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JULY 05, 2024



Gender lens financing: From policies to realities, evaluations and restrictions, experts bare it all

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Editor's note



Welcome to the month of July! We trust that you are doing fine? Worried about not having your wishes fulfilled in the first half of 2024? The second half is here. Don't lose hope. This chapter will bring your desired results. Keep hope alive!

Our cover story for this week is on gender lens financing. I had the privilege of speaking with remarkable female experts in the field of gender lens financing. Through our insightful discussions, we delved into the multifaceted world of policies, challenges, societal restrictions, and the vast potential inherent in accessing finance through a gender-specific lens. It is indeed rich in information. You will love this.

Here are other stories in this edition:

- They didn't push Your Button, You Have a Button to Be Pushed.
- Seizing the Second Half of 2024: A Time to Thrive Financially and Personally.
- Navigating Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS) with Knowledge and Support.
- 4 Fears You Must Conquer Before You Get Married.
- Nigeria's Blockchain Boom: Navigating Regulatory Hurdles for Business Success.
- The Power of Networking in Accelerating Business and Personal Growth.

Have you had brown stewed fish? What of homemade pineapple ice cream? Two different mouth watering yummies to try out. Start with the former and relax watching your favorite series while enjoying the latter. Enjoy!

I am loving Derin Fabikun's designs. The Derin Fabikun line is a luxurious fashion line that specialises in bespoke and bridal couture. Each piece in the collection is meticulously crafted with the finest fabrics and intricate details to ensure that every garment exudes timeless elegance and sophistication. You should pay them a visit and expect the best.

I will be here again next week with another loaded edition for your reading pleasure.

Until then, have an amazing weekend you soooooooo deserve!

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Gender lens financing: From policies to realities, evaluations and restrictions, experts bare it all

BY KEMI AJUMOBI

I had the privilege of speaking with remarkable female experts in the field of gender lens financing. Through our insightful discussions, we delved into the multifaceted world of policies, challenges, societal restrictions, and the vast potential inherent in accessing finance through a gender-specific lens.

Together, we explored the organisations leading the charge in facilitating gender lens financing, the diverse avenues available for accessing essential funds, and the vital importance of gender representation in this dynamic landscape. The insights gained from these conversations shed light on the intricate and often nuanced realities faced by those seeking to harness the power of finance to drive positive change and foster greater equity.

It was a truly enlightening experience, and I'm honoured to share the valuable perspectives and experiences gleaned from these remarkable women who are paving the way for a more inclusive and empowered financial ecosystem.



ADA OSADEMEY–UDECHUKWU

Senior Gender Advisor, Africa, IFC

Indicators used to assess gender impact of investments in Nigeria

There are various key indicators or metrics that are utilised to evaluate the gender impact of investments globally. These metrics can then be customised for specific markets, including Nigeria. Here are some examples.

Female labour force participation rate is a metric by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) that measures the percentage of women who are economically active. It helps determine if investments are creating opportunities for women to participate in the workforce and promoting access to quality jobs and assets.

There is the women's entrepreneurship rate by the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) which measures the percentage of women who are engaged in entrepreneurial activities. It helps assess if investments are supporting women's economic empowerment through entrepreneurship.

The gender representation in leadership positions metric is tracked by United Nations (UN) Women as relevant indicator for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. Achieving gender equality and women's empowerment is integral to each of the 17 SDGs. This metric evaluates the proportion of women in leadership roles within organizations and share of parliamentary seats. It helps determine if investments are promoting gender diversity and women's representation in decision-making positions.

IN THE EVOLVING LANDSCAPE OF GENDER LENS FINANCING IN NIGERIA, THERE ARE STILL CHALLENGES TO BE OVERCOME

Additionally, there is the indicator that assesses women's access to financial services, such as bank accounts, loans, and insurance. These are also mirrored in women's access to digital services and assets i.e., access to mobile/smart phones, digital financial services, internet connectivity etc. It helps determine if investments are improving women's financial inclusion, access to economic resources, and bridging the digital gender divide.

There are also indicators that measure women's educational attainment and literacy levels, which help determine if investments are promoting gender equality in education and ensuring equal access to quality education for girls and women.

The indicators that evaluate women's access to clean energy sources and safe drinking water, help determine if investments are addressing gender disparities in access to basic services and promoting sustainable development.

For companies, standards such as the 2X criteria help to provide minimum requirements for global gender lens investment and organizational practices for companies and investors of all sizes.

Current landscape of gender lens financing in Nigeria

In the evolving landscape of gender lens financing in Nigeria, there are still challenges to be overcome, including limited access to finance for women entrepreneurs, and the need for capacity building among investors and financial institutions. However, there is a positive shift towards more inclusive and impactful investments that consider gender equality and women's empowerment. Increasing awareness



IFC WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS FINANCE INITIATIVE (WE-FI) PROGRAMME HAS MADE INVESTMENTS IN SEVERAL COMPANIES IN NIGERIA'S BUSINESS LANDSCAPE

among investors, financial institutions, and development organisations about the importance of integrating a gender lens into investment decisions is leading to more discussions and initiatives focused on gender lens financing in Nigeria.

Specialised funds and investment vehicles have emerged in Nigeria that specifically target gender-focused enterprises or projects. These funds aim to provide capital and support to businesses that promote gender equality and women's empowerment. Impact investing, which seeks to generate positive social and environmental impact alongside financial returns, is also gaining traction in Nigeria. Within impact investing, there is a growing recognition of the need to consider gender issues and invest in businesses that address gender disparities. There is also heightened awareness about innovative financing that leverage the debt capital markets such as gender bonds.

Various entrepreneurship programmes and initiatives in Nigeria are specifically designed to support women entrepreneurs. These programmes provide training, mentorship, and access to finance to help women start and grow their businesses. Additionally, there is an increasing focus on collecting gender-disaggregated data and conducting research to understand the gender dynamics in different sectors and industries. This data helps investors make informed decisions and identify investment opportunities that can address gender gaps.

The Nigerian government has also taken steps to promote gender equality and women's empowerment through policy and regulatory frameworks. Collaboration and partnerships among stakeholders, including investors, financial institutions, development organisations, and civil society, are also driving the promotion of gender lens investing in Nigeria. These collaborations help share knowledge, resources, and best practices to advance gender equality in the investment landscape. While challenges remain, the increasing focus on gender lens investing in Nigeria indicates a promising direction towards a more equitable investment ecosystem.

IFC's involvement

There is evidence of the business case for gender-lens investment strategies such as greater competitiveness, increased profit, growth, and innovation. IFC is investing in strengthening supply and demand side capabilities.

To strengthen the supply side, in 2020, we published a guide, Private Equity and Value Creation: 'A Fund Manager's Guide to Gender-smart Investing.' The guide is a practical step-by-step road map for fund managers on how to strengthen gender diversity within their own firms and incorporate a gender focus into investment operations. In 2022, we launched Invest2Equal – an IFC-led programme in partnership with the Women Entrepreneurs Finance Initiative (We-Fi), that brings together IFC portfolio fund managers to make specific, measurable, and time-bound commitments to increase gender diversity within their firm and/or investment processes.

Through the IFC ScaleX Solutions, IFC supports access to early-stage risk capital for women-led startups in emerging markets. The programme helps investors to incorporate a gender lens into their processes and work with accelerators and entrepreneur support organisations (ESOs) by sharing best practices and offering free toolkits and webinars. We also provide some women-led startups with hands-on support and introductions to relevant investors.

INVESTORS CAN MAKE A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON ACHIEVING THESE SDGS, DRIVING POSITIVE CHANGE, AND FOSTERING A MORE INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENT FOR ALL

Additionally, the IFC Women Entrepreneurs Finance Initiative (We-Fi) programme has made investments in several companies in Nigeria's business landscape. The programme, which is designed to enable entrepreneurs to start and grow firms prioritised investments in companies such as Trade Depot, to build stronger women-led small and medium enterprises (SME) retailer and distributor networks.

One notable program that promotes gender lens investing is the She Wins Africa programme, an IFC-led initiative that aims to accelerate access to capital for women-led startups across sub-Saharan Africa. Launched in 2023, the programme is taking a holistic approach through interventions that support 100 women entrepreneurs across sub-Saharan Africa by providing them with access to finance, investor matchmaking, and capacity-building opportunities. Notably, thirty-three of the select startups are in Nigeria. By investing in women-led businesses and initiatives through the SheWinsAfrica programme, women can enhance their business skills, and promote their active participation in the Nigerian economy.

She Wins Africa will roll out other initiatives, including: 1). A bootcamp to help lead pre-seed women-led startups into acceleration phase, 2). An initiative to open up acceleration support for women-led startups in markets where such support is not easily available, and 3). A programme to boost traction gender lens investing in sub-Saharan Africa and create a coalition of funds, venture capital firms and gender-lens investors to improve access to finance for women and their businesses across Africa.

By addressing the specific challenges faced by women-led businesses gender lens financing programmes like SheWinsAfrica, SheWinsArabia, IFC ScaleX, and Invest2Equal contribute to reducing gender gaps and promoting economic growth in Nigeria.

Gender lens financing contributing to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in Nigeria

Integrating a gender lens into investing decisions allows for a meaningful contribution towards achieving multiple Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) simultaneously, as gender equality is a cross-cutting theme that underpins many of these goals. Gender lens financing has the potential to drive positive social and economic change, empower women, and contribute to the achievement of various SDGs in Nigeria.

Some SDGs that address gender lens investing include SDG 1 (No Poverty) which addresses the need for reduced poverty. By supporting women-led businesses, gender lens financing can lead to increased income and economic empowerment, ultimately lifting women and their families out of poverty. SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) whereby investments in agri-focused businesses through access to finance and business support services can enhance women's productivity and income in the agricultural sector, contribute to food security and reduce hunger SGD 5 (Gender Equality) which addresses the need to invest in businesses that prioritize gender equality in their operations, supply chains, and leadership, gender lens financing can contribute to reducing gender gaps and promoting women's rights. SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) addresses the need to support investments that provide decent work opportunities for women, promote gender diversity in the workforce, and ensure equal pay for equal work.

Gender lens financing also contributes to SDG 10- Reduced Inequalities, SDG 3- Good Health and Well-being, SDG 4- Quality Education.

Overall, investors can make a significant impact on achieving these SDGs, driving positive change, and fostering a more inclusive environment for all.



AYODELE OLOJEDE

Divisional Head, Retail and SME, Wema Bank

Gender lens financing supporting women-led enterprises in Nigeria

In Nigeria, as well as most African countries, inequalities result from accumulated access restrictions to various opportunities and resources. These include lower rates of job market participation, confinement to traditional sectors with relatively lower profits, limited access and control of assets and especially land, restricted spatial mobility not only due to domestic obligations but also social restrictions, and finally, lower education levels, which limit women's ability to deal with bureaucratic procedures and technology. All of which lowers women's access to formaI banking.

Gender lens financing refers to the practice of intentionally investing capital in businesses or initiatives that promote gender equality. In the context of Nigeria, where women often face significant inequality in resources and opportunities, gender lens financing can close the gender gap.

Gender lens financing can play a crucial role in supporting women-led enterprises and women entrepreneurs in several ways:

Access to Capital: Women entrepreneurs in Nigeria often struggle to access capital due to various factors such as limited collateral, cultural biases, and discriminatory lending practices, gender incentive algorithms and so on. Gender lens financing can provide tailored financial products and services designed to meet the specific needs of women entrepreneurs, including microloans, grants, matching funds, investment and so on.

> **BY LEVERAGING GENDER LENS FINANCING IN NIGERIA, STAKEHOLDERS CAN CONTRIBUTE TO NARROWING THE GENDER GAP IN ACCESS TO FINANCE**

Capacity Building: Gender lens investors can support women-led enterprises by providing not just capital but also capacity-building initiatives such as entrepreneurship training, mentorship programmes, and networking opportunities. These programmes can help women entrepreneurs develop essential business skills, expand their professional networks, and access markets more effectively. There also needs to be deliberate effort in including women digitally – reducing digital divide.

Market access: Gender lens investors can actively seek out and invest in platforms that offer market access to women entrepreneurs. Providing these platforms allows them sell, expand their customer base, diversify their products and so on.

Impact Measurement: Gender lens investment also prioritises tracking and measuring the social and economic impact on women and girls. By collecting data on indicators such as women's employment, income generation, access to education, and participation in decision-making processes, investors can assess the effectiveness of their interventions and make evidence-based decisions to maximise positive outcomes for women entrepreneurs in Nigeria.

Leveraging gender lens financing to address issues such as access to finance for women in Nigeria

Financial Products Tailored to Women: Traditional financial products and services may not always meet the specific needs of women in Nigeria. Gender lens financing


AT WEMA, WE ARE DELIBERATE, THROUGH SARA IN FUNDING BUSINESSES OWNED BY WOMEN AND OR LED BY WOMEN

involves developing financial products tailored to address their needs having considered the institutional, systemic, collective and internalised inequalities faced by women.

Targeted Investment**:** Gender lens financing involves directing investments towards businesses and initiatives that either directly benefit women or promote gender equality. In Nigeria, this could mean investing in women-owned businesses, enterprises that provide products or services catering to women's needs, or organisations working to empower women economically, organisations that are women owned and or women-led.

Partnerships: Collaboration among investors, financial institutions, government agencies, NGOs, and women's organisations is crucial for the success of gender lens financing initiatives in Nigeria. By working together, stakeholders can leverage their expertise, resources, and networks to maximise the impact of investments and address systemic barriers to women's financial inclusion.

By leveraging gender lens financing in Nigeria, stakeholders can contribute to narrowing the gender gap in access to finance, fostering women's economic empowerment, and driving sustainable development in the country.

Wema Bank's involvement

We are involved in a lot of ways.

Firstly as an organisation, we have mainstreamed gender in our operations, this is evidenced in our approach to women in the workplace, marketplace and community – WWN, SARA and Sustainable impact programmes.

1 First, we have a dedicated team that focuses on the needs of our women, we have also created products and propositions to cater to our needs.

2 Discounted and uncollaterised lending bundled with healthcare plans. On the ALAT for business platform, SMEs can access MSME instant loans disbursed in 5minutes. We also offer digital instant micro loans via our USSD channel *945#. We also have cluster lending – SABI, this product is in partnership with the LBS, sponsored by Bill & Milinda Gates Foundation that provides banking as a services to Nano businesses leveraging thrift collectors and aggregators.

We are also particular about the planet, and we have green finance that promotes use of green energy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

3 Market access – In 2023 alone, we offered over 1,000 WMSMEs access to over 60,000 buyers, this year, we are taking it a notch higher by offering international market access with over 100,000 buyers.

We are also very deliberate about ease of collection, and as the first fully digital bank in Africa, we have designed payment and collection platform to make selling easier for our customers. These collection and payment tools includes – ALAT, ALAT for Business – our robust 360 degree SME platform that offers instant loans, bulk payment, account management and so on. ALATPay – our collection tool that allows mutli-currency payment and storefronts for businesses, NQR code, agents and so on.

4 Closing the digital divide – beyond, business skills and vocational training, we are deliberate about closing the digital divide. Leveraging partnerships, we training women – 17 and above on STEM programmes, use of technology, how to leverage social media tools/ platforms and so on.

5 Internal Gender Diversity and inclusion programme under the WWN. As an institution, we have aligned with the 2x criteria for gender finance. We have over 30% of our board members as women, over 35% of senior management as women and over 40% of workforce as women. Last year, we appointed the first ever female chairperson in the Bank , Oluwayemisi Olorunshola.

> **AT WEMA, WE HAVE MAINSTREAMED GENDER IN OUR OPERATIONS, THIS IS EVIDENCED IN OUR APPROACH TO WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE**

We are also deliberate, through SARA in funding businesses owned by women and or led by women. Last year, we held a round table session with the goal of raising $200m to provide catalytic and innovative finance for women entrepreneurs.

As an institution, the mandate is simple, we want to ensure that by 2027, we have equal product uptake from the gender, in terms of loan, savings and investment products, bank accounts, our digital platforms and so on.



ADESUWA OKUNBO RHODES

Founding Partner & CEO, Aruwa Capital Management

Gender lens financing as a tool to address gender inequalities and empower women in Nigeria

Gender lens financing is a powerful tool that recognises the intersectionality of gender and finance, aiming to address systemic gender inequalities while fostering women's economic empowerment. In Nigeria, where gender disparities persist across various sectors, deploying gender lens financing can catalyse positive change.

Firstly, by directing investment towards businesses that prioritise gender equality in their operations, such as companies with diverse leadership teams or those founded or led by women actively supports the economic empowerment of women. This not only creates opportunities for women to participate more fully in the economy, but also generates ripple effects by promoting inclusive economic growth and poverty reduction.

Secondly, by providing capital specifically tailored to the needs of women by investing in businesses that provide goods and services to women, we are able to foster more bespoke and innovative solutions for women who have been traditionally ignored.

Potential benefits for investors who incorporate a gender lens into their investment strategy in Nigeria

Incorporating a gender lens has a triple bottom line effect. First is financial return, second is societal return and third is women's economic empowerment and gender inclusion. Incorporating a gender lens into investment strategies offers a myriad of benefits for investors in Nigeria. From accessing untapped market opportunities, investors can generate a superior financial return due to the fact that women are returning 2.5x every dollar invested according to BCG. There is a societal return due to the active role women play in their families in Nigeria providing access to healthcare and education for their children. Gender lens investing represents not only a moral imperative but also a business necessity for investors seeking to generate sustainable returns while advancing social impact, gender equality and women's empowerment.

Organisations and individuals in Nigeria getting involved in promoting gender lens financing

Promoting gender lens financing in Nigeria requires collective action from organisations and individuals committed to advancing gender equality and women's empowerment. There are several avenues through which stakeholders can get involved and contribute to the proliferation of gender lens investing:

> **GENDER LENS FINANCING IS A POWERFUL TOOL THAT RECOGNISES THE INTERSECTIONALITY OF GENDER AND FINANCE**



IN NIGERIA, WHERE GENDER DISPARITIES PERSIST ACROSS VARIOUS SECTORS, DEPLOYING GENDER LENS FINANCING CAN CATALYSE POSITIVE CHANGE

Firstly, organisations can prioritise gender diversity and inclusion within their own structures. By promoting gender-balanced leadership teams, implementing policies that support work-life balance, and fostering inclusive workplace cultures, organisations set an example for others while creating environments where women can thrive and contribute effectively.

Moreover, stakeholders can leverage existing platforms and networks to raise awareness and build capacity around gender lens financing. This could involve organising workshops, seminars, and conferences to educate investors, entrepreneurs, and policymakers about the benefits and strategies of gender lens investing. Additionally, collaborating with organisations already active in the gender investing space is another avenue.

Risks and limitations associated with gender lens financing in Nigeria

While gender lens financing offers significant potential to drive gender equality and women's empowerment in Nigeria, there are several risks and limitations that stakeholders should be mindful of:



STAKEHOLDERS CAN LEVERAGE EXISTING PLATFORMS AND NETWORKS TO RAISE AWARENESS AND BUILD CAPACITY AROUND GENDER LENS FINANCING

One key risk is the availability of reliable data and metrics to assess gender impact. In many cases, data disaggregated by gender is limited or unavailable, making it challenging for investors to accurately evaluate the gender-related outcomes of their investments. This lack of data transparency can hinder the growth of the asset class and gender inclusive practices. Furthermore, there may be challenges related to scalability and sustainability of gender lens initiatives in Nigeria. While there is growing momentum around gender equality and women's empowerment, systemic barriers such as limited access to education, healthcare, and financial resources continue to impede progress. Without addressing these underlying structural inequalities, gender lens investments may struggle to achieve meaningful and lasting impact at scale.

Lastly, there is a risk of tokenism or superficial engagement with gender issues, where investors prioritise optics over meaningful change. Simply investing in women-led businesses or implementing diversity quotas without addressing underlying power dynamics or systemic barriers may fail to yield substantive results and could even perpetuate inequalities.

DR. EMUWA ANINO

MD, Avandis Consulting/Founder, 100 Women At Davos

Best practices and strategies for integrating gender lens financing into different investment portfolios in Nigeria

Gender lens financing involves incorporating gender considerations into financial products, promoting gender equality alongside financial returns. Effective implementation includes setting clear targets for investing in women-led ventures or establishing specific gender lens funds. Notable examples in Nigeria include Rising Tide Africa and Aruwa Capital. It's not just about directing funds to women, fostering diverse leadership within investment teams is crucial. Research from the World Economic Forum shows that companies with gender-diverse leadership teams are 36% more likely to excel financially. This approach requires financial institutions to move beyond symbolic gestures like "pink products" and instead focus on removing barriers for women in accessing finance.

Gender lens financing's contribution to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in Nigeria

Gender lens financing is a catalyst for Nigeria's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), addressing gender disparities while driving economic growth. Recognised by the World Bank as macrocritical crucial, closing gender gaps leads to significant economic gains. The World Economic Forum estimates that achieving gender equality in economic participation could add $28 trillion to global GDP by 2025. Gender lens financing significantly contributes to SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth). Investments in women-led businesses create jobs and enhance economic resilience. Moreover, with women and children disproportionately affected by the climate crisis, financing women-led innovation in climate helps to find climate action solutions aligning with SDG 13 (Climate Action). Investing in female-centric innovations and healthcare solutions further narrows the gender health gap helping to achieve SDG3. Recent data has shown that closing the financing gap for women has cross cutting implications for addressing SDG and this has been identified by the recently concluded United Nation Commission of Status of Women as a priority for alleviating poverty (SDG1) and job creation (SDG 8).

Involvement of organisations and individuals in Nigeria to promote gender lens financing

Engaging in gender lens financing is not just about finances, it's about societal transformation. Organisations and individuals in Nigeria can promote this by understanding the economic and social imperative. Gender lens investing reshapes investments to be more inclusive and impactful. By learning about gender lens investing, stakeholders can unlock vast opportunities. According to the World Economic Forum, embracing gender lens investing could unlock vast global market opportunities by 2025. Financial institutions, private equity, VCs and funds need to adjust their strategies to effectively support female-led business. Gender lens financing not only brings financial gains, but also serves as a catalyst for societal progress and inclusive development in Nigeria.

"IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT DIRECTING FUNDS TO WOMEN, FOSTERING DIVERSE LEADERSHIP WITHIN INVESTMENT TEAMS IS CRUCIAL




ENGAGING IN GENDER LENS FINANCING IS NOT JUST ABOUT FINANCES, IT'S ABOUT SOCIETAL TRANSFORMATION

YEMI KERI

Founder, Heckerbella and Co-Founder, Rising Tide Africa

Gender lens financing can be leveraged to address access to finance for women in Nigeria by adopting investment strategies that intentionally focus on supporting women's economic participation. One of such strategies is providing capital to businesses that promote access to finance to Nigeria.

There are a number of capacity building programmes for women led business in Nigeria initiated by the government, private sector, international and local NGOS. Some of them include: Rising Tide Africa, The Women Entrepreneurship Program (WEP) by the Bank of Industry (BoI), Enterprise Development Centre (EDC) of the Pan-Atlantic University, Access Bank's 'W' Initiative, She Leads Africa and so on.

“IN THE NIGERIAN CONTEXT, BALANCING SOCIAL IMPACT WITH FINANCIAL RETURNS IS A CHALLENGE TO GENDER LENS FINANCING

However, in the Nigerian context, balancing social impact with financial returns is a challenge to gender lens financing. Many at times, people's perception of gender lens financing is that the focus on gender outcomes overlooks the financial sustainability and profitability of investments. There are also some deeply ingrained societal norms which can limit women's participation in certain sectors.



“THERE ARE DEEPLY INGRAINED SOCIETAL NORMS WHICH CAN LIMIT WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN CERTAIN SECTORS


PEOPLE'S PERCEPTION OF GENDER LENS FINANCING IS THAT THE FOCUS ON GENDER OUTCOMES OVERLOOKS THE FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY AND PROFITABILITY OF INVESTMENTS



ADEBOLA TOYIN ORUMA

Group Head, Gender Business Group, BOI

Gender Lens Investing (GLI) is the integration of gender analysis into a new or existing investment process for better social and financial outcomes. To foster gender equality, the GLI takes into consideration the gender-based factors across the investment process to make better investment decisions.

Some of the strategies include:

1 Conduct a thorough gender analysis of the investment landscape in Nigeria which will provide a better understanding of the gender disparities, challenges and opportunities within various sectors and industries.

2 Engage with stakeholders not limited to investors, companies, agencies, NGOs amongst others noting that the collaboration and partnership is crucial for the successful integration.

3 Conduct a thorough screening of potential investments to ensure they meet the gender sensitive criteria via assessing the company's policies, practices and performance related to gender equality.

4 Promote transparency and accountability

5 Provide capacity building

6 Measure and evaluate the impact.

Interestingly, there are specific support mechanisms or capacity-building programmes available for women-led businesses in Nigeria.

There are a number of them in existence such as but not limited to:

> **THE BOI GENDER BUSINESS DESK FROM INCEPTION IN 2006 FOCUSED ON CAPACITY-BUILDING AND ADVOCACY ROLE FOR GENDER SUPPORT**

1 Women's World Banking Nigeria

2 She Leads Africa

3 Diamond Bank BET Programme

4 WEConnect International in Nigeria

5 Empower Women Nigeria

Additionally, local chambers of commerce, business associations and government agencies may also offer programmes and initiatives to support women entrepreneurs in Nigeria.

Bank of Industry understands the importance of gender equality and has taken bold steps to provide financial and non- financial support to women led businesses.

The BOI Gender Business Desk from inception in 2006 focused on capacity-building and advocacy role for gender support. The bank, apart from a dedicated desk, partners with Federal Ministry of Women Affairs in empowering women. The bank always seeks possible partnerships and collaborations to support women entrepreneurs and also make available services of business development support providers to assist in preparing women-led businesses ready for financing.



THERE ARE SPECIFIC SUPPORT MECHANISMS OR CAPACITY-BUILDING PROGRAMMES AVAILABLE FOR WOMEN-LED BUSINESSES IN NIGERIA

Advocacy, training and international exposure opportunities are made available by the bank.

On resources or networks available for those interested in gender lens financing in Nigeria, GLI has become a popular mode of investment in Nigeria. Network of organisations banks and international agencies such as AFAWA are able to provide support. Others are:

1 Local Impact Investment Networks
2 Online Platforms and Resources
3 Consultancy and Advisory Firms

There are government policies or initiatives that support or encourage gender lens financing in Nigeria and they include:

1 National Gender Policy
2 Central Bank of Nigeria Initiatives
3 Women's Economic Empowerment Programmes
4 National Action Plan on Gender and Development

While these listed may not be dedicated policies or initiatives focused solely on gender lens financing, these broader gender equality and women's empowerment initiatives create an enabling environment for promoting such approaches within the investment sector.

THEY DIDN'T PUSH YOUR BUTTON, YOU HAVE A BUTTON TO BE PUSHED

GLADYS AGWAI

In the complex and often tumultuous landscape of human emotions, one of the most profound realisations is that your reactions are not solely the result of external provocations. Rather, they are deeply rooted in the internal mechanisms of your own psyche. The statement, "It is not that they pushed your button, but that you have a button to be pushed," encapsulates this idea perfectly. It suggests that your emotional responses are more about your own vulnerabilities, histories, and conditioning than about the actions of others. Understanding this can lead to profound personal growth and improved relationships.

Emotional buttons are metaphorically embedded triggers that, when pressed, bring about strong emotional reactions. These buttons can evoke feelings such as anger, fear, sadness, or frustration. They are often formed through past experiences, particularly those from your formative years, and can be deeply ingrained in your subconscious. For example, negative experiences, such as trauma, neglect, or harsh criticism, leave a lasting imprint. What might be a trigger in one culture could be insignificant in another. If you believe you are unworthy or inadequate, any situation that seems to confirm this belief can trigger a strong emotional response.

When someone's actions or words align with the specific sensitivities of your emotional buttons, it can feel as though they are directly attacking you. However, it is often your own interpretation and internalization of these actions that cause your emotional upheaval. If someone makes an offhand comment about competence and you have deep-seated insecurities about your abilities, you might react defensively or with anger. When you are unaware of your own buttons, you take everything personal resulting in defensive behavior, miscommunication, and escalation of conflicts.

Recognising that your reactions are often about your own buttons can help you respond more thoughtfully and less reactively. On the other hand, understanding that others also have their own buttons can foster empathy and patience. Recognising that a partner, friend, or colleague's strong reaction might be rooted in their own emotional history can help you respond with



"Your task is not to seek for love, but merely to seek and find all the barriers within yourself that you have built against it."
Rumi

compassion rather than defensiveness. Manage your emotional buttons through:

- **Self-awareness:** Be introspective with a willingness to explore your past experiences and insecurities. To manage your emotions when triggered, pay attention to situations that elicit strong emotional reactions. Reflect on why these situations are triggering and what past experiences are connected. Are there common themes or recurring issues that tend to push your buttons?
- **Regulated emotions:** Respond more calmly and thoughtfully when your buttons are pushed. Techniques such as deep breathing, mindfulness, and grounding exercises can be effective in managing immediate emotional responses. This can help you respond more thoughtfully rather than impulsively, gain perspective, and reduce the intensity of your emotional reactions.
- **Improved communication skills:** Learn to express your feelings and needs clearly and assertively, without blaming others. Practice active listening to understand the perspective of the other person to respond more empathetically.
- **Self-compassion:** Be kind to yourself and accept your imperfections without judgment. Recognise that everyone has emotional buttons and that it is okay to have vulnerabilities. This can reduce the shame and self-criticism that often accompany strong emotional reactions. Address the root causes of your emotional triggers to reduce their power over you.
- **Reframing:** Irrational thought patterns exacerbate your emotional reactions. Common distortions include expecting the worst to happen, blaming yourself for events outside your control, and viewing situations in extremes. Notice and challenge these thoughts and replace them with more balanced perspectives. If you believe that everyone is judging you, challenge this belief by seeking evidence to the contrary or see a criticism as an opportunity for self-improvement.
- **Resilience:** Develop your ability to bounce back from adversity and maintain a positive outlook in the face of challenges. Surround yourself with supportive and understanding people who can provide encouragement and perspective. Engage in activities that promote physical, emotional, and mental well-being.
- **Responsibility:** Recognise that your reactions are about your own buttons and not solely about the actions of others. Others are not responsible for how you feel. Take control of your reactions and make conscious choices about how to respond empowering yourself to make positive changes.

The concept that it is not about others pushing your buttons but about having buttons to be pushed has broader implications for society and collective well-being. When you take responsibility for your own emotional reactions, it leads to a more compassionate and understanding community.

"Feelings are much like waves, we can't stop them from coming but we can choose which one to surf." Jonatan Mårtensson



Gladys Agwai is the Founder of Ignite Within and an International Author, Speaker, Life Coach, and Trainer. She transitioned as a business owner in 2014 after spending 30 years as a global corporate executive within IBM in the US, Nigeria, Ghana, and Kenya. She is the author of Dumped! NOT Dumped On! How to stop reliving the negative impact of rejection in your life, business, and career! and* IMPOSTER: *Five Strategies to Your Authentic Self. Gladys helps professionals and leaders who want to make organizational, career, and life transitions gain the clarity and right mindset required to take uncomfortable actions to achieve sustainable success. She can be reached at ignitewithin.org



PERSONAL FINANCE

SEIZING THE SECOND HALF OF 2024: A TIME TO THRIVE FINANCIALLY AND PERSONALLY

SOLA ADESAKIN

If you're reading this, know that H2 2024 will be your time to be brave, earn more money, begin building sustainable wealth, maintain good health, surround yourself with the right people, be in the best frame of mind, and achieve your goals.

As we step into the second half of 2024, it's the perfect time to reinvigorate our efforts and channel our energies towards not just meeting but smashing our financial and personal goals. This period beckons us to be courageous, to expand our horizons, and to strategically position ourselves for success. Whether it's increasing our income, nurturing our health, or enriching our social networks, the upcoming months offer a canvas upon which to paint our achievements.

Here's how you can capitalise on this promising phase:

1 Embrace courage in financial decisions

The remainder of 2024 is your season to be bold with your financial choices. Consider diversifying your investments or starting that business you've dreamed about. Remember, with substantial risk comes enormous potential reward. Assess your risk tolerance and make calculated moves that could lead to significant financial growth.

2 Develop a strategy for sustainable wealth

Building sustainable wealth is a marathon, not a sprint. Focus on creating multiple streams of income and investing in assets that provide long-term returns. This could mean investing in real estate, starting a side business, or putting money into stocks that offer dividends. Now is the time to lay the financial foundations that will support you for years to come.

3 Prioritise health over wealth

Good health is the cornerstone of achieving any goal. Having compromised health makes it challenging to concentrate on financial success. Invest in your physical well-being through proper nutrition, regular exercise, and adequate rest. Remember, a healthy body hosts a productive mind.

4 Cultivate the Right Connections

They say you are the average of the five people you spend the most time with, so surround yourself with individuals who inspire you to grow. Being in the right circles can provide access to opportunities that might otherwise be unattainable. Whether it's through professional associations, social gatherings, or online platforms, you should intentionally network.

5 Maintain a positive mindset

Approach the second half of the year with optimism and resilience. The right frame of mind can significantly influence your ability to overcome challenges and seize opportunities. Practice mindfulness or engage in activities that reduce stress and enhance your mental clarity.

6 Set and review your goals

Take advantage of this mid-year point to review the goals you set at the beginning of the year. Celebrate the progress you've made and recalibrate where necessary. Review your short-, mid-, and long-term goals again. Establish objectives with distinct benchmarks to accomplish by the conclusion of the year.

7 Financial Education: Keep Learning

Financial literacy is a powerful tool. Continue to educate yourself on financial matters. Whether it's reading books, attending workshops, or consulting with financial advisors, every piece of knowledge equips you better to handle your finances wisely.

The second half of 2024 isn't just another period on the calendar—it's an opportunity, a chance to redefine your life and finances. With courage, careful planning, and a proactive approach, you can enhance your financial situation, improve your health, expand your social circle, and achieve your most ambitious goals.

This is your half-year to shine, live abundantly, and leave a lasting impact on the world.



Sola Adesakin (FCA, FCCA CPA MBA) is a Personal/ Business Finance Coach and Chartered Accountant with over 20 years of hands-on experience. She is passionate about helping people understand the "make-manage-multiply money" message, maximize their resources, achieve their crucial financial milestones and build true wealth through the concept of financial planning.
As a financial enthusiast, Sola is an advocate for SDG5 and SDG10, with a firm belief in achieving gender equality and reducing inequality via financial literacy and access to funding. Sola is the author of currently eight (published books and several unpublished articles in the public domain. She has recently been admitted into the Forbes Coaching Council, as she continues to leverage global alliances and partnerships to amplify the money message around the world.

PERSONAL HEALTH



NAVIGATING POLYCYSTIC OVARY SYNDROME (PCOS) WITH KNOWLEDGE AND SUPPORT

DR. MAYMUNAH YUSUF KADIRI

As the sun rises on a new day, Emma awakens to face the familiar challenges of Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS). For her and millions of women worldwide, PCOS is not just a medical condition, it's a complex and often misunderstood disorder that can impact every aspect of life, from fertility and hormones to weight and mental health.

Unveiling the Complexity of PCOS

PCOS is a hormonal disorder characterised by imbalances in reproductive hormones, insulin resistance, and the presence of multiple small cysts on the ovaries. This multifaceted condition can manifest in a variety of symptoms that vary in severity and presentation:

1 **Menstrual Irregularities:** Irregular menstrual cycles, including infrequent periods, prolonged bleeding, or absent periods, are common among women with PCOS. Hormonal imbalances disrupt the normal ovulation process, leading to menstrual irregularities and fertility challenges.

2 **Hyperandrogenism:** Elevated levels of androgens, or male hormones, such as testosterone, can cause physical symptoms like acne, hirsutism (excess hair growth), and male-pattern baldness in women with PCOS. These symptoms can have a significant impact on self-esteem and body image.

3 **Weight Gain and Difficulty Losing Weight:** Insulin resistance, a hallmark feature of PCOS, can lead to weight gain, particularly around the abdomen. Women with PCOS may struggle to lose weight despite efforts to maintain a healthy diet and exercise regimen, exacerbating feelings of frustration and body dissatisfaction.

4 **Fertility Challenges:** PCOS is a leading cause of infertility in women of reproductive age, primarily due to irregular ovulation and hormonal imbalances. Achieving and maintaining a healthy pregnancy can be challenging for women with PCOS, requiring specialized fertility treatments and support.

Empowering Women Through Education and Advocacy

Despite the complexities of PCOS, there are effective strategies and resources available to help women manage their symptoms and improve their quality of life:

1 **Hormonal Management:** Hormonal contraceptives, such as birth control pills, patches, or hormonal intrauterine devices (IUDs), are commonly used to regulate menstrual cycles and manage symptoms of hyperandrogenism in women with PCOS. These medications can help restore hormonal balance and alleviate physical symptoms associated with PCOS.

2 **Lifestyle Modifications:** Making lifestyle changes such as maintaining a healthy diet, engaging in regular exercise, managing stress effectively, and prioritizing adequate sleep can help support overall health and hormone balance in women with PCOS. Weight management strategies, such as monitoring calorie intake and incorporating strength training exercises, can also help improve insulin sensitivity and reduce the risk of complications associated with PCOS.

3 **Fertility Support:** For women with PCOS struggling to conceive, fertility treatments such as ovulation induction, intrauterine insemination (IUI), or in vitro fertilization (IVF) may be recommended to help achieve pregnancy. Consulting with a reproductive endocrinologist or fertility specialist can provide personalized guidance and treatment options tailored to individual needs.

4 **Psychological Support:** The emotional toll of PCOS can be significant, impacting self-esteem, body image, and mental health. Seeking support from mental health professionals, support groups, or online communities can provide validation, encouragement, and coping strategies for women navigating the challenges of PCOS.

Advocating for Understanding and Support

As Emma confronts the daily challenges of PCOS, she is determined to raise awareness and advocate for greater understanding and support for women affected by this complex condition. By sharing her story openly and authentically, she hopes to dispel myths and misconceptions surrounding PCOS and promote empathy and compassion within society.

Through education and advocacy efforts, Emma aims to empower women with PCOS to take control of their health and advocate for their needs. By fostering a greater understanding of PCOS and its impact on women's lives, she hopes to create a more inclusive and supportive environment for all those affected by this common yet often misunderstood condition.

Polycystic Ovary Syndrome may present formidable challenges for women, but with knowledge, support, and access to effective treatments, they can navigate the complexities of PCOS and reclaim their health and well-being. By shedding light on PCOS and advocating for greater awareness and support, we can create a more compassionate and inclusive society for all those affected by this complex condition. So, let us stand together, hand in hand, and empower women to confront PCOS with resilience, dignity, and strength.





Dr. Maymunah Yusuf Kadiri (Aka Dr. May) is popularly referred to as "The Celebrity Shrink," She is a multiple award winning mental health Physician, advocate and coach. She is the Medical Director and Psychiatrist-In-Chief at Pinnacle Medical Services, Nigeria, prominent in the application of innovative clinical approaches in the management/ treatment of a wide range of psychological, emotional, and behavioral related disorders. Dr. Kadiri is a Consultant Neuro-Psychiatrist with almost 20 years' experience as a practicing Physician. She is a trained and certified Rational Emotive and Cognitive Behavioural Therapist from Albert Ellis Institute, New York, USA. She is also a certified Trauma Counsellor and Neurofeedback Practitioner.

BLOCKCHAIN



NIGERIA'S BLOCKCHAIN BOOM: NAVIGATING REGULATORY HURDLES FOR BUSINESS SUCCESS

OGE ANENE

Nigeria has emerged as a surprising global leader in blockchain adoption. The Nigerian Security and Exchange Commission (SEC) projects the country's cryptocurrency market to reach a staggering $52.5 million by 2028, reflecting a projected growth of 12.66% between 2024 and 2028. This statistic highlights a strong national interest in this transformative technology.

Across various sectors, from dynamic fintech start-ups to established supply chain players, blockchain's potential to streamline processes, enhance transparency, and unlock new avenues for financial inclusion is undeniable. However, despite this widespread enthusiasm, navigating the regulatory landscape in Nigeria presents a complex challenge for businesses eager to embrace blockchain.

Fragmented Regulatory Landscape

One of the first hurdles businesses encounter is the fragmented regulatory environment. Unlike some jurisdictions with a single governing body, Nigeria has multiple agencies involved, each with its own set of regulations and licensing requirements. The key players are:

Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC): The SEC focuses on regulating digital assets considered securities, such as Security Token Offerings (STOs). They recently issued the Digital Assets Regulations, which provide a framework for registering and operating as a digital asset exchange or custodian.

Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN)

The CBN primarily focuses on traditional financial institutions and has a more cautious stance towards cryptocurrencies. In 2021, the CBN banned banks from facilitating cryptocurrency transactions, raising concerns about the future of crypto adoption in Nigeria.

This fragmentation creates challenges for businesses. Obtaining clarity and navigating the approval processes can be complex and time-consuming. Businesses may need to seek licenses and approvals from both the SEC and CBN depending on the specific application of their blockchain project.

For instance, a Nigerian start-up aiming to develop a blockchain-based platform for secure and transparent agricultural product trading would likely face this hurdle. They might need SEC approval for the platform's tokenomics (if it involves a token representing ownership) while also requiring clearance from the CBN if the platform integrates with traditional financial services. This lack of a unified regulatory framework can significantly hinder progress, leading to delays, increased compliance costs, and uncertainty for businesses seeking to innovate with blockchain technology.

Uncertainty Surrounds Peer-to-Peer Trading

Another key hurdle is the uncertainty surrounding Peer-to-Peer (P2P) crypto trading platforms. The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) prioritizes maintaining control over foreign exchange (FX) flows. This focus has led to concerns that the CBN might restrict P2P crypto trading platforms, which have become a significant aspect of the Nigerian cryptocurrency market.

P2P platforms allow individuals to directly buy and sell cryptocurrencies with each other, bypassing traditional financial institutions. This ease of access has significantly contributed to Nigeria's high cryptocurrency adoption rate. Restricting such platforms could have a negative impact in several ways:

Reduced access and liquidity: Limiting P2P trading could make it more difficult for Nigerians to buy and sell cryptocurrencies, potentially reducing overall market liquidity.

Increased black market activity: Driving P2P trading underground could lead to a rise in unregulated black market activities, posing greater risks to consumers.

Alternative solutions exist to address the CBN's concerns without stifling innovation:

Know Your Customer (KYC) and Anti-Money Laundering (AML) regulations: Implementing stricter KYC/AML measures on P2P platforms could help mitigate money laundering and illegal FX transactions.

Collaboration with P2P platforms: The CBN could work with P2P platforms to develop frameworks that ensure transparency and compliance with FX regulations.

Finding a balance between financial stability and fostering innovation in the P2P crypto space is crucial for the healthy development of Nigeria's blockchain ecosystem.

High Registration Fees

Another obstacle is the proposed increase in registration fees for crypto exchanges by the SEC. These high fees threaten to stifle the market by discouraging smaller start-ups with innovative solutions due to the upfront costs. This could lead to a situation where established players dominate the market, hindering competition and slowing down the adoption of new technologies. The SEC could explore alternative approaches, such as tiered fee structures or performance-based incentives, to ensure market stability and protect investors while fostering a competitive environment.

These alternative approaches would achieve market stability without stifling the competition that drives innovation and benefits consumers.

Nigeria's blockchain adoption is promising, but a more balanced regulatory approach is needed to unlock its full potential.



Oge Anene is a lawyer, called to the Nigerian Bar in 2012 As a blockchain lawyer, at the forefront of blockchain tech investments, she plays a pivotal role as a consultant to companies entering the world of blockchain and asset tokenisation. Oge is committed to unraveling the emerging opportunities within blockchain, with a specific focus on real-world asset tokenisation. Through executive training and workshops, she is part of a team that paves the way for this innovative venture to thrive in Africa. Oge is a certified NLP practitioner and holds a certificate in cognitive behaviour therapy.

RELATIONSHIPS



4 Fears you must conquer before you get married

NIKE FOLAGBADE

Marriage is a beautiful journey, but it comes with its own set of fears and challenges. Conquering these fears before you say "I do" can lead to a more fulfilling and enduring marriage. Here are four common fears and practical ways to overcome them.

1 Fear of Marriage

In today's world, the media often highlights the negative aspects of marriage, creating fear and doubt.

Timilehin watched her parents' marriage fall apart and constantly reads news about divorces, making her skeptical about marriage.

How to Conquer This Fear:

- Reduce exposure to negative platforms: Limit your consumption of negative news and focus on positive stories.
- Seek out healthy marriages: Find couples who exemplify a strong, healthy marriage and learn from them.
- Pray and build faith:Ask for strength and wisdom to overcome your fears. Cultivate a positive mindset.
- Question your fears: Reflect on your fears and challenge them with truth and positivity.

2 Fear of Choosing the Wrong Partner

Choosing the right partner is crucial, and the fear of making the wrong choice can be overwhelming. Tunde worries that his fiancée might not be the right one because she has trouble managing her anger, which heightens his fear that she may be a wrong choice for him.

How to Conquer This Fear:

- Check for character and alignment: Ensure your partner's values, beliefs, and goals align with yours.
- Assess consistencies:Look for consistency in their behavior and actions over time.
- Evaluate love and commitment:Ensure mutual love and commitment. Seek wisdom from trusted mentors and loved ones.

3 Fear of Falling out of Love

The fear that love might fade can cause anxiety about the future of your relationship.

How to Conquer This Fear:

- Show up with kindness and actions: Continuously invest in your relationship through acts of kindness and love.
- Commitment over emotion: Remember that love is a choice and a commitment, not just a feeling.
- Cultivate daily love: Make intentional efforts to nurture your relationship daily.

4 Fear of the Unknown

The uncertainties about what marriage might bring can be daunting. Emily is anxious about how her life will change after marriage and whether she can handle the responsibilities, balancing career, family, and new realities.

How to Conquer This Fear:

- Embrace uncertainty with faith: Trust that you will be guided through the uncertainties.
- Prepare and plan together: Discuss your future together and make plans, but remain flexible.
- Support each other: Lean on each other for support and reassurance.

Addressing and conquering these fears before marriage can pave the way for a strong, enduring relationship. By focusing on positive examples, seeking alignment, committing to love beyond emotions, embracing uncertainties with faith, and building deep trust, you can enter marriage with confidence and joy. Remember, guidance and wisdom are always available to help you navigate these fears and build a thriving marriage.

For more guidance on compatibility with your partner before marriage, download this free guide: [Premarital Compatibility Checklist](https://nikefolagbade.com/checklist/).



Nike Folagbade is a family life coach and counsellor. She is the founder of Nike Folagbade International.
She's a Master Practitioner of Neuro-Linguistic Programming and Results Coach; an Associate of Family Systems Engineering and a certified emotional intelligence and anger management coach. Equally, she's a SYMBIS facilitator, who helps engaged and married couples prepare for the 'before and after' of their marriages.
Nike has written over seven books including 'Get The Ring', 'Untold Secrets That Wreck Marriages', to mention a few. Her signature course, Warrior Brides Network, has created a movement of single and married women (in over 10 countries) please visit her website www.nikefolagbade.com
She is also the founder of the 'Love and Life Hub' platform that equips singles and married with the right knowledge on love, dating, marriage and purpose.

THE POWER OF NETWORKING IN ACCELERATING BUSINESS AND PERSONAL GROWTH

DR. AGILITY OBI-IHESIE



"Na wa for you oh, how did you manage to know all these people? See how people are hustling to get close to the guest of honour and they just gave you VIP access and you're hugging the big people as if you are old friends?", Celia asked Ayo as they exited the venue of the event. The biggest and most sought-after business development expert on the continent had come to speak in their city and Ayo had literally dragged her along. She was grateful that Ayo was her bestie and especially because she did not allow her settle into what she called 'business bad habits'.

"I was once like you and got hurt really badly but I had someone who dragged me out of my bad habits so I have decided to pay it forward beginning with you, my dear Celia", Ayo answered her friend. "I think I will tell you more of my story if you bribe me with dinner at Transcorp this evening. I've been looking for someone to take me out and provide great company and you fit that need perfectly."

Celia chuckled as she walked to the car with Ayo and told the driver to take them to Transcorp Hotel. She needed all the information she could get, or would she call it 'soap cutting'. They decided to settle down at the poolside restaurant and after placing their orders, Ayo started talking.

"You know how I used to be a diehard introvert who would do anything to avoid interacting with people right? Well, it worked very well during my 9 to 5 but after I transitioned fully into entrepreneurship it became my biggest weakness. As you already know the company I worked for was one of the top leaders in the industry and had established a great reputation after being in business for over 79 years. Without making a lot of effort, we always had a steady stream of new customers who were referred by those we had worked for. I just took it for granted that when I started my business, people would automatically find me the same way. I was so so wrong."

"After six months of operation with zero clients, I reached out in desperation to my uncle who was doing a similar business as mine and cried out for help. That I was technically sound was not in doubt, but I didn't just understand why clients were not rushing me like hot Agege bread", Ayo said with dramatic hand movements to buttress her point as Celia laughed.

"Anyway, my uncle told me to take a 1-month break from my business and come work with him which I readily agreed to. I noticed that he was always going from one business lunch to another business dinner to golf clubs and ceremonies. The common denominator with all these meetings was that he kept looking for opportunities to build relationships and be of value to these people he kept meeting. He didn't pitch to anyone the first time he was meeting them. Somehow the conversation just flowed from shared interests before business was ever mentioned. I noticed that he was comfortable with people which I was not and I knew instinctively that that was the first mindset block I needed to work on."

Ayo went on to tell Celia how she had to step out of her cocoon and interact with other people, which is called networking. Within three months her business picked up as more people got to know the value she offered and trust her too, leading to many business deals. On her own part, she made sure that she did her best to keep the relationships open while continuing to meet new people. It was during one of those business meetings that she had met the expert who spoke at the event that evening and they had kept in touch since then.

Networking correctly is a powerful tool for business acceleration. It is said that people do business with people that they 'know, like and trust'. Do your best to expand your network and show people the value you carry, and watch your business soar.



Dr Agility Obi-Ihesie (Dr Purejoie) is a Consultant Pathologist, Entrepreneur, Life and Personal growth strategist, and wholesome living advocate. She is the Founder of Dr Purejoie Skincare, a safe ethical skincare brand in Nigeria, and Dr Purejoie Consulting where she helps individuals gain clarity and develop strategies for personal growth, relationships, and healthy wholesome living.
She holds a MBBCh degree from College of Medicine University of Calabar, a FMCPath Fellowship in Pathology from National Postgraduate Medical College of Nigeria, a Certificate in Project Management in Global Health from University of Washington and a Certificate in Entrepreneurial Management from Enterprise Development Centre, Pan-Atlantic University (CEM51 Class). She can be reached at agility.obiihesie@gmail.com.

MEALS TO ENJOY
By ImmaculateBites

BROWN STEWED FISH RECIPE



Brown Stewed Fish Recipe – Savoury and perfectly spiced, like most Jamaican dishes, this brown stew fish will have you licking your plate clean! It's a one-pan meal sure to liven up your weekly dinner routine.



Ingredients

FISH MARINADE

- 2 whole fish, cut into pieces (I used snapper)
- 1 teaspoon (3g) fish bouillon (or chicken bouillon)
- 1-2 teaspoons (5-10g) minced ginger
- 1 teaspoon (5g) minced garlic
- 1 teaspoon (2-3g) white pepper
- 1 teaspoon (1g) fresh thyme
- ½ teaspoon (1-2g) paprika
- 2 green onions, thinly sliced

BROWN STEW

- 2 tablespoons (30ml) canola oil or more as needed
- 1 medium onion, diced (about 1¼ cups)
- 2 teaspoons (10g) minced garlic
- 1 teaspoon (1g) fresh thyme
- 1 teaspoon (5ml) hot sauce (sub chili sauce)
- 1½ teaspoons (2-3g) paprika
- 1 teaspoon (2-3g) ground allspice
- 1 tablespoon (13g) brown sugar
- 1-2 teaspoons (5-10g) browning sauce
- 2-3 tablespoons 34-50g) ketchup
- 1 scotch bonnet pepper

- 2 small bell peppers, sliced (red or green)
- salt and pepper to taste
- 1-2 cups (240-475ml) chicken broth (or water)

Instructions

THE FISH

- Wash the fish thoroughly, drain excess water, and dry the fish with a paper towel.
- Cut it into pieces. If using them whole, make three diagonal cuts on each side, all the way to the bone, and squeeze some lemon all over them.
- Then, season with the fish bouillon powder, ginger, garlic, salt, white pepper, thyme, paprika, and green onions. Thoroughly rub the fish with a spoon or your hands until well coated, cover tightly, and set aside in the fridge. Marinate for at least an hour (preferably overnight).
- When ready to cook, remove excess marinade from the fish and reserve for later. Heat a large pan and add the oil.
- Brown the fish for 4-5 minutes until it's golden brown, remove, and place on a plate. Drain excess oil from the pan, leaving 2-3 tablespoons.





THE BROWN STEW

- In the same pan, add the stew seasonings: onions, garlic, thyme, hot sauce, paprika, allspice, sugar, browning sauce, ketchup, bell peppers, and salt to taste. Stir for 2-3 minutes until onions are translucent. Add the reserved fish marinade.
- Deglaze the pan with the broth or water. Bring to a boil and add the brown fish back to the pan.
- Cover and cook for 10 minutes, more or less, until the fish cooks through and the sauce thickens slightly. Adjust for salt, pepper, and consistency with more broth or water as you cook.
- Turn off the stove, remove the stew, and serve it with your favorite rice recipe.

Tips & Notes

- Washing the fish with a mix of lemon or lime juice and vinegar reduces the fishy smell before and during cooking. Just pat the fish dry before frying.
- Be thorough when seasoning the fish. I like to use my hands to ensure the seasoning gets all over, including in the slashes you make on the side of the fish. More seasoning equals more flavour.
- Go easy on the browning sauce at first. Different brands have different concentrations; the same goes for homemade browning sauce. The brown stew fish can taste a bit bitter if you overdo it. So add the lesser amount first, give it a taste test, then add more if needed.
- If you prefer a thicker brown sauce, simmer the stew for a few minutes longer or add cornstarch slurry (equal parts water and cornstarch).
- Please remember that the nutritional information is a rough estimate and can vary significantly based on the products used in the recipe.



HOMEMADE PINEAPPLE ICE CREAM

Pineapple Ice Cream is vibrant, refreshing, and delightfully creamy. So get ready to indulge in a real tropical treat.

Ingredients

- 5 cups (800g) fresh pineapple, chopped (about 2 cups when pureed)
- teaspoon (tiny pinch) salt
- 2 cups (480ml) cold heavy whipping cream
- 1 14-ounce can sweetened condensed milk
- ½-1 teaspoon (3-5ml) vanilla extract
- 2 tablespoons (30ml) lemon juice (optional)
- ½ teaspoon (3ml) rum (optional, omit for kid-friendly version)

Instructions

- Important: Chill your bowls and ingredients in the refrigerator before starting.
- Peel and chop pineapple, then puree it in the blender until smooth.
- Pass the blended pineapple through a fine mesh strainer to discard any solids for smoother ice cream. You should end up with about 2 cups of strained puree. (Skip this step if you don't mind pineapple fiber in your ice cream.)
- Pour the strained pineapple puree into a saucepan. Then, bring it to a boil and simmer over low heat for 20-25 minutes. You should have about (1-1½ cups of cooked pineapple puree).
- Let it cool for about 30 minutes, then transfer it to the fridge to completely chill.
- Pour the very cold, heavy whipping cream into a large chilled metal or glass bowl. Whisk with a hand mixer on high for 3-4 minutes until soft peaks form. The peeks shouldn't be too stiff, or the cream will break and the ice cream will be grainy.
- Take out half of the whipped cream and place it in another bowl. Reserve the other half in the freezer while you proceed.
- Pour the condensed milk, chilled pineapple puree, lemon juice, vanilla extract, and rum (if using) into the bowl of whipped heavy cream and gently fold to combine.
- Add this to the reserved bowl of whipped cream and gently fold to combine.
- Next, transfer the mixture to a chilled freezer-safe pan and cover with plastic film. Lightly press the plastic film directly on the surface, covering all the angles and edges. Make sure the cling wrap touches the ice cream's surface so there's no space between the ice cream and the cling film. (That keeps ice crystals from forming.)
- Freeze until firm (6 hours or overnight).
- Take the ice cream out of the freezer 5-10 minutes before scooping and serving in a bowl or cone with your favorite toppings.





Tips & Notes

- Use ripe pineapple. The riper the pineapple, the sweeter and more flavourful the ice cream.
- Like more texture? Add some pineapple tidbits to your ice cream.
- The lemon juice provides a slight yogurt-like taste, but feel free to omit it.
- If you're lucky enough to have an ice cream maker, combine all the ingredients and chill in the fridge for about 6 hours. Then, follow the manufacturer's instructions for churned ice cream.
- Please remember that the nutritional information is a rough estimate and can vary significantly based on the products used in the recipe.



DERIN FABIKUN

The Derin Fabikun line is a luxurious fashion line that specialises in bespoke and bridal couture. Each piece in the collection is meticulously crafted with the finest fabrics and intricate details to ensure that every garment exudes timeless elegance and sophistication.

The bespoke line offers custom-made outfits that are designed to accentuate the individual's unique style and flatter their silhouette. Clients can choose from an array of sumptuous fabrics and work with the in-house team of skilled artisans to create a one-of-a-kind piece that perfectly captures their personality and aesthetic.

For brides-to-be, they offer an exquisite selection of outfits that are designed to make every woman feel like a vision of beauty on her special day. Each design is created with meticulous attention to detail and embellished to taste.

Derin Fabikun is the ultimate destination for the modern sophisticate who appreciates the art of fine craftsmanship and desires a truly unforgettable fashion experience.


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