

RISING WOMAN

A celebration of women thought leaders, innovators, thinkers, problem solvers, and drivers of growth and development who are contributing to the Rising Africa Story.



HER EXCELLENCY MUFERIAT KAMIL,
Minister of Peace, Ethiopia

How important is peace and security in driving further FDI into Ethiopia?

Peace and security for a country extends beyond one sector or area of economic concern. It is about the continued peace and stability for a country's people who have an opportunity to thrive and prosper.

A country's people who enjoy the benefits of peace are, in turn, happy, dedicated and energetic. This translates into value for a company in the terms of greater productivity, stability, and economic

assurance. Such an environment thus attracts FDI investment to our borders.

Your position is revolutionary in gender parity, tell us how you hope to further impact and empower women?

Gender parity is both a landmark and cornerstone of this administration. Ethiopia has entered a new chapter in history with the appointment of many women to the executive branch.

Moreover, it has provided our young girls with positive role models. Through strong investment in their education to prepare them for leading in the future, we are ensuring a strong future for Ethiopia.

DR. NEEMA KASEJE,
Founding Director
of the Surgical
Systems Research
Group, Kenya



How important are partnerships in achieving your goals?

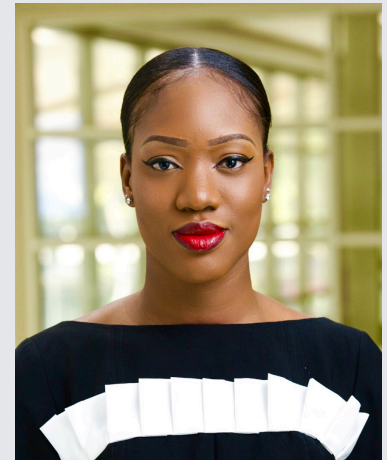
When it comes to significant global challenges such as the lack of access to life saving children's surgical care, partnerships are key to achieving any meaningful impact. Our mission is to expand access to life saving children's surgical care in one of the most neglected regions in Kenya.

How important are health policy frameworks where governments work hand in hand with partners and the private sector?

Health policy frameworks where governments work with partners and the private sector are critical to success because they provide the roadmap for how health for all will be achieved.

They define the responsibility and role of each partner and they determine measures of success.

ADAKU UFERE-AWOONOR,
International
Energy Attorney &
Founder/CEO DAX
Consult, Ghana



An award-winning energy attorney, Adaku Ufere-Awoonor, practices at the intersection of energy and gender.

She's currently the CEO of DAX Consult, a firm providing advisory services on energy transactions, gender mainstreaming and digital communications strategy.

Ms. Ufere-Awoonor has been honored on the 40 Under 40 Leading Lawyers in Nigeria, received the Attorney of the Year: African Legal Awards, and is a Mandela Washington Fellow. She is a member of the Nigerian Bar Association, the International Bar Association and the Association of International Petroleum Negotiators.



Photo courtesy of Banji Abioye
@fabolousbanji

JUDY MELIFONWU,
Head of Policy and Public Affairs,
Diageo, Nigeria

Should initiatives such as poverty alleviation be part of the social commitment of multinationals operating in Africa?

Forward-thinking multinationals should internally make a commitment through their operations and CSR strategy to encourage

poverty alleviation when operating in developing markets.

This can be guided by a collaborative policy that makes African countries attractive for FDI while protecting both citizens and the environment. Companies need to examine their corporate culture and ensure local people occupy the majority of management positions. Multinationals should also focus on providing opportunities within

their value chains.

They should try to source a higher percentage of raw materials locally to provide employment throughout the value chain.

How do you find a balance between government responsibility and good corporate citizenship to ensure successful social development?

Government responsibility and corporate citizenship can sometimes intertwine. While government must create forward-thinking policies that work to grow a country's economy and meet SDGs, corporations should adopt strong sustainable development programs that align with that vision.

Sustainable development goes deeper than CSR as it affects future generations. Balance is found when government provides clear direction and corporations are responsible and committed to the communities they serve.



OLEBOGENG TEFO SENTSHO,
MD Simba Mgodu Fund (SMF),
South Africa

Olebogeng Sentsho has a vision for Africa to create an extensive

network of African industrialists focused on creating a prosperous and economically active continent.

By creating a strong and inclusive mining economy, Sentsho believes Africa will be able to generate the type of resources needed to undertake significant social and educational progress.

Progress has indicated an increase in strong African leaders for sustainable economic growth. Sentsho's first step down that path has involved catalyzing South Africa's tertiary mining industry. As the Chief Executive Officer of the Simba Mgodu Mining Incubation Fund, a development fund that supports emerging entrepreneurs in mining and mining services, Sentsho is able to accomplish this objective by drawing upon her extensive technical, finance, and law background.



ABENA BRIGIDI,
CEO Nimed Capital, Ghana

Nimed Capital's Managing Director and CEO demonstrated a

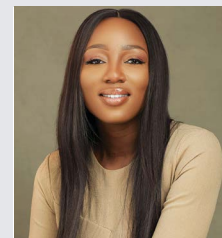
flair for finance early in her professional career. She quickly rose through the ranks at Zenith Bank from a customer service advisor to a relationship manager and head of customer service.

After five years with Zenith Bank, she moved to All-Time Capital to become the V.P. of Marketing and PDT development and then on to Kariela Oil & Gas as its CFO.

Her expertise in corporate finance, funds and investment management, as well as investment research, has effectively paired with her entrepreneurial drive to create one of Ghana's leading investment banks.

Today, the investment analyst, author, and speaker is a passionate advocate for empowering women through recognition and promotion of the efforts and successes of women in various industries.

Brigidi herself was recognized as one of the Woman Rising's 100 Most Outstanding Women Entrepreneurs in Ghana in 2017 and adjudged the Emerging Woman Entrepreneur of the Year.



YEJIDE AYOMOFE RUNSEWE,
Founder, Naija Nomads, Nigeria

Yejide Ayomofe Runsewe never

considered herself to be an explorer. That changed however with an inspirational trip to Morocco in 2011. Her Moroccan adventure opened her eyes to the often misconceptions about countries and cultures often perpetuated in the media. This inspired her to enthusiastically embrace her inner explorer and travel to places often off the beaten track.

She decided to start sharing those experiences by writing a travel blog in 2015 and her community of followers quickly grew. Runsewe effectively tapped into a large community of followers that like her, were hungry to experience new countries and cultures. Her widely popular blog and Instagram page @naijanomads evolved into a travel business.

Today, Runsewe offers a unique service she calls the "Green Passport Movement", aimed at offering seamless travel experiences to Nigerian travelers regardless of any limitations posed by their passports.

The Green Passport Movement's goal is about encouraging Nigerians to see travel as impactful but affordable; as an opportunity for cultural immersion and education that leaves one with an unforgettable experience.



**FOLAKE
ADENIYI-ADELEYE,**
Regional HR Leader
Oracle Corporation
Founder, Coachivate,
South Africa

A seasoned HR executive, Adeniyi-Adeleye has held various senior management roles in leading global multinationals like Oando, Celtel (now Airtel), Microsoft, and Oracle. Adeniyi-Adeleye earned a Practitioner Diploma in Executive coaching in 2017. She is a mentor to many aspiring executives and has

coached many high achievers, senior managers, top executives and under 45 entrepreneurs in the US, Europe, Middle East & Africa.

She recently founded 'Coachivate', a human capacity development platform whose mission is to inspire personal leadership and enhance professional and executive potential through mentoring and a transformative and solutions-focused coaching process.

She is unapologetic about her passion in elevating the status and influence of women and ensuring they remain relevant in their work-life and sits on the Executive Council of WIMBIZ (Women in Management, Business and Public Service), an NGO focused on developing and implementing programs that inspire, empower and advocate for greater representation of women in leadership positions and nation building.

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of Folake and do not necessarily reflect the position of Oracle Corporation.

**UGO
NWACHUKWU,**
Founder
Enchanted
Events, Nigeria

Having previously worked in the fashion industry, she decided to utilize her innate creativity skills, flair for design, and passion for creating beautiful spaces to start her event management company, Enchanted Events in 2011.

Today, Enchanted Events is renowned for designing and planning some of the most high-profile events in Nigeria, including the wedding of Zarah Buhari, daughter of the president of Nigeria.

The company has also planned and executed events for other top government officials, various embassies, and high-end corporate executives. Her work on events like these and others has been featured in a number of publications including *Mode Men* and the *Abuja Times*.

Nwachukwu continues to refine her craft achieving several specialized certifications. She is a Preston Bailey (New York) wedding planner protégé, a Karen Tran (London) protégé trained in the art of luxury floral design, and a graduate of the Wedding Planning Institute (California).



YOADAN TILAHUN,
CEO Flawless Events,
Ethiopia

Running seamless, perfect – flawless – events was a vision of Ethiopian-born Yoadan Tilahun. That vision manifested itself into a successful company that organizes summits, corporate events and conferences throughout Africa today. Initially

launched in Washington, DC and transplanted to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, Flawless Events has worked tirelessly to earn its well-earned reputation for innovation and creativity. As a result, it has achieved substantial growth in its 15 years of operation.

Tilahun is known for instituting exceptionally high work standards and always doing business with integrity and honesty. An approach clearly appreciated by those that have witnessed this through the planning of such events as African Philanthropy Forum in Kigali, Rwanda; an African Venture Capital Association workshop in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, and various event elements for the ICT advisory and networking organization, Extensia in Burkina Faso, Tanzania, Mauritius, Zimbabwe and Nigeria.

Tilahun is also an enthusiastic advocate for professionalizing the MICE industry in East Africa and is an active member of the International Congress & Convention Association (ICCA). In 2018, she was named Seasoned Entrepreneur of the Year by Global Entrepreneurship Week (GEW).



FUNMI ROBERTS,
Principal Partner
Funmi Roberts & Co.
Law Firm, Nigeria

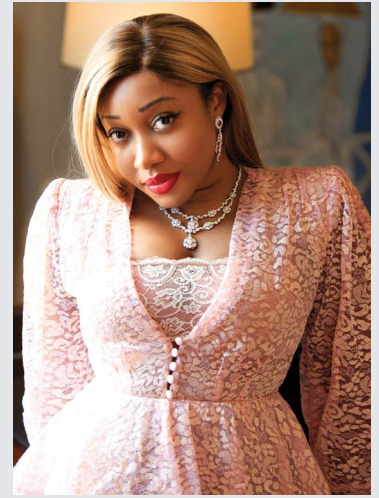


Funmi Roberts has devoted more than thirty-five years of her life teaching and practicing law. In 1989, she established Funmi Roberts & Co., a firm of Solicitors and Advocates engaged primarily in corporate and commercial law practice, whilst also specializing in ADR as a tool for dispute resolution.

Today, the firm has grown into one of the premier female-owned law firms in Nigeria with offices in Ibadan and Lagos, with a focal point in Abuja. Funmi is an accomplished mediator and arbitrator who works with both private and corporate clients and she adds significant value to the boards she sits on as director by bringing her significant corporate experience to bear.

Her tireless dedication has earned her several awards including the PSR Woman of Merit Gold Award in recognition of her contribution to the development of Nigeria in the field of law and legal services.

JENNIFER OBAYUWANA,
Executive Director
Polo Limited, Nigeria



As the daughter of a pioneer in the luxury industry, it was inevitable that Jennifer Obayuwana's unwavering passion for luxury and beauty would lead to her following in her father's footsteps. She rigorously prepared for the role in business, rising through the ranks from a sales executive on the shop floor to the Executive Director of Polo Limited. She then went on to run one of Africa's leading fashion and lifestyle destination, Polo Avenue.

Today, she is the Executive Director of the Polo Luxury Group, Nigeria's leading luxury goods company. Headquartered in Lagos, the luxury retailer operates five boutiques with three more set to open soon.

Obayuwana embraces the personal mantra of "To lead, you must serve" and has worked to empower women across Africa. Using the Polo Foundation as a vehicle, she has pioneered Women Who Conquer, an NGO that is focused on socio-economic issues affecting women.



ONEYKA CINDY OJOGBO,
Senior Counsel
Centurion Law Group,
South Africa

Oneyka is an Attorney at Centurion Law Group with significant experience advising on project finance and energy deals across the African continent.

She obtained her law degree from the University of Ibadan, Nigeria and holds an LL.M degree

in Capital Markets, Finance and Projects from Columbia Law School, New York.

Oneyka has advised on landmark deals including a \$900 million independent power producer project in Nigeria and the ongoing backfill project for the monetization of gas resources in Equatorial Guinea. She has advised Governments and regulators, international lenders and sponsors. Oneyka is qualified in Nigeria and certified for admission to the New York State bar (March 2019).

IFEOMA I. IDIGBE,
Founder and Executive Vice
Chairman Boys to MEN
Foundation, Nigeria



An experienced business advisor and financial analyst, Ifeoma I. Idigbe has a keen interest in people development, organizational culture, and behavior. She is passionate about mentoring and coaching people to become their best, and to that end founded the Boys to Men Foundation.

The foundation started in 2017 as a Nigerian non-governmental organization (NGO) dedicated to developing boys and men into responsible, ethical, gentlemen with integrity. The ultimate goal of the Boys to Men Foundation is developing better global leaders of integrity in all spheres of life and endeavors.

Idigbe is the author of *Sounds from Silence: Musings* and *About Men: Random Poems, Monologues, and Reflections*, which she hopes will stimulate discussions around the challenges of being male, particularly in a modern society, and what can be done to help men become the best they can be. She also co-hosts TW Conversations, a television talk show on DSTV.

DR. IBILOLA AMAO,
STEM
Specialist &
CEO Lonadek,
Nigeria



Dr. Amao established Lonadek with a greater purpose than just providing technical consultancy to ensure that local and indigenous companies utilized established systems, processes and procedures to deliver quality goods and services.

She envisioned a company that could continually develop the capacity of young Africans in the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields. The focus of Lonadek is Engineering, Technology and Innovation Consulting.

With the Energy Institute and the Royal Academy of Engineering UK, she has promoted efficient energy solutions. Dr. Amao also mentors young professionals and engages with Junior Engineers, Technicians, and Scientists (JETS) clubs.

“Over the last 25 years, Lonadek has successfully trained over 5,000 certified engineers, designers, and cost consultants in the utilization of engineering software and information technology. We are proud to be a part of ensuring that Africans are playing a major role in the front-line of global development and to contributing to the STEM fields.”

LAUREEN ADAM,
Founder
Amara’s
Health
Center & Spa,
Zimbabwe



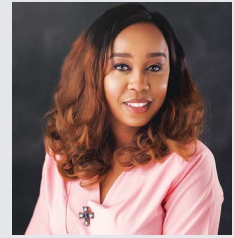
A true entrepreneur is able to see opportunity where others see problems.

The social, political and economic challenges that face entrepreneurs in the Zimbabwean economy are well documented, but probably not as well understood by those who have not had the experiential learning of doing business in Zimbabwe like Laureen Adam.

Ten years ago, Adam constructed an exotic health spa that has since won multiple international awards from organizations like the World Luxury Spa, the Luxury Travel Guide and BID. Not content with just one successful enterprise, she then expanded laterally to supply spa equipment to other southern African countries. The development of another venture offering exotic Zimbabwean treatments based on local herbs and oils followed.

Each have faced significant challenges including foreign exchange and currency obstacles as well as no real support from the government for business creation. This hasn’t however stopped Adam who plans to franchise her brand internationally.

QUEEN OHAMARA,
Founder,
Qmara Vie
Planners,
Nigeria



Qmara Vie Planners is a boutique events management company based in Abuja, Nigeria and founded by Queen Ohamara.

The company emphasizes adding luxury and sophistication to their client’s event while maintaining a sense of modernity. Ohamara acknowledges planning an event can be quite stressful, given all the preparation and decisions involved with theme development, budget management, and scouting venues. “It can seem daunting to even the most seasoned of hosts. That’s where we come in.”

Qmara Vie Planner is comprised of a young, vibrant team that is constantly innovating and pushing themselves to creatively turn dreams into reality. The company prides itself on curating unique once in a lifetime experiences. Ohamara believes you should be able to live in the moment and enjoy the present.

That is why her company bears all the stress of planning an event so clients can enjoy their special day. However, even with a string of high-profile events under their belt and a growing loyal clientele, client satisfaction brings Ohamara the greatest pride. “That is why we do what we do. Our Ikigai.”



IFEYINWA IGHODALO,
Founder DO. II Designs Ltd., Nigeria

With over 30 years’ experience in the furniture and interior design industry, Ifeyinwa Ighodalo managed reputable furniture companies such as Coonita and Casafina Furniture before striking out on her own. She co-founded Design Options Ltd., an indigenous furniture manufacturing company to fill the niche for quality made in Nigeria furniture. Over the next 25 years, she successfully built Design Options into a strong brand.

She went further to create the DO.II brand

as a one-stop shop for ‘glocally’ produced furniture and turn key interior solutions for the corporate, hospitality and residential markets. Through her vision and leadership, DO.II has been honored with two Interior Design awards in 2012 and 2014 as well as the prestigious African Property Award.

Ifeyinwa is one of the founding members of WIMBIZ, Women in Management & Business. She currently sits on the Board of Trustees of Wimbiz and IDAN, the Interior Designers Association of Nigeria. She is also the 2010 proud award recipient of the International Women’s Entrepreneurial Challenge (IWEC).



JULIA OKU JACKS,
 Founder, Julia Oku Jacks
 Consulting, Nigeria

Effective communication is the bedrock of any society. Communication assists in sharing information and knowledge, and in developing relationships with others. Julia Oku Jacks understands the important role communication serves in furthering the growth and development of Africa.

As an accomplished copywriter, strategist and marketing and corporate communications expert, Jacks co-founded the acclaimed marketing communications organization, SO&U Saatchi, eventually becoming its Executive Creative Director.

As the Lead Consultant of Julia Jacks Consulting, she offers clients sustainable value by designing bespoke strategy-driven creative solutions to help individuals and corporates re-discover, re-focus and optimize their identity, purpose, and effectiveness in an increasingly crowded global market.

Jacks has served the marketing communications and branding industry in different capacities including as Head of the then Association of Advertising Practitioners of Nigeria-AAPN (now AAAN) Training Committee and has facilitated training courses for the Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria (APCON). She also remains actively engaged with the world of advertising and creativity, chairing the jury at the 2017 AAAN LAIF Awards.

**OMOBOLANLE
 VICTOR-LANIYAN,**
 Head Sustainability,
 Corporate
 Communications
 Access Bank,
 Nigeria



For many years, Nigeria's image and that of Africa has been dealt a severe blow. A situation worsened by the rising trend of both legal and illegal immigration, fraud, corruption, tribal wars, and rising extreme nationalism in Europe and America, which have subjected the continent to unfair treatment. Furthermore, the foreign media has consistently refused to apply a sense of fairness and deliberate accountability to their coverage. Instead, they choose to amplify negative stories that have contributed to crippling the creativity, beauty, innovation, enterprise, and culture of Africa.

Access Bank PLC is at the forefront of changing the negative African narrative. The Bank has continued to develop impactful initiatives that have strategically addressed the local community's key social, environmental and economic challenges, leading the transformation, pushing recommendations and communicating solutions that are grounded in knowledge about the true African narrative.

Omobolanle Victor-Laniyan serves as the internal leader and go-to expert for sustainability in Access Bank, monitoring emerging trends, programs and issues; communicating and educating others on sustainability. Her efforts and that of the Bank are reflected in the local and international sustainability awards received.

**ADESUWA
 OKUNBO-RHODES,**
 Managing Director
 Syntaxis Africa,
 Nigeria



There is a growing global trend towards an increased verbal commitment from institutional investors to improve gender diversity and women's economic empowerment.

Adesuwa Okunbo-Rhodes believes to accelerate gender parity, women must be empowered as capital allocators and decision makers by institutional investors in order to be able to directly influence the lives of other women.

In Sub Saharan Africa, Syntaxis Africa is one of only a few private equity funds majority owned and led by a woman. Okunbo-Rhodes has been very intentional about ensuring gender equality in her own company and also in the portfolio companies she invests in across Sub Saharan Africa.

"Data shows that investing in women pays off," Okunbo-Rhodes says. "According to a McKinsey study, closing the gender gap could add \$28 trillion, or 26%, to annual global GDP in 2025. By 2028, female consumers will control around \$15 trillion of global consumer spending, two-thirds of the global total. This opportunity should not be ignored. Investing in women is not only attractive from a financial returns perspective but can also help to improve society in the long run."



UCY ROCHAS,
Director General,
Rochas Foundation, Nigeria

Entrepreneur and humanitarian Ucy Rochas has dedicated her career to addressing the immense poverty and lack of educational opportunities within Africa.

She has worked tirelessly advocating for every child's right to receive a comprehensive quality education. As the Director General of the Rochas Foundation, she leads the charge to

provide at least five less privileged children from every African country with a free high school education and see that they get to the university level.

The Rochas Foundation is a non-governmental, non-profit and non-political organization, established in 1998. It has undertaken an ambitious campaign to ensure that one million African children are taken off the streets and enrolled in schools by 2030. Today, they are well on their way, having assisted over 15,000 children.

LINA IRIS VIKTOR,
Visual and Performing Artist,
New York, London

“My work focuses on re-positioning the way we Africans view ourselves within the global context—hopefully to a position of self-proclaimed power and pride. This directive relates to Africans who actually live on the continent and have to contend with very negative and skewed global discourses that are prevalent through most media and educational outlets.

However, more urgently, this conversation matters most for those within the diaspora that are removed from the continent. Most people of African descent have never traveled to their point of origin, and at this point in history, are so mentally and emotionally disconnected from their source due to the catalogued, subversive tactics that have been practiced and taught to us since the rise of slavery.

The negative priming now thrives via propaganda and the media. I call attention to this reality as it affected me at an earlier age: a Liberian growing up in London.”



GODREY OGBECHIE,
Executive Director,
Rainoil Limited, Nigeria

After 20 years in banking, Godrey Ogbechie was looking for a new entrepreneurial challenge. It came in the form of a downstream oil and gas company that she co-founded in 1997.

Rainoil has grown significantly over the last decade generating gross revenue of 163 million Naira in 2018 and expanding its asset base to include two storage facilities, 65 service stations, 80 tank trucks, and a shipping vessel.

Ogbechie is also involved in several social welfare and humanitarian initiatives through her family NGOs and also collaborates with several other NGOs in the areas of education and health.

She is also an Associate Member of WIMBIZ, a non-profit organization focused on building leadership skills and networking opportunities among women in management, business, and public service.



CATHY ALLARA LATIWA,
Amato Founder Latiwa Development
Foundation, Nigeria

For Cathy Latiwa Amato, art has a cultural and humanitarian vocation. Amato having worked with the poorest people, wanted to provide an opportunity to lift people out of poverty. From that ambition, the “Latiwa Art and Fashion” (LAF) platform was born.

The objective of LAF is to organize events where young artists can be introduced to the world while, at the same time, raising funds to assist those in need. Since its inception in

2015, LAF has proven successful in launching the careers of several African fashion designers, artists, and women entrepreneurs.

The Latiwa Development Foundation (LDF), the charitable arm of LAF, funds projects in education, healthcare, and entrepreneurship. LAF and LDF have successfully created a bridge between culture and economic exchange for artists, fashion designers and female entrepreneur from countries across Africa and Europe. As well as a platform to highlight the need to encourage and support women and young girls through social economic empowerment.





TANG SAU MUOI,
CEO of ILCI Business School &
IESIG Management School, France

“As I ran from war and emigrated to France, I never had the chance to finish my education.

I was certain that the only way to succeed was to be well-educated. The benefit of a good education was exemplified by my children; all five attained Master’s degrees and have good jobs.

I wanted to give the same chance to children from abroad, to benefit from a good education. I established the IESIG School and ILCI Business School with the main focus of offering programs that align with future employment needs. I am proud of the results attained by our students.”

MARCIA ASHONG

Founder and Executive Director,
The Boardroom Africa, Ghana

“While boardroom diversity is an imperative globally, its impact is most likely to be largest in emerging markets that are lagging in development but are poised to be the next center of global growth. Africa is home to six

of the world’s ten fastest-growing economies. As the region becomes more integrated into the global economy, its private sector is maturing as a key engine in fostering sustainable growth. As investors flock to new opportunities and homegrown and multinational companies expand their presence across the region, there lies a unique opportunity to achieve returns while making a developmental impact.”



**ADAMA
AMANDA NDIAYE,**
Adama Paris, Senegal

Adama Amanda Ndiaye is a Senegalese fashion designer born in Kinshasa, Zaire. She epitomizes the multicultural fashion designer of the new millennium. As a child of



parents serving in the diplomatic corps, she grew up in several international cities which influenced the development of her unique urban style.

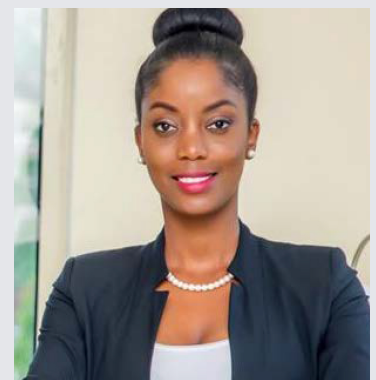
After studying economics and a brief stint in banking, Adama began taking fashion lessons in Paris. It was the first step in launching her now iconic fashion brand.

Adama is also the founder and producer of many fashion events such as Dakar Fashion Week, the Afrika Fashion Awards, also known as the “Trophies of African Fashion” (TMA), and the Black Fashion Week in Prague, Paris, Bahia, and Montreal since 2010. Adama and her team also launched the first “Fashion Africa Channel” in 2014.

She is a passionate advocate for the promotion of women entrepreneurship throughout Africa.

CHINENYE UWANAKA,
Managing Partner, The
Firma Advisory,
Nigeria

Throughout Chinenye Uwanaka’s career, she has focused on positively uplifting African values and African development. She has been a strong advocate for finding local solutions to local challenges.



Uwanaka established the Access to Justice-Pro-Bono Legal Aid Initiative programs at the law firm she founded, The Firma Advisory, to provide a voice to the voiceless by promoting Prison Reform, Human Rights & Enforcement. This was recently awarded by the Vice President of Nigeria.

She also believes there is a need to encourage innovation among Africa’s youth and is creating an impact through her Advocacy with The National Assembly Business Environment Roundtable (NASSBER) and The National Economic Summit Group (NESG), which is a platform for the Nigerian Legislature and the Private Sector to engage, deliberate and support reform of critical laws that govern Data Protection, Technology and Creative industries to make it sustainable in Nigeria.

OGUGUA OKONKWO,
Founder Style Temple, Nigeria

As a designer with a growing customer base, Ogugua Okonkwo understands the back-breaking challenges that come with manufacturing in Nigeria. Challenges that not only hinder sector growth but also affects the strategic sustainability of companies within an industry.



The grossly underfunded manufacturing sector in Nigeria, the lack of financing available to fashion designers, inflated lending rates, and the near absence of skilled labor has made it challenging to update equipment and facilitate efficient manufacturing processes. This has, in turn, Okonkwo believes, significantly impacted Nigeria's ability to remain competitive in an increasingly crowded global market.

HALIMA YUNUSA,
Founder 41 Luxe, Nigeria

With over 19 years experience in the fashion business with a focus on production and retailing, Halima Yunusa has built a brand that is synonymous with diverse, edgy and sought after Nigerian labels in Abuja, Lagos and Kaduna. The retail chain stocks over 50 Nigerian brands in a multi-functional space in all 3 locations with the aim of supporting and building Nigerian fashion on the global map.



Halima has her educational background in Economics, Business Management and Human Resource Management from the University of Maiduguri and a stint from the London School of Economics.



ADEOLA OKESHOLA,
Founder 2706 Events, Nigeria

You focus on the 'experience' when curating your events, what does that mean to you and to your clients?

The company's vision and brand mandate are driven by our impeccable creativity and passion for planning exceptional weddings, events, and parties.

Our work philosophy revolves around four keywords: integrity, innovation, service and professionalism.

2706 Events always exceeds expectations and delivers long-lasting beautiful memories from special celebrations. With our fingers on the pulse of the latest industry trends and innovations, our team is skilled at reinventing classic and timeless themes and moments that stay in step with contemporary style.

How has your background as a trained investment banker and financial advisor assisted your client in realizing their dream events?

It has been very useful in allowing us to create realistic budgets for clients. Our 2706 Sessions service provides budget breakdowns for events without requiring a commitment to use our services. Roughly 95% become clients.

MICHELLE TAKON,
Founder Narnia Events, Nigeria

What advice would you give young women entrepreneurs?

Firstly, young women entrepreneurs need to understand the business they'd like to go into, the business environment, target market, and then ensure that their business ideas will solve a problem before they embark on their entrepreneurial journey.

I would also tell them to make sure that whatever they choose to do, should be borne out of passion and not based on what other people are doing or how much money others are making.

What should we expect from Narnia Events in the short to medium term?

Our short-term goals are building a strong team, an even stronger brand and getting better at our craft. Our long-term goals are to be recognized in the industry for our innovative and trendsetting work, in Nigeria, Africa and the world at large. We are working towards having our own branded products and expanding into other creative industries.

