financing or logistics problem is partly a trust problem.
Commodity exchanges can help convert trust from something personal into something institutional.
Standardised contracts, grading systems, certified warehouses, reliable market data, transparent price discovery and enforceable settlement mechanisms reduce the number of things counterparties simply have to "take your word for."
That is particularly important for intra-African trade. We need to move from "I trade with you because I know you" to "I can trade with you because the system works."

What is one of the greatest lessons life has taught you?

That very little in life is permanent. Not success, not failure, not applause and certainly not difficulty.
So I have learnt to hold success with humility and adversity with perspective. Some chapters teach you through achievement; others teach you through disappointment. Both are useful.
Sometimes the thing you thought was happening to you turns out, with time, to have been preparing you for something else.
And perhaps most importantly, I have learnt that who walks the journey with you matters enormously. Relationships, family, friendship, faith, mentors and people who can tell you the truth are invaluable.
Titles eventually change. What remains is who you became, whom you helped and what you contributed while you had the opportunity.

You've led operations across 22 countries - what is your definition of performance and what lessons have you learnt that summarise your experiences and impact in the 22 countries?

Performance, for me, is sustainable results delivered through people.
Numbers matter. Market share matters. Revenue, profitability, efficiency and growth all matter. But if fantastic results disappear the moment the leader leaves, or if they were achieved by exhausting the organisation, I would question how successful that leadership really was.
Working across 22 countries taught me three things.
First, context matters. Africa is not one market. What succeeds in Lagos may require substantial adaptation in Abidjan, Accra, Dakar or Kinshasa.
Second, standards can be global while execution must often be local. Strong organisations know which principles are non-negotiable and where teams need freedom to adapt.
Third, that diversity is a winning ingredient. When you bring together a variety of minds with all they represent (upbringing, culture, experiences), and let them all be involved in creating ideas, providing solutions and building the businesses, you can achieve extraordinary performance.

> ***An exchange should not exist simply to make commodities move. It should make markets work better.***





When you managed at Nestlé Central & West Africa, how did you translate "brand discipline" into "business discipline" across multiple markets with different appetites for risk?

Brand discipline is important: creativity works best when you are very clear about what the brand stands for and what therefore, must never be compromised. With standards defined, execution can take many different faces. The same applies to business.
Across multiple markets, I separated principles from practices. Principles - consumer trust, product quality, financial discipline, ethics, brand standards and accountability - were non-negotiable. Practices could differ according to market realities.
That distinction gave teams room to innovate without creating organisational chaos.
You don't want 22 countries behaving identically. You want 22 countries pursuing the same strategic intent intelligently within their own context.

> *We need to move from "I trade with you because I know you" to "I can trade with you because the system works."*

What do you do differently when a team's problem is not capability, but belief?

You stop teaching and start restoring confidence.
I would first understand what damaged the belief. Was it repeated failure? Leadership behaviour? An unrealistic target? Lack of recognition? Fear? Organisational politics?
Then I would create opportunities for credible wins—not artificial wins, but meaningful progress that allows the team to see itself differently.
And leaders have to lend teams their belief for a while. People watch what you tolerate, what you celebrate, how you respond to mistakes and whether you remain confident under pressure.

What is an important leadership skill?

Listening. Not listening in order to respond, but listening in order to understand.

Additionally, when leaders become more senior, one of the greatest risks is that people increasingly tell them what they think they want to hear. So the ability to create an environment where people can challenge you, bring bad news early and offer perspectives different from yours becomes enormously important.
Listening also does something else: it gives you access to intelligence you cannot possibly possess yourself.

Leadership is not proving that you are the smartest person in the room. It is creating the conditions in which the intelligence of the room can be tapped into.

One "design failure" that quietly harms well-being in fast-growing markets - and how would you redesign it?

Technology was supposed to give us flexibility. Instead, for many people, it has

removed the boundary between work and life. It has created an always-on culture. Messages arrive at midnight. Weekends become extensions of the working week. People expect instant responses to messages.

I would redesign work around specific deliverables and outcomes rather than constant visibility and permanent accessibility. That also involves fewer unnecessary meetings, protected periods for focused work and explicit norms around after-hours communication.

Rest should not be treated as the reward you receive after you have exhausted yourself. From a business perspective, tired people don't simply feel worse. They make worse decisions.

If you could implement one internal policy today across organisations and institutions to reduce burnout and decision-error, what would it be, and what resistance would you expect?

I would introduce protected decision time. I would deliberately protect periods in the working week when people with significant decision responsibility cannot be routinely booked into meetings. That time should be available for thinking, analysis, preparation and difficult decisions.

The resistance would be immediate: "We are too busy." "Our culture doesn't work that way." "Clients need us."
But being busy and being effective are not synonymous.

When the cost of a poor executive decision can run into millions of dollars or affect thousands of employees, clients, customers or investors, thinking is not downtime.
Thinking is a critical part of the job.



> ***Titles eventually change. What remains is who you became, whom you helped and what you contributed while you had the opportunity.***

Tell us about Forty Lives and its impact so far.

Forty Lives is an NGO I established to provide advocacy for people with mental health conditions and promote good mental health for all. I realise that I started it from a childhood passion for supporting people who were neurodivergent and misunderstood,



people who were bullied, and those whom society had given up on, such as prisoners. I invited my sister, equally passionate about mental health, to be a co-founder, knowing that our combined strengths would take our efforts further. It grew from a conviction that mental well-being deserves the same seriousness with which we discuss physical health, particularly in societies where people can still find it difficult to say, "I am struggling and I need help."

The name itself speaks to the value of life and to the importance of community. Our work has been about creating awareness, providing support and, importantly, helping to remove some of the stigma around mental-health conversations. Where I started this with a specific group in mind, now I also care more broadly about the well-being of professionals. I started to look for signs in my team when one of them started falling apart. Success can sometimes become its own mask. People assume that because somebody appears happy or even accomplished, they cannot also be struggling.

Impact, therefore, is not only in programmes or numbers reached. It is also in the conversations that become possible, the person who seeks help earlier and the family, workplace or community that learns to respond with greater understanding.

> ***Brand discipline is important: creativity works best when you are very clear about what the brand stands for.***

> ***My book is centred around a framework I developed called SMARTER Leadership. It is a set of principles designed to guide established and aspiring leaders.***

If Forty Lives makes it easier for even one person to choose support instead of silence, that matters.

You have shared your plans to launch a book. What is it about?

It is centred around a framework I developed called SMARTER Leadership. It is a set of principles designed to guide established and aspiring leaders through uncertainty, make difficult decisions, transform setbacks into opportunities for growth, and ultimately to command the kind of respect most commonly associated with some of the world's greatest leaders.

Drawn from my personal experiences alongside insights from accomplished leaders, the book offers actionable lessons to help navigate complexity, build resilient teams, and balance courage with empathy. The principles I espouse in the SMARTER Leadership Framework are important in leadership because leadership is ultimately about people.

You can have the best strategy, the strongest technical expertise and a brilliant business plan, but if you cannot communicate, build trust, manage conflict, listen, influence and empathise, it becomes very difficult to bring people with you.



As leaders become more senior, their technical expertise often gets them to the table, but their ability to relate to people determines how effectively they lead once they get there.

And when you are trying to build and scale an institution, this becomes even more important. You are no longer just managing tasks; you are shaping culture, aligning people, navigating different personalities and creating an environment where others can perform at their best. That is why the principles I outline, some of which are referred to as 'soft skills,' are so important. They are often the hardest skills to master, but some of the most consequential in leadership.

Technical skills may get you into leadership. SMARTER Leadership determines how far your leadership can take you.

> ***Leaders must listen to understand, not to respond.***

> ***Technology was supposed to give us flexibility. Instead, for many people, it has removed the boundary between work and life.***





Advice for top female executives going through difficult moments at work?

First, do not make a difficult season your identity.
A bad quarter, a difficult boss, an organisational conflict, a missed opportunity, or even losing a role, does not erase everything you have built or everything you are capable of becoming.
Second, resist the pressure to suffer elegantly and silently. Senior women in particular can feel that admitting difficulty will be interpreted as weakness. Find your people. You need a small circle of individuals who do not need your title, are not impressed by your résumé and can tell you the truth with love.

Third, separate the problem from yourself. Ask: What can I control? What can I learn? What needs confronting? What needs accepting? And what do I need to walk away from?
Protect your health. Protect your reputation. Continue investing in your competence. And never allow one organisation's assessment of you to become your assessment of yourself.
Sometimes resilience means staying and fighting. Sometimes courage means leaving. Wisdom is knowing which moment you are in.
And throughout it all, remember that leadership is not the absence of difficult moments. Most often, difficult moments are where leadership is formed!

> ***Sometimes resilience means staying and fighting. Sometimes courage means leaving. Wisdom is knowing which moment you are in.***

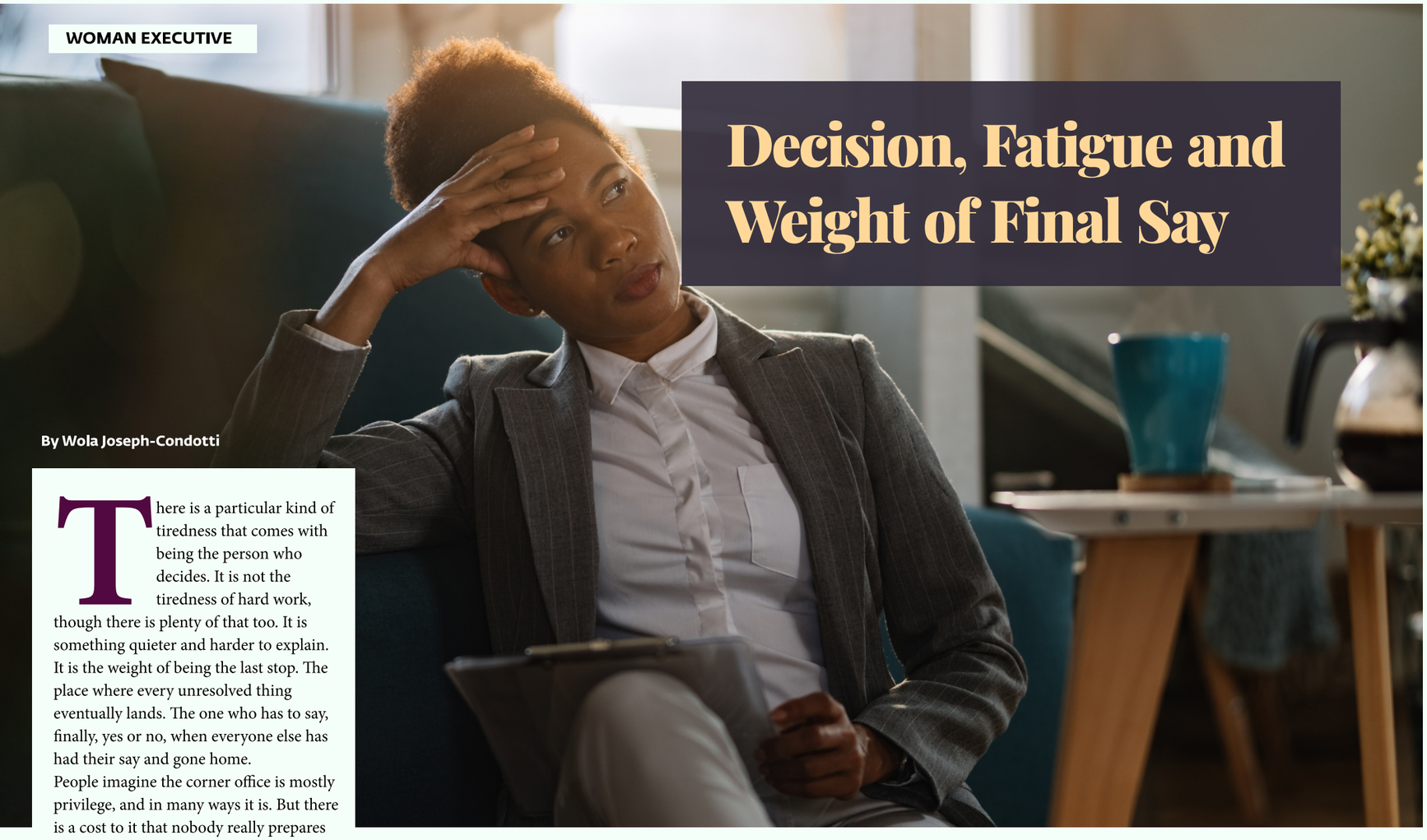


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WOMAN EXECUTIVE



Decision, Fatigue and Weight of Final Say

By Wola Joseph-Condotti

There is a particular kind of tiredness that comes with being the person who decides. It is not the tiredness of hard work, though there is plenty of that too. It is something quieter and harder to explain. It is the weight of being the last stop. The place where every unresolved thing eventually lands. The one who has to say, finally, yes or no, when everyone else has had their say and gone home.

People imagine the corner office is mostly privilege, and in many ways it is. But there is a cost to it that nobody really prepares you for, and it took me years to understand what I was actually feeling. It is this. Everyone brings you their problems. Almost no one carries yours.

Death by a Thousand Decisions

Let us start with the sheer volume, because it is real and it is underestimated. A leader makes decisions all day. Big ones and small ones, back to back, often with barely a pause between them. Should we do this deal. Can we afford this hire. How do we handle this crisis. Do I approve this, escalate that, override the other. By late afternoon, you have made more consequential calls than most people make in a week, and there is a real cost to that.

Psychologists call it decision fatigue, and it is not a metaphor. Your judgement is not infinite. Every decision draws down the same well, and when the well runs low, the quality drops. You get impatient. You reach for the easy option instead of the right one. You say yes just to make the asking stop. The dangerous part is that it does not announce itself. You do not feel your judgement eroding. You just quietly start making worse calls while feeling exactly as capable as before.

The Finality Is the Heavy Part

But volume is not the hardest thing. Finality is.

When you are not the final decision-maker, there is always someone above you to escalate to. A safety net. Someone who will carry it if it goes truly wrong. And then one day you become the person there is no escalating past. The problem stops with you. And there is a specific loneliness in that, the loneliness of knowing that whatever you decide, you own, all the way down, with no one to hand it to.

That is the weight of the final yes. It is not that the decision is necessarily harder. It is that there is no longer anywhere for it to go but you.

No One Carries the Leader

And here is where the isolation deepens. The whole organisation is built to bring things to you. That is the design, and it is correct. But it means the flow runs one way. All day, people arrive with what they are carrying and set it down in front of you. And then they leave, lighter. And you are still there, holding all of it, plus your own.

Who do you set your burdens down in front of? For many leaders, the honest answer is no one. We are so used to being the strong one, the capable one, the one with the answers, that we quietly conclude we are not allowed to need anything ourselves. So we carry it alone. And carrying it alone, over years, is how good leaders slowly wear thin.

Protecting the Well

So what do you actually do?

Protect your judgement like the asset it is. Make your heaviest decisions when you are fresh, not at the frayed end of the day. Push the small, reversible calls to other people, so your limited judgement is spent where it truly matters. Not everything needs to reach your desk, and a leader who insists on deciding everything will end up deciding the important things badly.

And this is the one we resist most. Build a place to set your own burdens down. A trusted friend outside the organisation. A mentor with nothing to gain. A quiet space, in prayer, where you are not the one with the answers but the one bringing the questions. You need at least one relationship where you are allowed to not be the strong one. Not a luxury. A survival requirement.

A Word From Scripture

Moses nearly broke under this exact weight. He sat as the sole judge over the people, from morning until evening, every dispute funneling to him and him alone. And his father-in-law Jethro watched, and said plainly, "What you are doing is not good. You will surely wear yourself out."

The solution was not for Moses to try harder. It was to share the load. Appoint capable people. Let them judge the smaller matters. Reserve only the weightiest things for himself.

Even Moses was not built to be everyone's final answer. Neither are you.

Final Thoughts

If you are the one who decides, hear this clearly. The loneliness you feel is not a flaw in you. It is the nature of the seat, and nearly everyone in it feels it, whether they admit it or not.

But the weight is not meant to be carried alone. Guard your judgement. Share what can be shared. And find the people, and the quiet, where you get to lay your own burdens down.

Because a leader who is only ever a destination for other people's problems, and never once a place to rest her own, will not last. And the work needs you to last.



Wola Joseph Condotti
Chief Executive Officer,
Eko Power Limited.

Wola is the CEO of Eko Power Limited.

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, be coming 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.

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INSPIRING WOMAN AFRICA

FINANCIAL AdviseHER

Three Roads to Wealth. Same Destination

By Sola Adesakin



There is a conversation I have had more times than I can count. A woman sits with me, sometimes in a formal consultation, sometimes over a casual lunch, and says some version of the same thing. I feel like I am working hard but not building wealth. And my first question is always the same. Which pathway are you on?

Because here is what most people never stop to think about. There is not one road to wealth. There are at least three and more. And while they all lead to the same destination, they move differently, they demand different things from you, and they reward different kinds of effort. The three I want to focus on today are the professional pathway, the entrepreneurial pathway, and the investor pathway.

The professional pathway

This is the road most of us start on. You get an education, you build expertise, you get employed, and you exchange your time and skill for a salary. There is nothing wrong with this road. Some of the wealthiest people in the world built their foundation here. But this pathway has a specific rule you need to understand. Your income on this road is directly tied to how valuable the market considers your skill set. Not how hard you work. How valuable your work is perceived to be.

Two accountants can work the same hours. One earns N250,000 a month. The other earns N1.2 million. The difference is not effort. It is positioning, specialisation, reputation, and the ability to solve problems that command higher fees. If you are on the professional pathway, your single most important financial decision is not where to save. It is how to become more valuable. Invest in certifications that move you into higher-paying brackets. Build expertise in areas where demand exceeds supply. Position yourself where your skill commands a premium, not where it competes with a thousand other people offering the same thing.

The entrepreneurial pathway

This road replaces the salary ceiling with a different equation. Instead of exchanging your time for money, you build a system that creates value at scale. A product, a service, a platform, a business that can generate revenue beyond your personal capacity to deliver. The reward potential is significantly higher than the professional pathway. So is the risk.

The entrepreneurial road is not for everyone, and that is perfectly fine. But for those on it, the principle is the same as the professional pathway, just amplified. Wealth does not answer to effort alone. It answers to value. The business that solves a real problem for a large enough number of people and does it efficiently will generate wealth. The one that runs on the founder's sweat without a system will generate exhaustion.

If you are building a business, the question to keep asking is this. Am I building something that works because of me, or something that works because of the system I have created? The first is a job you gave yourself. The second is an asset.

The investor pathway

This is the road where your money does the work instead of you. You deploy capital into instruments or assets that generate returns: stocks, bonds, mutual funds, real estate, treasury bills, businesses you are not running. Your time is freed up entirely or partially because the income is not dependent on your presence.

The investor pathway is the slowest to start and the most powerful to finish. The woman who invests N20,000 a month from age 30 in a diversified portfolio does not feel wealthy at 35. By 50, the compounding has done something remarkable. By 55, it has done something transformational. This road requires patience, consistency, and the willingness to let time do its work without interfering.

So which one is best?

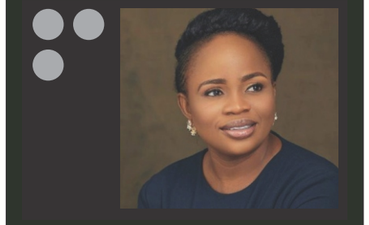
None of them. And all of them.
The wealthiest people I know are not on one pathway. They are on two or three simultaneously. They earn well professionally because they invested in their value. They own a business or a side venture that generates income beyond their salary. And they invest consistently so their money compounds while they focus on living.

That is the real strategy. Not choosing a single road but building bridges between all three.

Start where you are. If you are a professional, ask what would make you twice as valuable in your field within two years. If you are an entrepreneur, ask what system you can build that does not depend entirely on your presence. If you are neither yet, start as an investor. Even N5,000 a month puts you on the road. And if you can do all three, the easier it gets to build wealth.

Wealth answers to value. Whichever pathway you choose, bring value. The wealth follows.

What are your current pathways?



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 Instructor℠ and a member of the Personal Finance Speakers Association.

HER POINT OF VIEW

Let Your Value Speak: How to Communicate What You Bring, Without Bragging

Chinyere Okorocha



For many women, talking about what we are good at feels uncomfortable. We can advocate passionately for other people. We recommend colleagues, celebrate our friends and proudly tell everyone about the accomplishments of our children or team members. But ask us to explain why we deserve the promotion, appointment, opportunity or seat at the table, and suddenly we become hesitant. We do not want to sound boastful.

I understand this instinct because I was raised with the same values many women of my generation were taught: work hard, be humble, let your work speak for itself. It is good advice.

But after more than three decades in professional life, I would add one important qualification:

Your work cannot always speak for itself. Sometimes, you have to give it a voice.

Humility Does Not Require Invisibility

There is a difference between bragging and communicating your value. Bragging says, "Look how wonderful I am." Communicating value says, "This is what I can contribute." That distinction matters.

As my career progressed, I had to become more comfortable talking about my experience and expertise. Whether I was speaking to a prospective client, pursuing a leadership opportunity, developing a new area of practice or sitting in a room where decisions were being made, I could not expect people to magically know everything I had done. I had to learn to clearly articulate it.

For women, this can require unlearning. We sometimes believe that being modest means minimising ourselves. We say, "Oh, it was nothing," when it was very much something. We attribute an achievement entirely to luck. We deflect compliments. We allow other people to tell our stories because telling them ourselves feels somehow inappropriate. There is nothing humble about pretending you have less value than you actually possess.

Talk About Impact, Not Importance

One of the easiest ways to communicate your value without sounding boastful is to focus on impact rather than importance. Instead of telling people how brilliant you are, tell them what changed because of your contribution.

What problem did you solve?
What did you build?
What improved?
Who benefited?
What result did your team achieve?

Early in my career, my value was largely demonstrated through the quality of the legal work I produced. As I became more senior, the conversation changed. My contribution could no longer be measured only by the assignments I personally completed.

It included clients I helped develop, practices and sector initiatives I helped build, younger lawyers I mentored, relationships I cultivated, teams I led and opportunities I helped create.

That required me to broaden my own understanding of value.

And that is something I encourage younger and mid-career women to do. Your value is not simply how hard you work.

Keep Your Own Receipts

One practical habit I recommend is keeping a record of your accomplishments. I call it a victory log or brag book…

We are often so busy moving to the next task that we forget what we have already achieved. Keep track of successful projects, positive client feedback, revenue generated, problems solved, efficiencies created, awards, speaking engagements, new responsibilities and measurable outcomes. This is not vanity. It is evidence. When appraisal season comes, when you are negotiating compensation, applying for a board position or preparing for an interview, you should not be trying to remember twelve months of contribution the night before. Know your evidence. There is a quiet confidence that comes from being able to say, factually and without embellishment: "This is what I have delivered."

Learn to Receive a Compliment

This sounds small, but it matters.

Someone says, "You did an excellent job." And we respond: "Oh, it was really the team." Yes, acknowledge the team. But you were part of the team too.

Try: "Thank you. I am really proud of what we achieved as a team."

Notice the difference.

You have accepted the compliment without taking credit away from anyone else. Women do not need to shrink so that others can shine. Both things can be true.

Let Other People Speak for You Too

Communicating your value does not mean you must constantly talk about yourself. Your reputation, relationships and body of work should also speak.

This is where sponsors become invaluable. A sponsor can say your name in a room you are not in. A satisfied client can recommend you. A former colleague can attest to your leadership. A strong professional network can amplify your credibility in ways self-promotion never could. But even sponsors need information.

If people do not know what you have accomplished or what you are interested in doing next, they cannot advocate effectively for you. Make it easier for people to speak well of you.

Do Not Wait Until You Need Something

Another lesson I have learnt is that communicating value should not happen only when you want a promotion or opportunity. Build visibility consistently. Contribute thoughtfully in meetings. Write. Speak. Share your expertise. Volunteer for meaningful assignments. Participate in your industry. Help other people. Develop relationships.

Over time, people begin to associate your name with particular strengths.

That is far more powerful than suddenly announcing your brilliance when a position becomes available.

Your Value Is Not a Secret

There is a generation of talented women doing extraordinary work while hoping somebody notices. Somebody may.

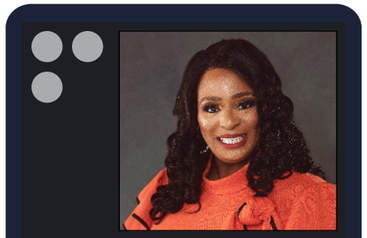
But hope is not a career strategy.

You do not need to become the loudest person in the room. You do not need to exaggerate your accomplishments. And you certainly do not need to turn every conversation into a sales pitch.

But you do need to become comfortable owning what you have earned.

Know your strengths. Keep evidence of your impact. Accept credit graciously. Make your ambitions known.

And when the moment requires it, be able to look someone in the eye and explain clearly why you are ready. That is not bragging. It is giving people the information they need to recognise the value that was already there.



Chinyere Okorocha

Partner in the Law Firm of JACKSON, ETTI & EDU

With over three decades of experience as a trailblazer in the legal profession, Chinyere Okorocha 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.



UNGA81: What is the Agenda for Women?

World leaders gathered in New York for the 81st session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), the global conversation on women's rights took place at a defining moment for multilateralism. The UNGA 81 which had its theme "Restoring Trust, Managing Transformation: A United Nations That Delivers for All" raises a fundamental question for women and girls, will global commitments to gender equality finally translate into power, protection, resources and participation?
The evidence confronting governments is stark. According to UN Women–UN DESA Gender Snapshot 2026, released during the opening of UNGA 81, reports that no single indicator under Sustainable Development Goal 5-Gender Equality is currently on track to be achieved by 2030. At current rates of progress, gender equality remains approximately 171 years away. The report also finds that 32 per cent of national gender equality mechanisms surveyed experienced an erosion of institutional power over the previous two years. This is more than a statistical warning. It is a warning about political will.

The central issue: women and power

For decades, the international community has adopted conventions, resolutions, declarations and development goals affirming women's equality. Yet the latest evidence suggests that the central problem is no longer simply the absence of commitments. It is the persistent exclusion of women from the institutions where decisions are made.
The 2026 Gender Snapshot reports that women remain substantially underrepresented in political, judicial and economic leadership. Only 31 of 175 Chief Justices globally are women, while women occupy only around six per cent of corporate chief executive positions globally. The report also notes that close to nine in ten defence ministers and more than eight in ten finance ministers are men.
The message for governments at UNGA 81 is therefore increasingly clear, gender equality cannot be achieved without addressing unequal access to power.
This is why women's political participation, leadership and representation are central to the current UN agenda. The question is not simply how many women are present in parliament or government, but whether women have meaningful influence over budgets, laws, peace processes, economic policy, technology and national priorities.

From Beijing to the SDGs: the implementation gap

The international framework is already extensive. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Sustainable Development Goals, the Women, Peace and Security agenda and the Pact for the Future collectively establish a substantial architecture for women's rights. Yet implementation remains uneven.

The Pact for the Future, adopted by Member States in 2024, places women's full, equal and meaningful participation within the wider transformation of international cooperation. Its commitments connect gender equality with peace and security, sustainable development, technology, youth participation and reform of global governance.
UNGA 81 therefore provides an opportunity to move the conversation from what governments have promised to what governments are actually financing and implementing.
That means strengthening national gender institutions, protecting women's rights organisations and civic space, investing in gender responsive public financing, improving gender data and ensuring that laws protecting women are implemented rather than merely enacted.

Women's rights and access to justice:

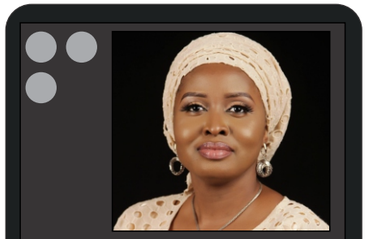
The 2026 agenda also places justice at the heart of gender equality. The 70th session of the Commission on the Status of Women, held in March 2026, focused on women's access to justice and the removal of legal and structural barriers. This is particularly important because discriminatory laws, weak institutions, inaccessible justice systems and social norms continue to prevent millions of women from exercising rights that formally exist on paper.
Justice must therefore be understood broadly: access to courts and legal remedies, protection from violence, property and inheritance rights, economic rights, political rights, digital rights and protection from discrimination. For women living in fragile and conflict-affected settings, access to justice is inseparable from peace and security.

Women, Peace and Security: from participation to influence

Twenty five years after the UN Security Council Resolution 1325, on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda remains one of the most important frameworks for women's participation in peacebuilding.
Yet women remain dramatically underrepresented in formal peace negotiations and decision making structures. UN Women continues to emphasise that women must not be seen only as victims or beneficiaries of humanitarian assistance. They are negotiators, mediators, community leaders, peacebuilders and political actors. This matters particularly in an era of protracted conflicts, forced displacement, violent extremism, climate-related insecurity and humanitarian crises.
The question for governments is therefore whether WPS will remain primarily a policy commitment or become a properly financed political and security priority. Women need seats at the table, but they also need the authority, resources and institutional support to influence what happens at that table.

The Secretary General's transition: A test for the UN

Perhaps no issue symbolises the gender question within the multilateral system more clearly than the ongoing selection of the tenth UN Secretary General.
The UN Sec. Gen. António Guterres' second term ends on 31 December 2026, and the next Secretary General is expected to assume office on the 1st January 2027. The selection process has introduced greater public engagement, including interactive dialogues between candidates, Member States and civil society.
There is also a historic dimension to this. In the UN's 80-year history, no woman has ever served as Secretary General. During the 2026 selection process, the President of the General Assembly explicitly highlighted gender parity. She noted that all 193 Member States had supported calls for women to be nominated while also stressing that candidates must meet the required standards of competence, leadership, integrity and international experience.
The significance of the transition therefore goes beyond the identity of the next office holder. It raises a wider institutional question on what does representative leadership look like in a multilateral system serving a world in which half of humanity is female?
Importantly, gender parity cannot begin and end with the Secretary General's office. As the President of the General Assembly observed, parity must also be reflected in ministerial positions, diplomatic negotiations, General Assembly processes and other centres of international decision making.



Dr. Asmau Benzies Leo
Executive Director,
Centre for Nonviolence and Gender Advocacy in Nigeria (CENGAIN)

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 (CENGAIN), 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.



Edition 57, **29th September 2026**
INSPIRING WOMAN AFRICA

WOMAN AT THE HELM

Aisha Muhammed - Oyebode

Founder/CEO
Murtala Muhammed Foundation & Chairperson, Lekoil Nigeria

Aisha Muhammed-Oyebode has over 20 years of experience advancing the cause of women and girls as a development specialist, human rights activist, and international NGO expert. She serves as the CEO of the Murtala Muhammed Foundation, dedicated to improving the quality of life of Africans. The Foundation specifically focuses on engendering self-reliance and fulfillment by working tirelessly on policy and advocacy for issues that impact on ethics, equity, good governance and economic empowerment, encouraging business development, education and providing medium term disaster relief.

As a seasoned entrepreneur, she also serves as the Group CEO of Asset Management Group Limited, a real estate development and management firm, specialising in both luxury and mass housing.

Aisha is the board Chair of Lekoil Limited, an African oil and gas exploration company which currently holds interests offshore Nigeria. The company was established in response to the changes currently sweeping through the African oil industry - particularly the growing trend towards regulation and actions that support domestic participation in the oil industry.

Aisha is a board member of the Women's Leadership Board of the Women and Public Policy Programme at the Harvard Kennedy School, a member of the University of Pennsylvania Law Global Women's Leadership Initiative, and advisor to the United States Institute of Peace in Nigeria.

She bagged an LLM in Public International Law, an MBA in Finance, and an MPhil Law from the University of London's King's College, Imperial College and School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) respectively. As a trained lawyer she is a member of the Nigerian Bar Association and the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators.

In addition to her professional accomplishments, she is also an educator with experience teaching master's students including at SOAS, as a teaching fellow in Hausa language structure, framework, and translation. As an activist both in and out of the boardroom, Aisha is passionate about positive change and empowering Africans to reach their full potential.



Edition 57, **29th September 2026**
INSPIRING WOMAN AFRICA

WE'VE GOT MEN

Hisham Ezz Al-Arab

CEO/Board Member, Commercial International Bank (CIB), Egypt

Hisham Ezz Al-Arab was reappointed as Chief Executive Officer and Executive Board Member of the Commercial International Bank (CIB) – Egypt, in November 2024.

CIB is the leading private-sector bank in Egypt, offering a broad range of financial products and services to its customers, which include more than 500 of Egypt's largest corporations, enterprises of all sizes, institutions, and households. CIB's strong brand and growth in retail and SME banking segments continues to introduce new customers to the bank. As a result, CIB has succeeded in becoming the most profitable private sector Bank operating in Egypt.

Ezz Al-Arab was previously the Chairman of the Commercial International Bank (CIB) – Egypt since March 2023; prior to his appointment in CIB, Ezz Al-Arab served as an advisor to the Governor of the Central Bank of Egypt for three months in 2022 before rejoining CIB as Non-Executive Director of the Board in November 2022. Ezz Al-Arab founded and chaired HE Advisory in 2020 till his appointment as CIB Chairman in March 2023.

As former Chairman, he transformed the institution from a wholesale lender into Egypt's largest private-sector bank. The bank's market capitalisation grew from EGP 1 billion ($ 200 million) at the beginning of Ezz Al-Arab's term to EGP 100 billion ($ 6.6 B), making its stock — a blue chip component of the Egyptian Exchange — the global investment community's preferred proxy for Egypt and a benchmark for the banking industry in emerging markets.

He also inspired the CIB Foundation, a leading Egyptian voice for universal access to quality healthcare extended to underprivileged children.

He has over 40 years of experience as an international banker across Europe, the Middle East, and Africa, had advised corporations on Growth Strategies, Resources Mobilisation and Financial Risk Management and provided fundraising advice and strategic counsel to start-up fintechs.

Under Ezz Al-Arab's leadership, CIB is embarking on a transformative five-year strategic journey spanning 2026 to 2030, designed to position the bank for long-term, sustainable growth amid an evolving macroeconomic landscape.

HOLISTIC LIVING

DIABETES: More Than the Numbers

By Dr. Maymunah Yusuf Kadiri



When Lily was first diagnosed with diabetes, she expected her life to shrink into a narrow routine of glucose readings and dietary restrictions, a condition to be managed rather than a life to be lived fully. What actually unfolded surprised her entirely, becoming less a story about a single disease and more an exploration of how deeply mind, body, and spirit are woven together in the pursuit of genuine wellness. Her journey offers a compelling case for why chronic illness, however daunting at first, can become an unexpected teacher in holistic living.

The connection between Lily's mind and her blood sugar became impossible to ignore once she started paying closer attention. Stressful weeks consistently coincided with readings that refused to stabilise no matter how carefully she counted carbohydrates, revealing a truth that no prescription alone could address. Meditation, deep breathing, and yoga became her tools for calming a nervous system that was quietly working against her metabolic health, and as her stress eased, so too did the volatility in her numbers. It was a revelation that reframed her entire understanding of what managing a chronic condition actually requires.

Therapy became another unexpected cornerstone of Lily's healing, offering her a space to process the fear, anxiety, and grief that often accompany a lifelong diagnosis but rarely get acknowledged in typical medical appointments. Through those sessions she uncovered a resilience she had not known she possessed, learning to extend herself the same compassion she would offer a friend facing the same diagnosis. This emotional groundwork did not appear on any lab report, yet it fundamentally changed how she carried her condition day to day.

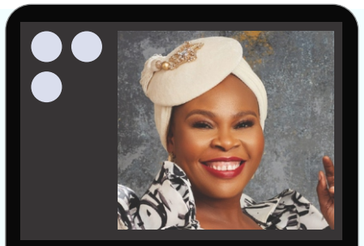
Community became Lily's quiet lifeline. Rather than facing diabetes in isolation, she leaned on friends, family, and a support group of people who understood her experience without lengthy explanation. Their encouragement reminded her, on difficult days, that she was not fighting alone, and their shared wisdom offered practical insights no textbook could provide. This sense of belonging became as vital to her wellbeing as any medication, softening the loneliness that chronic illness so often brings.

Food, too, was transformed from a source of restriction into an act of self-respect. Lily approached her plate as a curious explorer rather than a rule-follower, experimenting with whole, unprocessed ingredients and discovering genuine pleasure in meals that nourished her rather than merely fitting within a diabetic-friendly checklist. Movement followed a similar evolution, shifting from an obligation into a source of joy, whether through nature walks or strength training that left her feeling capable and strong rather than merely compliant with a doctor's orders.

Lily also explored complementary therapies such as acupuncture and massage, not as replacements for her medical treatment but as meaningful additions that eased her symptoms and deepened her overall sense of wellbeing. Alongside this, she found herself drawn increasingly toward advocacy, sharing her story publicly to dismantle the stigma and misinformation that so often surrounds chronic illness, and discovering unexpected purpose in helping others feel less alone in their own diagnoses.

Faith and spirituality offered Lily a final, steadying thread through moments of doubt, giving her a sense of meaning and guidance that extended beyond what any treatment plan could measure. Lifelong learning became a companion to this spiritual grounding, as she remained curious about new research, new perspectives, and new approaches to her own self-care, treating her diagnosis as an invitation to keep growing rather than a sentence to be endured.

Lily's experience captures something essential about holistic living that extends well beyond diabetes itself: genuine wellness is never confined to a single number on a monitor or a single system in the body, but reflects the full integration of physical care, emotional honesty, community, purpose, and spirit. Her story reminds anyone facing a chronic diagnosis that illness need not define the boundaries of a life. With the right blend of medical guidance, emotional support, and holistic self-care, it is entirely possible to meet a lifelong condition not with resignation, but with courage, curiosity, and an unexpectedly rich sense of purpose.



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- Psy chiatrist 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-therapeu tic 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, Praeti tioner (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 organi zation, "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

When will abuse, violence against women stop?

By Zainab Aderounmu

Everyday, women face walls and ceilings that continue to limit their participation in public society. Everyday women valiantly battle these walls and ceilings just for an opportunity to be recognised as equal contributors to the world.

The sad part? Abuse and violence which could primarily be perpetrated in close proximity and physical spaces now follow women to intimate spaces through technology. Technology that ordinarily should make human lives better has created amplified avenues for abuse through technology facilitated gender abuse.

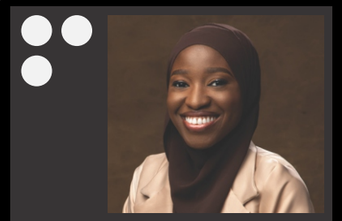
I watched a video of a lady online where she confronted a man who had been physically following her for thirty minutes. He followed her from street to street, and when she noticed she was being followed, she confronted him. Interestingly, the only person who came to her aid was another woman. The other men were onlookers, by choice. But that was physically, for only thirty minutes.

How about the woman or girl who gets stalked for weeks, even years, online? I know a friend who experienced such harassment for over three years. He kept changing phone numbers to call her, promising to take good care of her once she agreed to marry him. It became a mixture of verbal abuse and constant unwanted, unsolicited access. At some point, he tried to reach me, and the only thing I knew to do was block him across all platforms. Did he attempt to reach me with other accounts? Yes, and I kept blocking. But for how long do we want to keep blocking?

When will the question change from 'what did you do to get abused?' to 'why did that man abuse her?' And when exactly would men be taught to leave women alone? You may think we sound like a broken record, but we sound that way because society is still broken, and women are left to gather the harmful broken pieces every time.

One in three women have been abused, and four in five face online harassment. Over 50 percent of adolescents globally will face some form of abuse, a staggering number being girls. And more sobering is the fact that the world is 171 years away from gender equality. The numbers are appalling, but they're our lived reality.

Edition 57, **29th September 2026**
INSPIRING WOMAN AFRICA



Zainab Aderounmu

Zainab Aderounmu A. W. is a First Class graduate of English Language and the Overall Best Grad uating Student from the Lagos State University, Lagos Nigeria. She's a professional Master of Ceremonies, known as "The Hijabi Compere" , 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.

After I got physically assaulted on a bus, I got tired of being asked to learn how to defend myself. It is imperative, no doubt, but when will we ask men to stop assaulting women? That's the actual question.

September is the gender violence awareness month for the Lagos State Government, championed by the Executive Secretary of the Lagos State Domestic Violence Agency, Titilola Vivour -Adeniyi. One is tempted to marvel at her tenacity and dedication to revolutionising gender violence response in Lagos, but one must acknowledge her ability to stay level-headed even in the face of gory and worrisome stories she comes across daily. So yes, her passion is fuelled by anger, anger at what women still experience in society, despite contributing largely to society's stability.

If we began to measure how housewives and mothers contribute to GDP growth globally, we might begin to understand that gender pay gaps shouldn't even exist because women literally ensure balance.

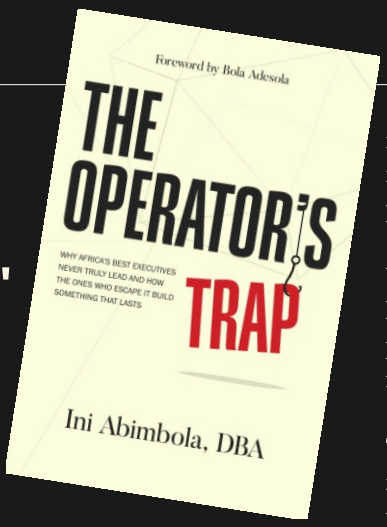
But we must continue to speak of solutions and create awareness, until there's nothing to create awareness on; until women don't have to cross three streets just to ensure they're not being followed; until women don't have to block stalkers everywhere online; until women begin to feel safe and are actually safe.

WILAN's Nana AI chatbot is one of those solutions. It is a friendly, no-judgement tool that provides information and safety tools for women experiencing technology facilitated violence. Essentially, it helps women take action at the first signs of harassment. So if you're experiencing any form of online abuse, please speak to Nana. She'll guide you to response centers who would help.

You ask "Why are there so many women organisations?" Because there are still too many issues besetting women. From pay gaps to violence, women still face too many walls and ceilings in society. That's exactly why.

IN THE NEWS

Ini Abimbola's 'The Operator's Trap' to launch in OCTOBER



Zainab Aderounmu

What happens when operational excellence, the very skill that got African executives promoted, keeps them stuck? The book, "The Operator's Trap", by Dr Abimbola Ini, is set to answer that question.

The book argues that operational excellence, the quality that carries an executive up through the ranks, becomes the very constraint that holds them back. It draws on the author's almost three decades of experience in consulting and advisory on governance, strategy and sustainability across public and private sectors, including her nine years as Chief Executive of ThistlePraxis Consulting, the management consulting firm she founded in 2010.

The book further purports that nobody warns executives at the point of appointment, because the organisation has every reason to keep rewarding what it already values.

It highlights the cause in the conditions executives work under, and argues that talent pipelines remain thin enough that delegation carries real risk, institutional processes often live in individuals rather than in documented systems, and the strategy models taught on most MBA programmes assume stable currencies, deep capital markets and predictable regulation that African markets do not reliably supply. Therefore, executives who fall back on operating under pressure respond rationally to the environment they work in, and the book treats what follows as a design problem with solutions.

"I spent years looking for this book before I wrote it," said Abimbola. "I watched executives who were among the most capable people I had ever met make decisions well below their intelligence, and the reason was never ability. The tools they had been handed were built for a different environment, and this book is my attempt to give them something built for where they actually stand."

The foreword is written by Bola Adesola, Chairman of Ecobank Nigeria, who has spent more than three decades in banking. In twelve chapters, across four parts, and supported by twenty-two frameworks and diagnostic tools, it covers strategy in volatile markets, understanding boards and stakeholders, the move from doing to deciding, strategy that survives economic instability, people and attrition as strategic issues, financial fluency for the executive who is not a finance specialist, cross-sector transition, women in the boardroom, communicating strategy to different audiences, and the measurement of execution. The argument is carried by a composite chief executive, Emmanuel Okafor, whom the reader follows across five years, a device intended to make the frameworks legible in practice as well as on the page.

With preorders now open, the book will be launched on 31 October 2026 in Lagos, but preorders placed now will be dispatched from October 12, 2026.

The author, Dr Abimbola Ini, has spent more than twenty-five years across the public and private sectors advising institutions on governance, strategy, public policy execution, and sustainability, including fifteen years in development sector programme management and results-based monitoring and evaluation. She founded ThistlePraxis Consulting in 2010 and led it as Chief Executive for nine years before stepping down in 2020. She served until 2023 as the United Nations Technical Expert on Women's Political Leadership, supporting the Office of the Speaker of the Federal House of Representatives. She teaches international corporate social responsibility management on the MBA programme at the University of Applied Sciences in Austria, is Vice President and a founding trustee of the Sustainability Professionals Institute of Nigeria, holds a Doctorate in Business Administration from Rome Business School, sits on the Governing Council of Wigwe University and works from Lagos.



iWA | INSPIRING WOMAN AFRICA

EDITION 49, 4TH AUGUST, 2026



Woman Executive



Wola Joseph Condotti
Chief Executive Officer, Eko Electricity Distribution Company

When the Sector is Bigger Than You: Leading in Systemically Broken Industries

There is a kind of leadership burden of running a company inside a sector that is, honestly broken. You inherit ambitious targets. You put together a competent team. You write a credible strategy. And then you spend most of your week fighting problems you did not create, cannot fully fix, and will still somehow be blamed for when they land on the evening news.

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Her Point Of View



Chinyere Okorocha
Partner & Overall Head of Sectors at Jackson, Etti & Edu

The "Support Role Cycle". Why So Many Brilliant Women Are Overlooked at Work

Recently, I had a conversation with a female executive that stayed with me long after our meeting ended. On paper, she was exceptional.
Highly competent. Dependable. Intelligent. Hardworking. The kind of professional every organisation says it wants. responsibilities that were often beyond her job description.

Visit our website www.theiwagroup.com to read conclusion

Financial AdviseHER



Sola Adesakin
Founder and Lead Coach, Smart Stewards

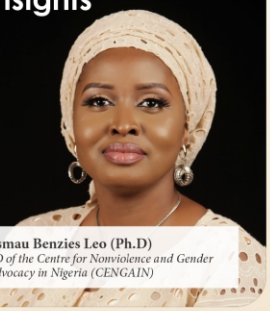
Live for the Right Things: A Smarter Financial Approach for 2026

Every New Year comes with pressure. New goals, expectations. New standards of "success" defined mostly by what people are showing online. But 2026 is going to be financially different for you, not be because you spent louder or tried harder impress. It will be because you lived for the right things.

Financial progress is less about dramatic reso and more about quiet alignment.

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Gender Insights



Asmau Benzies Leo (Ph.D)
ED of the Centre for Nonviolence and Gender Advocacy in Nigeria (CENGAIN)

geria in 2026: ny True Security Must ve a Woman's Face

igerians step into 2026, one truth remains bidable: insecurity in Nigeria is not gender l. From banditry affected communities in the west to displacement camps in the Northeast nate stressed regions across the Middle Belt, nd girls are not merely collateral victims of ey are deliberately targeted, onately affected, and often left without justice.

e www.theiwagroup.com to read

HOLISTIC LIVING



Dr. Maymunah Yusuf Kadiri
MD/CEO Pinnacle Medical Services Ltd

Your Greatest Investment Is the Life You Build Every Day

When Maggie looked in the mirror, she believed the extra weight she had gained was her greatest problem. It was only the visible sign of a life that had quietly drifted out of balance. Stress had replaced rest, convenience had replaced nourishment, and survival had replaced intentional living. Her transformation began not with a miracle diet but with one decision care for herself differently. That single decision gradually changed her body, restored her confide lifted her mood, strengthened her relationships a gave her a renewed sense of purpose.

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VITH BES



Zainab Aderounmu
Youth Advisor & Ambassador Delegation of the European Union to Nigeria & ECOWAS

Nigeria in 2026: Why True Security Must Have a Woman's Face

The New Year has begun and making a sense of what you want may feel overwhelming. You may be tempted to 'see how it goes' instead of setting concrete goals, but I don't recommend because what you don't measure, you can't multiply. On that note, here's a step-by-step process of setting your goals for the new year.

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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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