BUSINESS DAY
WEEKENDER
EDITION 320 | 21, NOVEMBER 2026





AMINA YEREMA: THE WOMAN AT THE HEART OF NIGERIA'S FOOTBALL REFORMS



WOMEN

Inaugural HerSphere Summit in Lagos targets growth financing, market access for over 3,000 women-



FOOD

Chef Dumebi: The woman whose creativity goes beyond the kitchen

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PUBLISHED BY
BusinessDay Media Limited
6A George Street, off
Mobolaji Johnson Street, Ikoyi
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The Law Union

BUSINESS DAY WEEKENDER

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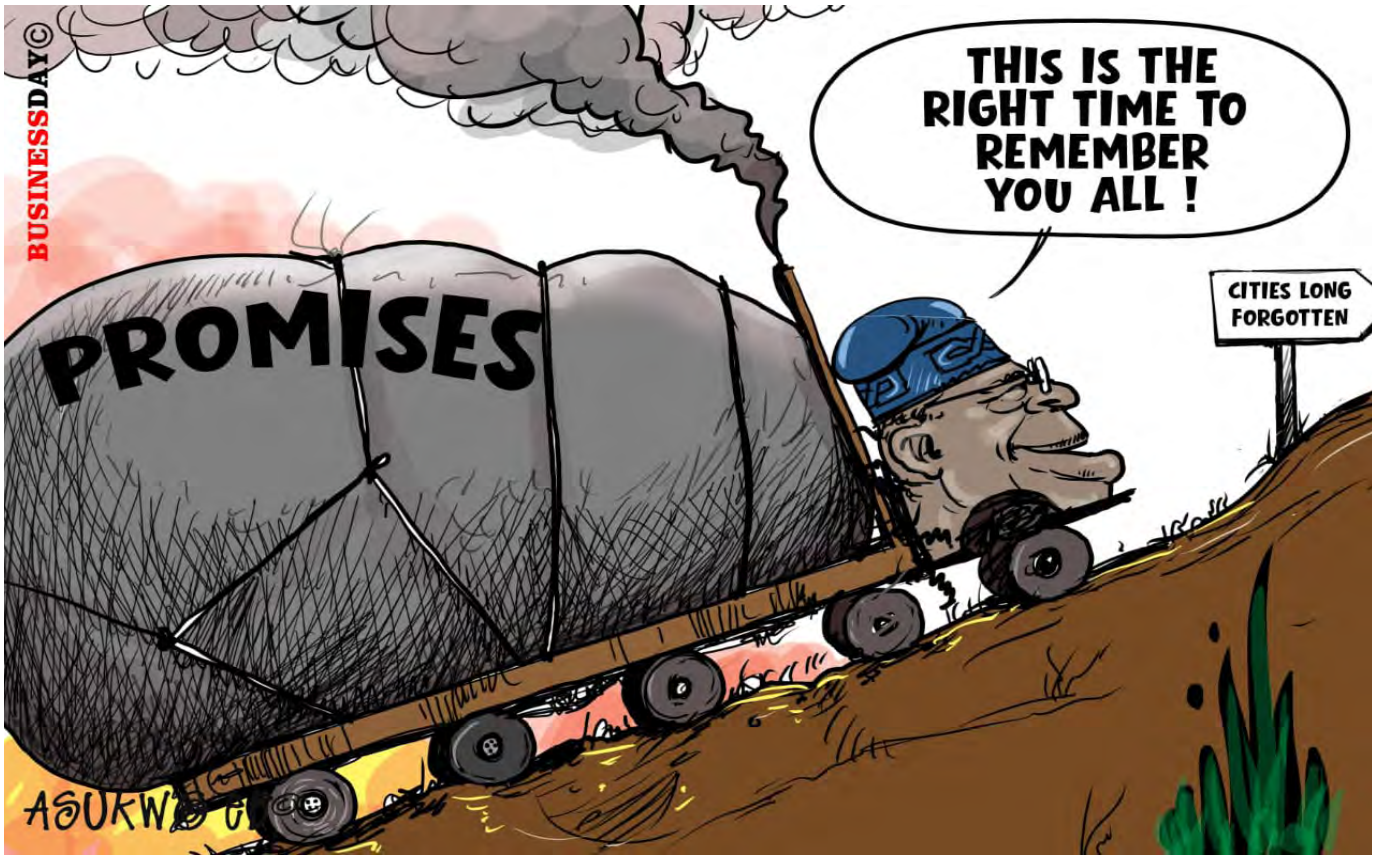


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CITIES LONG FORGOTTEN

AMINA YEREMA:
THE WOMAN AT THE HEART OF NIGERIA'S FOOTBALL REFORMS

ANTHONY NLEBEM



When FIFA appointed a five-member Normalisation Committee to oversee the running of the Nigeria Football Federation (NFF), Amina Yerema emerged as the only woman among those selected to steer Nigerian football through a critical period of institutional reform.

Following consultations with the Confederation of African Football (CAF), Yerema was named alongside committee chairman Sampson Ebomhe, Dr Joe Abah, Godwin Enakhena and Daniel Amokachi. The committee is expected to stabilise the NFF, implement governance reforms and oversee a transition to a new leadership.

While her colleagues bring experience in law, public administration, media and professional football, Yerema offers more than 25 years of expertise in financial management, audit and assurance, taxation, consulting, corporate governance and organisational development.

A passionate football enthusiast, she combines a lifelong connection to the game with professional experience in public financial management reform, institutional accountability and strategic planning.
Her career includes serving as a World Bank Financial Management Specialist, where she reviewed the Annual Performance Assessments of all 36 Nigerian states.

Her responsibilities involved evaluating the compliance, quality and comprehensiveness of state financial reports and recommending improvements to public financial management systems.

She is also trained in the World Bank's Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability (PEFA) framework, which provides a basis for assessing and strengthening public financial management and accountability systems.

Yerema has served as an engagement partner on tax advisory services to the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), representing the institution in tax audits across multiple jurisdictions. She has also provided advisory services to Taj Bank.
In addition, she spent more than a decade as financial controller of a property development group, gaining experience in financial oversight and corporate administration.
Her professional work has included leading organisational transformation initiatives to modernise governance structures, financial processes and internal control systems.

Beyond her institutional experience, she has trained more than 300 professionals in accounting, finance and taxation.



From the football pitch to football governance

For Yerema, football is more than an administrative responsibility. Her connection to the sport dates back to her formative years, when she played in school competitions, took part in five-a-side matches with family and friends, and continued playing during her National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) programme.

Over time, her interest expanded beyond the playing field to include the management, governance, commercial and developmental dimensions of the game.

"My relationship with football goes beyond that of a spectator. From playing football during my formative years, participating in five-a-side football with family and peers, representing my school in competitions and continuing to play during my National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) period, football has remained an important part of my life," she said.

She believes developing Nigerian football requires more than sporting talent, highlighting the importance of sound leadership, institutional accountability, financial discipline, stakeholder inclusion and professional administration.

"I have developed a keen appreciation of the importance of sound leadership, institutional accountability, financial discipline, stakeholder inclusion and professional administration in building a successful football ecosystem," she said.

Her perspective comes at a time when the NFF faces the challenge of rebuilding institutional credibility and strengthening relationships with key stakeholders, including state football associations, clubs, players, sponsors and government institutions.

A mandate to restore confidence

Yerema believes Nigerian football has significant sporting, economic and social potential, but argues that the country needs an administrative structure capable of translating that potential into sustainable success.

"Our national teams, players, coaches, clubs and football institutions have demonstrated the capacity to compete at the highest level. What is required is a governance and administrative environment capable of consistently converting this potential into sustainable success," she said.

Her priorities include promoting sound financial management and transparency, strengthening professional administration, rebuilding stakeholder confidence and supporting the sustainable development of grassroots and domestic football.

She also views the committee's assignment as an opportunity to establish a credible and orderly transition to a properly constituted NFF leadership.

"I would therefore like to contribute to an NFF that is professionally managed, transparent, financially responsible, stakeholder-inclusive and capable of inspiring confidence at home and internationally," she sid.

For Yerema, membership of the Normalisation Committee represents more than an appointment. She describes it as a national responsibility and an opportunity to strengthen an institution central to Nigerian football.

"I would bring to the role integrity, professionalism, football passion, financial and governance competence, strategic thinking and a commitment to consensus-building," she said.

The committee's mandate includes reviewing the NFF statutes, updating its electoral code, managing the federation's day-to-day operations and conducting elections by May 31, 2027.

Within that framework, Yerema is expected to bring her financial and governance expertise to efforts to strengthen accountability, improve financial controls and rebuild confidence among state football associations, clubs, players, corporate sponsors and government stakeholders.

Ultimately, her contribution will be measured not only by her professional credentials or status as the committee's only female member but also by the extent to which the committee delivers meaningful reforms and lays the foundation for a more transparent, accountable and professionally managed NFF.

INAUGURAL HERSPHERE SUMMIT IN LAGOS TARGETS GROWTH FINANCING, MARKET ACCESS FOR OVER 3,000 WOMEN-LED BUSINESSES

LEHLE BALDE



Leaders from government, finance, corporate Nigeria, and the creative industries gathered in Lagos on Tuesday for the inaugural edition of the HerSphere Global Summit, calling for stronger access to growth financing, corporate supply chains, and institutional backing to scale women-led enterprises across Africa.

Held on November 17 at the Wole Soyinka Centre for Culture and the Creative Arts, the maiden summit brought together key figures including former Deputy Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) and Head of the Bridgforte Centre for Global Impact, Aishah Ahmad; All Progressives Congress (APC) Lagos deputy governorship candidate, Princess Damilola Sonayon-James; fashion designer Mai Atafo; and Nollywood actor Bucci Franklin.

Lagos State Governor, Babajide Sanwo-Olu, was represented at the event by his Special Adviser on Sustainable Development Goals, Dr Oreoluwa Finnih.

Themed “Her Enterprise, Africa’s Advantage: Moving Women-Led Businesses Beyond Participation to Economic Power,” the convening focused on addressing structural barriers, particularly limited access to affordable capital and institutional markets, that continue to constrain women-owned businesses despite high rates of female entrepreneurship across the continent.

Delivering the keynote address, Ahmad urged women entrepreneurs to remain resilient and strategic as they work to expand their businesses in a challenging economic environment.





Her address underscored the summit's broader objective of supporting established female founders to move from small-scale operations to institutional growth.

Sonayon-James, a businesswoman and APC deputy governorship candidate running alongside Kadri Obafemi Hamzat ahead of the 2027 Lagos State elections, highlighted the intersection of enterprise growth, governance, and women's leadership in driving economic development.

Beyond policy and finance, the event featured prominent voices from fashion, film, and media, including Atafo and Franklin, reflecting the growing commercial contribution of Nigeria's creative economy alongside traditional business sectors.



According to the summit's official programme, the speaker roster across finance, energy, telecommunications, and investment included Jumoke Olaniyan of Nigerian Exchange Group; Adesuwa Okunbo Rhodes, founder of Aruwa Capital Management; Arese Ugwu of NASD Plc; Ifeoma Uddoh, founder of Shecluded; Godfrey Ogbechie of Rainoil; Temilade Aduroja of Oando; and Monisola Olufunke Alabi of MTN Nigeria.

Other listed speakers included Ambassador Maisie Dunbar, Liberia's Special Envoy for Trade and Investment; Bode Abifarin of MoMo Payment Service Bank; Ivie Dima-Okojie of Nigerian Exchange Limited; Seyi Alawode of CHL World; and corporate and technology professionals John Mago and Kenneth Akan.

From the media and creative sectors, the programme featured Terra Kulture founder Bolanle Austen-Peters; Africa International Film Festival founder Chioma Ude; BellaNaija founder Uche Pedro; broadcast journalist Lamide Akintobi; Media Independent Practitioners Association of Nigeria (MIPAN) President Brenda Nwagwu; Women in Advertising Nigeria Chairperson Oluwaseyi Layande; Tola Akerele of the National Theatre; and entrepreneur and philanthropist Anita Ukah.

Built around the pillars of agency, influence, and capital, HerSphere connects a network of more than 3,000 women-led businesses to strategic partnerships, market opportunities, and institutional networks.

The summit was supported by the Lagos State Government, the Office of Sustainable Development Goals (Lagos Global), Nigerian Exchange Group, Delphino Entertainment, and SheMeansBusiness by BusinessDay, and was co-hosted by media entrepreneur Lehlé Baldé and ARISE News Society Editor, Kachi Offiah.

CHEF DUMEBI: THE WOMAN WHOSE CREATIVITY GOES BEYOND THE KITCHEN

ESTHER EMOEKPERE



When Chef Dumebi visits a new country, one of her first stops is usually a supermarket or local market. She wants to see what people are buying, the ingredients on the shelves and what they eat at different times of the day. For her, everyday food habits reveal a great deal about a place and its people.

“You can learn an incredible amount about a place simply by observing its everyday food culture,” she says. It is an approach that reflects her curiosity about people, places and new experiences. Photography, art, fashion, hair, music and travel have shaped her as much as cooking. She describes her mind as a laptop with a million tabs open.

Food was one of those interests, although it took time to become a career. At school, she studied Food and Nutrition, preferring the practical lessons to the theory. She remembers making a particularly incredible fried rice. At university, she returned to cooking through catering. People enjoyed her food, paid for it and encouraged her to consider a business. She began developing menus but eventually put the idea aside because she did not yet understand what building a food business involved.

The fried rice would make another appearance while she was working on an independent magazine. She had organised a photoshoot with actor Triple A, alongside her friend Helen, a fashion stylist. During the shoot, she served him and his friend her signature dish. He loved it, but what stayed with her was his appreciation of the hospitality: being invited for a photoshoot and offered a lovely meal.

She cannot say for certain whether the experience was what brought her back to food. But it brought together several things she loved: creativity, photography, cooking and making people feel welcome. Perhaps, she reflects, it planted a seed. Food could be more than something she enjoyed preparing; it could become part of an experience she created for others

That thinking informs her culinary philosophy, which she calls “Translation, Not Fusion”. She is interested in taking familiar ingredients and interpreting them through different culinary traditions rather than simply combining elements from different cuisines. A beef preparation slowly braised with onions, fresh thyme and rosemary, for instance, could become a French- or Italian-inspired dish, while another version could draw on Nigerian or Togolese seasonings and accompaniments. The starting point remains the same, but the finished dishes tell different stories.



This approach is particularly important in her exploration of West African food. Dumebi believes the region's cuisine already has the depth, complexity and knowledge to stand on its own. She wants to explore the techniques behind traditional cooking and make that knowledge accessible without losing the cultural identity of the dishes.

Travel continually adds to that understanding. Whether in Nigeria, Togo, Senegal or Europe, she visits markets, speaks with traders and observes what people eat. During a recent trip through Amsterdam and other parts of Europe, she spent time examining supermarket shelves and watching what people bought. Each destination offers something new, from unfamiliar ingredients to different ways of preparing familiar foods.

Her interest in visual expression predates her culinary career. At school, she covered a wall with magazine photographs of models, architecture and artwork, rearranging the images whenever she acquired new magazines. "I suppose I was creating my own little exhibitions without even realising it," she says. Today, she photographs food, buildings, skylines and everyday details. She has also been experimenting with turning food into art. Although colour, texture and presentation matter to her, taste always comes first.

Hair is another creative interest, one she traces to her grandmothers. One was what she describes as the queen of wigs, while the other was a seamstress who owned a hair salon. Spending time around them introduced her to different forms of personal expression and eventually led her to take a hairdressing course. She has experimented with weaves, short hairstyles and different colours, even shaving her head completely at one point. Having rediscovered her love for natural hair, she is now particularly interested in natural styling and the cultural significance of African hairstyles.

Music has also found its way back into her life. She studied it when she was younger and was once a DJ, but her interest faded as she explored other pursuits. Recently, watching her daughter work out melodies and musical keys by ear has rekindled that passion. Her children, she says, often reconnect her with interests she had set aside.

Looking ahead, Dumebi is thinking about how to develop her creative pursuits while building something that can outlive her. The Chef Dumebi School of West African Cookery is central to this ambition. She wants to document the region's culinary knowledge, explore the science behind traditional dishes and establish a structured approach to teaching West African cookery as a professional discipline.

She is also developing platforms for emerging culinary talent, including The Twelve, a culinary competition, and exploring hospitality and creative spaces through Table 12 in Lagos and projects in Lomé. Her plans also include writing books, among them The First Table, and creating collaborations across food, fashion, art, music and education.

Family remains an important part of these plans. Her son has completed the first stage of his Junior Chef Academy training, and she enjoys watching her children discover their own interests. She hopes to build things they can develop in their own ways, rather than expect them to follow her path. As she puts it, she wants them to take what inspires them and "sprinkle their own magic on it".

Cooking may be what Dumebi is best known for, but it is only one expression of a much wider creative life. "My creative expressions are my happy place," she says

FROM CAPITAL MARKETS TO REAL ASSETS: SOLAPE FAYEMI'S MODEL FOR SAFE, TRANSPARENT PROPERTY INVESTMENT





In a Nigerian real estate market frequently clouded by opaque land titles, delayed allocations, and broken investor trust, Solape Fayemi is bringing a refreshingly institutional, governance-led approach to property acquisition.

Sitting at the intersection of corporate governance, strategic investment, and human capital development, Fayemi serves as Board Chair of diversified financial group Sohcahtoa Holdings Limited and Founder/Executive Director of the Sohcahtoa Foundation. Now, as Chief Executive Officer of Saina Properties, she is leveraging her background in finance and investment management to build a real estate advisory enterprise focused on helping individuals, families, and diaspora investors protect their capital and build generational wealth without getting burnt.

In this exclusive interview with Ifeoma Okeke-Korieocha, Fayemi unpacks why Nigeria's property sector struggles with transparency compared to global markets like the United States, how Saina Properties is eliminating post-purchase anxiety through structured due diligence and six-month client follow-ups, and why vision, not gender is her greatest competitive edge in a male-dominated industry.

Can you tell us how Saina Properties came about? What sparked the vision, and why did you decide to set it up?

I have been investing in real estate personally for years because I love it as an asset class, it remains one of the most reliable ways to build long-term wealth. Over time, exploring the market, I realised that the way most people approach real estate in Nigeria is the exact reason so many get burnt in the process. Often, buyers see flashy marketing, rush to invest, and pay without truly understanding what they are acquiring. There is no clarity.

That lack of clarity is why someone invests millions of naira, because real estate is never a N1,000 or N50,000 decision only to discover later that the seller had no legal right to sell the property, or that a family member who was not legally recognised in government records transacted the land.

Another major reason people suffer allocation delays is that some sellers have not even fully acquired the land from the original owners before collecting money from buyers; when issues arise along the line, investors get stuck.

Nobody wants to lose hard-earned millions to preventable mistakes. That is why I decided this industry needed a different approach. Before people part with their money, they must be able to answer critical questions: Who truly owns this property? Does the seller have the legal authority to transfer it? What are the risks? Does the location align with my goal, whether capital appreciation, rental income, or a first home? At Saina Properties, we want people to buy with clarity and confidence.

What were you doing before venturing into the real estate business?

I worked in an investment company, which heavily shaped how I view real estate as an asset class. Because I understand investing across different asset classes, I recognised early on that real estate offers deeper opportunities for sustained, long-term wealth creation.

Did I always know I would build a real estate company? Not at the beginning. However, every time I reviewed my personal portfolio, I found myself researching property markets and analysing potential returns. When I eventually decided to step into the sector professionally, I knew the market was already crowded, so I didn't want to operate like everyone else.

I set out to identify the core structural problems in the industry and figure out how to solve them. I went back to school to study real estate both in Nigeria and in the United States, and I intend to keep taking global courses to bring international best practices home.

Having studied real estate in both Nigeria and the US, why do you think land and property disputes are so peculiar to Nigeria?

It comes down to one word: transparency. In the United States, for instance, if you want to buy a house, you don't even need to walk into anyone's office to verify ownership. You simply go online, enter the property address, and pull up the complete history, who the actual owner is, when it was first bought in 1982, when it was resold in 1995, and every encumbrance attached to it.

In Nigeria, accessing accurate records—even when you walk into the Surveyor-General's office, is still cumbersome, and vital information remains largely hidden. Because that data isn't open and accessible, unscrupulous actors hide behind what buyers don't know and can't see to take advantage of them. If everyone had seamless access to verified property records, everyone would know how to act right.

The real estate sector is heavily male-dominated, yet you are positioning Saina Properties as a major player. How do you plan to compete effectively as a woman in this space?

It is undeniably a male-dominated industry, but I believe in the power of vision, not the power of genetics or gender. What drives you? What problem are you solving, and what do you want to achieve? That is what makes the actual difference—not whether you are male or female. Having a crystal-clear understanding of the institution I am building, the people I serve, and the wealth I want them to preserve is what sets me apart.

Where do you see Saina Properties in the next five to ten years?

I see Saina Properties as an institution defined by earned trust and consistency, a company that delivers on its word every single time, and stands as the first port of call for anyone looking to invest safely in Nigerian real estate, whether they live locally or in the diaspora.





Having covered the real estate sector extensively, "trust" is a buzzword every developer uses, yet many companies still collapse over trust deficits. What is Saina Properties doing differently to ensure you don't become another cautionary tale in five to ten years?

That is a very important question, and our answer lies in embedding accountability into our systems rather than treating trust as a marketing slogan. First, we are not out to just "sell, sell, sell." We operate as advisors first, empowering clients with full due diligence and education before they commit a single naira.

Second, unlike what happens with many companies where buyers start chasing the developer for updates the moment money changes hands, our relationship does not end at the point of payment. We maintain a structured six-month post-sale follow-up system with our clients to ensure documentation, allocation, and asset performance stand the test of time. Our clients never have to chase us for information they should readily have. When you build an advisory relationship like that, clients return to you five or ten years later because they know their capital is safe with you.



THE FUTURE OF HEALTHCARE IN NIGERIA: WHY TELEMEDICINE IS NO LONGER AN OPTION BUT A NECESSITY

OLU KUNUYI





Nigeria's healthcare sector is at a turning point. With increasing pressure on existing infrastructure, an uneven distribution of specialists, rising costs, and difficulty accessing quality care, the need for a new model of delivery has never been greater.

Against this backdrop, telemedicine is no longer an alternative. It is becoming an essential part of modern healthcare.

What was x andce seen as a convenience is now a necessity, driven by advances in digital technology, changing patient expectations, and a growing acceptance of remote care.

At QuickMed Araya, we believe we entered this market at precisely the right time.

A New Approach

In March 2026, we launched our hybrid telemedicine model, bringing together technology, medical expertise, and patient-centred care.

Since launch, we have recorded over 1,000 sign-ups on the Araya App. It is an early milestone, but an encouraging one. It tells us Nigerians are ready for accessible, technology-enabled healthcare.

Our vision was clear from the start: to build more than a video-consultation app. We wanted an integrated platform that supports a patient through the full journey — from first consultation and diagnosis, through treatment, follow-up, and discharge.

My background in technology, complemented by an MBA in Strategic Management, shaped how I see this problem. But healthcare is not just another tech industry. It demands deep respect for medical ethics, clinical standards, professional collaboration, and above all, the human side of care.

That is why Araya combines the best of technology with the best of medical practice. Our ambition is not simply to digitise consultations. It is to redefine how healthcare is accessed, coordinated, and delivered in Nigeria.

What Makes Araya Different?

Telemedicine is becoming competitive. The long-term winners will not be those with the flashiest apps, but those who deliver accessible, dependable, and comprehensive care.

At Araya, three pillars set us apart.

1. Access to Highly Qualified Specialists

Nigeria has many competent doctors, but geography and cost often put specialist care out of reach. Nigeria has an estimated doctor-to-patient ratio of around 1 to 5,000, far below the World Health Organization's recommended 1 to 600.

We are encouraged by the growing interest among Nigerian doctors in the diaspora who want to contribute back home. There is a tremendous pool of talent across the UK, Europe, North America, and beyond — professionals trained in some of the world's most advanced health systems.

We are building access to that expertise. Our ambition is to make world-class medical knowledge available to anyone, regardless of location or circumstance.

2. A Hybrid Model: Digital + Physical

The future is not exclusively virtual..
Some cases need a physical examination, face-to-face consultation, or further intervention.

That is why we adopted a hybrid model. Araya offers the convenience of telemedicine while retaining the ability to facilitate physical consultations when clinically required.

This is guided by clinical judgement, not convenience. For example, all children below the age of one are seen face-to-face. Convenience must never compromise appropriate clinical assessment.

Technology should not replace the human elements of healthcare. It should strengthen them.

3. A Platform Built for More Than Consultations

Our platform is designed not only for consultations, but also for Electronic Health Records (EHR) and collaboration across the healthcare ecosystem. Patients rarely receive care from one facility alone.

Effective care requires referrals, specialist opinions, shared records, and continuity across institutions — subject to patient consent, data protection, and access controls.

Our EHR capability is therefore more than digital record-keeping. It is part of our ambition to build a connected healthcare ecosystem where hospitals and professionals work together more effectively.

Clinical Governance: Patients First
Credibility in healthcare depends on quality, safety, and consistency.

Telemedicine must not lower clinical standards. At Araya, technology supports clinical decision-making — it does not dictate it. Where a virtual consultation is insufficient, the patient is directed to the appropriate physical assessment..

Our approach to children under one is one practical example of that philosophy. We want families to have confidence that behind the convenience of the app is a serious commitment to professional practice and patient welfare.

All our doctors are duly licensed, and our platform is built with patient confidentiality and data protection in mind.

Building for the Long Term

The opportunity is clear. Nigeria's large population, rising mobile connectivity, and substantial unmet healthcare needs create a compelling case for technology-enabled care. The wider West African market faces similar challenges.

But success will require more than launching platforms. It will require investment in medical expertise, strong governance, reliable technology, and strategic partnerships.

We are realistic about the challenges — market education, trust, adoption, and infrastructure. The pace may sometimes feel slow, but the direction is clear.

We are not simply looking to participate in the market. Our ambition is to become Nigeria's preferred telemedicine provider.

That cannot be done alone. The future will depend on collaboration between providers, hospitals, doctors, technology companies, insurers, employers, and government.

We are particularly keen to partner with hospitals, corporate organisations, and Nigerian doctors in the diaspora who share our vision.

Our Commitment

Ultimately, our mission is straightforward: to make quality healthcare accessible, affordable, and available without prejudice.

Access to quality care should not be determined by geography, social standing, or ability to navigate a complicated system.

The future of healthcare is connected, collaborative, and patient-centred. At Araya, we are building to be part of that future.

Olu Kunuyi is the Chief Executive Officer of QuickMed Araya, a hybrid telemedicine and EHR platform connecting patients in Nigeria to licensed doctors and specialists in Nigeria and the diaspora. He holds an MBA in Strategic Management.

For partnerships: Hospitals, HMOs, employers, and diaspora doctors interested in working with Araya can visit www.Quickmedaraya.com or download the Araya App at araya.ng

NIGERIAN BEAUTY ENTREPRENEURS JOIN COSMOPROF CASABLANCA ROADSHOW AS 2027 AFRICAN PAVILION PLANS ARE UNVEILED



A delegation of Nigerian beauty industry professionals attended the Cosmoprof Roadshow in Casablanca, Morocco, on 27 October 2026 at the invitation of Cosmoprof.

The delegation was coordinated by Omolola Faleye, Founder and Event Director of The MakeUp Fair Series, and included Stella Ginika Ndekile of Nuban Beauty and Nuban Cares; Linda Onyesoh of MakeupMavenNYNG and Beauty by Aubrey; and Olayemi Nosirat Oduyoye of Yglam Beauty.

Held at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Casablanca, the programme brought together Moroccan beauty professionals and delegations from Angola, Nigeria, Senegal and Tunisia.

A morning networking session was followed by an afternoon press conference organised by BolognaFiere Cosmoprof with support from the Casablanca office of the Italian Trade Agency.



At the press conference, BolognaFiere Cosmoprof presented its international network of beauty trade shows and outlined how companies can participate as exhibitors or trade visitors. The presentation highlighted how these events connect brands and manufacturers with buyers, distributors, importers and retailers in other markets.

A key announcement was the first African collective pavilion planned for Cosmoprof Worldwide Bologna in 2027. The pavilion will give African beauty companies a dedicated space to showcase their products, meet international buyers and explore new business opportunities.

For the Nigerian delegation, the roadshow offered an opportunity to connect with peers





from other African markets and learn how Nigerian beauty businesses can participate in upcoming Cosmoprof events.

CIEL LAGOS INTRODUCES THE NETWORKING TABLE, BRINGING BUSINESS LEADERS TOGETHER FOR MEANINGFUL CONVERSATIONS







In a business environment where relationships, collaboration and access to the right conversations can shape opportunities, creating spaces for meaningful professional connections
has become increasingly important.

Recognising the value of bringing people together beyond conventional business settings, Ciel Lagos is introducing The Networking Table by Ciel, a curated gathering designed to connect
business leaders, entrepreneurs, professionals and influential personalities for an evening of
conversation, knowledge-sharing and relationship-building.

Scheduled for Saturday, November 28, 2026, at Ciel Lagos, Lekki Phase 1, the event will provide an opportunity for guests from different professional backgrounds to interact, exchange
perspectives and build relationships in a relaxed yet distinguished setting.

A major highlight of the evening will be a guest speaker session featuring Chief Osita Chidoka, former Minister of Aviation of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Drawing on his experience in
public service, leadership and national development, his participation is expected to contribute valuable perspectives to the evening's conversations.

Beyond the formal programme, The Networking Table is designed around the idea that some of the most valuable professional relationships begin through simple conversations. By bringing
individuals from different industries and professional backgrounds into one environment, the gathering seeks to encourage connections that can extend beyond the event itself.

The evening will feature welcome drinks, opening remarks, a guest speaker session, networking opportunities.

Guests will also experience A Taste of Ciel, a showcase of the venue's signature
entertainment offerings, before the evening transitions into a social after-party.

For Ciel Lagos, the initiative represents an extension of its approach to hospitality: creating experiences that bring people together, whether through dining, entertainment, celebration or
professional engagement.

As Lagos continues to develop as a centre for business, innovation and entrepreneurship, platforms that encourage interaction across industries offer an opportunity to strengthen
professional relationships and foster new conversations.

The Networking Table by Ciel will take place on Saturday, November 28, 2026, at Ciel Lagos, Lekki Phase 1, Lagos.

The event commences at 8:00 PM.
Contact details: 0813 806 7116, hello.ciellagos@gmail.com.

TEMITOPE ADENUSI REDEFINES THE CONVERSATION ON INFLUENCER MARKETING AND BRAND STORYTELLING

CHISOM MICHAEL



The conversation about influencer marketing is changing. For brands, the question is no longer simply how many people a creator can reach, but how that reach translates into trust, relationships and consumer behaviour. As the creator economy expands, the need for strategy, accountability and an understanding of culture is becoming central to how businesses communicate with their audiences.

For Temitope Adenusi, Founder and Chief Vision Driver of Couleurz Global, this shift represents an opportunity to rethink how brands approach influence and the role creators play in communication.

A marketing strategist with experience in marketing communications, digital strategy, account management and campaign execution, Adenusi has built her career around understanding how brands connect with people. Her work brings together audience insight, culture and storytelling, with a focus on helping businesses communicate beyond product promotion.

Through Couleurz Global, an influencer marketing and creator partnership company founded in November 2023, she works with brands to develop campaigns that connect them with audiences through creators and cultural conversations. The company has executed campaigns for brands including OPay, American Cola, Mamador and The Ice Cream Factory, recording more than 200 million in audience reach, views and impact.

Her approach reflects a view of influence that goes beyond social media numbers. She believes that the relationship between a creator and an audience, the trust that exists within that relationship and the ability to communicate a brand's message through storytelling are central to the value influencer marketing can deliver.

Adenusi's understanding of brand communication developed through different stages of her career. Her experience in marketing communications exposed her to the processes through which businesses build identities, communicate their value and engage consumers.

Working across these areas helped her recognise that a relationship between a brand and its audience requires more than a product or a communication campaign.

She explains: "It became clear to me that a lot is being considered when it comes to creating long lasting relationships. As such, it's about understanding people's interests, behaviours, their needs, their environments, their culture. It goes beyond just having a good product."



This understanding became more pronounced through her experience in influencer marketing. She began to see how creators and the communities around them influence conversations, perceptions and consumer decisions.

For Adenusi, the number of followers a creator has cannot independently determine the value of that creator to a brand. The relationship between creators and their audiences offers another way to understand influence.

"I realised that influence goes beyond the popularity or the huge followership. It's about trust, relatability, shared experiences and the utmost ability to connect with people in unconventional ways," she says.

This thinking informed the establishment of Couleurz Global. She wanted to create a company that would help businesses approach influencer marketing through strategy rather than treating creator engagement as a transaction.

The objective is to help brands understand how to use influence through storytelling and partnerships that establish relationships with the people they want to reach.

One of the questions facing the creator economy is how businesses should measure the value of influencer partnerships. While reach, impressions and follower numbers remain part of campaign reporting, Adenusi argues that these figures do not provide a complete picture of influence.

She believes brands must first establish what they want a campaign to achieve before selecting creators or deciding how to measure performance.

"Well, I think meaningful influence today is defined by the ability to shape perceptions, build trust, drive conversations and being able to influence how people think, feel and act towards a brand," she says.

For her, measurement should follow the campaign objective. Where awareness is the priority, reach and impressions provide indicators of performance. Where engagement is the goal, brands should examine the quality of conversations and how audiences respond to their messages. Campaigns designed to drive sales should consider sign-ups and purchases.

At Couleurz Global, this question of purpose informs campaign planning. Adenusi says the company consistently asks clients what they want to achieve before developing a creator partnership.

However, she cautions against judging every campaign by immediate conversions. Brand familiarity, credibility and associations with consumers can develop over time, making them important considerations when assessing the contribution of creators to business growth.

This position challenges businesses to consider what happens after a campaign reaches an audience. A creator may generate millions of views, but the value of that exposure depends on whether the message connects with the people who receive it.

Beyond brand communication, Adenusi is interested in the role storytelling plays in how Africa is represented across the world.

At Africa PR Week in Nairobi, Kenya, she spoke about the need for Africans to become more intentional about their stories and take ownership of how the continent is represented.

Her argument is rooted in the belief that representation influences perception. For years, she observes, much of the international narrative about Africa has been informed by perspectives that do not fully reflect the continent's experiences.

She argues that stories about Africa must move beyond a narrow focus on challenges and make room for its creativity, innovation, opportunities and diversity.

"This is not to suggest that we should ignore our challenges, rather it's to ensure that stories are told with greater depth, context and diversity," she explains.

For Adenusi, narrative ownership is not simply about producing more African content. It also requires access to the platforms, resources, networks and distribution channels through which African stories can reach international audiences.



She places responsibility on brands, creators and communications professionals to recognise how their work contributes to the wider perception of the continent.

“Who better to tell our stories than us?” she asks.

She also believes that African creators, filmmakers, storytellers and communications professionals need opportunities to develop and distribute their work. Without investment in the people and systems responsible for producing these stories, the ability to influence international conversations will remain limited.

Her position is that Africa must move from participating in global conversations to actively shaping them. This requires international partnerships, access to global platforms and a commitment to presenting stories that reflect the experiences and perspectives of people across the continent.

At Couleurz Global, Adenusi’s approach to campaign development rests on three elements: culture, data and storytelling.

She sees each as serving a different purpose in understanding audiences and developing communication strategies.
“Culture helps us to understand the audience better, data helps make informed decisions and storytelling is where the real connections are created,” she says.

Understanding culture involves examining what audiences care about, the conversations they participate in, their interests, behaviours and how they relate to the world around them.

This knowledge helps brands identify where they can participate in conversations without making their messages feel disconnected from the people they want to reach.

Data provides another layer of understanding. Audience demographics, engagement patterns and creator performance help the company make decisions about campaign planning and creator selection.

Storytelling then connects the brand’s message with the audience. Rather than simply placing a product in front of consumers, Adenusi believes businesses should develop narratives through which people can understand and relate to what a brand represents.

She also warns against treating culture as a marketing theme that brands can adopt whenever a commercial opportunity arises.

Businesses, she argues, must invest time in understanding the communities they intend to engage. They should also allow members of those communities to participate in the stories being told about them.

This is one reason she considers creators important beyond their ability to distribute messages.

Their experiences and knowledge of the communities they represent can help brands communicate with greater understanding.

As the creator economy creates opportunities for people to build businesses and careers around content, Adenusi believes the industry must pay attention to the structures supporting its growth.

She identifies creator compensation, credibility, measurement and brand partnerships as areas that require attention.

On compensation, she argues that payment should reflect the scope of work, the value creators contribute and the rights attached to their content.
"We need to get to a point where compensation reflects the scope of work, the value being contributed and the rights attached to the content," she says.

She also calls for greater attention to credibility and authenticity in creator partnerships. Brands, in her view, must consider how well a creator fits their identity and whether the creator has established a relationship with the audience the campaign intends to reach.

For creators, this means taking responsibility for the work they produce and the partnerships they accept.

She also wants the industry to move away from relying on vanity metrics such as follower counts and likes. Campaigns should have clear objectives linked to business outcomes, with measurement systems that reflect those objectives.

"The next phase of growth should be about building a more professional, accountable and sustainable ecosystem around them," she says.

Artificial intelligence is introducing new possibilities for content creation, audience analysis, campaign planning and personalisation. Adenusi sees these developments as opportunities for brands and creators to improve how they communicate.

For businesses, AI can support audience research, consumer behaviour analysis and campaign decisions.

For creators, it can assist content development and provide new ways to express ideas. Consumers can also benefit from personalised experiences.

However, she believes technology cannot replace the human experiences that give influence its value.

"If there's one thing I think technology cannot replace, that would be originality," she says.

As content creation becomes more accessible, she expects trust, lived experiences and human connection to become even more important.

"I don't see AI and human influence as opposing forces. I see technology as an enabler of what brands and creators can achieve, but the human connection is what gives that influence meaning."

Her position recognises that technology can improve the process of communication, but the relationship between the person telling a story and the people receiving it remains central.

Looking towards the next decade, Adenusi sees opportunities for African creators and marketing companies to participate more actively in the global industry.

She points to international interest in African music, fashion, film and entertainment as evidence of the opportunities available to creators and businesses across the continent.

However, she identifies access and distribution, industry structure and representation as barriers that require attention.

African creators need stronger connections to international platforms, networks and partnerships. The industry also needs structures that support creator management, professional standards and sustainable business relationships.

For Adenusi, changing perceptions of African creativity is equally important. This requires creators and businesses to be deliberate about the work they produce, the stories they tell and the spaces in which they participate.

At Couleurz Global, the ambition is to develop partnerships that extend beyond Africa and contribute to how brands approach influence across markets.

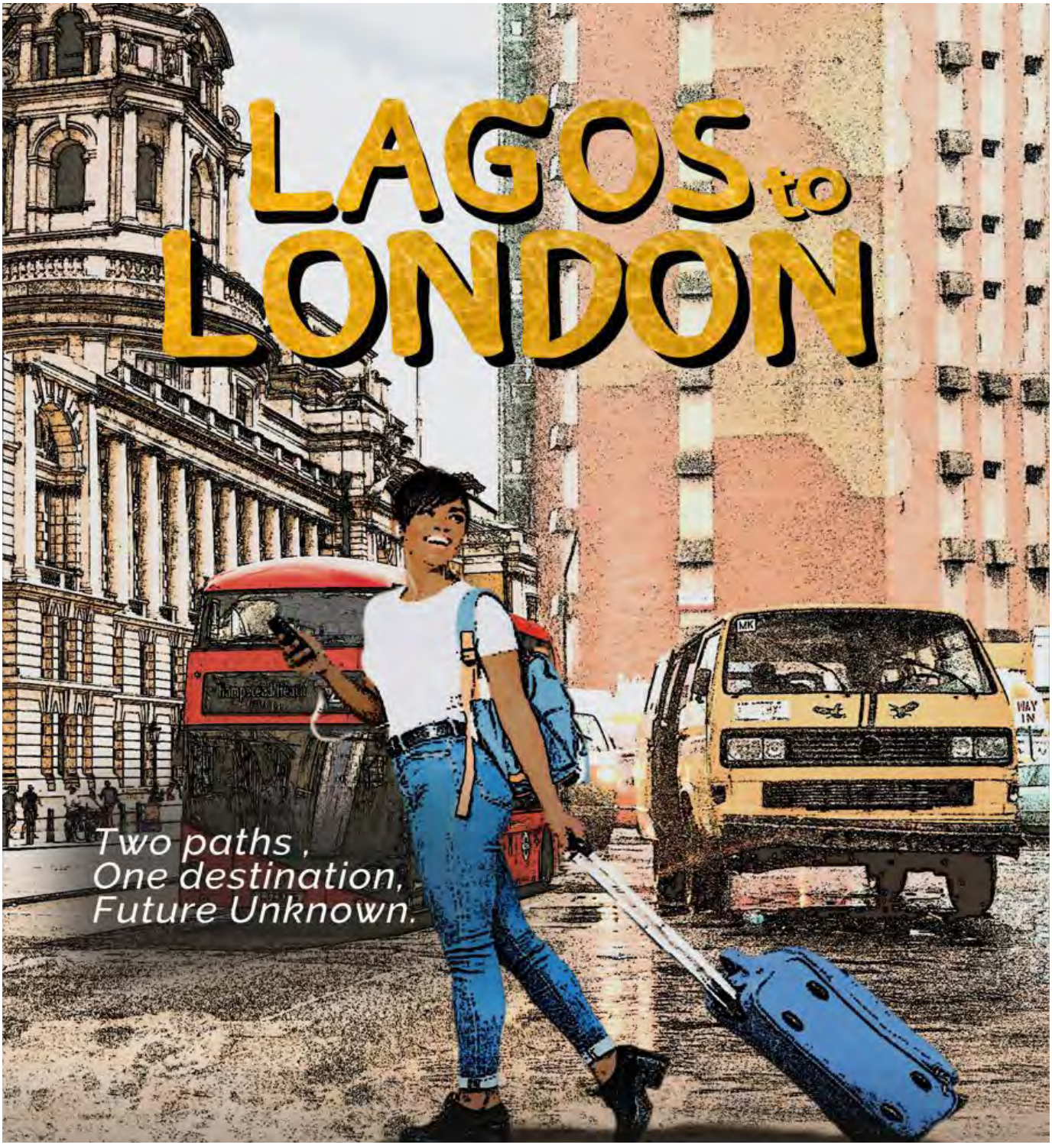
The company's direction is not limited to connecting brands with creators. It also involves helping businesses understand audiences, enter markets and develop communication strategies that reflect the people they want to reach.

Adenusi also wants to contribute to conversations about the value of influence, the role of creators in brand communication and the relationship between storytelling and cultural narratives.

Her work points to a wider argument about the future of marketing: influence cannot be reduced to the size of an audience, and storytelling cannot be separated from the people whose experiences give it meaning.

As brands reconsider how they communicate, creators seek recognition for the value they contribute, and African voices pursue a greater place in global conversations, Adenusi's position remains clear. The future of influence will depend not only on the ability to reach people, but also on the capacity to understand them, earn their trust and tell stories they can recognise as their own.

LAGOS TO LONDON BY LOLA AWORANTI-EKUGO ADOPTED INTO LAGOS STATE SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL LITERATURE CURRICULUM





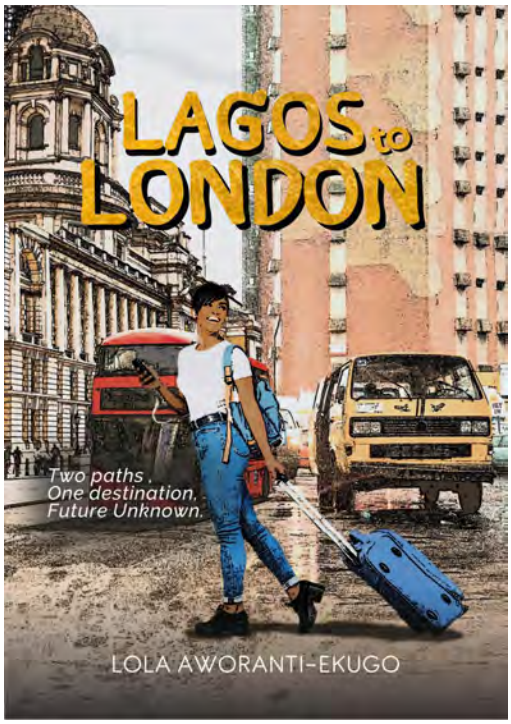
Lagos to London, a novel by Nigerian author Lola Aworanti-Ekugo, has been included in the Lagos State Government curriculum for Literature-in-English in senior secondary schools, covering Senior Secondary School 1–3 (SS1–SS3).

The recognition marks an important milestone for the novel and reinforces the growing relevance of contemporary African-authored literature in educational settings.

It also creates an opportunity for more young Nigerians to engage with stories that reflect their experiences, aspirations and the realities of an increasingly interconnected world.

Commenting on the recognition, the author, Lola Aworanti-Ekugo, said:
"I wrote Lagos to London with the hope of telling real and relevant stories that resonate with young Africans today, encouraging them to think more deeply about identity, ambition, choices, opportunity and the world around them.

"Seeing the novel included in the Lagos State curriculum for senior secondary schools is particularly meaningful because it allows these important conversations to reach a wider audience of young people, inspiring them to broaden their horizons and engage with different perspectives through literature."



Lagos to London follows the journeys of two young Nigerians from different backgrounds, Remi Coker and Nnamdi Okonkwo leave the shores of Nigeria full of hope in search of greener pastures in London.

Remi, born into the prestigious Coker family, is expected to return home after her law degree to eventually take over the family law firm and Nnamdi, frustrated by the persistent federal university strikes, is determined to "japa" from Nigeria, with little intention of ever returning.

The story follows their individual journeys of self-discovery, unexpected twists and the dilemma of whether to return home or stay in the United Kingdom. The novel explores a subject that resonates deeply with a generation of young Africans navigating ambition, migration, nation building, societal expectations and the desire to forge their own paths in an increasingly globalised world.

Beyond storytelling, Lagos to London seeks to encourage critical thinking, self-awareness and informed decision-making among young people while broadening their worldviews.

Its inclusion in the Lagos State curriculum provides an opportunity for students to engage with contemporary African fiction that connects literary exploration with real-world experiences, while encouraging wider perspectives on identity, culture and global opportunities.

The recognition also highlights the importance of making African-authored stories more accessible to younger generations, strengthening reading culture and ensuring that African perspectives remain an important part of literary education.

WHY NIGERIAN FAMILIES STILL LOOK ABROAD FOR QUALITY EDUCATION

...spent N14.78 trillion on education tourism in six years

CHARLES OGWO



For some Nigerian families, an educational admission letter from the United Kingdom, Canada, the United States, or another foreign destination is more than an academic achievement; it is the beginning of a costly family sacrifice.

Parents are selling assets, exhausting savings, and making difficult financial choices to give their children educational opportunities they believe are increasingly difficult to find at home.

This growing appetite for foreign education has come at a huge cost, with Nigerians spending N14.78 trillion on education tourism in just six years, despite the influx of foreign educational institutions into the country.

The outflow shows no sign of slowing, as Nigerians spent at least N1.92 trillion on foreign education in the first half of 2026 alone, according to data from the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN). This is compared to an estimated N1.85 trillion spent in 2025.

The Nigerian apex bank also disclosed that between 2020 and mid-2025, Nigerians spent $11.1 billion (N14.78 trillion), on foreign education.

The figures underscore the persistent demand for overseas education and raise fresh questions about the capacity of Nigeria's domestic education system to retain students and stem the flow of funds abroad.

According to the CBN report, Nigerians' foreign education



expenditure in the first half of 2026 accounted for 50.5 percent of the country's total travel-related foreign exchange outflows of $2.85 billion (about N3.79 trillion).

The figure represents a 3.51 percent increase from the $1.39 billion spent in the corresponding period of 2025, an additional $48.85 million, according to the apex bank's Balance of Payments statistics.

Further analysis showed that education accounted for 59.1 percent of the $2.44 billion spent on personal travel abroad during the period.

Spending on health-related travel stood at $341.28 million in the first half of 2026, marginally higher than the $340.94 million recorded a year earlier.

This means outlays on foreign education were more than four times the amount spent on medical travel.

The figures underscore the sustained appetite for overseas education among Nigerian families, despite rising tuition fees, accommodation costs and foreign exchange pressures.

Foreign schools' influx in Nigeria

From Charterhouse to Wellington and Rugby School, there are over 70 foreign high schools in Nigeria, signalling a growing appetite among Nigerians for global curricula and pathways to overseas universities amid persistent challenges in the local system.

Recently, Wellington College International announced plans to expand its global footprint with the opening of its first African school in Alaro City, Lagos, in 2027.

Before then, foreign high schools such as Charterhouse Lagos, Rugby School Nigeria, British International School, American International School of The Hudson School, Lead British School, Abuja, and Maple Canadian College, Lekki, among others, are already flourishing in the country.

This shift is seen as driven by the desire of wealthy Nigerian families to access high-quality education within the country in the face of a devalued naira.

Joy Isa, the education consultant at Rugby School Nigeria, said the new trend could be attributed to Nigerians' quest for quality education.

Isa said that historically, Nigerians, especially in the western region, have travelled abroad seeking opportunities for



quality tertiary education.

This, she noted, has now extended to secondary education; hence, many Nigerians started sending their children abroad for this higher education purpose.

“In view of the changing economic dynamics in the UK and in Nigeria, fewer students can travel abroad, and so these legacy institutions that have had Nigerian students for decades have brought their schools to our doorstep.

“This has exponentially reduced the cost for parents. They also get to keep their children closer to home for longer periods; instead of sending them off early, and unfortunately, some of them end up losing their sense of identity and cultural heritage,” she said.

Factors driving the surge

Experts believe that stable foreign exchange reduces uncertainty, thereby promoting growth and development. Hence, they argue that Nigeria’s stable foreign exchange rate is instrumental to foreign schools’ influx into Nigeria.

Stella Apologun, a Nigerian in the UK, said the cost of schooling abroad is high compared to what it was a few years ago, due to the liberalisation of the exchange rate.

“Most of these schools berthing in Nigeria operate the UK curriculum. It is a way of preparing the students for further education abroad,” she said.

Nubi Achebo, director of academic planning at Nigerian University of Technology and Management (NUTM), said factors such as growing demand for quality education, economic and investment opportunities, among others, are driving the shift.

“Nigerian parents are increasingly seeking high-quality education for their children, driving demand for international schools that offer globally recognised curricula and standards.

Foreign schools’ influx and Nigerians’ education tourism appetite

Education experts argue that the surge in foreign schools in Nigeria has not changed the citizens’ quest for education tourism abroad.

Achebo emphasised that Nigerian parents are increasingly seeking high-quality education for their children, driving demand for foreign education that offers globally recognised curricula and standards.

Besides, many Nigerians seek foreign education to equip themselves for the evolving global labour market and changing skills demand.

The World Bank’s Human Capital Index estimates that a child born in Nigeria today will achieve about 37 percent of their potential productivity, compared with approximately 45 percent in sub-Saharan Africa.

Basically, the shortfall can be attributed to the quality of education the local schools offer the teeming youth population. About 43 percent of Nigerians are under the age of 14, while the country’s population is projected to approach 400 million by 2050.

The expanding youth population, experts believe, presents opportunities for economic growth, but the benefits will depend substantially on the ability of the education system to equip young people with relevant knowledge, practical skills and the capacity to respond to changing labour market demands.

RECIPE OF THE WEEK: AJI A KESEN (TIV EGG SOUP)

ESTHER EMOEKPERE



SERVES: 2–3

Preparation time: 10 minutes
Cooking time: 10–15 minutes

METHOD

1. Build the broth. Pour the water into a small pot and place it over medium heat. Add the blended pepper, onions, ginger, crayfish, seasoning cubes, palm oil and half of the locust beans. Stir to combine and bring the mixture to a boil.

2. Simmer the base. Allow the broth to cook for about five minutes. This gives the ingredients time to combine and helps cook out the raw taste of the pepper. Taste and adjust the seasoning if necessary.

3. Prepare the eggs. Crack the eggs into a bowl, add a small pinch of salt and whisk until the yolks and whites are evenly combined.

4. Add the eggs. With the broth still gently boiling, slowly pour in the beaten eggs. Leave them undisturbed for about two minutes to allow them to begin setting into soft curds. Once they have firmed up, stir gently to separate them into chunky pieces without breaking them up too much.

This week, we travel to Tiv land in Benue State to explore Aji a Kesen, a traditional egg soup prepared by the Tiv people. Made with eggs, pepper, palm oil, crayfish and fermented locust beans, the soup offers a different way to enjoy eggs. It is served warm with pounded yam or another swallow.

INGREDIENTS

4 large chicken eggs
2 tablespoons red palm oil
2 tablespoons fermented locust beans (nune/iru)
2 medium scotch bonnet peppers (atarodo), roughly blended
1 medium onion, roughly blended or finely chopped
1 teaspoon grated fresh ginger
1 tablespoon ground crayfish (optional)
1 cup chopped leafy greens (spinach, aleefu, ugu or locust bean leaves)
1½ seasoning cubes
1 cup water
Salt to taste

5. Add the greens and remaining locust beans. Stir in the remaining locust beans and chopped leafy greens. Allow the soup to simmer for another one to two minutes, just until the leaves soften. Taste once more, adjust the salt if needed and take the pot off the heat.

SERVE.
Serve warm with pounded yam or another swallow of your choice.

TIPS
Adjust the heat: Scotch bonnet gives the soup a noticeable kick. For a milder flavour, replace it with red bell pepper (tatashe), or use a combination of both.

Let the eggs set: Allow the eggs to cook briefly before stirring. This helps them form distinct, chunky pieces instead of breaking into tiny bits.

Do not overcook the greens: Add them towards the end of cooking so they retain some colour and texture.

INDIA, CHINA, NIGERIA LEAD COUNTRIES USING AI AT WORK

CHISOM MICHAEL



India, China and Nigeria have emerged among the countries with the highest rates of artificial intelligence (AI) use in the workplace, as employees across Asia and Africa report adopting the technology for work-related tasks.

India ranked first, with 91 per cent of surveyed employees saying they intentionally used AI at work, followed by China at 88 per cent and Nigeria at 85 per cent, according to a 2025 global study by the University of Melbourne and KPMG.

The findings show differences in how employees across countries are incorporating AI into their work, from finding information and summarising reports to handling tasks that require processing large amounts of data.

The study, titled Trust, attitudes and use of artificial intelligence: A global study 2025, examined employees' use of AI and their willingness to trust the technology for work purposes across 47 countries.

Responses were collected between November 2024 and January 2025. The figures measure the percentage of surveyed employees who reported intentionally using AI at work at least once within the period covered by the survey.

The findings also show that workplace AI adoption does not always translate into trust. Across the 47 countries, 58 per cent of employees reported using AI at work, while 53 per cent said they were willing to trust the technology for work purposes.

Here are the 10 countries with the highest reported rates of AI use at work.

1. India – 91 per cent

India ranked first, with 91 per cent of surveyed employees reporting that they used AI at work. The country also recorded an 81 per cent willingness to trust AI for work purposes, placing it among the countries with the highest levels of workplace trust in the technology.

2. China – 88 per cent

China ranked second, with 88 per cent of employees reporting workplace AI use. However, the country's willingness to trust AI for work stood at 73 per cent, a 15-percentage-point difference between reported use and trust.

3. Nigeria – 85 per cent

Nigeria ranked third globally, with 85 per cent of surveyed employees reporting that they used AI at work. The country also recorded an 81 per cent willingness to trust AI for work purposes, matching India's figure and placing both countries at the top of the trust ranking.

4. United Arab Emirates – 84 per cent

The United Arab Emirates ranked fourth, with 84 per cent of employees reporting the use of AI for work-related activities. Its position places the country among the four highest in the survey, alongside India, China and Nigeria.

5. Egypt – 84 per cent

Egypt recorded the same workplace AI usage rate as the United Arab Emirates, with 84 per cent of surveyed employees reporting adoption. Both countries ranked fifth and fourth, respectively, in the study.

6. Saudi Arabia – 82 per cent

Saudi Arabia ranked sixth, with 82 per cent of employees reporting that they used AI at work. Its inclusion means that six of the countries with the highest reported workplace AI use are in Asia or Africa.

7. Costa Rica – 76 per cent

Costa Rica ranked seventh, with 76 per cent of surveyed employees reporting workplace AI use. This placed the country six percentage points behind Saudi Arabia and 15 percentage points below India.

8. Brazil – 75 per cent

Brazil recorded a workplace AI usage rate of 75 per cent, placing it eighth. The figure means that three out of every four surveyed employees in the country reported using AI for work.

9. South Africa – 74 per cent

South Africa ranked ninth, with 74 per cent of employees reporting that they used AI at work. Its position also makes it the second African country, after Nigeria and Egypt, among the top 10.

10. Türkiye – 69 per cent

Türkiye completed the top 10, with 69 per cent of surveyed employees reporting workplace AI use. Although its rate was the lowest among the 10 countries, it remained above the global average of 58 per cent.

TAKING ANOTHER LOOK AT PUBLIC RELATIONS

FEYISITAN IJIMAKINWA

In the grand scheme of business, communication—internal and external—are strategically important, and more organisations, big and small, are accepting that the communications guys cannot and should not be treated as “money takers” who do not bring anything in.

Specifically in the fast-evolving world of public relations, communication is far more than a tool; it is the foundation upon which every successful strategy rests. At its essence, PR is not simply about issuing press releases or organising events, but about creating meaningful connections between organisations and their audiences.

Effective communication ensures that every message is clear, authentic and consistent. It enables organisations to engage the right people, through the right channels, at precisely the right time. Communication is the element that turns objectives into outcomes, shaping reputation, building trust and sustaining long-term success.

Building trust through transparent communication

Trust is the cornerstone of every lasting relationship. In an age of instant information and increased public scrutiny, transparency has become essential. When organisations communicate openly, they project integrity and reliability — qualities that inspire confidence among stakeholders.

Transparent communication is particularly important when launching a new product, service or policy.

Honest and straightforward messaging sets realistic expectations and prevents misunderstandings that could harm reputation. Regular updates demonstrate accountability and show that the organisation values feedback and engagement.

Transparency also relies on clear and accessible language. Complex information should be simplified without losing meaning. Using plain, relatable words helps ensure inclusivity and strengthens connection. Authentic communication builds credibility and deepens the emotional bond that drives loyalty.

Managing crises with strategic communication
Crises are an inevitable part of organisational life. Whether caused by internal issues, external pressures or unforeseen circumstances, how a company communicates during a crisis determines the strength of its recovery. Strategic communication plays a vital role in maintaining trust and managing reputation during challenging times.

The first step is acknowledgement. Recognising the issue promptly demonstrates responsibility and composure. A sincere apology, supported by clear corrective action, helps restore confidence. Offering practical solutions such as replacements, refunds or detailed action plans signals genuine commitment to rectifying the situation.

Timing is equally critical. A delayed response allows misinformation to spread, while timely and factual updates maintain control. In the digital era, social media enables real-time engagement, but responses must always be accurate and considered. Clarity and truth should never be sacrificed for speed.

Enhancing brand awareness through consistent messaging

A strong brand is built on consistency. Every message an organisation delivers — from social media posts and press statements to interviews and internal briefings — should reflect the same purpose, values and tone. Consistency builds recognition, reinforces identity and strengthens credibility.

Consistency does not mean repetition. It means maintaining a unified voice while exploring creative storytelling formats. If sustainability is central to your brand, highlight it through real examples: case studies, staff stories or community partnerships. Each story enriches your narrative and reinforces your values.

Storytelling sits at the heart of effective PR. People connect emotionally with stories far more than they do with statements. Sharing authentic accounts of milestones, challenges and achievements makes an organisation more relatable and human.

Driving strategic outcomes through targeted communication

Communication in PR is a strategic discipline with measurable goals. Every message should contribute to a specific objective, whether it is enhancing reputation, increasing engagement or influencing public perception.

Success begins with understanding the audience. Segmenting audiences allows PR professionals to deliver relevant messages through the most effective platforms. Younger audiences may respond best to visual content on social media, while industry professionals might prefer in-depth articles or reports published on LinkedIn or within trade media.

Evaluation is equally essential. Monitoring engagement, reach, sentiment and media coverage helps identify what resonates most. These insights allow PR teams to refine their approach, ensuring that every communication effort remains targeted, informed and aligned with the organisation's wider strategic priorities.

LAST LINE

Communication is the heartbeat of modern public relations. It connects purpose with perception, vision with influence, and message with meaning. It builds trust, guides organisations through uncertainty and amplifies the values that define their identity.

In an increasingly connected and competitive world, those who communicate with clarity, empathy and authenticity will stand out. They will not only capture attention but also earn enduring respect and loyalty. True communication is not merely about speaking. It is about being understood, trusted and remembered.



FEYISITAN IJIMAKINWA

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

SHOULD EQUALITY NEED A BUSINESS CASE?

EKEMINI AKPAKPAN

I actually Googled the meaning of values-based leadership. I wanted to understand what we really mean when we use the term. One definition describes it as a leadership philosophy in which leaders align their decisions, behaviours and organisational systems with clearly defined values and ethical principles.

That got me thinking about something. In conversations about women's leadership and gender equality, we have become very accustomed to making the business case. We explain how women's participation improves organisational performance, strengthens decision-making, contributes to economic growth and advances development outcomes.

And these are important arguments. We should absolutely make them. But I have a question: Must equality always make a business case before we are willing to stand behind it?

Perhaps this question resonates with me because of how I have always understood the world. Growing up in a family, deeply guided by values, I found myself constantly interrogating situations through the lens of what was right, fair, and humane.

Long before I had the language to describe concepts such as bullying, violence, dignity, or mental health, I could recognise when something was wrong or when someone's dignity was being undermined. I have come to realise that this has shaped the kind of leader I am and, perhaps, explains why I have found myself in the social impact space. I am interested not just in whether things work, but in what they stand for.

This is why I find our conversations about gender equality interesting. I have noticed a tendency to be cautious about framing it as a matter of rights, fairness or social justice, almost as though doing so makes the argument too ideological or, worse, socialist.

what happens when advancing equality requires an organisation to reconsider established practices, challenge existing power arrangements or make investments whose returns are not immediately measurable? Does equality become less important?

This is where I think we need to take values-based leadership more seriously. If we profess to value fairness, dignity, integrity and equal opportunity, these values cannot be selectively applied only when they align with our commercial interests or organisational convenience. Yes, the business case tells us why equality makes practical sense. But our values should also tell us why it matters.

Equality is an expression of our humanity

Gender equality is fundamentally an ethical question because it concerns how we recognise and treat other human beings.

Why should someone's opportunities, freedom, dignity or ability to participate in society be determined by their gender? A person's humanity should not be conditional on whether they are male or female. Nor should their aspirations, intellectual contributions, or right to participate in decisions about their lives be restricted by social expectations attached to their gender.

This is bigger than just women's advancement; neither does it mean that everyone must live identical lives. It means that differences should not become a justification for denying people dignity, opportunity, freedom, or agency. The measure of our social progress is not simply what we have achieved, but how we have chosen to treat one another.

Equality expands our collective intelligence and improves decision-making

When women are excluded from decision-making, society loses access to their knowledge, experiences, perspectives and judgement. Think about the implications.

Policies designed without women's participation may overlook their realities in healthcare, safety, education, agriculture, transportation and social protection. Institutions may continue to reproduce assumptions that do not reflect the experiences of the people they serve. Decisions about families, communities and national development may be made without the meaningful participation of those who experience their consequences.

This is not to suggest that women automatically make better decisions. That would be another stereotype. Rather, a society that systematically excludes a significant part of its population from decision-making unnecessarily narrows the pool of human knowledge and judgement available to it.

Equality expands what the next generation believes is possible

Representation is not simply about seeing more women in positions of authority. It is also about what visibility communicates to the next generation. When girls consistently see men occupying positions of political authority, intellectual leadership, institutional influence, and public recognition, while women are largely absent, they absorb messages about who is expected to lead and whose contributions are considered exceptional. These messages can become limitations long before a girl has had the opportunity to test her own abilities.

But when girls see women leading governments, directing institutions, developing scientific solutions, negotiating peace agreements, building businesses and shaping public policy, their understanding of possibility expands. And this matters for boys too.

They grow up seeing women as colleagues, decision-makers, authorities and equal participants in shaping society. Representation helps normalise equality in the imagination of society before it becomes fully established in its institutions.

Equality is empowering because it recognises agency, not because it gives women a voice Women already have voices.

The problem is often whether institutions and society recognise their authority to speak, whether they listen, and whether women's contributions influence decisions.

Women should be able to express their perspectives without being dismissed, intimidated or penalised; participate in decisions that affect their lives and communities; exercise leadership and authority without having to continually establish their legitimacy; challenge policies, practices and social expectations that disadvantage them; and influence the allocation of resources and the direction of institutions.

Recognising women as agents in their own lives and as contributors to the collective decisions that shape society is empowering.

And there is a further dimension: when women exercise agency, they are not simply advocating for themselves. They may be challenging practices that affect other women, girls, families and communities. Empowerment is not about giving women permission to participate. It is about recognising their agency and removing the barriers that prevent them from exercising it.

Equality makes it possible to build a more humane society Think about the social arrangements we have normalised: women carrying disproportionate responsibility for unpaid care; girls being denied educational opportunities; violence and harassment being dismissed or tolerated; women's aspirations being treated as secondary to their domestic responsibilities; and women being expected to accommodate institutions that were not designed with their realities in mind. These are not isolated women's issues. They reveal something about the values underpinning our society.

What kind of society are we building when one group is expected to absorb a disproportionate share of the costs of keeping families, communities and institutions functioning? A humane society does not simply celebrate individual achievement. It considers how people experience everyday life, how burdens and opportunities are distributed, and whether people can live with dignity.

Gender equality invites us to reconsider these arrangements. It challenges us to build societies where care is valued, safety is expected, opportunity is accessible, and human dignity is not compromised by gender.

Values must be reflected in the structures through which society operates. It is not enough to declare that women deserve equality while maintaining institutional practices that make it difficult for them to experience it.

Finally, let's think long-term

To start with, intergenerational responsibility. The social arrangements we accept today become the realities that future generations inherit. Let's consider how we pass on more than unequal opportunities, but also a particular understanding of human relationships and power.

But we can choose differently. We can build institutions that recognise equal dignity, families that share responsibility, communities that challenge harmful norms and political systems that make room for the meaningful participation of everyone. That is a longer-term understanding of progress. It asks us to look beyond immediate organisational targets and consider the kind of society we are shaping over generations.

We should make the business case for gender equality, but we must also have the courage to defend it because it is right. This is the conversation we hope to advance at WISCAR's 2026 Annual Leadership & Mentoring Conference, themed "Courage in Action: Shaping Policies & Structures for Inclusive Progress."

Join us on Saturday, 28 November 2026, at the Civic Centre, Victoria Island, Lagos, as we explore what it takes to turn our values and commitments into meaningful institutional change.

FAVOUR

UDY OSARO-EDOBOR

Emem had Favour when she was barely old enough to understand the full responsibility of motherhood. Unable or unwilling to raise a child at that stage of her life, she left Favour in the care of her mother in the village and moved to the city, where she established herself as a hairdresser. As the years passed, she built a life for herself, but motherhood was a responsibility she kept at arm's length. She hardly visited her mother and daughter, contributed very little to their upkeep and only managed to call occasionally. In the city, she lived as though she had no child, carefully concealing Favour's existence from the people around her.

When Emem eventually decided to get married, she knew she would have to explain the existence of the young girl who occasionally featured in her mother's life. Rather than admit that Favour was her daughter, she told her fiancé that the girl was her niece, the only child of her late sister. It was a convenient lie, especially since nobody knew much about her family. The truth was that Emem was an only child. She had no sister, dead or alive. Favour remained a secret that Emem had no intention of revealing.

However, when her mother died, Emem had no choice but to bring Favour to live with her and her husband. By then, Favour was a teenager who had spent most of her life in the village, and the transition to city life was difficult enough without the hostility that awaited her.

Emem's husband was a secondary school teacher, but he was far from being a pleasant man. He was perpetually unhappy, irritable and resentful of his marriage. Favour could not understand the full extent of the problems between the couple, but she was old enough to recognise that the man was unhappy with her mother's presence in his life. He frequently insinuated that Emem had trapped him into marriage by deliberately getting pregnant. According to him, their church had compelled them to marry after discovering the pregnancy, and he had never truly forgiven her for it.

Their home was an unhappy place. Although she had hoped that living with her mother would give them an opportunity to build the relationship they never had, Emem treated her with little affection. She was constantly criticised and treated more like a domestic help than a daughter.
What made the situation even worse was her stepfather's behaviour. On several occasions, he attempted to take advantage of her sexually. Favour was frightened and disgusted, and the thought of being trapped in a house where she was neither loved nor safe became unbearable.

She did not understand why Emem treated her with so much resentment, but she continued to hope that perhaps one day they could have the mother-daughter relationship she had always wanted.

Eventually, she decided that returning to the village was better than remaining in a home where she felt unwanted and unsafe.
Before leaving, however, she made one last attempt to speak with her mother. She wanted to explain how unhappy she was, how uncomfortable her stepfather made her and how badly she wished to be loved and accepted. Unfortunately, the conversation ended in the most devastating way. Rather than listen to her daughter, Emem dismissed her with words that would remain with Favour for the rest of her life.
"You wey you life don bend, you be bad luck, abeg carry your bad luck waka far."

Favour did not understand what her mother meant by those words. She had no idea what made her a bad omen or why her very existence seemed to offend the woman who gave birth to her. All she understood was that her mother did not want her. The words bored a hole in her heart, confirming what years of neglect had already made her suspect: she was a child her mother wished she had never had.

She returned to the village and settled in her grandmother's house. Life was not going to be easy, but at least she would no longer have to endure the hostility of her mother's home. She took to farming, working on the land to provide for herself. Fortunately, her grandmother had willed a piece of land to her, and she knew she would eventually have to think of something meaningful to do with it.

The village offered her something she had never experienced in the city: a measure of peace. She worked hard, learned to depend on herself and gradually built a life around the little she had. It was not the life she had imagined for herself, but it was infinitely better than living in a house where she was treated like a servant and constantly reminded that she was unwanted. She never saw her mother or stepfather again.

Years passed, and while Favour was finding her feet, Emem's life was gradually falling apart. Her marriage, which had never been particularly happy, deteriorated further when her husband secured a teaching appointment in another state. He rarely returned home, and with time, Emem began to suspect that he had established another family elsewhere. The distance between them became so pronounced that she eventually lost track of where he was actually working. Their communication was strained, their marriage was practically non-existent, and she had nobody she could genuinely depend on.

Unfortunately, her problems were not limited to her marriage. Her children had become a source of constant worry.

Her first son had grown into a neighbourhood tout. He spent most of his time around the motor parks, picking pockets, fighting and getting into one trouble after another. He had developed a reputation among people in the neighbourhood, and his mother was becoming increasingly helpless in her attempts to control him.

Her first daughter was equally troublesome. She hardly stayed at home and only remembered her mother's existence whenever she needed money. Whenever she returned, it was usually because she was broke, and she had no qualms about stealing money or taking household belongings to sell. She lived on the streets, associated with the wrong crowd and had become involved with drugs.

The last child presented an entirely different challenge. He was physically challenged, and caring for him was taking a serious toll on Emem, both physically and financially. His condition was the consequence of a pregnancy Emem had never wanted. When she discovered she was pregnant, she had tried to terminate it using local herbs, but the attempt failed. Unfortunately, the substances she took affected the unborn child, who was eventually born with deformities.

Emem was now left to deal with the consequences of choices she had made over the years.
Her troubles reached another level when her first son was arrested alongside a gang of armed robbers. The gang had been involved in a robbery, and because her son was found with them, he was arrested and charged to court.

As the case unfolded, she learned that her son was a first-time offender who had been misled by his friends. According to his explanation, he had accompanied them to a location under the impression that they had secured a job cutting grass for someone who wanted cheap labour but was willing to pay reasonably well. His friends had carried cutlasses, which they told him were needed for the work. He claimed he had no knowledge that their actual intention was to rob a house.

He was not entirely innocent, of course. He had willingly associated with people whose criminal activities were already known to the police and his association with them had placed him in serious trouble.

Emem desperately wanted to believe her son's explanation, but she was also frightened by the possibility of losing him to the criminal justice system. She approached the police, hoping there was something they could do, but they made it clear that the matter was now before the court and that the final decision rested with the judge.

Her husband was contacted and informed about their son's arrest, but he was unwilling to get involved. He claimed he was busy and could not travel down for the proceedings. Emem was left to face the situation alone, just as she had been left to shoulder almost every other responsibility in the family.

The case eventually came before the city court, where Honourable Justice Kado presided. At the first hearing, the court proceedings took their course, and the matter was adjourned to another date.

Emem was terrified. She had heard enough about the consequences of armed robbery charges to know that her son's future was at stake. She desperately wanted a miracle, but she had no idea where help would come from.

As she was leaving the court that day, she sighted Justice Kado walking towards a parked car. For a moment, she considered approaching him to plead for her son. But she was confused and intimidated by the presence of his security detail. She also feared that approaching the judge outside the courtroom might complicate the matter further. Eventually, she let him go.

On the day of the next hearing, Emem arrived at the court looking anxious and frightened. She had spent the days leading up to the hearing praying that somehow, things would work out in her son's favour. She knew she could not afford to lose another child to a life already filled with disappointment.

While waiting for the proceedings to begin, she heard someone call her name. The voice sounded uncertain, almost as though the person was trying to confirm her identity. She turned around and saw a beautiful, well-dressed woman walking towards her.

At first, she did not recognise her. But as the woman drew closer, Emem's expression changed. Her mouth fell open, and for a moment, she struggled to believe what she was seeing.

It was Favour. Her daughter.

Favour explained that she had come to the court a few weeks earlier to pick up her husband. She had been waiting in the car when she noticed Emem walking out of the courtroom. Something about the woman's appearance had caught her attention, but she was not entirely sure it was her mother. She had not seen Emem in years, and although she recognised some familiar features, she did not want to jump to conclusions.

Curious and unsettled by what she had seen, she made enquiries and found out about the ongoing case involving Emem's son. She subsequently returned to the court on the day of the next hearing, hoping to establish whether the woman she had seen was indeed her mother.

Emem was dumbfounded. She had not expected to see Favour again, much less under such circumstances. The girl she had sent away as a teenager had grown into a beautiful, confident woman.

Favour, on the other hand, could see that life had not been particularly kind to her mother. Emem looked older, tired and troubled. There was a weariness about her that suggested years of disappointment and struggle.

Favour remembered the neglect, the maltreatment, the fear of living with a stepfather who repeatedly tried to violate her. She remembered returning to the village with nothing but a broken heart and the knowledge that the woman who gave birth to her considered her bad luck.

Emem, however, was beginning to see an opportunity in the unexpected reunion. This was the miracle she prayed for, she didn't think that God would answer her so fast.

She had spent years not knowing where Favour was or what had become of her.

Now, here was the daughter she had abandoned, looking successful and well settled. Somehow, she knew that Favour might be able to help her with the crisis involving her son.

Favour could sense her mother's desperation. She listened without much emotion as Emem tried to explain the situation and eventually began pleading for her intervention.

Then Favour calmly revealed something that left Emem completely shattered.
The man who had presided over her son's case, the Honourable Justice Kado, was her husband.

Emem could hardly believe it. The realisation was overwhelming. Without wasting another moment, Emem fell to the floor and began pleading with Favour to help her son. She begged her to speak to her husband, to intervene and ensure that the boy did not suffer a fate that might destroy his future.

But Favour was unmoved. She gently shoved her mother away, looked at her and repeated the very words that had followed her into adulthood:

"You wey you life don bend, you be bad luck, abeg carry your bad luck waka far."

And with that, she walked away, leaving Emem on the floor, confronted by the words she had once used to destroy her own daughter's heart.



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WEEKENDER

MOVIE REVIEW

HEARTLAND

If you enjoy countryside movies, then you might want to jump on this brand new movie, one thing is that you must pay attention to know what really happened. Misty Jones went off the radar for 25 solid years, but when she receives the news of the disappearance of her niece, she decides to return to make sure she finds her alive. When Misty Jones returned, everyone was scared to have back because she was a lady with temper and mischief. Misty strongly believed they were some faul play in the city and was bent on making sure she got to the bottom of the case. You will need to find out if she found her niece, the reason why she was killed and who did it. The 113m music, crime, drama, thriller, mystery films was directed Shama Feste, they featured actors like Jessica Chastain, Garrett Hedlund, Carter Faith, John Hawkes, Ross Lynch, Paul Sports, Jennifer Nettles, Hill Harper etc



SURVIVING CHRISTMAS (2004)

This is my first Christmas movie for the year 2026, and it's a throwback comedy movie from wayback 2004, this movie made me laugh so hard, I kept wondering what would happen next. Drew Lathan must find a family to spend Christmas with desperately to prove to his girlfriend that he has one. Drew was a very wealthy man, he travels to the old home, where he grew up and decided to pay the family there to be his hired family for that Christmas, he promised to pay them $250,000 for a few days. This family must put up with his attitudes and cravings just so they collect the money on the table. Tou must watch this movie to find out if they survived that Christmas with Drew, and if they got the money, this was a very funny movie. The 91m romantic comedy films, comedies, romance was directed by Mike Mitchell, they featured actors like Ben Affleck, James Ganeldfini, Christina Applegate, Catherine O'Hare, Josh Zuckerman, Bill Macy, Jennifer Morrison, Udo Kier, David Selby etc.





GUARDING STARS (2026)

If you are a sucker for romantic, comedy movies, Christmas movies, then this movie would absolutely make your day, this is my second Christmas movie for the year, I had such a good laugh from start to finish. Jack was a famous actor, loved by everyone, for some weird reasons his life had being threatened, so to go see his mom, he must be accompanied by some unbecoming bodyguards, who would follow him around but blend in without being noticed. On arrival he meets this pretty, simple, 5.5' inch lady, who welcomes him as his bodyguard, he must learn to work with her all through the holiday, but to proceed to his family ranch, they must both act as though they are in a relationship. You must go check out this movie, to find out if their pretense and acting worked, if they fooled everyone , and if they caught the guy that was threatening his life, this movie will make your day. The 109m romantic comedy films, comedies, romance movie was directed by Elizabeth Allen Rosenbaum, they featured actors like Leighton Maester, Jared Padalecki, Andie Macdowell, CM Punk, Noah LaLonde, Toby Sandeman, Rachael Ancherill, Shaun Johnston, Greg Lawson and many more.



Linda Ochugbua