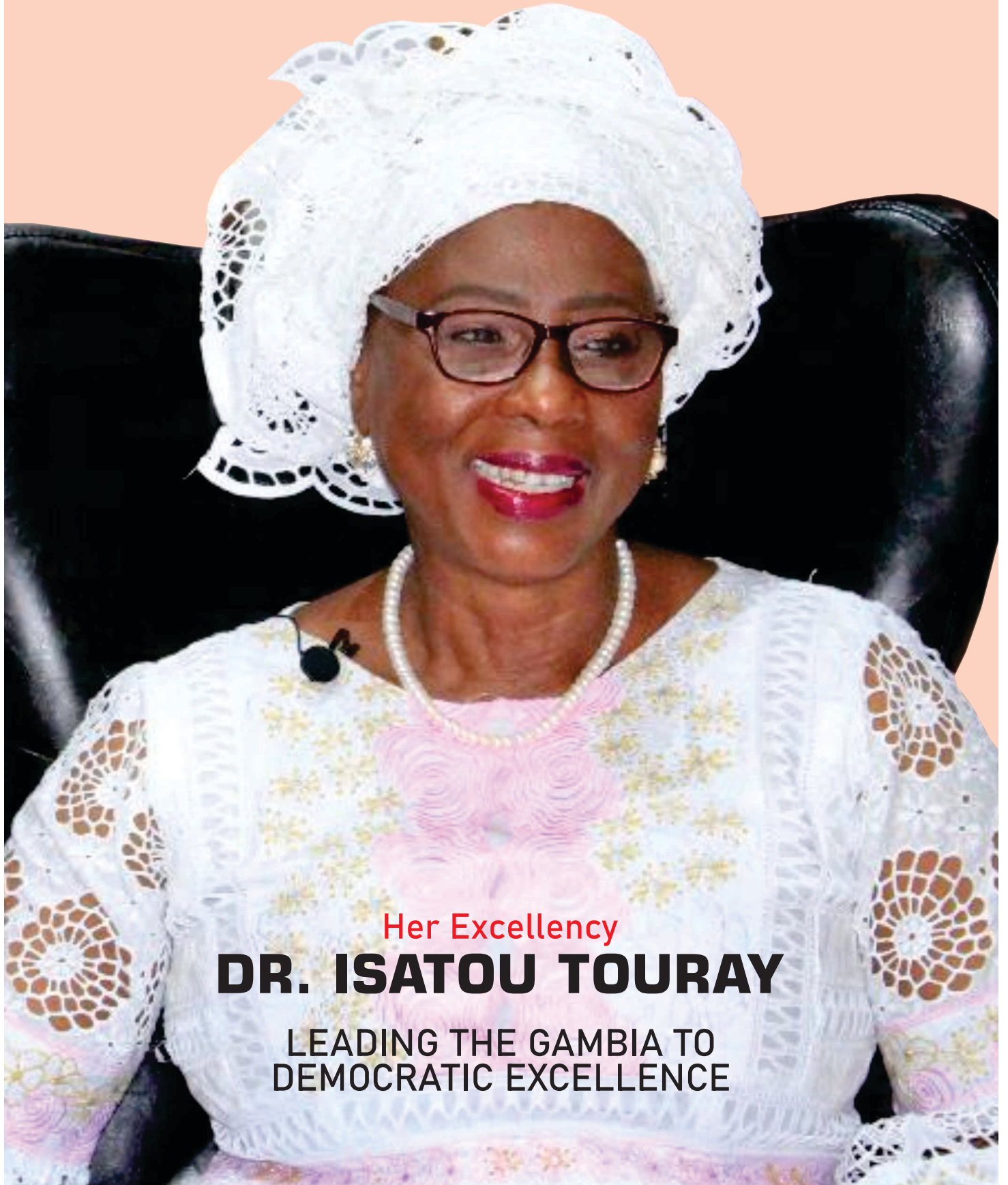


AMAZONS WATCH

...foremost voice for women in Africa and across the globe



Her Excellency

DR. ISATOU TOURAY

LEADING THE GAMBIA TO
DEMOCRATIC EXCELLENCE

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WOMEN OF THE FUTURE: Building Relevance & Resilience



There is no doubt that in the past years progress has been made in enhancing women's rights to basic and fundamental necessities of life, and engagement in non-traditional leadership roles and pathways- from state houses to boardrooms and to the grassroots. However, reflecting on the ground-breaking achievements of matriarchs of old such as Wangari Maathai, the first African woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize for her environmental work in Kenya; Tamar the Great, the first-ever Georgia's great medieval queen and ruler; or Anna Fued, who pioneered the defense mechanisms concept and the field of child psychotherapy, it is evident that numerous opportunities and possibilities abound for women to thrive in every major sector of the global economy. These include opportunities to showcase their relevance and resilience in contributing to solving the novel and most pressing global challenges whilst driving the development of innovations and initiatives that address systemic inequalities and threat to women's existence including gender based violence, healthcare and poverty.

Therefore, this year 2022, the Amazons Watch Magazine (AWM) in collaboration with the Centre for Economic & Leadership Development (CELD) have put together programs and initiatives centred on the theme- Women of the future: Building

Relevance and Resilience. The goal is to support women to build their relevance and resilience as they tread unknown paths and take on the world. This double-pronged approach of building relevant and resilient women underpin all our programs this year 2022 specifically and the coming years. These Programs aim to build women's drive and tenacity to not only strive to be relevant at the peak of their career, but also to remain so even when the ovation is over, the curtains drawn and the job is done, whilst remaining resilient in the face of uncertainties and upheavals.

We are pledging a renewed commitment to continually highlight the experiences, stories and giant strides of women from Africa and the rest of the world, and be the platform where such original and accurate data are mined and combined to power women's development in all spheres of society.

We acknowledge that stories are powerful and when we tell them several times, we begin to shape opinions, paradigms, which gradually transform into a defined reality. Therefore, in the coming years, beginning from 2022, we aim to position both AWM and CELD platforms for women to more than ever, control the narrative of their own pain or success story. Every human has both success and pain stories, which when reflected upon, should serve as a compendium of the person's strength of perseverance, doggedness, resilience and timeless lessons learnt, including monumental achievements and breakthroughs. Thus, every woman deserves a collection of such stories to be documented for posterity and as time-tested case studies for upcoming generation of women.

Therefore, the new direction for AWM in collaboration with CELD is to tell and champion the woman's story and experiences from her own point of view. A platform where every woman's story is told and experiences highlighted- from the woman in rural area to the woman in leadership spheres, through our diverse programs, mediums and platforms.

Therefore, we implore you to stay and work with us as we strive to redefine women's relevance and resilience in these very volatile times.

Mrs. Ibifuro Ken-Giami

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the world and tread unknown paths from
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success.



LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Storytelling has always been an essential part of my life growing up as an African child. It was absolutely mandatory for grandparents to tell us a folktale every time they visited. Besides learning valuable moral lessons from the stories, what I remember the most are the characters and this extraordinary phenomenon. Depending on who was telling the story, sometimes the

characters and the story would change. It was as though the story would differ depending on what the storyteller wanted us to think. At that point, I was too young to think much of it, but it is now evident to see why the storyteller is vital in any narrative.

Amazon's Watch magazine strives to be the leading voice for all women, especially in Africa and developing regions, and this year is no different, but this time we are paying particular attention to our narratives. Our goal this year is for women to more than ever have control over their own narrative. And now, what does this mean? Like all the folktales and stories we were told, our understanding and narratives differ depending on how and who is telling the story. In our interview with Her Excellency Vice President Jewel Taylor, she said, "Africans have to tell their own story, and this statement is as true for Africa as it is for other developing regions. If we keep waiting for the narrative from the Western world to determine who we are and what we do, then we leave our lives and the hopes of our people to them." It is that simple. Likewise, the female voice has been altered and forced into narratives that fit the storyteller's preferences, and the original story representing the authentic voice of women will gradually become lost if ignored.

So how have we gone around this matter, you may ask? In this edition, we have spoken to several influential women going above and beyond in their individual sectors, and we listened. We listened to what they stood for, who they supported and what they were most passionate about. Our cover story features Dr. Isatou Touray, The Vice president of The Gambia, and she states, "Feminist approaches ensure that we live together and understand whatever a man can do, a woman can do. It's not a competition. It's about opportunities." Her excellency spoke extensively about how a woman's role in political society is strong and influential. What is different is that we often read that women are competing in the media. It is, in fact, not a competition, and it is our job to teach that. This means our job is also to make sure this message is communicated on the right platforms. H. E Cidália Lopes Nobre Mouzinho Guterres, First Lady of East Timor shares a similar view. She explained to us that one of her most passionate projects is placing women in decision-

making positions, and they are doing this through several programmes that not only lead women but teach them. It is inspiring to hear of these projects as they pave the future for all women. More stories such as these are there in the world to share, there are women in the world ready to start their narratives, and we are here to give them that platform.

Dr. Liezille Jacobs expressed her passion for research in developmental psychology. Her knowledge stretched beyond giving facts about mental health; her interview illuminated the minuscule details of female discrimination that are often overlooked. Rev Mrs. Patricia Sappor described her journey into the banking sector, but she also conveyed how her faith and challenges pushed her through the male-dominated world. Professor Mmaki Jantjies told us how she had played her part, alongside others, to assure the future of the girl-child in tech. In addition, she articulated the importance of having a supportive family for any girl child. The President of DEPOWA, Mrs. Irabor, told us about her goals for the military widows, but she also went a step further to explain how she has implemented them within her circle first before leading others through them. Dr Afua Asare supports women in high places. Still, most importantly, she praises the femininity of these women, "There's nothing wrong with being a woman, having emotions and bringing them to work. I mean, that's how we are, and I cannot recreate a woman. But I need to use all of these feminine traits to my advantage." These are only a few of our features and interviews in this edition that have highlighted each distinct narrative.

This journey for the Amazons Watch Magazine has only just begun. As storytellers, we are taking our job seriously. We aim to pay more attention to every detail of our interviews and make sure that every one of our stories highlights each woman's unique experience. The fact that not every story will be the same means that diverse time-tested lessons and insights will be projected, and we hope that this edition will be one like no other.



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UPLIFTING THE WIVES OF FALLEN HEROES' BY EXTENDING A HELPING HAND

Mrs. Victoria Irabor & **DEPOWA**

Barrister (Mrs.) Victoria Irabor, President, Defence, and Police Officers' Wives Association (DEPOWA), a vast and well-read professional in the fields of law, conflict, security, development as well as corporate management and finance law has decided to use her in-depth knowledge and experience to take on the challenge of changing the narrative of the lives of widows in Nigeria, with special focus to the wives of fallen heroes in Nigeria. In her role as the DEPOWA president, she has not only led by example but has gone further to make sure that the military widows of the nation benefit and succeed.

She believes in fulfilling the African dream by harnessing the power of the skilled woman and has gone over and beyond to see to the social inclusion of these women via relevant skill acquisition. The wives of our fallen heroes are heroes in themselves and we must recognize them. They must be equipped to re-join society. Irabor has come in with a fresh pair of eyes for innovation and expansion with projects that goes beyond helping the widows of fallen heroes of Nigeria to helping the heroes themselves.

Women have always played an essential role in the development and growth of any society and Barrister (Mrs.) Victoria Irabor through the office of the president of DEPOWA has made it her mission to make sure that Nigerian widows lead better lives through skill acquisition projects, social inclusion, and establishment of PTSD Rehabilitation centres for their husbands. She has shown tenacity, resilience, compassion, and a strong drive for excellence in the course of her service to Nigeria.

A team of editors caught up with her recently where she talked about her passion and motivation in helping widows.

We would be thrilled to know a little more about the woman behind such great works.

I am Mrs. Victoria Irabor, fondly called Vicky by my friends and family. I am married to Major General Lucky Eluonye Onyenuchea Irabor. We believe in the grace of God and Jesus Christ, our Saviour. I am who I am today because God has made me so. My marriage is blessed with two beautiful children, a son and daughter.

My parents were civil servants. My father was a teacher and principal of schools and my mother was a nurse, so they were exposed to education.

This afforded me the opportunity to start school. I was exposed to a good education because my parents were educated. Today I am a lawyer and married to a military officer. I would relate who I am to date to the experiences I had as a child. With benefit of hindsight, I recall that as a child, my

mother would look at me and she would praise me. She would say, "you see you're so tall. I can imagine you reading law. "When you stand in court to speak, your presence will intimidate the judge". With this nudge from her, fell in love with the profession after I researched. Later I came back to my mom and told her that I wanted to be a lawyer but I wanted to work with the police so that I'll be able to fight crime and investigate crime. At the end of the day, I could not join the police but I married the military officer. So I think that my dream did come true, only in a different way than.

I graduated from the University of Benin where I obtained an LLB. I also proceeded to the Nigeria law school where I obtained my BL and was called to the Nigerian bar. After that I acquired three masters, first from the legal state university, where I obtained a masters in corporate management and finance law, then a Masters of law from the Lawton University Bangladesh, and finally a Masters in conflict, security, and development from the Nigerian defence academia. I actually did my Masters in conflict, security, and development to support my husband in his job as a military officer.

You have a vision for DEPOWA as it were. Where did you meet it and where do you intend to leave?

When I met DEPOWA it was a very comfortable place to start off work. The past DEPOWA Presidents have done wonderfully well. DEPOWA as an association is the coordinating body for the army officers' wives' association, Naval officers' wives' association, air force officers' wives' association and the police officer's wives' association.

As the president my position allows me to relate with women across the services. My vision for the association is broken down into parts. We have our traditional objective which is coming together as women and relating with one another. Sharing the same challenges with someone is usually reassuring. Another one of our traditional goals is to not leave the widow isolated. I have a goal to go beyond just support, I want to give skills to those that do not have and then also sharpen their skills by organizing pieces of training. I intend to go beyond the traditional objectives and goals.

I have found a project that I think would launch DEPOWA to greater heights and that is looking beyond ourselves, not just what we can offer to the officer's wives but to see what we can do for our husbands, because our husbands today have a huge problem that is plaguing them and that is the issue of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, PTSD.

For the past decade, Nigeria has gone through conflict and when the men come back home, they return with so many issues. At the end of the day, the women and children in their lives are the first to receive the impact of these negative outcomes. Women watch their husbands go to the conflict zone and change.

Some of these women have complained that their husbands cry at night, they scream in their dreams and some become very violent and take it out on the wives and children. As a soldier or officer, you cannot go to the war zone, return and go straight back to your family. But in

Nigeria, we do not have the system where these men are evaluated and if the problem of PTSD becomes existent in their lives, they don't have a chance to be rehabilitated. We need that type of centre and that is why I am proposing that DEPOWA works towards establishing a rehab PTSD evaluation and rehabilitation centre for the armed forces. That is my big project and goal. I believe one of the effective ways to help women is to give them a peaceful and safe home, to do this we must make sure that their husbands are sane and without any form of post-war trauma.

In some of your works you have partnered with migration and refugee organizations, how did that assist and benefit your goals?

Yes, I partnered with them but right now we're trying to reach out to the downtrodden in the society. The widows, the sick in the hospital, especially victims of conflict we are paying specific attention to the northwest zone because of the grave levels of insurgency. This is the Zero Hunger Project.

Hunger is not just about food. Anything that makes you deprived is hunger and if we say zero, the kind of hunger we are talking about is ending hunger for food, shelter, love, and health. We want to reduce any problem that is plaguing the society. We are prepared to meet these needs no matter how little thus the name of the program; Zero hunger. I am sure when people see that they expect food but we go beyond that, they will appreciate it. Last month we were at 44 hospitals where we donated 13 motorized wheelchairs and some assistance for the patients.

Looking at DEPOWA and your skill acquisition programs that you organize, a lot of people have come to question how you organize and departmentalize it. How do you decide which skills gap you want to breach?

For DEPOWA our skills acquisition and target audience are different from other skills acquisition done by other organizations in the sense that we focus primarily on widows, the orphans, and the less privileged in our military



I have found a project that I think would launch DEPOWA to greater heights and that is looking beyond ourselves, not just what we can offer to the officer's wives but to see what we can do for our husbands"



community. As I mentioned earlier, Nigeria has gone through a lot of insecurity and insurgency in the last decade, hence more men of the force have been deployed to protect our country. This would mean that the number of widows in the military community has increased. We have so many of them in the barracks and there's no way DEPOWA can turn a blind eye to what is the current reality.

That's the reason why we have taken this very seriously. It is not enough to just pay their debt, and the debt benefits of their husbands as saved out of the barracks. Where do we go from there? So, we ask these women if they have any skills and quite a number of them do not. We then concentrate on exposing these women to skills that can improve their standards of living by giving them a stream of income. These skills could range from catering, tailoring, ICT, bead making, and so on. And we don't just stop at the training when they graduate, we set them up with start-up capital. We buy the tools and equipment's they would need to start and pay their rent for one year. Then we monitor them for some time. When they are established, we can let them stand on their own. This scheme nurtures these women from beginner levels up until they are grounded in their craft and can sustain a cashflow system independently.

To keep track we have a database of the women whose husbands are deceased under our scheme. Every time a soldier dies in the war zone, we update our data. We follow up on the women to know the ones that would require our support. What we are doing is limited to the military community and we do it with passion not just because we want to go into skills acquisition, but because our community needs this. We are cantered on remembering the wives of our heroes, the men who put their lives on the line for our great country.

COVID-19 disrupted a lot of livelihoods, disrupting businesses and many people lost jobs just like most organizations. DEPOWA also has some kind of intervention relief for this set of people. Could you tell us more about what DEPOWA is doing regarding this?

Yeah. From time to time, we gather the widows in the military community and we give them relief materials. It is something we do on a regular basis, and we're still prepared to do this in the coming years. We also incorporate an inclusive approach when planning our programs for these widows. For example, we had a general meeting two months ago and we found opportunity to gather the widows again, we do this to stay in touch and make these women have a sense of belonging.

Every day as we eat, as we dress up and put on makeup, we must recognize that we have these women amongst us for the sake of love for the nation, their husbands died. We must never forget them. They are part and parcel of DEPOWA and will always be remembered. If we don't remember them or reach out to them who will? society does not know them. We cannot abandon them! Losing a loved one is difficult, but losing a loved one who fought to protect the nation is difficult yet prestigious and that is why we must regard these women.

For a big organization like DEPOWA one of the major challenges a leader can face is finding a work-life balance. A lot of people look up to you and most of them are also professionals. How are you able to maintain that delicate balance between work, family, as well as also ensure that you stay on top of your project and programs at DEPOWA.

To start with I would like you to know that I still have my professional career outside DEPOWA. I have the choice to take a leave of absence to focus on DEPOWA but I deliberately decided to continue and when my MD called me and asked if I was sure I said, why not! The reason is I intend to teach the women not by saying it, but by example. As a woman, you must be gainfully employed not just provide civil service but you must be actively engaged in a business or career that earns you a living. You can't be married to an officer and be idle.

In fact, in the current age and time we live in, idleness is not an option. Women from advanced countries work 2-3 jobs, I don't see a reason why I shouldn't be able to hold down my various responsibilities provided I manage my time and resources effectively. If you are not working in an office, you should work from home or have your business and that is the only way you can earn your respect and be useful to the society.

We must decide to be useful to our husbands, children, and ourselves. Our husbands need a lot of support from us. The idle brain is the devil's workshop. We don't want women to be a liability. We want them to be useful, useful to their families and the society. How am I able to manage? I have always worked long before I married my husband so it comes naturally to me. I have worked long enough both as a single woman and as a married woman.

Over the years I've learned how to juggle and combine both family and work-life to coexist. It became natural to play this role as the DEPOWA president and work in my office. My office is in Kaduna but they've allowed me to work from home. So sometimes I'm here with my laptop. And if I don't have time to work in the daytime, at night I sit up to work here when they need me.

My close team members all work elsewhere and I encourage it. No woman around me is idle. To thrive in the Nigeria of today you must bring something to the table. I don't want a DEPOWA where we are gathering to clap hands. You need to be versatile. You need to be current. You need to know the issues in your community, our community, the military community. If you don't know what the issues are, you would not be able to deliver anything. Every woman has got a brain, so every woman here is thinking and that is what I want to see in DEPOWA.

Leading GAMBIA to Democratic Excellence



H. E DR. ISATOU TOURAY
VICE PRESIDENT, THE GAMBIA

From activist to vice-presidency, Her Excellency Dr Isatou Touray has proven to be an excellent example of women in leadership. Working very closely alongside the President and ministers, they have created significant youth initiatives, led their country through the pandemic and are now leading the way in African Technological advancements through ECOWAS. In this interview with our team of editors, she tells us how she did it and how many other women can do it.

Your Excellency, thank you so much. We don't know what the journey has been like for you, but we know it's not easy, especially in a male-dominated sector like politics. Africa is very cultural, and there've been very few women who have risen to your current level. How did you get to where you are today?

Thank you very much. I think that's an excellent question. Politics belongs to everybody, and it is for every individual who has the right and belief in oneself to lead. Politics belongs to both men and women. It is a field where it is highly male-dominated; this is mainly because there is a social construction of women in our cultures that give leadership positions to men rather than women. And therefore, high functions such as presidents vice presidents are male-dominated. So, women who journey through the leadership path have a lot of work to do.

My journey to this position was not intended at all. I began as a rights activist; my country was authoritarian. The regime was abusive, and many disappearances occurred, and I led an organization dealing with humans, human rights, and children's rights. I witnessed the atrocities that were going on. We were also victims as we were falsely accused of stealing money. People's voices were silenced, and when we tried to voice our concerns, they detained us.

We went through a severe court case, but we came out strong and won the case against the dictator. After such experiences, we realized we could not talk advocacy while working alone. Political parties made different coalitions, and they were doing their best, but none of them could remove the dictator. This time we thought we should give it a feminist touch where women will show that they can lead. When we came out, we were well welcomed by all the political parties, and we had an inter-party committee that sorted the issues and effectively engaged with them. Finally, we came together to agree on a candidate who was his Excellency, President Adama Barrow.

We intended to ensure that these political parties would come together and not disappoint each other. We came together when other men left when we joined the campaign and worked with his Excellency. The people decided, and we came together from the coalition. I was part of the coalition, and after we won, his Excellency made me the Minister of trade Integration and Deployment. After that, he made me the new Minister of Health and Social Welfare. And finally, I found myself the vice-president since I had been working closely with him since then. I have been learning about governance to see how we have been moving The Gambia forward in the light. Our mantra is democracy. We want to strengthen the pillars of democracy. We tried to assure the people of their fundamental freedoms and human rights, which his Excellency is doing for The Gambia.

You were detained during the period of the former administration rather than being derailed; it inspired you. How did that happen? One might think that staying away and washing their hands would be easier?

No, you don't do that. When you are doing the right thing, you do not fear. I was representing the voiceless I did not do it alone. I have a core group of activists and people who believe in these issues we are dealing with, and we see the disadvantages of being silenced. We were not going to allow them to silence us in prison. That detention was a very enlightening time. We met very important women and men there, particularly women. I was there with my colleague, and we were able to discuss with them, and we saw the scale of atrocity, the scale of abuses, and how women were arrested even for asking for their rights. They took them to prison, and they were abused. These conversations opened our eyes and we realized that we could not just sit down and compress it.

When we left, we were more determined than ever to come out and show that we would address the issue in a nonviolent way. We worked together with the coalition members and the political parties who had been in the game

for a long and we decided to make the collective approach.

As one of the leading female political leaders on the continent, how do you assess Africa's progress regarding female political empowerment and participation? What barriers are there to fast-tracking female political leadership?

Well, I think we have to; I can see that there is progress. It is encouraging that you can count female leaders in Africa. Collectively there are emerging trends where women are becoming vice presidents and even presidents. The issue is not whether she's a woman or a man; it is now a question of perception. One might find that there is a lot of awareness, and there is a lot of advocacy around the issue. Many NGOs, women's rights organizations, and the African Union create resolutions and talk about equal solutions. They are also distributing other protocols to empower women and women's rights. Organizations have different efforts and initiatives that call for the leadership and women to educate young girls. It is not that the men are more educated; it is their opportunities. Because of the patriarchy, there is male dominance and a tendency to try to preserve that space only for men. Women have to be patient; women have to work hard; they also have to deliver and engage constructively. Education is now increased in girls. Women are now also asserting their rights. There is effective advocacy within the political parties where you will have the women leaders raising the bar, listening to issues about gender equality, and making sure that women are equally represented.

We have to build women's confidence because the political world is not easy if you don't have the confidence. You have to be strong; you have to be ready to engage and be ready to act. You don't have to act like a man. That's what I tell people; your femininity makes a difference. We must have the feminist perspective in politics for us to move forward. Almost over 50% of the voters are women, and they go out and converse.

The President's Excellency has supported women by setting up the Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Welfare. And he has given resources to that ministry. He has appointed a woman to be the leader, and policies are trying to close the gender gaps. These policies are also going to promote economic leadership and politics.

We also have to deconstruct the old ways of thinking and get out of patriarchal shepherds trying new perspectives. Feminist approaches ensure that we live together and understand whatever a man can do, a woman can do. It's not a competition. It's about opportunities. We have a lot of initiatives coming in all over the world, and I could see that there is a global effort is trying to ensure that women are coming up as set exemplary leaders.

I have been responsible for checking and maintaining this female standard, and I will continue with my President to make sure that we do as we promise. We have a lot of stories to tell in the Gambia concerning women's effective participation in leadership. We are excited to showcase it and work together with others to make it more familiar.

The Gambia is predominantly a youthful country with a median age of 19.9 years. How are these young people being



encouraged, supported, and engaged as mothers and leaders? What is your administration doing to harness this demographic dividend?

There is an excellent demographic dividend on the continent. 19.9 to 25 to 35, depending on the area in The Gambia, we are very much aware of that and want to leverage that. First and foremost, His Excellency has created the Ministry of Youth and Sports, and we have a minister who is less than 40 years of age leading that sector. We also have policies that are there to empower the youth. We have asked women and youth to be trained. They can run programs that also empower them. Scholarships have been given to the youth as a diverse nonhomogeneous group. There are many plans, and we organized systems along the way for both male and female future leaders. Therefore I believe the government has created a constructive environment for them.

Times are also changing. Technology, as you know, can be made use of in a positive space. At present, there are cyber study programs, and with the cyberspace, the youths can do more as they are savvier with technology. The youth are bringing more in technology, creativity, and

innovation; they are taking significant initiatives in medicine and trading. We try to allow them to create their visions and give them the opportunities and spaces to do so. They are the future of The Gambia and soon will have to carry the country forward.

There are so many opportunities created, and we continue to do that. We have the YEP project, the Youth Empowerment Project, and other projects, such as the Youth Leadership programs projects within The Gambia. Our exchange programs are also taking place between The Gambia other countries with the best international practices and standards. They are also cooperating, and we encourage them to use that energy. There is also a lot of support given to them regarding resources from the Minister of Youth and the President. I think the youth of The Gambia has a very bright and excellent future.

As the Vice president of The Gambia going into the polls in a couple of months, what would you describe as your most significant accomplishment in office so far?

My most outstanding achievement is contributing to establishing a democratic government. A government

was taking care of all the pillars of democracy, a government where we have created an opportunity by making the Minister of Gender, Children, and Social welfare. I have been out there, and we have been fighting for over 35 years with my colleagues. We are in a ministry of our own. Our fundamental concept is Excellency.

The other thing that came in was also to make sure that. We bring hope to the young people who suffered and whose parents and sustained during the authoritarian regime resulted in mass exodus of these young people. This government was to bring them back and turn things around, giving them hope it's a big achievement.

Another achievement is my being a presidential candidate. Because of this, it is possible that women can become presidents. A woman can become vice-president. Engaging daily with governance is a crucial achievement that I have maintained. We are trying to control damages through democratic human rights, fundamental freedoms, and respect for civil liberties. I think it's an outstanding achievement and an achievement that I don't want to associate only with myself. But it is also an achievement of the government system that is in the country,

Bringing in peace and stability in the country and changing from an authoritarian to the current situation that we are in is an excellent source of pride for us. Many countries want to associate with the government of excellence that President Barrow and all the other ministers have established.

Access to finance has been a challenge to females seeking business and entrepreneurship. Are there any government interventions to help women access financing in The Gambia?

Absolutely. There is tremendous phenomenon progress regarding the ministry of gender. When the ministry was first established, they worked with the women in the system and with the Minister of finance. These financial resources helped women in the informal sector, small businesses, and small SMEs. Banks do not trust them, so the ministry for women plans to engage the different portals and provide resources, including the government of The Gambia giving loans to women.

The Women enterprise fund is funding a lot of women in The Gambia. Some women have been in business for more than 20 years but are still being marginalized because of their gender. There are also blocks out there, and these barriers are being removed systematically. I can tell you that several women are benefiting from loans.

I'm also working with other institutions to give women more partners they trust. So those barriers are systematically and gradually being addressed, and we are also empowering them. We encourage those who can fly high and those at the bottom; we try to uplift them and empower them to get small-scale business entities. We also want to make sure banking institutions stop questioning women and being prejudiced depending on whether they are married or have more income. All women should have access to what is due to them without prejudice. Lack of those strategic resources is also a contributing factor to why women are disempowered. But when you look at the women practising, women have been paying loans when they work

together amongst themselves. They try to engage and support each other. We are also influencing other institutions to do the same apart from the banks, including the private sector, where all the women began.

Feminists play a significant role in The Gambia. That is a wonder to observe. What social protection mechanisms and safety nets have been put in place to help the recovery process for your citizens following the impact of COVID19 in the Gambia?

I am the Chairperson of the Covid 19, response. As the Ethics Body, we will engage in policy advice towards the management of Covid 19. We have almost 13 ministers who sit down daily to discuss the strategies and look at the public statistics, significantly when the cases had escalated. We also observed the policy issues and discussed them even at that political level.

And then, we had the technical committee that would sit down to look at how Covid was increasing, and we were working closely with WHO. We also had the support of the Ministry of Finance. At the community level, the Red Cross was very supportive. The pandemic cut across everything; therefore, it took a collective responsibility with the government to implement plans that would help us survive as a nation. That was when the first \$500 million was injected into the systems.

We were supported by the

European Union, the U.N., and other agencies in other countries. When the time came, the vaccine mechanisms were put in place; they were very robust. We also had the National Disaster Management Agency working closely with the Department of Strategy and Policy to develop frameworks that guided the process from a humanitarian point of view because Covid was not only about mobility and health. Families were disturbed daily when people could not go out.

The government brought a huge humanitarian response, which declared that we would inject over 500 million to assist with the economy. The pandemic affected trade, the market women, and every other sector of society. Therefore, that humanitarian response was also a key and fundamental intervention within the mechanisms we were dealing with. We distributed starch, vegetable oil, and all forms of food and support to the populism budget. Over 37%, and almost 90%, of the population, have support because everyone was provided with some finances and food resources.

Most importantly, we have the education mechanism where we have the technical team doing their part. We all know that the internet is not available everywhere in Africa, and The Gambia is not an exception. We have ministers who also look at the nature of how education dynamics are at present. Those who would have internet access were having their lessons through

You have to be strong; you have to be ready to engage and be ready to act. You don't have to act like a man. That's what I tell people; your femininity makes a difference.

online learning, while those who did not have would buy radios and take them to the community. The teachers were brought in to teach through radio. Finally, we used the T.V. and ran television sessions where particular students would follow live programs for schools.

Even though covid was an unfortunate experience, it has also changed the way we work, bringing the best out of all of us and creating intelligent strategies. At present, we are mobilizing the vaccine and creating awareness among the population to take the vaccinations and follow the public health guidelines.

I think that is progress. We should not rest because covid is still not gone, but it has reduced, and people are still being vaccinated. We must follow the scientists. We will continue to mobilize, and we are headed in the right direction.

You mentioned technology earlier when you were speaking about the youth and how it is common that most African countries do not have wide access to the internet. The Gambia is a part of ECOWAS, and it has a very interesting ICT and technological policy. Would you like to comment on that briefly?

Yes, indeed. We need to look at our policies and look at important trends created by the policy. We were looking at the institutions, and we want to transform institutions. First and foremost, frameworks must be established for guidance not only with the ICT policy but even with the freedom of expression policies. Such policies have been created to guide institutions through democratic processes. That is what is expected in a society where democracy is in place.

The Minister of Information and Communication Infrastructure decided to come up with these policies in a cabinet paper, and we discussed them and developed them thoroughly. We need to ensure that institutions are adequately guided and working within democratic levels and responding to the evolving and evolving needs of the population.

Regarding women on the internet, some advantages and disadvantages

come, especially in the public eye. How do you handle such comments and criticisms?

Sometimes, we have to be tolerant. If you are a leader and you represent people, not everybody will have access to you, nor will you have access to them. But you assume that you are being beneficial to them. Yet, I can never predict or control their perspective. I think we have to listen, and it's beautiful when you listen; it gives you insight at the levels you least expected. Sometimes those comments are excellent, and of course, sometimes, I get very negative comments. Sometimes they frame you to the point that you think you are wrong. My attention is often brought to certain things I said and have done, and that is not always a bad thing.

I have restricted my access to social media. But then people are still after you; I think that makes life beautiful. This is what life is all about! What is important is to live it positively. If I were not sitting on this chair, I would not be a target. Generally, I believe that sometimes the comments are positive, but sometimes the words are just trying to get your attention, making me feel that we should do something about it.

Regardless of this, I also believe people should use the media in a more professional way and in a way that will make the world a better place. We have so much to contribute, and we have a lot, so it's better to focus, focus, focus, and move the country and the continent forward while we do so

You are encouraging and inspiring many women in Africa, especially young women. What message of hope do you have for women everywhere, especially African women, who look up to you?

Where there is light, there is hope. If you have a cause to fight, make sure you follow it with dedication and make sure you are focused. Do not fall into different paths and give up quickly; stay focused.

I could not achieve everything alone. I constantly asked myself, who can I align with to ensure that we work together to achieve them? Once you do

that, have confidence in yourself and accept when there is a failure. Sometimes they say failure is not good for women, but to err is human. If you are trying something new, sometimes you fail. You will have to go back and try again and uplift yourself and others in the process.

Though we have our commonalities, we are women, and we must be there to support each other respective of the diversity. So, when we have the spaces, let us be there to inspire each other. And let us allow men who can and who have been in the game before us and have something to contribute genuinely. No gender can do it alone. We need to create spaces to strategize and make positive changes.

Do you have any parting words for our leaders who will want to read this? I'm sure they'll be excited to hear from you

We went to thank the world leaders, particularly in Africa, who are seeing and encouraging the emerging trend of female leaders. Women have something to bring to the table. Femininity makes a big difference, and so does masculinity. When you get both of them together, you have harmony, and we can move together to make the world a better place. Men alone cannot do it.



A LIFE COMMITMENT TO IMPACT & INSPIRE

Kindly share your background and some of your experiences growing up as a girl in Timor-Leste.

I was born in an occupied country. Before the occupation, Timor-Leste was a colonised country. We were besieged by violence. Since I was a child, I have experienced the suffering of women and children.

The island where I was born was turned into a prison. Education, to which everyone should have access, was not considered necessary. The place where I was born was full of stereotypes against women. As a teenager, before going to Catholic school for secondary education, I was already imbued with Christian principles and values that had been passed on to me within my family. When I finished my studies, Timor-Leste was going through a crucial moment in its history – an opportunity to choose and determine our future. The path was open to a better future, although it would demand blood and great sacrifice.

The majority of the Timorese people chose the path of freedom, sovereignty, and independence.

Political parties started to organise, and I became immediately involved in the parties' political action. That is how I was able to express my ideas and dreams and became part of the political committee in the administrative post of Ataúro, the island where I was born.

Timor-Leste restored its independence on 20 May 2002. And I started my family four months later. A year after that, I became a mother. As a mother and as a woman, I understood the suffering of other women better. Today, like so many mothers, I have four children. My children are also going through their stages of development, which helps me better understand the importance of children's education and health care, especially education. Women and children must access clean water, hygiene, and quality education.

Quality education from an early age helps prepare children to become responsible citizens who can contribute to society.

THE STORY OF *H. E Cidália Lopes Nobre* **MOUZINHO GUTERRES** FIRST LADY OF TIMOR-LESTE

H. E Cidália Lopes Nobre Mouzinho Guterres is the wife of Francisco Guterres and as such First Lady of East Timor. Her Excellency is a native of the Atauro Island in East Timor. Before her marriage, Cidália Guterres was a leading member of the Organização Popular de Mulheres Timorense, the feminist organization of the FRETILIN party whose president was Francisco Guterres. When she took her position in 2017, she continued her mission to prioritise and engage in social activities favouring women, widows, orphans, and old, disabled, and disowned people. Today she continues to lead by example, creating a better country for the future.

In an interview session with Amazons Watch Magazine, the First Lady of Timor-Leste talks about her drive and passion to care for the under privileged.

Excerpts;

Please tell us about your career and achievements before assuming office as First Lady of the Timor-Leste.

I started my career in a World Bank programme, the Community Empowerment Project (CEP). It aimed to empower young people and women by providing training and capacity building in management, leadership, and small-scale economic entrepreneurship. We also provided financial capital to young people and women to develop their businesses, and we monitored and evaluated the impact of the programme on their lives.

As a political leader, I travelled throughout the country and saw first-hand the untreated and unhealed wounds and scars of women and children. I reached out to listen and work with this population to learn about their hopes and priorities.

As First Lady of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, what are some of your achievements and efforts towards women empowerment and addressing gender-based violence in the country?

As the wife of the president of the republic, I focus on four programmes. Firstly, the social programme is designed to provide rapid response, like emergency assistance to women, orphans, the elderly, the disabled, the general population affected by natural disasters, wildfires, mental and physical illnesses, and survivors of gender-based violence.

Secondly, education, health, community development, and the environment provide long-term solutions.

In the education programme, we give children the opportunity to have access to education by promoting a national policy that prioritises nine-year schooling. The programme also aims at school reintegration. It focuses on children who have dropped out of school, either because of their family's lack of financial capacity or because they are orphans or victims of sexual violence. We have already managed to reintegrate 50 children who were at risk. This programme includes the municipalities to assist those in need.

With the help of the moral support, guidance, and financial assistance that we have provided alongside our partners, these children have been getting good grades. Some have excellent grades. This programme motivates other children to go back to school and trust themselves to have a better future in their own country.

I have also been working with friendly countries to support 451 university students finishing their studies in engineering, medicine, economics, etc.

I believe that these areas play an important role in ensuring a better life. I believe that investing in education impacts people's thinking and personality and prepares them to solve their own problems, making them independent and enabling them to enjoy a sustainable life.

I work with international partners – with Plan International – as a goodwill ambassador to combat child marriage and teenage pregnancy and violence against children, girls, and women. I also work with religious and youth organisations to prevent violence. These activities involve directly engaging with those groups through seminars and national outreach.

We also launched a national campaign to prevent social media bullying, discrimination, and sexual harassment. We worked with partners to pass the Law for the Protection of Children and Young Persons at Risk. We succeeded in speeding up the process to ensure that this Law was approved in Parliament as quickly as possible. The draft Law for the Protection of Children and Young Persons at Risk was finally approved in the general session on 20 September 2021. This Law will provide the conditions for children and young persons at risk to develop to their full potential and live free from violence.

Health programme:

The first and second leading causes of death among women in Timor-Leste are cervical cancer and breast cancer. Families – and society in general – have limited knowledge about health-related matters, opting for traditional healing methods. It is only when patients are already in an advanced stage of the

disease that they seek hospital care, but it is often too late, and they die.

Given this situation, I promote women's and family health education by carrying out activities to raise awareness and educate women about malnutrition and the prevention of cervical cancer and breast cancer. These initiatives provide women at risk with information, knowledge about foods with nutritional value, and the ability to detect symptoms and seek treatment at the community level.

Working with the government and civil society, we ensure that health centres have sufficient funds for treating women, girls, and children and tests like mammograms, which enable early diagnosis.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, we have been helping the government raise awareness about the importance of vaccination and the need to adopt certain practices to avoid transmitting the virus, like frequent handwashing with soap, wearing masks, and maintaining physical, social distance.

Community development

We live in a patriarchal system. Women do not have access to capital (it is kept as inheritance), do not participate in family decision-making, and do not have access to other opportunities. In terms of community development, we focus on isolated areas and carry out empowerment programmes for women who make a living selling goods, providing them with training in finance and preparing local produce and goods. This enables them to manage their businesses effectively and efficiently, improve the quality of their service, and grow their income. These women can then have their own money and decide their own life priorities, positively impact their family's nutrition, and contribute financially to their children's education, ensuring a healthy and prosperous family life.

I also support the president of the republic's environmental protection programme, namely the 'One citizen, one tree' national reforestation programme. In terms of family health, I work with families to promote the cultivation of trees with nutritional

value and prevent illnesses.

Available data shows that Timor-Leste ranks 124 out of 149 countries in the Gender Gap report of the World Economic Forum. What is your take on this, and what are some of the government's policies to bridge the gender gap in the country?

In 2000, Feto Timor-Leste organised a national consultation in the form of a national women's congress, which proposed to the Constituent Assembly that the Constitution provided equal opportunities. This resulted in Article 17.

Later, the First Constitutional Government signed the CEDAW international treaties to eliminate discrimination and violence against women.

It was based on these instruments we adopted the 30% quota system to ensure that women participate in decision-making processes in all sectors. This policy has placed women in key positions in national politics, namely in the legislative branch. This year, we reached 40%, with a woman as vice-president of the National Parliament. At the executive level, 31% of the ministers, who prepare and implement the government's plan, are women. In the judiciary, women represent almost 25%, and we have a woman vice-president of the Office of the Human Rights Ombudsman.

In Timor-Leste, the state apparatus made room for gender equality through the creation of the Office of the Secretary of State for Equality, which prepared and promoted laws against gender-based violence in 2010 and developed a plan of action for the 2016–2022 period.

In the gender mainstreaming programme at the line ministry level, each ministry has appointed a focal point to ensure that programmes and budgets are gender-responsive.

These focal points are usually senior officials, like national directors and directors-general, who play a role in the decision-making processes.

The government has established partnerships with international agencies and civil society organisations to

strengthen and support the implementation of gender equality programmes. We also had an action plan to implement United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace, and security for the 2016–2020 period, based on four pillars: prevention, protection, participation, and peace-building.

There are still challenges concerning women's role in the public sector and the decision-making process at the regional level. Nevertheless, by pushing our decentralisation programme, we continue our efforts to bring women into decision-making positions. In 2021, we appointed a woman to the office of mayor of Dili and another to the office of post administrator.

At the grassroots level, although the law and local authorities ensure women's participation in the suco and village councils, where two of the seven members have to be women and another two have to be young persons, the elections have shown that community confidence in women as suco or village chiefs is only at 5%.

To address these gaps and after three years of groundwork, the government launched the National Programme for Village Development (PNDS) in 2016, with an initial implementation term of eight years. This programme aims to contribute to rural development, particularly in terms of basic infrastructure, vocational training, job creation, gender equality, and social inclusion. Notably, it includes training in ICT (Information and Communications Technology), engineering, and finance.

In five years, the PNDS has successfully developed 547 projects in the area of water and sanitation, with direct impact on women and children; 440 rural road and bridge construction projects to improve the access of the population, especially women, to markets; and also launched a flood control project to ensure the safety of the communities. The PNDS has also made substantial investments in human resource development to ensure the direct involvement of the local population in the projects, electing a suco-level team for programme management, implementation,

operationalisation, and maintenance. In that instance, we have ensured the participation of women by following the 30% quota system.

You have been selected for conferment with the Global Inspirational Female Leadership Impact Award by the Amazons Watch. How do you feel about this award?

This award represents a great responsibility and is an opportunity for me to show the world the contribution of Timorese women towards an egalitarian and inclusive national development.

It makes me happy because my programmes can inspire other women. As I have said on many occasions, I want to continue to empower women, children, and the most vulnerable. I want to make their voices heard and make them feel that they are part of, and even take charge of the development process of this new country is Timor-Leste.

I will finish by saying that peace is possible, even if it takes time. Peace requires commitment and responsibility, and we cannot lose hope or retreat. I believe that PEACE IS WITHIN OUR REACH, and other people, especially women, can also achieve it in other parts of the world.

Thank you.

“Peace requires commitment and responsibility, and we cannot lose hope or retreat.”



H.E. JEWEL TAYLOR

Vice President of Liberia

Discusses the Burden of Female Leadership

MAN UP OR GO HOME

Despite the proven abilities of women as leaders and change agents, their political participation is restricted. Women are underrepresented as voters and in leading positions, whether in elected office, the civil service, the private sector or academia. Throughout history, women in positions of authority have often been perceived as violating well-established gender norms. It has almost seemed that this terrain is a reserve of the male gender. However, despite the fundamental challenges associated with female political leadership, some women have shown unusual determination and courage in pursuing and maintaining political leadership in Africa.

Her Excellency Jewel Taylor is the first female vice president of Liberia and an inspiration to all women and girls that aspire to take the road towards politics. The heavily male-dominated world of politics and leadership can sometimes appear massively challenging and impossible, yet Her Excellency dissects it into a transparent, understandable sector. Her passion for helping people was her pedestal and propellant into her position and played a crucial role in making her the legend she is. She navigates us through this journey and inspires the youth to do the same in our conversation.
Excerpts;

There are several reasons you inspire girls worldwide, not just in Africa. You have been through so much before becoming the great country Liberia's vice president. What are some of the high points of your life that have led you to where you are today?

Thank you first for this unique opportunity and the organization for providing me such rare opportunities over the years. If you look at my story, which I intend to write, I know how inspirational it seems, but the truth is it was forged through fire. Nothing is ever easy. The challenges remain whether you want to be a housewife, scientist, or just a politician.

I faced several challenges, but I would like to zone in on one particular one; the discrimination and the prejudice attached to what we do. First, I'm an African woman, and it is often perceived that women must stay in their place. But I think the idea of

discrimination and prejudice goes beyond gender. The last name I carry, Taylor, brings its complicated compound issues.

People either love or hate former president Charles Taylor. There's no, in-between, and it seems as if some of those prejudices have been attached to me. I think this is the most formidable challenge that women face. They ask, what is she doing there and why is she even here, what can she bring to the table? These questions are not asked as aggressively to any male candidates who step up in strange and unusual places. We have to keep pushing forward because you lose your step if you pay attention to what they're looking for. And so, I've learned as I've walked this tough road that you have to find your passion, decide that you're going to make this something positive that you remain where you are, and then forget the naysayers. They will always be there, whether you do good or bad, but we are under a microscope that is so intense for the women.

I like politics because it's a fight for the heart and souls of people; it is a fight for our nations' destiny and what we want our children to be. So for women who wish to be politicians, I'm encouraging as many as possible to remain focused, work hard, and succeed. Forget the noise.

As former Chairperson for the Gender, Child, and Social welfare committee, what has your experience been like interacting with the hinterland and people that are frequently caught away from the hustle and bustle of the city?

It will surprise you to know that growing up; I never thought that I'd be a politician. I wanted to be a banker, but I found myself in a political space because I married Charles Taylor, and I was 33 years old. You can only imagine dealing with all of the things that were happening at the time, it was a civil war, but something happened during those few years that maybe forced the Jewel I am today. I realized that I couldn't sit at home and drink tea; I had to get in the field.

I started visiting displaced camps and engaging the women and children

in those destitute situations. You can imagine not enough water, barely anywhere to sleep. People were having babies in those situations because they couldn't even get to the hospital. I had just come back from the United States, where I was schooling. I realized that those caught up in the war, of course, of no fault of their own, needed someone to show that they cared.

I got into those situations and started to provide blankets for babies and have critically ill mothers transported to the hospital. That is how my humanitarian work began. I made sure that I tried to make a difference everywhere I went, and that started the platform for which I believe I was able to stand up for elections. When the elders of my county approached me and asked me to be their Senator, I laughed, like how can I be a Senator? But I had learned during those early years of the crisis that what it required was just someone who cared and someone willing to raise their voice to make a change. They usually call lawmakers noisemakers here. There is a lot of noise, everyone is shouting on top of the other. I had to make my noise.

So as a Senator, I became an advocate from that experience, seeing what women and children went through. Every time I raised that issue, I spoke with passion because I knew I had seen what was happening in my country. I think if I had not had such an opportunity, maybe I would have been one of the senators sitting at the legislature concerned about what my nails looked like and what colour suit I would wear. I knew that my work had to impact women at the grassroots

level.

In 2014, when I went for reelection, there were many places I still hadn't gone to. And I said, if I wait until 2014, I will be overrun because the elections will be noisy, and so, in my office, I announced that we are to begin to campaign two years before, and everybody was laughing, but we started. I got a chance to connect and recommit to the work that I had been doing as Senator, to make new friends and let people feel me because it's different when you're in an office, as opposed to going in and sitting with the women, going into the villages and beating rice. It brought my heart closer to the people that I serve.

It's been a challenging, long route, but I think it helped, and at the end of the election, women and students got up long queues to cast their ballot for me. I went against 12 men, and I beat all of them. And mind you, 2014, we had Ebola; if I had waited till 2014, I would probably have lost because the country was shut down. I believe my instinct kicked in, enabling me to continue my connection.

You became a Senator at a very young age, and Africa is a continent filled with young people. What are some of the challenges you would say that young people face in this country, and how is the administration trying to manage these challenges thus far?

If you look at our history post civil war, we didn't have external aggression, which was challenging to process because people felt marginalized, and inequality persisted.

60% of our population is from about 18 to 35, and these were young



I want to inspire the young girls and remind them of their opportunities and that I had a similar opportunity only because my father believed that children were equal.





people born in the war years, living in displaced camps. They did not have access to educational opportunities like I did or training, so 40 years later, they now have their children. How do we engage them? They are angry because when they look at the internet and see other countries where young people are doing great things, they ask what is happening here? How come we've been stuck? If you talk to a young Liberian, they want to get out and see Europe and America as better opportunities. We have to do a lot to reconnect the hope of the young people to our continent.

Some youths are now heads of households without parents to guide them, so they have come of age by themselves and are inevitably hardened and impatient. We have begun to work with youth across the country. There is a program called the Youth Opportunities Program where we are providing training opportunities and funds to help them get started in their own small business.

We have also gotten them opportunities for skills training, encouraging them to open their cooperative businesses. Agriculture is our primary goal and starting point. Thankfully the UN and World Bank

systems have assisted Liberia through funding to this particular group. Unfortunately, some youths are on drugs, and you can understand coming from the war years, not having hope it's not easy. In addition, they find it difficult to go back to the standard school system. We must now find a hybrid strategy to provide some skills training and education to survive, but it is a high order. But I still think Africa has so many opportunities if we begin to utilize the benefits of the natural and human resources that God has given us. We can turn the situation around.

Hopefully, we can turn Africa into an industrialized continent to stop shipping our raw materials. Anytime we export raw materials, we ship our peace. I'm happy that the Africa continental free trade agreement is now up and running. We have opportunities to create new industries for solar and wind power.

You mentioned agriculture now; considering the agricultural exports and mining being the main economic activity of Liberia as identified by the EMT, what is the appeal? How do you appeal to the young people to take on this industry? How do you make it attractive for young people?

Africa has not done well in showcasing what agriculture can be. A wealthy western farmer has all of the industrialized tools, and they are not physically moving and herding cattle, having a farm that is a stable job and can last for generations. We need to learn and showcase how farming is a great career that we can get our young people involved in, especially those who have not had the opportunity to be adequately educated. I have a grandson who is 12, and I asked him the other day if he wanted to be a farmer. He refused and laughed, "No. why do I want to be a farmer?" he said, and I asked him what farmers do, and he said they plant food in dirt and they suffer, the perception in our youth here is clear, and we need to change it. The government has to do its best to change the narrative. We need tools and small implements that we can use to make farming a little easier. It is sad that if you find a 30-year-old woman in Africa who is a farmer, she looks like she's 70, whereas if you find an 80-year-old farmer in the USA, he is strong and looking great because of the tools. How can we make farming easier for our people?

We have one young man who has a small company called J-PALM (JPLM). He is not even 30 years old. I don't think he dreamed of creating beauty products from Palm kernel oil, but he saw an opportunity. He found the farmers who had Palm that only harvested the oil, and then they threw the kernels away. He asked for the kernels and used them, and now he has a fully functioning business today. He is trying to expand, and the World Bank has given him a small grant to buy a small machine that now speeds up the processing time. Those are the kinds of stories we need to tell. He is a Liberian icon for agriculture. This is how we spark passion in our young people like my grandson.

A famous quote says, "It is hard to get to the top but is even harder to stay on top." You have received many commendations globally and within the continent for your commitment to service, and you have consistently maintained that tempo. How do you intend to sustain this tempo as your vision continues to grow?

What makes it difficult is that you get all these commendations, and now when you step out of my door, you have to put on this facade, like you have it all together. People don't expect you to have challenges, so I have to put on my makeup, get dressed, and move around as if everything is fine. Sometimes, it worries me; one has to constantly do new things to raise the bar, sometimes you live under so much stress.

I have so many things on my desk. I have an NGO called the Jewel Starfish foundation that provides scholarships for young girls. We are now in Malawi and Freetown. We are trying to move beyond Liberia. We have an executive director, but I often engage because I am a hands-on person. I want to inspire the young girls and remind them of their opportunities and that I had a similar opportunity only because my father believed that children were equal. And then I have my work as head of the Liberian Senate and dealing with the bills and the different things that come to the legislature. I'm also a much sought after motivational speaker and role model.

I often ask myself how I balance all of this. What suffers is my home because I'm up early in the morning to late at night. Sundays are my most relaxed days when I come from church, and I crash.

As a woman in this position, you have to be good at everything, which is impossible. I am now the first female vice president in my country. I must continue working. I must continue making the impact that we need to make. I must continue being the role model that I have set the standard, but sometimes it is challenging. I pray that many more women would pick up the fire because we don't have to do everything.

Take us through the typical day as the vice-president of a great country, like Liberia?

Remember that the typical vice-president is always male, so I come to this table where the vice in Africa should be silent. My main job is to provide support for the President.

I'm up by five o'clock in the

morning on a typical day, and I do my prayers. After that, I attend to my paperwork because a line of people is waiting to see me once I get to my office. I make sure I say good morning and wish my grandchildren a good day, and I'm usually out by 10. If I have speaking engagements, I do them before going to the office. Following that, I check on my projects and then go to the office, meet people, write some letters, etc. Then I go home at the end of the day and sleep a little bit early.

If I'm not in the country, I'm busy speaking and dancing with women and doing all the things we should do as the Vice-president.

What are your hopes for the future of Liberia?

I pray that I would get up one morning and I'll still be alive to see Liberia transition from where we are today to a fully engaged country at peace with itself and with the world. This means we must, at that point, be able to provide opportunities for our young people and see them work out their dreams.

The dream will also see women with equal rights. We say we do, but the fact is we don't; even in the political setting, I forced my political party to provide space for women because I was the head. If a man headed it, they would probably claim they don't know where to find suitable women. I want an industrialized country and utilizing God's opportunities to build, export, engage with our neighbours, and be integrated.

ECOWAS should improve



*Hopefully, we can turn Africa
into an industrialized continent
to stop shipping our raw materials.
Anytime we export raw materials,
we ship our peace*



engagement with Liberia while we also need to improve our infrastructure as we only have about five hotels that cannot host more than 200 persons. We have to build beautiful tourism sites in our country that have not yet been tapped into; this is a great place for hiring young people.

I want a vibrant Liberia where everyone has an opportunity to achieve their goals and their aspirations. Without intimidation, discrimination, and harassment, that's the Liberia I want

We are hopeful that we'll see it in our lifetime. As a member of the African leadership hall of fame, the final question is how do you intend to use your office to mobilize the African leaders to leap for Africa's development.

Liberian President: I feel privileged to have been given such an opportunity. I think I can be that voice of advocacy. I want to continue to talk about the continent we want to see. I had a chance to speak at the opening of the parliament in Abuja. In my speech, I addressed the absence of women and the fact that there is a 30% minimum qualification for women at ECOWAS. We must do what we say. It's not about just putting documents on paper and leaving it.

AWM: Thank you very much for using your powerful platforms to deliver the key messages and conversations that should be had, and we must commend you for the great work you have done.



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**EXPORT GHANA,
EXPORT MORE!**

DR AFUA ASARE

THE TALENTED CAPTAIN STEERING THE SHIP OF
GHANA'S EXPORT PROMOTION AUTHORITY



The Ghana Export Promotion Authority (GEPA) is the National Export Trade Promotion Organisation that facilitates the development and promotion of Ghanaian exports. It was established by NLCD 369 in 1969 as an agency of the Ministry of Trade and Industry with the mandate to develop and promote Ghanaian exports. The GEPA has accomplished many feats under the watch of its CEO, Dr Afua Asare.

In this interview with Amazons Watch Magazine, Dr Asare talks about her accomplishments as the CEO and the challenges of being a woman in leadership. Excerpts:

As an award-winning female leader responsible for one of the most important sectors in Ghana, can you please tell us about your experiences growing up as a girl, and what are the particular incidences in those experiences that moulded you to become who you are today?

I am the last of six children and so everybody would think that I was pampered, but I wasn't. I lived with both parents and was in a household full of grownups. Everybody was older than me. It was a little tough to fight for what I wanted. I can say that I learned a lot from my very competitive siblings. Everybody was doing well; and I didn't want to be the black sheep. I had role models already to emulate- my mother, father, and siblings. Everyone had something good that I had the opportunity to look up to in them.

My childhood was quite humbling. I come from a very humble background. I loved selling a lot when I was a kid, such that when they gave me money to go to school in those days, I would buy sweets, biscuits, etc, to sell before running off to school. When I was in secondary school, I was selling in my dormitory, same too at the University, I was always selling something. I also like to do a lot of things with my hands; I paint, I do music; I sell everything Art and Craft, and I'm very excited about it. I have been an entrepreneur throughout my life, and I'm enjoying it. So, everything comes together to help and support me in this position that I am in now. Because I've been doing bits and pieces of everything all over Ghana and wherever I find myself.

Kindly take us through your career journey, especially some of the challenges you have experienced as a female leader and the lessons

learned in your race to the top.

This question has always been a little tricky for me because every woman will say that it hasn't been easy being a woman rising to the top. I think it's not easy for anyone, but even tougher for women. When you are assertive as a woman, you are said to be rude and arrogant, but it is okay for men in that same position to assert themselves. These are some of the problems that you face, but it's nice being a woman. You have to bring your womanly instincts, intuition and emotions to the work you do. There's nothing wrong with being a woman, having emotions and bringing them to work. I mean, that's how we are and I cannot recreate a woman. But I need to use all of these feminine traits to my advantage and that is what I have done.

It has been challenging working in government at the top with many men and very few women. But look at yourself as a woman and see the advantages that you have and can use to come to bear. Instead of trying to be a man and being so strong, you carry yourself as the woman you are. Be proud of the woman you are, but be firm and focused in what you do. So I face challenges. And I think that some men will also face some challenges, but their challenges will be different

from mine. But I always ask myself what I can do to overturn some of the challenges that I face. It's an art that you have to learn. You have to accept who you are and know who you are. If you don't know who you are and your capabilities, then it is very difficult to excel in any situation where you are at the top as a woman. If you know who you are, you should know what you're capable of. You have to find a way around these challenges and don't let them bog you down.

What are your proudest achievements since you assumed office as the CEO of Ghana Export Promotion Authority?

Number one is putting together the National Export Development Strategy because that is the roadmap that the country will have to follow. Everyone will be serious with exports, and if you don't have a strategy, how do you move? The nation needed a National Export Development Strategy and that's what we decided to do first, then we achieved that. We brought together stakeholders from all over the country that are in the export ecosystem, to put this document together. We spearheaded it and are facilitating it. It's very exciting to know that we travelled the length and breadth of Ghana to explain right down to the districts and in



Instead of trying to be a man and being so strong, you carry yourself as the woman you are. Be proud of the woman you are





local dialects, what the National Export Development Strategy stands for. As you know, the Africa Continental Free Trade Area agreement (AfCFTA) has its headquarters right here in Ghana. We also want to take advantage of it. We needed a roadmap that will help us take advantage of the African Continental Free Trade Area agreement, so the National Export Development Strategy is part of the roadmap to take advantage of the AfCFTA. I am so proud of this achievement.

- The renewal of the WTPO; we are bringing the WTPO for the first time to West Africa. We won it as Ghana but are excited because we want it for the whole of West Africa. I am thankful to all the ECOWAS trade promotion organisations, because they are all supporting Ghana, in hosting the WTPO conference on 18th, 17th, 18th, and 19th of May, 2022. It's happening in Accra. We won that bit to bring it to West Africa and Ghana.
- And then, we have programmes and a lot of interventions that we have done in the agribusiness sector, including

supplying of good disease-free seedling to farmers who are farming in pineapples, cashew, coconut and vegetables. We have done interventions in our arts and crafts sector where we have built common shared areas for people involved in the making of beads. The whole family in the community are involved in the making of beads with our bauxite. We have bauxite in Ghana which is also used for creative stuff like beads and buttons. We've created machines for them and we've created a common shared area for them, where they can stay and do this work. Because normally they'll be doing it in a very primitive way. We are changing the face of all the art and craft villages dotted around the country, and this is very interesting, because not so long ago, the arts and crafts industry was going down. But now it's coming up again. We are holding huge exhibitions, and also selling our fine art. Some of the biggest exhibitions have been happening in the country for the past two years, so we are pushing arts. We are a green arts industry and even a greener

agro-industry.

- We are growing our services sector. I'm so proud that our services sector has taken off in a very grand way. We have been to Nigeria, to see how we can extend the services of our education to Nigeria and how we can woo students to come and take advantage of some of the best universities. We have health, tourism and legal services we are selling and it's been interesting. So these are some of the interventions that we are doing. We are not just limiting ourselves to products, but also the services that we have. Since I resumed my position as CEO of GEPA, the services sector has been of great importance to me. I and my team are pushing the services sector seriously in collaboration with other agencies. For me, that is one great achievement that I'm collaborating with other agencies and not doing this alone. And it is making a difference in the way that the Ghana Export Promotion Authority is working because of the collaboration we are having with other agencies.

Amazing responses! Your role is such an important one with so many components packed into one and it is obvious from what you said, that you had to work with a lot of people at different levels, men and women alike. How was your leadership in driving this project received, how was it affected, did you face barriers and bottlenecks?

Yes, to put together a project like that, you need the support of your minister. I have a very, very supportive minister and ministry. In fact, it was the minister that assigned us to put together this document and make it accepted by everybody. We have to involve all

the stakeholders. There have been times in the past where national export development strategies have been put together by consultants who sat somewhere for a few weeks, and put together a strategy and came to claim their money for it. And so, you find that the strategy will be lying down somewhere with nobody caring about its implementation. But when you have a strategy that represents the whole nation, everybody will be asking questions, they will wonder what is happening if they don't see it work. I mean, people, the parliament, organisations were part of it, and ministries were part of it.

So it makes it very interesting. Everybody sees the part that they have to play in it. We have a National Export Development Strategy Secretariat that is coordinating all of these affairs. And so, the other agencies know they have to do their share of what they have to do in the strategy, and everybody is doing their part. As I speak with you, tomorrow there's going to be a big forum organised by the Ghana Export-Import Bank, which is based on their part of the National Export Development Strategy. The forum is going to explain the role that they will be playing as part of the stakeholders in the National Export Development Strategy. When you make it a national thing, it means you have to bring everybody on board, and it makes your work easier and then the document becomes a living document as well.

You are known for encouraging women and young men to venture into exports as full-time careers, and also offer assistance to individuals that have an interest in agricultural or other fields with potential for exports. What are the inroads or opportunities that exist for women, particularly in this sector?

As a woman sitting in this position, I have a soft heart for my clients and in Ghana, a lot of SMEs are being operated by women. I mean, if we have to look at it percentage-wise, I dare say that 70% of SMEs are being run by women. So, it is very, very important that we support women in what we do, and I work with a lot of them. We have monthly seminars, where we invite women who have a setup that we call the Impact Hub. In this Impact Hub, we have every information you need on export, we have computers, we have a library and offices that women who don't even have offices can take advantage of. So, if you're an SME and don't have an office but need to have a meeting with a potential client, you can use one of our offices and can even have zoom meetings. I mean, it's a very conducive atmosphere. We put everything at your disposal without a fee. And if you want a PA and I'm available, I can even sit in on your meeting and help you resolve some of your issues. All our officers are here in this building to support you when you need the space and the people to be your support in maybe negotiating a deal or even if you want to come up with a business.

If you want to understand how to register and what kind of business that will be good for your

ideas or need to grow your ideas, you can still use this facility. We have the Food and Drugs Authority officer sitting here. We've made sure that we have representatives from some of the agencies that you would have been crisscrossing the country to go to sitting right here in our building. This is what we are doing for the women.

It could be very intimidating starting your business as a woman. Going around, people pushing you around, getting money from you and all of that. But we've made it very comfortable for you to come here, sit with us, and we will handhold you along the whole value chain. We do this with youths as well, but encourage women more. With the youth, we even go further to attach you to experienced exporters so that you can work with them and give you all the tools you need to work with them for about a year, when you, are prepared to start your own business.

You've recently been selected by the Amazons Watch Magazine for conferment with the Special African Female Leadership Impact Award. Please tell us what this means to you.

It's quite interesting when you just focus on your work, and don't even know that people are watching. And so, when you are



We are not just limiting ourselves to products, but also the services that we have. Since I resumed my position as CEO of GEPA, the services sector has been of great importance to me.



asked to pick up an award like this, it boosts your confidence even more and is a call for you to even work harder because people are watching. Just as well as they are seeing the good things you are doing to reward you, if you do something bad at all, they see that as well. So now I am guided to behave and to continue doing the work that I'm doing because Big Brother or Big Sister somewhere is watching, and will be very, very happy with me if I do more. I want to take this opportunity to thank them for what they saw in me to honour me with such a prestigious award.

What is your advice to upcoming female leaders who will read this article and wish to follow the career path that you have chosen or taken?

Whichever career path that they choose, they should make sure that they understand what they want to do. They have the capacity and the capability to execute whatever work that they've been given to do or they choose to do. For me, that's it. If you choose a career, build yourself in that career, find a mentor, somebody who has already done it and has the experience, and get yourself attached to this person. I still learn from the CEOs who have passed through this organisation. I call quarterly meetings with them, and pick their brains on what I want to do because I know they've been here before and have walked this path before. They may have ideas that they could have executed but for lack of time. So, you must always learn from those who have been there before. You must build your capacity all the time. The world has become such a dynamic place that things are changing all the time. So every time, we are learning. I'm still learning even at my age. There's



nothing shameful about asking, I don't understand this, can you explain it?

From your response, it is clear that it is not just physical contact with the mentors that women need because so many women tend to complain that they don't have access to mentors. Is it mandatory or most effective to only seek for physical contact with a mentor?

I am a music artist. I saw somebody's work on Facebook and the technique was fantastic. This person is a guru in his field in Italy. I just sent a message to him saying, "I love your work and would like to learn this technique. I want you to mentor me". He doesn't even speak English and so we use a translator. I'll do my work, take a picture of it, and send it to him. He mentored me to understand his technique and I was using his technique till I got the opportunity of travelling to go meet him in person. You don't necessarily have to see the person and I know a lot of people will tell you oh, I'm busy. So you have to make it easy for them to be able to

mentor you.

Thank you so much, Dr Asare. Your interview has been insightful. We are grateful for your time. And we wish you all the best in your future endeavours.

Dr Asare: Thank you!





CATRIONA LAING
British High Commissioner to Nigeria

WE ARE COMMITTED TO PROMOTING GENDER EQUITY IN NIGERIA –

The British High Commission in Nigeria has continued to support the government towards promoting good governance, trade, and women representation in key sectors of the economy. In this exclusive interview with African Leadership Magazine UK, the High Commissioner, Catriona Laing, talks about the UK government's commitment to supporting the Nigeria to achieve major milestones in key sectors of the economy. Excerpts:

You have worked in Africa for some time now. Can you share your experience with us and your journey thus far before your posting to Nigeria? What's been the journey for you as a female leader and a female diplomat so far?

To start with Nigeria as my destination. I've been here three years, and I'm the first female British High Commissioner to Nigeria. Nigeria is one of our most important missions in Africa. And I'm one of the most senior British diplomats stationed on the continent, which underscores the importance of the UK-Nigeria relationship. So for me, in terms of career progression, this is the job I wanted. And of course, it couldn't be more exciting and more challenging. My interest in Africa, started when I was about 11 years old. We moved house from a white middle-class area to a much more cosmopolitan, multicultural area and I suddenly had a completely different set of friends, from Ghana, from Nigeria, from India, from Pakistan. And it just completely changed my perspective.

One of my closest friends is Ghanaian, and her mother was a dominant figure in her household. I was very impressed with her, and her presence was very strong. And just hearing the stories of Ghana and Nigeria and other African countries, it just hooked me completely. And I just knew even from that young age that I was going to work in Africa. I didn't see how that would happen, but I knew it was going to happen anyway.

Fast forward, I found out studying economics was a good way into international development. I studied economics, got my master's, and then applied for an Overseas Development Institute fellowship program <https://odi.org/en/odi-fellowship->

scheme. This is a brilliant program, which places about 20 young people in Commonwealth countries in Africa, the Caribbean and Pacific. So you go in as a junior economist, effectively, to work in a Ministry. And it's a brilliant program because you see things from the perspective of the government of that country. I was sent to Botswana and was lucky because it's a fabulous country with a brilliant planning system. So I learned the ropes of how a sound planning system works.

I eventually worked my way up from being the most junior to the most senior Planning Officer in my team. I felt like I was making a difference doing everything from helping develop Botswana's transport plan to the privatization of their national airline. It was just amazing work; you get so much experience. From there, I joined what was then the Overseas Development Administration, the precursor of the Department for International Development – or DFID – as a junior economist.

I have spent most of my career working in Africa. I went to Somalia in 1993-94 to work in the UN mission UNOSOM, where I managed the transition from the then crisis emergency to recovery. That was a very tough assignment but I found I really enjoyed it. From 2007-09 I headed up the UK office in Sudan, when it was still one country, before the breakup with the South.

Before that, I took five years out to work for Tony Blair in his Strategy Unit. There I got to see how my own government works. And I think if you're working in other countries, you should have your eyes open to your own country and its challenges. Every government has its challenges and problems, whether you're in the UK, Nigeria, Kenya, wherever.

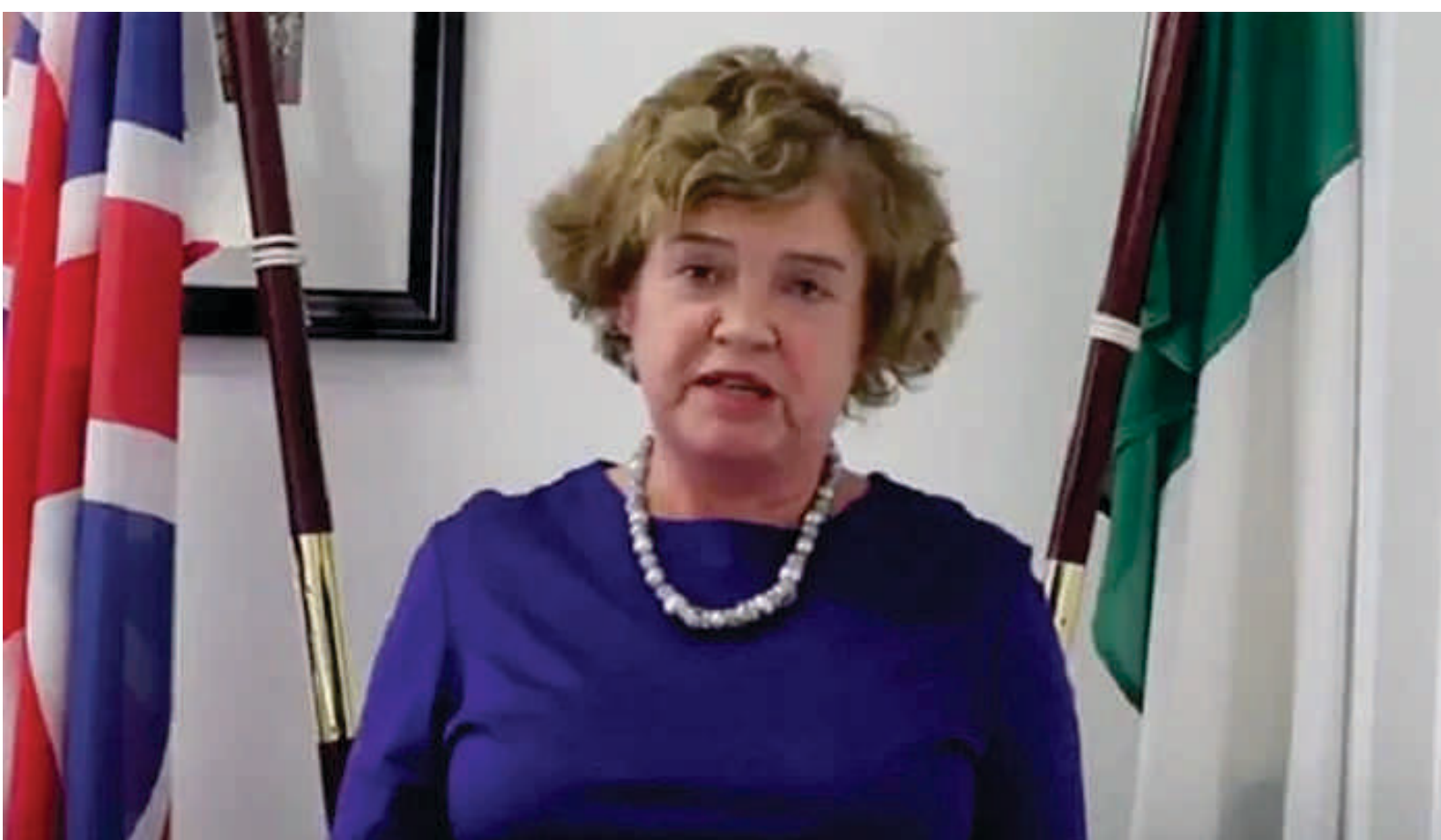
After Sudan I spent three years

in the UK Ministry of Justice from 2009-12 as the International Director. Following the 2008 financial crisis and government departments were facing significant workforce cuts I knew that I would probably lose my job so I took another plunge and applied for a job to be the head of the Helmand Provincial Reconstruction Team in Afghanistan. From there I went to Zimbabwe where I was fortunate to end up during the country's period of transition from Mugabe to Mnangagwa - that was an exciting time. I loved Zimbabwe, it was fascinating, and I adopted my daughter there. So that was great. And then, on the back of Zimbabwe, as I said, I always knew I was going to end up in Nigeria.

As we are aware, one of your significant mandates is promoting Business-to-Business and people-to-people engagement and looking at our history, Nigeria. Looking at where we are coming from and where we are today, how would you describe the trade relations?

So, as you know, we are an important trading partner of Nigeria's. The current trade volume stands at about 3.2 billion pounds per annum. But to be honest, I think we're underperforming and should be doing much better than that. There's a long legacy, obviously, the oil and gas industry and those investments. So we're aiming for a much broader partnership, particularly looking to the economy of the future in Nigeria, around tech, and fintech, particularly creative industries. And we are making excellent strides there.

For example, my old alma mater, the London School of Economics (LSE), has just set up an entrepreneurship hub in Lagos. So LSE now has a massive program of entrepreneurship. They're looking to set up sites in many countries, including the UAE, for example. But



their first one in Africa is in Nigeria. The idea is that if you're young entrepreneur, and you've got a great idea, LSE will match you with mentors and help you raise funding and so on. And as we know, Nigeria is full of talent across the country. So as we develop the Trade and Investment Partnership, it will grow more prominent; the future business will be much more around tech and creative industries and innovative finance, such as green bonds.

We've already helped Nigeria launch its first green bond, and we're going to do more of that. The City of London provides a platform for companies to list through the London Stock Exchange. As we are aware, one of your significant mandates is promoting Business-to-Business and people-to-people engagement and looking at our history, Nigeria. Looking at where we are coming from and where we are today, how would you describe the trade relations?

I feel that agriculture is a huge opportunity. Nigeria has suffered from the Curse of Oil: when it discovered oil it stopped investing in its core agricultural base, which was doing well. But that also means there are now loads of opportunities, and we've seen companies make a difference. There's a

joint British-Danish dairy company, Arla, in Nigeria which is already transforming the dairy industry, getting much more productivity out of cattle - you get the nutrition right, you get the breeding right they will produce much more.

That's just one example. And in parallel, we're working to support Nigeria to meet the high standards that you need if you're going to export to the European market.

And there are many examples where we're working with the government to try to link UK investors to Nigerian investors with the market opportunities in the UK. Because we've got that history and shared education system and so on, it means those links are quite natural usually. So in sum, I think we were underperforming. But I'm confident we can raise the game.

One thing I should add, of course, is that one of the critical things for investors is the policy environment has to work. In Nigeria, Forex policy represents a challenge. For most companies, their biggest problem is accessing foreign exchange. And when we're lobbying, our key messages are you need to deal with the Forex issue, you need to remove fuel subsidies, which are draining the country's fiscal purse, and it would help if Nigeria sorted out all the complexity around customs. Nigeria will take off, I think very well,

once those fundamentals are in place.

Your country was one of the significant partners in Nigeria's efforts to combat the impact of COVID-19 in the country. Can you share some of your government's efforts towards supporting the country?

COVID-19 sent shock waves worldwide, and it was felt throughout Africa, even though the health implications weren't as severe as people feared. For whatever reason, people still speculate. Particularly in West Africa, more so than any other part of Africa. The numbers have not been as bad, which is good, but the economic shock was enormous, particularly for countries like Nigeria, largely dependent on oil exports.

As you know, the oil price at one point crashed to below \$20. As a country which relies heavily on oil revenues that meant that overnight the budget was entirely off track. The Vice President and Minister of Finance responded with an economic sustainability plan. I think Nigeria did a good job in handling the financial crisis following COVID. On the international side, we realized we needed to respond quickly and speak with one voice. We created a "Key Political Partner's Group" of the UK, the US, Germany, the European Union, the World Bank and the IMF, with the UN as the convener. The UN was encouraged to set up a basket fund, which we all contributed to ensuring that our COVID support went through one mechanism. From PPE equipment to other products, it came through this fund.

We also helped the Nigerian government through the Centre for Disease Control and other agencies to manage its response. Both the

UK and the US have had a very long-standing collaboration with the health sector here. However, the impact of the economic shock was quite enormous.

The World Bank told us that 5.4 million people were thrown into poverty and unemployment as a result of COVID. And most of those are still unemployed. I think the COVID-19 economic shock is also one reason we are seeing the rising insecurity level in the country.

You mentioned the nexus between insecurity and COVID-19, and we would like to look at the rising insecurity in Nigeria. Banditry, and terrorism, secessionist groups in the south-east. How is the UK government supporting the country's effort to rid the country of all forms of aggression?

So as you said, I think there are numerous security challenges. I think there's a clear link to the COVID shock. There are also deep structural challenges. So, for example, climate change is a factor with the farmer-herder tension, as there is much less pasture and much less water. So pastoralists are having to move further South. And that's a Sahelian wide phenomenon, - not just Nigeria. So when you get a combination of these deep structural challenges with a shock like COVID, you've got a severe problem, but specifically in

the Northeast.

On what the UK is doing – So following the Chibok girls kidnapping, the British military, came in at the request of government to support their efforts.

The government did a good job in tackling Boko Haram but the rise of Islamic State West Africa (ISWA) is perhaps more challenging and dangerous. The British military are supporting with training, equipment and with campaign planning. But the military element alone will not solve this problem. So we also support the government in applying a "comprehensive approach" bringing together civilian and military efforts.

For example, in a place called Banki, in Borno state we have supported the excellent Governor Zulum in stabilizing this area. We have helped build a secure perimeter, police have gone in to provide the security, we've helped rebuild the infrastructure and the government is now delivering services to the people so their livelihoods can carry on.

With regards to the Middle Belt, we need to help Nigeria address the underlying drivers including livelihood opportunities. A large part of the solution there is through the economics through providing sustainable livelihoods for the herdsmen through ranching.

The livestock transformation



We develop the Trade and Investment Partnership, it will grow more prominent; the future business will be much more around tech and creative industries and innovative finance, such as green bonds.



plan needs to be implemented and investors need to come in. There are investors interested in states like Kaduna to do ranching.

The terrible rise in kidnapping is I think also driven in part by economics. If young men don't have a job and cannot feed their families, they may turn to a life of crime including kidnapping. So if the economy takes off again and creates opportunities for people; a part of the insecurity will be addressed. Other drivers of insecurity that need to be tackled include demography, climate change, and identity politics around ethnicity and religion.

Let us talk about youth and women development in Nigeria. What is your government doing to support this critical demography?

So well, let me say this first – the end SARS movement was a bit of a wake-up call. I think this has been a political awakening for the youth to realize their voice really can make a difference. So I guess I'm feeling quite optimistic about that. I want to encourage young people to register to vote, which they are doing; the numbers are pretty encouraging. And obviously, to vote to try and put some candidates forward. They need support and help, and the political parties themselves need to help young people move forward. So, I think the youth realize that they can help determine the outcome of this next election; if they register to vote and make their position known, the parties will have to respond quickly.

So then we come on to women in politics. Nigeria's record on this is appalling. It's gone backwards, not forwards. But we have been on that case. There are many female ambassadors in Nigeria at the moment, and we're pushing very, very hard. The American

ambassador, the French ambassador, the EU ambassador, the German ambassador and me are all women.

We are engaging with the President of the Senate and the Speaker on this, pushing hard. No country makes rapid progress without carrying the women along, possibly through a quota system. So that's crucial. But then for the political parties again, and the aspiring candidates, I say to them the one who's brave enough to put a female VP on their ticket will be the one who wins the next election. That's what I am saying to the candidates. You see what has happened in Tanzania, and the world hasn't ended. Women are taking over and it is ludicrous to tell me that this country is not ready for it – if not now when will it ever be?

You've got great examples like Amina Muhammad out there as the UN Deputy Secretary General and Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala as the Director-General of WTO. So it would help if you had a younger candidate, and you also need to get the women involved with the forthcoming elections in 2023. And that's what we need to support in Nigeria, which is a sense of hope for the future. Absolutely. I can't give up on Nigeria! It can turn things around.

Education will play a vital role in the renaissance that you talk mentioned. How can more Nigerian have access to the quality educational system that is available in the United Kingdom?

Well, as you know, we've got strong education links. And many Nigerians in senior positions have studied in the UK and are Alumni of our top universities. We have, of course, our flagship Chevening Scholars Program, which is our one-year

master's graduate program, and many Nigerians have gone through this programme. We look for not just very bright people, but people who will give back to their country after graduation. That's the deal, you study, and then you come back and give back, whether you're in the public sector, civil society, or private. And we've had some brilliant Nigerians go through that. I think we have had some challenges. One is, and I will hold my hands up and say our visa system could be improved. And the good news it is improving now following Brexit. We've now had more deliberate intent to reach out and expand the scope of visas. So for students now, whereas before you weren't able to stay on after you have graduated, you can stay for two years if you either do a degree or a master's and three years, if you do a PhD. So, I think that is helping a lot.

We need to link the education part with other things, including research. I'm keen to build robust research partnerships. I plan to develop collaboration between top research institutions in Nigeria and in the UK. And that's a big theme for this government in science partnerships, tech partnerships with countries with that capability. So we're already doing it in the health sector. As I said, Nigeria is one of our focal countries for genomic testing. So I'm building on that, and I think we can go a lot further on health collaboration, not just in COVID but in other complex diseases and so forth.

Nigeria has brilliant scientists; we've got top-notch scientists, therefore establishing research partnerships is one area I'm keen to develop. And of course, the other high priority for us is particularly girls' education, not that we don't care about boys, but we know that once a girl studies, she is much less likely to have children at a young age to marry young, etc. Education

increases her income by 20%. And that for our prime minister, and our foreign secretary is a huge priority. And we have massive educational programs here in Nigeria.

So that's always been one of our focal points. So, we are looking at the foundational schools, as well as tertiary and higher education as well. This is the only opportunity for the world to change the dynamics and the narrative.

The UK has shown outstanding leadership with the hosting of COP26. What does this represent for African countries?

I am proud, after two years of intensive global climate diplomacy, of the historic climate agreements reached at COP26 in Glasgow. The UK is a committed partner to African nations on climate action.

The Glasgow Climate Pact agreed at COP26, commits countries to phase down unabated coal, supports a just transition for developing countries, and agrees for the first time a common timeframe and methodology for national commitments on emissions reductions.

We know that African nations are responsible for just 2-3% of global emissions and at COP26 the message came across loud and clear – the whole world needed to step up to the challenge and I think the outcomes from COP26 showed that the world did step up. Critically for African communities living at the frontline of changing climates, governments have committed to double the overall climate finance for adaptation and to better address the threat of loss and damage in climate-vulnerable countries. In what was a significant step forward, more public and private finance was mobilized to support climate action in developing countries than ever before, with new pledges made at COP26 bringing us closer to meeting the \$100bn annual climate finance target next year – and ensure we will exceed it after that. The whole world played a role in reaching this deal.

The UK has shown outstanding leadership with the hosting of COP26. What does this represent for African countries?

COP26 also saw over 90% of the world's forest covered by the historic pledge to halt and reverse forest loss by 2030, with over 130 countries signed up. And 65 countries also committed to phasing out the use of coal power, and all major coal financing countries have committed to end international coal finance by the end of 2021 – this was a major step

forward in phasing out the world's use of the single largest contributor to climate change.

And 154 countries and parties presented Nationally Determined Contributions, with Nigeria amongst those who presented ambitious plans for reducing emissions. Ahead of COP, Kenya became the first African country to introduce a Climate Change Act. It was brilliant to see that Nigeria has now also done that so soon after the conclusion to COP26.

Over the coming year of the UK's COP Presidency I look forward to working with partners from across Nigeria and Africa to deliver the commitments we made at COP26.

This is just the beginning. The critical 1.5C global warming goal only remains within reach but only if we keep our promises and translate commitments into rapid action.

As Nigeria prepares for a very crucial election, what will be your message for the country?

Well, our message is to share how important this election would be for the country's growth. I don't think people should underestimate this election. So Nigeria has been on the democratic journey since 1999, and I don't think it gets enough credit for actually sticking with this. Nigeria is surrounded by countries going through coups and presidents who are determined to extend their term limits. There are many successes to build on in Nigeria, and this is very important. Nigeria is the biggest democracy in Africa; it matters to Africa. It matters to the world that this democratic journey progresses and that each election at least makes some step forward. I'm not saying perfect, but some advancement from the previous.

There was a low turnout the last time, but the actual process was better than the previous one. This time, we're going to have electronic transmission of votes; that's another step forward. So this all helps build the resilience of Nigeria for people to see their benefits and democracy. We know resilience, like in many places, has been built through a set of compromises that Nigeria had to reach to stick together, these include through the idea of a rotational presidency between north and south and so on. And I suspect there will have to be some restructuring at some point. But that needs to be done with consensus and buy-in. And you know, the people's voices need to be heard, not hushed. The key for me is to have a good election with a high turnout, particularly from the youth and women, with a leadership that can set a schedule for the future and build a plan. The election will be about hope and the future for the country.

According to an IMF report, greater inclusion of women as users, providers, and regulators of financial services would benefit beyond addressing gender inequality. It fosters more excellent stability in the banking system, enhances economic growth, and contributes to more effective monetary fiscal policy. Interestingly, it was also discovered that low-and middle-income countries have a higher share of women in bank boards and other core banking leadership positions than advanced economies.

Rev. Mrs Patricia Sappor is one of the outstanding African female bankers who has broken stereotypes surrounding women in banking leadership positions and have carved a niche for herself as a banker worthy of emulation.

Rev. Sappor is the President/Chairperson of the Chartered Institute of Bankers, Ghana. With over 30 years' experience. She worked with the Bank for Housing and Construction (BHC) for 11 years and Ecobank for over 20 years. She is currently the Head of Corporate Communications at Ecobank Ghana Limited.

In this interview with Amazons Watch magazine, she shared her career journey and the effect of her religion and beliefs in moulding her to become the trailblazer she is. Excerpts:



Rev. Mrs Patricia Sappor-

BREAKING STEREOTYPES IN AFRICA'S BANKING SECTOR

You have built a name for yourself with an outstanding career accomplishment in the banking and financial services sector, largely male-dominated. What are some of your experiences growing up, and what informed your career choice in the male-dominated industry?

Growing up was exciting and interesting. My parents were God-fearing and instilled in us the Word and Fear of God, discipline, good values, and character. My mother was a great entrepreneur with a lot of skills. As a result, I naturally developed an appetite for entrepreneurship and hard work. I was involved in my mother's career as an entrepreneur, which allowed me to develop a passion for working

with figures and quickly applying them to everyday situations, which later contributed to my attraction to the banking sector.

I was also attracted to the banking sector because I had a flair for dealing with people. I also admired the way banking staff conducted themselves anytime I visited the Bank to transact business for my mother. I also believed that being a woman should not deter me from working in a male-dominated environment.

I was not bothered about gender stereotyping at any level of my career because I knew I could perform excellently certainly with the support from the right people. Within a short time in my career, I realized that as long as one was good at one's job, one could work well with male and female colleagues with the right attitude

and a team player. The banking sector is a service industry; hence, the success of every Bank is mainly dependent on the dedication, hard work, and professionalism exhibited by its employees. Also, success in the banking environment depends on the individual's commitment, aptitude for developing knowledge and skills, positive attitude, ability to work well with others, and ability to adapt to change. Working in the banking industry is very rewarding and fulfilling. It can also provide exciting and new challenges every single day. The fact is you will never go wrong with Honesty, Truth, and Integrity.

You blazed the trail in 2016 when you emerged as the first female President of the Chartered Institute of Bankers (CIB). Kindly take us through your career journey, vis-à-vis some of your key accomplishments along the way.

As part of my career, I worked at Bank for Housing and Construction and Ecobank. I retired from Ecobank in 2018 as Assistant Vice President of Ecobank Ghana and Regional Head, Corporate Communications, Ecobank Foundation, Anglophone West Africa (AWA) Ghana, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Gambia, and Guinea. With over 33 years of banking experience and 22 years of service in Ecobank in various roles and capacities. By the Grace of God and with the committed team at the Bank, I initiated several programs in Ecobank Ghana and the Ecobank Group in Customer Service and other areas of the Bank, positioning Ecobank Ghana as a Customer-centric institution leading to the Bank winning numerous awards.

I was awarded a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Bankers (Ghana) in 2008 after obtaining the Associate Banker status with the Institute of Banking and Financial

Services in the UK in 1995, having schooled at City Banking College UK and an MBA Finance Option with the University of Leicester, UK. In 2016, I became the First Female and current President of the Chartered Institute of Bankers, Ghana, in the 43-year history of the Institute.

The Chartered Institute of Bankers, Ghana is the only Institution mandated to provide professional banking certification and qualification in Ghana. The Institute also serves as a professional body for banks and other financial institutions, providing stimulus for developing competent and more qualified human resources for the banks, enabling the banks to offer efficient and competitive services to meet customers' constantly changing needs.

The Vision of the Institute is to become the prime school for financial services education in Ghana and West Africa; to produce outstanding, highly trained, and honest bankers. This will be achieved through training, professional standards-setting, research and development, and advocacy.

The Institute's Mission is to fully develop practitioners' academic and professional potential in the financial services sector and those seeking to be practitioners by a course of study in banking and

financial services. The Institute actively participates in broad stakeholder consultations and engagements in critical National Banking and Finance Policy Dialogues and Debates and provides Public Education on Banking issues when necessary. The course content and structure of the Institute's Associateship Programme are in line with the requirements and standards of the Alliance of African Institutes of Bankers (AAIOB) for global recognition. The Chartered Institute of Bankers, Ghana, is also a member of the World Conference of Banking Institutes (WCBI).

Under my leadership, the Chartered Institute of Bankers, Corporate Brand has been strengthened, made more visible, repositioned, generating greater awareness and interest in the Professional Banking Course. Additionally, under my leadership and by God's Grace, the Chartered Institute of Bankers, Ghana Act, 2019 (Act 991) was passed, which is a great milestone for the Institute, making me the first Chairperson of the Council under the CIB Act 991. With the team, I have led the Council to establish Committees of Council to perform specifically assigned duties. The Chartered Institute of Bankers, Ghana Associateship Programme Curriculum has been restructured to meet banking human resource

Under my leadership, the Chartered Institute of Bankers, Corporate Brand has been strengthened, made more visible, repositioned, generating greater awareness and interest in the Professional Banking Course

needs.

Another critical achievement under my leadership as the President of the Institute is developing and launching the Ghana Banking Code of Ethics and Business Conduct. The principal aim of the Code is to ensure strict adherence to best banking practices and maintain high ethical and professional standards among practitioners within the banking industry in Ghana. Excellence and commitment have been my goal, and these attributes have driven my achievements over the years. My service to the Chartered Institute of Bankers, Ghana, was purely based on my commitment to my professional body and my employer. It is essential to rediscover who you are in life's journey, identify opportunities, and be purpose-driven. Being aware of the options and abilities I believed I had made me more focused, hence the key milestones in my life's journey.

What are some of the lessons learned in your career regarding the challenges you experienced and how you surmounted them?

Life is indeed full of lessons, and lessons help you grow and make you better and better each day. One lesson I have learned is to know who you are and what you can do—these help in planning the following milestones and steps needed to get there in advance.

The lesson of being bold as a woman comes very strongly, especially where women must necessarily compete with men in certain situations for a role. Fear, a mindset of weakness, and "submissiveness" appear to be some of the roadblocks to the progress of some women. I, therefore, encourage women to be bold, confident, and assertive when it comes to their careers and in the performance of their roles.

"Anybody can be anybody. "There are limitless opportunities. What is important is being ready and possessing the right competencies and requirements should opportunities present themselves. It is key to know that life can be full of challenges. Still, one needs to face and surmount those challenges through prayer, the right network, a positive attitude, etc. With determination, success will be achieved no matter the challenges. Challenges are normal and part of our life's journey. Challenges make us strong and pave the way for us to build resilience. Your ability to deal effectively with people is crucial for success in every sphere of life.

Another area of learning is the need to manage your expectations. There are ups and downs in every endeavour. Managing your expectations helps build resilience to deal effectively with the challenges as they come. No matter who you are, having a Mentor will go a long way to help you in life. Living a purposeful life is a life that cares about others, so it is important to give

back by positively influencing others. Finally, the God factor makes all the difference. We need to trust in the Lord in everything we do continuously.

We understand that you are a Minister of God and preacher at the Action Chapel International in Ghana, through which you have impacted a lot of people in the country. Please tell us how you can balance your role as a pastor, a banker, and your family obligations?

Time Optimization through prioritization is critical in achieving one's goals. Knowing what is important in life is the catalyst to outstanding achievements. To achieve the most, spending quality time on important things to your goals or mission is necessary. Planning and being Intentional on what must be done and doing it helped achieve some of my goals. Great family and Spousal support have contributed immensely to my achievements by the Grace of God.

Records show that you continue to use your opportunities as a banker and a Preacher to impact, develop, and empower women in all areas of their lives. Please tell us more about your efforts towards women's empowerment.

I have a strong passion and drive towards vulnerable young, intelligent ladies, making me gravitate towards them when I meet, know, or identify them. I give various forms of support to them to put them on track. I also offer counseling, prayer, and other forms of support to different women. The objective has always been to be a positive influence during every interaction.



NIGERIAN WOMEN Making Waves in The BANKING INDUSTRY

**Nneka Onyeali-Ikpe**, CEO, Fidelity Bank

Nneka Onyeali-Ikpe started the year with her appointment as Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of Fidelity Bank on January 1, 2021. For over 35 years of the bank's existence, this was the first time the bank had a female MD.

When she assumed office, Onyeali-Ikpe declared her intentions to make the bank the number one in the country by 2025 through an aggressive brand refresh exercise.

The bank successfully conducted its Eurobond exercise, where it generated \$400 million from the international capital markets. Fidelity Bank also received the 'Fastest Growing Bank' award and "MSME & Entrepreneurship Financing Bank of the Year at the 2021 BusinessDay Banks & Other Financial Institutions. Through the wise leadership of the MD, the bank will surely take the banking industry by storm by the end of 2022.

Miriam Olusanya, CEO, Guaranty Trust Bank (GTBank)

After about three decades of the existence of Guaranty Trust Bank, Nigeria Plc, Miriam Olusanya became the first female MD. She has worked with the bank for over 23 years, and she succeeded Segun Agbaje, the now-retired CEO. GT Bank is one of the most profitable banks, although it is not the biggest, and indeed, the bank has sustained outstanding records over the years with a network and client base that gives it a decisive advantage.

In recent times, the bank is fast spreading and gaining more ground.

Yemisi Edun, MD/CEO, First City Monument Bank (FCMB)

Yemisi Edun was assigned to lead the bank after a progressive 34-years+ career. Having spent 20 years in the bank, her appointment was considered a well-deserved feat. She started her career auditing corporate finance records of financial organizations with Akintola Williams Deloitte and proceeded fully



into banking about two decades ago. Within the period of her appointment, the bank has experienced tremendous improvement.

Kafilat Araoye, MD/CEO, Lotus Bank

From holding the forte for the former CEO of Lotus Bank, Kafilat Araoye was confirmed CEO of Lotus Bank. When the bank eventually received a non-interest banking license from the Central Bank of Nigeria in July 2021, it became Nigeria's newest and third-best non-interest bank. The bank began operations in September and has branches in four locations in Lagos state.

Araoye is charged to bring Lotus Bank to the spotlight in the banking industry in Nigeria.

Halima Buba, MD/CEO, SunTrust Bank

Halima Buba is the MD/CEO of SunTrust Bank with over two decades-plus banking experience amassed from several banks like Allstates Trust Bank, Zenith Bank, Inland Bank Plc, Oceanic Bank Plc and Ecobank Nigeria Limited.

Since 2001 when the Central Bank of Nigeria licensed the bank, the bank was not too known. However, with her wealth of experience, Buba is working to bring the bank out into the limelight and appropriately position it on the 'banking map'.

Tomi Somefun, MD/CEO, Unity Bank

Tomi Somefun started her journey as the MD/CEO of Unity Bank in August 2015 after a career spanning 26 years in the banking sector. She is a member of numerous professional associations and has vast experience in corporate banking, retail, and commercial banking operations. Under her leadership, the bank has progressed leaps and bounds

Bola Adesola, Board Chairman of Ecobank Nigeria
On the non-executive end, Bola Adesola was



appointed as the first female board chairman of Ecobank Nigeria Ltd, succeeding Mr John Aboh. Adesola is a well experienced and seasoned banker. She retired from Standard Chartered Bank, where she was the Senior Vice-Chairman, Africa; Chairperson of the Board of Standard Chartered Bank Mauritius and a Director at Standard Chartered, Ghana.

Also, she was the Managing Director/ Chief Executive Officer for Standard Chartered Nigeria and West Africa for over eight years, saddled with the responsibility to the bank's West African subsidiaries, like Ghana, Cote D'Ivoire, The Gambia, Sierra Leone, and Cameroun. The Banking industry in Nigeria is experiencing a revolution courtesy to these women raising the bar in the industry. With these women at the helm of affairs, this year and the years to come holds countless opportunities and tremendous growth for the sector.

7 TIPS TO HELP TEEN GIRLS FOLLOW THEIR PASSION

A child's identity begins the moment they are born; however, the teenage phase is a defining period. In this phase, critical decisions that will affect and shape their identities into adulthood will be made. One of such is the frequently asked question, "What will you want to be when you grow up?" Parents play a crucial role when it concerns kids' aspirations of what they want to be. The adolescent age is where self-limiting thoughts can appear especially for girls, but the parent can help keep the passion of the teenage girl in check through conversations and creating the right opportunities. These 7 tips can help you nurture your girl to follow through with her passion.

Exposure

Let your child see the world with her own eyes, don't cage her. Take your teenage daughter(s) out so they know things for themselves and form opinions about what they like. Educational Psychologist, Dr. Dion Terrelong, advises parents to "actively encourage and expose their children to the world's possibilities at every stage of development." Exposure can help create patterns, broaden their knowledge, spark their creativity and help them find something new they can be curious about and may likely pursue.

Motivate them to dream big

As kids grow up, their ideas change too. One of the best



things you can do for your teen is to encourage them to dream big. Don't shut them out when they start their unending tales about what they want to be. Please give them a broad smile and tell them you've got their back. According to research, Children with high aspirations show greater motivation to go on and to have more positive life outcomes, including emotional attainment and earnings in adulthood.

Spot out your teen's unique gifts

It isn't too difficult to highlight a child's unique gift if you pay close attention. What does she love doing at will or in her free time? Please pay attention to what she does when the T.V is off or when her phone's battery is dead. Spotting her gift early enough could help you fan the flames even more and eventually ignite a spark!

Be a good role model

Parents, particularly mothers, have a powerful influence on their teenage daughters. According to a survey of nearly 1,100 girls ages 13 and 18 by Keds and Girls Leadership, only 15 percent go to their friends first for advice. Younger girls are even more reliant on their mothers. What are you passionate



about as a mom? Your teen should notice this in your work, relationship, and impact you have in the family and the community. You are your teenage daughter's first inspiration. Let them see you as one.

Support your teen in choosing what interests them. Teens are humans and have a mind of their own. So, don't impose your agenda on them. Don't force them into accepting a passion just because you like it. It is important to remember that this is about them and not you. Therefore, you must be open-minded and accept that what they might be interested in can differ from what you want.

"I have seen from parents who allow their teens to explore their interests and find what they like or don't like without shame or judgment, creates a good relationship between the parents and child. The child is so much clearer, respectful and loving," says Dr. Dion Terrelong.

It is easier to gain mastery in one's area of interest than pursue a career that is imposed on you.

Seek out mentors for your teens

Kamala Harris, the vice president of the United States of America, shared how she started. She narrated that her parents introduced her to role models when she was younger, whose work motivated her to become a prosecutor.

Host lunch at your home for your friends who are passionate about their job. Arrange meetings for your teens to shadow or intern with friends whose work resonates with what your teen loves. This can increase their curiosity even more.

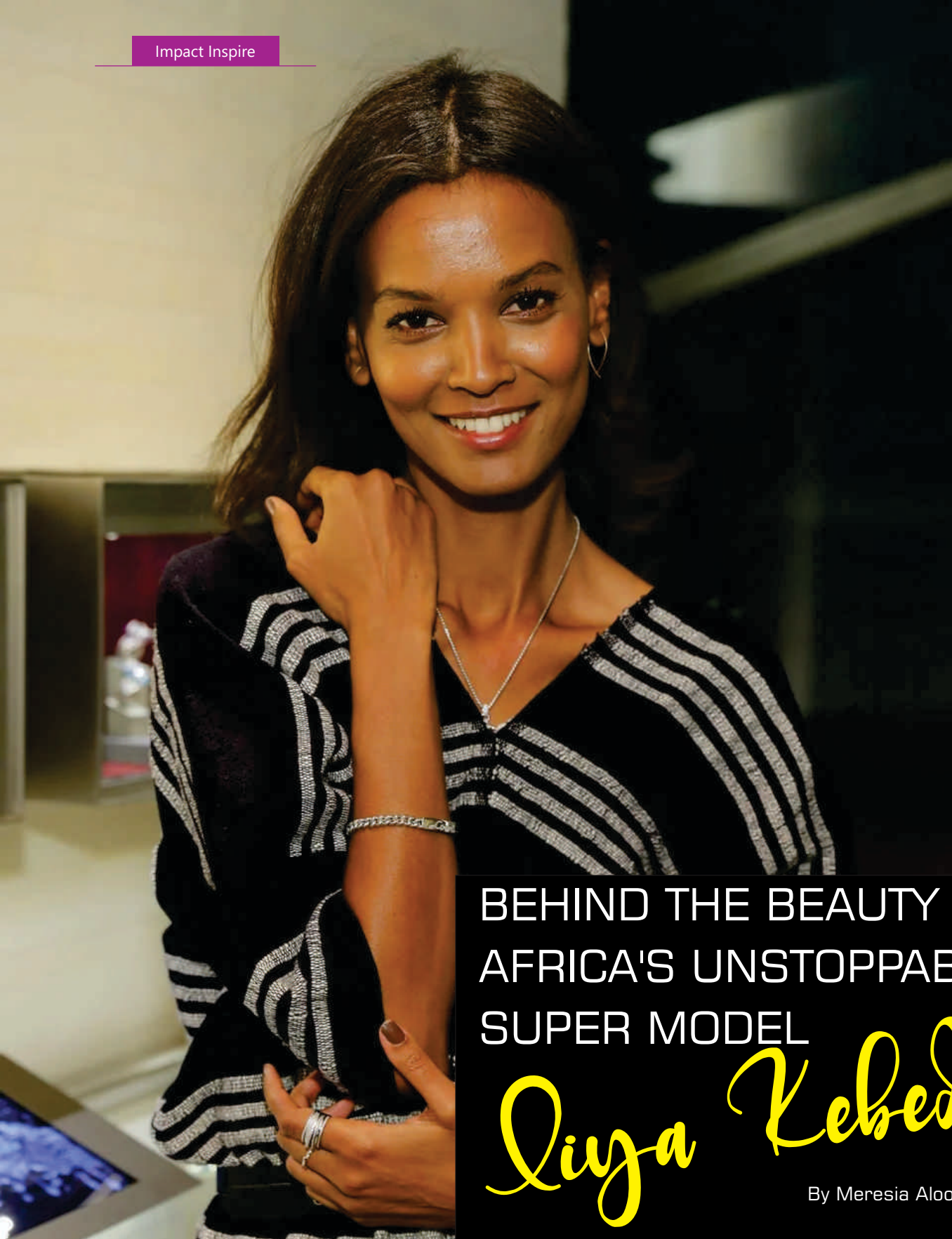
Appreciate your child's effort

Learning something new and gaining mastery takes time. So, there are times when your child might make a mistake, making her feel she isn't on the right track. Don't talk her down. Acknowledge her little effort and encourage her not to give up.

"Girls are inadvertently groomed to become perfectionists by being praised for "good girl" behaviour, so they quickly learn that making mistakes means "not good enough." This becomes problematic because researchers have found that it's the very process of taking risks and messing up that builds confidence.

There's no limit to what your teen can be.

Collaborating with your daughter will help her pursue her passions and create a stronger bond between you and your child.



BEHIND THE BEAUTY OF AFRICA'S UNSTOPPABLE SUPER MODEL

Liya Kebede

By Meresia Aloo

Ms Liya Kebede, is an unstoppable Ethiopian-born supermodel, international clothing designer, and top-notch actor who began her career at the mere age of 16 and became a mother at the age of 22.

Ever since her first discovery by a french film director in her hometown, Addis Ababa, Kebede has had a Whirlwind career which, through the engines of inter-sectional and gender-lens, has helped her reshape and rebuild a more equitable and just world.



Over the past years, her brand has ruled the airwaves internationally and has become a force to reckon with. At the age of 27, she began championing the rights of maternal healthcare and was appointed WHO Goodwill Ambassador for Maternal, Newborn, and Child health. As a goodwill ambassador, Liya was delegated with highlighting the problems and solutions to maternal health.

According to WHO Director-General Lee Jong-Wook, the appointment of Ms Liya Kebede resulted from her flexibility in using her global success and visibility to help bridge the gap of maternal health. Her passion in it was beyond what she could give while on stage, and therefore decided to dedicate herself to championing the solutions to maternal health.

"Liya is a perfect ambassador for this issue – not only is she a young woman and a working parent – but she is also an Ethiopian who has risen to the top of her industry. She has experienced first-hand a huge gap between two very different worlds and passionately wants to use her global success and visibility to help bridge this gap," WHO Director-General Lee Jong-Wook.

After teaming up with WHO, Liya got motivated to

start her foundation, took the challenge to herself, and founded the Liya Kebede foundation, whose mission was to reduce maternal, newborn, and child mortality in her home country Ethiopia, and around the world.

The foundation funded advocacy and awareness-raising projects and provided direct support to low-cost technologies, community-based education, training, and medical programs. In one of the health care centers, hospital deliveries rose by an incredibly significant percentage of over 50% in a year.

"It's not just about building the hospital. You have to train people to work there and educate women on prenatal and maternal health. Many expecting mothers don't see doctors—if they do at all, they are ready to deliver," she told Forbes during an interview.

Her home country and East Africa have celebrated her immensely due to her humanitarian acts that have seen her travel back and forth, intending to give back to society.

Hion has donated medical equipment to the Durame Hospital in Ethiopia and has partnered with other organizations, including the Hawassa Safe Mothering Center and the Ethiopian North American Health

Professionals Association.

Just as important, nearly 12,000 women have benefited from the Liya Kebede's Foundation over the past five years.

In 2009, she worked with Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation as part of their living-proof project. She also served as a high-level adviser at the Center for Global Development's 2009 report: start with a girl; A new agenda by the Global Health meant to shed light on the realities of girls' health and well-being in developing countries.

The agenda bridged the linkages between the health of girls and the prospects for their families and even implemented specific actions that aimed to improve health prospects for millions.

Her self-funded brand "lemlem" meant to bloom in Amharic, featured hand-spun, woven, and uniquely embroidered women's and Children's clothing.

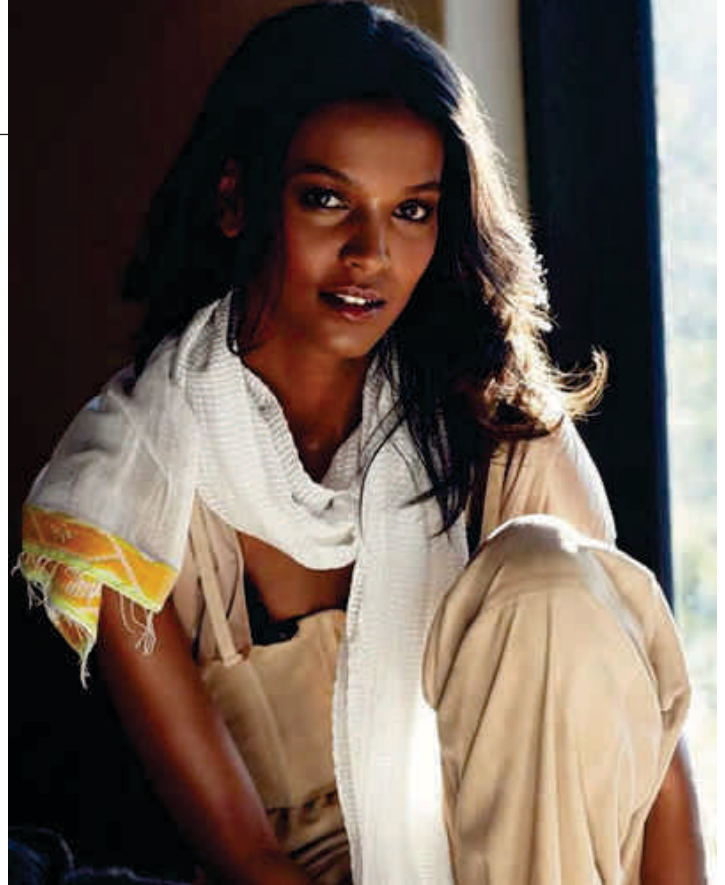
It was founded with the motive of helping preserve the art of traditional weaving in Ethiopia and to offer work opportunities to local artisans as a way of giving back.

Up to date, the line has sold Ethiopian wears to at least 150 retailers in the world. Through partnerships, the lemlem has created a wider networking environment for traditional weavers in Ethiopia, thus opening up more employment opportunities and a wider market.

Through the brand, African weavers and artisans in Ethiopia have showcased their talent and utilized their skill in coming up with new designs that have attracted the global market and international partnerships.

Her major contributions in the modeling Career have seen her do more than just lending her face to the world. She has worked with international brands such as Gucci, Vogue, and The Daily Beast. She is also part of the Champions for an HIV-Free Generation, an organization of African leaders led by the former President of Botswana HE. Festus Mogae.

In an interview with CNN at the Smart Cookie Magazine awards, an annual ceremony usually dedicated to mothers making a difference in the world, Tom Ford, Gucci's creative director described her as one of the breath-taking beautiful women in the world who has had a great personality, spirit, and soul and is committed to bringing solutions to societal problems.



To date, Liya Kebede Foundation has raised public awareness in the United States of America and Europe and has reached out to Major Print, Web, and television outlets to speak more about her campaigns.

Through the numerous engagements, the foundation has also secured new supporters from across the fashion, design, and entertainment industry, as well as African businesses and across diaspora communities.

Just as Kebede, Africa's homegrown millionaires, should also take up development matters into their hands and join her in the philanthropic space. As Africa's economy continues to expand: however lower pace as compared to previous years, acts of philanthropy from female millionaires could go a long way. Kebede: Africa's pride has set the pace:Will you?

We are in a moment where, no matter what, resources are at hand, be it in dollars, time volunteering whether small or big, we all have a role to play in supporting each other and contribute positively at this very pivotal point in the history of Africa. Just as Kebede and other female philanthropies have done. It is time that African females also stand up, defy the traditional belief that only Black men and whites can only ones who can perform acts of philanthropy.



10 Things I wish I knew Before Starting **MY BUSINESS**

By Goodnews Buekor

Starting up a new business can be an exciting experience, but many get too excited that they forget to look out for pitfalls. It is essential to make certain that you are ready for what you are about to do. A report from the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics showed that 20% of new businesses fail during the first two years of operation and roughly half of all businesses don't survive past the fifth year. If you consider starting up a business in the future, these 10 helpful tips gathered from different experts will guide you through the process and enable you to avoid certain mistakes most startups make.

1. You need more than passion

You should indeed do what you are passionate about, but no business thrives on passion alone. Passion is only a small part of the things needed for any business to succeed. Many startups that launched out with so much passion for their business crashed as quickly as they started because they neglected other crucial aspects of the business. "Of a truth, it is important to do what you love but you have to commit even more time into creating business strategies, interacting with customers, advertising your products, and doing the boring administrative stuff. So, when your mind is made up to start a business, be willing to do the not-so-fun part too," says Chastity Heyward, Marketing Consultant/Chief Executive Officer of Sylvan Learning Center.

2. Sustainable Cash Flow

For most startups, money is a potential challenge. Most new businesses do not make a substantial profit for a long period, so it is important to manage your finance as you have to do the funding to keep the business running. It is important to save enough before starting and spend wisely too. Thomas Aronica, Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Biller Genie intimated that "handling money wrongly and being reckless with cash flow is a death sentence for startups with limited access to capital."

3. Get a Mentor

A lot of mistakes can be avoided when starting a business by getting a knowledgeable and experienced mentor. Most startups make the mistake of launching out without wise counsel. Some people are already successful in the same thing you intend to do and so it is wise to seek counsel. "Entrepreneurs make the mistake of thinking they are all alone, and they try to operate independently without encompassing themselves with wise counsel. Do not attempt to run a new business on your own.

Look out for counselors that you can trust and discuss your business ideas, plans, challenges, and progress. Wisdom and power exist in the multitude of counsel," says James Zimbardi, Chief Executive Officer, Rent Items.

4. Develop a Business Plan

A business plan is vital to enable you to remain committed and keep you on track with your business goals. Structuring your business plan shows how serious you are, and how serious potential investors would also perceive you to be. Deacon Hayes, Financial Expert, and Founder, WellKeptWallet.com advises that "a startup should map out a business plan, even if it is just one page. Vital information such as the cost of operation, how much they anticipate to sell, target customers and the problem their products would solve should be included.

Failure to map out a business plan is planning to fail.

5. Not Carrying Any Market Research

Many entrepreneur's start-up businesses without bothering to know what the market holds for their products. They go-ahead to invest and in the end, become heartbroken. Test your products and services first before launching out. If you don't, you will have no idea if people will even want to buy them. It is risky to assume that people will buy.

6. File for a Proper Legal Structure and Business Registration

It is unsafe not to register your business entity. All you have built can be lost in splits of seconds when you do not have your business registered.

"The biggest mistake that startups make is not registering their businesses, choosing the right business entity, or protecting their intellectual property. These three areas are essential to a business starting right and if not done appropriately, will cost valuable time and money to rectify," says Heather Green Miller, Attorney, and Owner, HGM Law Office.

7. Customer Relationship is important

It is essential to actively engage your customers and sustain a relationship with them. Nobody likes to do business with nameless or faceless brands. Leveraging online technology will keep you ahead of your competition.

"It is important to build a relationship with your audience. Get a social media platform or website and make it as engaging as possible. By doing this, you can get direct feedback from customers, and this places you as an authority," says Chastity Heyward.

R.E.B.O.O.T

THE AFRICAN TECH INDUSTRY BY BRIDGING THE GENDER GAP

By Tanya Maswaure

So what is
the next
move?

R Role model

E Educate

B Break the barrier

O Organise

O Occupy

T Takeover

The feminist movement is an ongoing effort to shift the world from its gender-biased history and empowering the woman of this age. While we are witnessing extraordinary progress for women in almost all spheres of life, one of the largest sectors, the Tech Industry, is still falling behind. This position was echoed by Susanna Solis, a Member of the European Parliament (EP), the EP FEMM Committee, and a former mechanical engineering student. At a Women in IT event, she stated that "This crisis has highlighted even more that the world is becoming increasingly dependent on technology, and if women do not take part in this evolution, we will leave half of the population behind."

Research by PricewaterhouseCoopers Company shows a decline in females enrolling in tech-related degrees. Another article by a leading American magazine, The Atlantic, proves that employers in the tech industry have shown a preference for the male over the

female student; they believe the female is not as interested as the male. Fortunately, this has not gone unnoticed, as several organisations are making an effort to make these statistics something of the past.

Activista Kogi said "one of the organisation leading discussions on women in tech invited me to speak on the Day of the Girl-Child. At this event, many discussions regarding the girl-child in technology were had. In my well-received speech, I urged listeners that we use a new acronym I created: REBOOT. As an African woman, I am passionate about this topic because I was raised in a house of equal opportunity. My goal was to ensure that my fellow African sisters had all the chances to succeed in the tech space. Using REBOOT as an acronym, we can reset the technological space in Africa by encouraging better female participation in the industry.

Role Models

I had the privilege of speaking to one of the best role models in African tech: Professor Mmaki Jantjies. Dubbed Professor of the 21st century, she has worked with UN Women, Universities, and schools in South Africa. Prof Jantjies has launched programs such as Peo Ya Phetogo to help in the education of Information technology in South Africa. In our conversation, she stated, "You can't be what you can't see!". This phrase is why she works hard to interact and show young children and teachers that it is possible and there is a future in tech, especially for young girls. I communicated the

same message in my speech. For a child to aspire to something, they need to have role models to look up to and show them how it is done. It is then our responsibility to show these hardworking individuals and lead young ladies in the right direction while giving them a real living example that it is doable.

Educate

While this may seem obvious, research shows the decline in female enrollment in computer-related studies. Many stigmas still remain in some parts of Africa regarding the girl child being educated. Prof Jantjies shared with me that she was privileged enough not to feel any gender biases in her household but was shocked to see the discrimination she witnessed throughout her career. We must use organisations and all our platforms to encourage equal opportunities in tech classes. This is why Professor Jantjies launched Peo Ya Phetongo; they teach the children and guide the teachers who are crucial in the girl-child's education.

Break the Barrier/Bias

The most significant barrier in the tech industry is the discrimination present in the industry. In the talk, we discussed that because there is a considerable imbalance, the world of tech can automatically become intimidating. An example of a student who was the only girl in her IT class in high school was mentioned; after reaching out to her, she shared with





me anonymously saying "I was actually at the top of the class, and I really enjoyed IT, but my male teacher favored the other guys. "It was so bad that he would tell my parents in consultation that I was rude and had an attitude. Obviously, that was all because I was the only girl". She is now in university and studying Real Estate, and when asked whether her teacher had an impact in deterring her from IT, she was unsure. This example is shocking, but it is also not uncommon. If we break these barriers and change the narrative and attitude we have towards girls in the industry, we can better the opportunities for the girl-child in tech.

Organise

As Susanne Solis mentioned, we need to respond to this crisis, and we can not do it individually. Organisations such as UN Women working with Professor Janties, Activista Kogi, and Forbes Africa have shown how much we can send a message when we work together. With the help of the role models, we can organize movements, talks, and publications such as this one to encourage the girl-child and female to enter the world of tech.

Occupy and Takeover

Finally, we need the female to occupy the tech space. If we can accomplish and prioritize the above mentioned points, we will be able to take over the industry and create an equal and constructive space for females. In our conversation, Prof Mmaki Jantjies mentioned that some of her mentors were male, so this message is not just for the females but also the men.

In conclusion, together we can inspire the girl-child and make her feel safe. Let us REBOOT the African Tech system. We have seen how women have changed leadership, business, and politics. Collectively, we can do the same for tech.

In conclusion, together we can inspire the girl-child and make her feel safe. Let us REBOOT the African Tech system. We have seen how women have changed leadership, business, and politics.

Tomorrow starts today...



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THE 1000 CAMPAIGN



Valerie Lobo is just another ordinary teenager who has worked her way through completing her A-Levels with fantastic results and now to changing the world one sanitary wear at a time.

In 2021 after launching her campaign with a few friends, namely The Helping club, Chengeto Foundation and Go Zimbabwe, she changed the lives of hundreds of girls across her country.

Eighteen-year-old Valerie was driven by her love for all women and heart of gold to lead a campaign to raise 1000 sanitary packs for young girls in need in the country. She began the campaign in July with an idea and desire, "I am passionate about female empowerment", she told us, "So anything related to women and empowering them is my driving point." Even though this was her first time pursuing such a project she still managed to get such astonishing results to the point of national recognition.

Initially, she planned to involve schools mainly, but covid put up many barriers for her, yet she was not deterred. Valerie decided to launch an online campaign led by neighbourhood level interactions. "We had to do drop offs for pads to maintain Covid regulations but as the cases in the countries reduced, we were able to go physically to some schools for donations". When we inquired about how she attained her funds we were moved by her ambition and drive.

"I wrote letters, and walked around offices and they gave me ideas and exposure even though they didn't all sponsors." She told us. Her main obstacle was that people were not willing to donate to a cause that was still very new and not well known. Fortunately, she collaborated with other organisations that already had connections. "Although most of our collaborations helped, the largest chunk of the assistance came from friends and family."

Her campaign managed to gather over 1500 pads for

400 girls. Finally, they managed to have a presentation event where she managed to present sanitary wear with her collaborators and fellow schoolmates from Hillcrest College Zimbabwe, but she did not end here. On their social media platforms, they went on to educate on menstruation. "As Africans, we have this stigma where we cannot mention menstruation, and for something so frequent and normal, we had to teach people otherwise." They spoke of PMS and period pain on their platform, including health commentary and advice. This type of conversation has brought her campaign to a higher level. Following her success, she was mentioned and featured on national television and radio, including newspaper mentions, awards and collaboration with ministers. It is impressive to see how one person with a dream can change so much many lives. Miss Lobo admitted that this is only the beginning. Now, with the publicity her campaign gathered and hopefully with the help and collaboration of many more willing, she was working on more campaigns focusing on education.



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It is impressive to see how one person with a dream can change so many lives. Miss Lobo admitted that this is only the beginning.

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PARENTING DURING THE ERA OF COVID 19

Parenting is the act of raising a child through providing holistic care and protection to support and promote healthy milestones from infancy to adulthood. It is the most gratifying process that enables one to see beyond the freshly pressed shirts of a mother and a child. Along the journey of parenting, there are moments where parents would at times wish to grit their teeth, pound windows, yell and scream at the tantrums thrown by their kids—but then, when they remember there is more to that, they begin to appreciate every challenge that comes with it. Kids have different stages of growing and therefore the best thing a parent could do is to appreciate the stages as they transition; that is, from childhood to being a toddler to teenagehood all through to their

adulthood: I turn, this makes the process of child development smooth and cheerful. With the arrival of the pandemic, 99 per cent of the world's 2.36 billion children have found themselves in a country with some movement restrictions, including 60 per cent, under some form of lockdown. This has made childcare an even greater challenge for parents and caregivers. It is estimated that over 35 million children under five years old are sometimes left without adult supervision, a factor that studies done by UNEP have linked to economic pressures on parents to work. Decisions about who provides child care have affected the child and the people around them. In this context, caregivers' well-being and mental health play a critical

role, as it helps determine the transition of a child from infancy to adulthood.

According to data collected by UNICEF from 31 developing countries, 9% of today's working women choose to look after their children, while 22% of them decide to leave them under the care of a relative.

An estimated 4% are also said to leave their children in the care of a domestic worker or a nursery. In this context, the well-being and mental health of caregivers play a critical role, as it helps determine the transition of a child from infancy to adulthood.

Ms Annabell Gichure, a psychologist, based in Kenya, says Caregivers not only have to be trained but also should be mentored to have the capacity on how to communicate with the child

appropriately.

Proper parenting, according to her, is an environment where the parent puts the child first with the intention of meeting the child's psychological, emotional and basic needs.

More to this, engaging a child by creating activities that promote their holistic wellness and strengths triggers an open line of communication in the family: Just as important, empowering them in their areas of strengths also presents equal support that helps them grow and reach their milestones.

Equally important, as a parent, your presence in a child's life ought to be felt to create an environment of ease and protection.

Globally, the work of child-care has been, for the longest time, predominantly done by women, however; this includes female caregivers, such as workers employed in the child-care sector, grandmothers, aunts, siblings, and female friends.

In 2018, a total number of 606 million working-class women considered themselves not interested in jobs due to unpaid child-care work. This figure contrasts 41 million men who considered themselves not interested in jobs due to similar reasons as women.

Parenting, however, comes in different forms: from tiger parenting to helicopter parenting to snowplough parenting and free-range parenting.

Tiger parenting is a form of strict parenting whereby parents push their children to succeed according to their terms. Here, the parents push their children to attain high levels of academic achievement or push them for success in high-status extra-curricular activities, such as games or poetry.

Often, this type of parenting is commonly likened to lax parenting,

a form of parenting that liberal parents adopted without fair consideration of the underlying cultural and social contexts.

Helicopter parenting, also called cosset parenting, is when a parent pays exceptionally close attention to a child's daily experiences and problems. This happens mostly regarding educational matters. In this context, parents constantly oversee every aspect of their child's life. Sometimes these parents are usually seen to supervise their children in all aspects of their lives, including social interactions.

Snowplough parenting is where a parent attempts to remove as many challenges and obstacles from a child's life as possible in the hopes of guaranteeing success and minimizing frustrations and failures for the child.

This parenting style can be easily confused with helicopter parenting, as both types try to hover around the lives of their children.

While getting over-involved in the life of a child, over-hovering around the child can negatively affect a child, as each child needs to go through every step of their development to learn the steps

involved in their development and every challenge that comes from it. Free-range parenting is the concept of raising a child in the spirit of encouraging them to go about their life independently and with limited parental supervision. This could happen following their age of development and with a reasonable acceptance of realistic personal skills: it is generally viewed as the opposite of helicopter parenting.

In the 21st century, where children are exposed to different technology systems, parents are encouraged to monitor what their children are up to as much as moral standards are involved: this enables parents to control the content their children are exposed to.

The existing gaps in parenting include; lack of awareness, social-economic gaps, unresolved childhood trauma from families of origin and lack of maternal or paternal instincts: these challenges present the space of parenting to several risks, thus creating a boundary between a parent and a child.

Still, experts have commended parents for bringing up children





using the inclusive models, where children have been given a chance to communicate with their caregivers and parents openly: this has created a balance in the relation of a parent and a child, unearth the children's full potential. Even so, with the current global crisis, it is advised that parents should adopt using caregivers to help them to relieve themselves from 24-hour-tasks of daily parenting.

However, while considering this method, parents are urged to ensure that the status of child care provider is mentally stable and able to communicate with the child. More so they should be trained to be in a position to offer first aid in circumstances where the parent is not around. While around, it is also advisable that they work under supervision for the parent to keep up to date with the child and the child care provider.

Besides being involved a lot with office work, an important aspect to consider is getting to know what your child has been up to.

Therefore, having a nanny does not mean that as a parent you now need to forego your duties of parenting. Creating a culture to engage your children makes you make the right decisions between you, your nanny and the child. Important point to note is as you provide for the child also try to attend to the needs of the child care provider so that she could also nurture your child appropriately. In the current context of lockdown and school closures, lack of childcare is likely to be one of the worst affected services available to families because basically parents have to exist in two different contexts at the same time: being a parent and also working from home.

UNICEF has called for a set of four family-friendly policies for children in the early years, comprising paid parental leave, breastfeeding support, accessible, affordable and good-quality childcare and child benefits.

Through these policies they have shown that even some of the

world's richest countries fare poorly regarding adopting them, which reflects their policy priorities rather than available resources in their countries.

With family care being a predominantly positive experience for children in developing countries, the implications for those caring for them also deserve to be acknowledged.

As witnessed during the current global pandemic, different families were affected differently and therefore most families lost their jobs, hence depending on the government and relief from NGO firms.

Economic recovery packages were directed to firms rather than to households. As a result, this created strains while trying to take care of families. As such these can be changed through public provision of childcare, subsidies, social protection floors and tax incentives so that the vulnerable families also get access to the packages.

More so all these calls for the need for global action.



HOW TO GAIN YOUR KIDS TRUST & MAKE THEM OPEN UP

"To be trusted is a bigger compliment than being loved," says George MacDonald. I completely agree. From the time our children arrive in this world, they form perspectives about life and make conclusions about society and the people they live with. Building a trusting relationship with your child is a continuous commitment, but it's key to building a solid relationship.

Keep promises

Fulfil what you tell your child you will do. Don't use promises to reduce your guilt or a strategy of saying "no." Promise what is

reasonable and within your capacity to (restfully) accomplish.

Be reliable.

"When I tell my kids I will do something for them, I try to do it. The few times I am unable to, I explain to them why. This has worked for me over the years. I have gained my kids' trust," says Kathlyn, a mother of two kids. Parents are quick to make promises that they don't keep. This is one quick way to ruin your child's trust.

Listen

Listening is a deeper form of hearing—it is an action. Seek to

understand what your child says than listen to what they say. For instance, when a child says, "I hate you, Mommy!" it does not imply that she hates you. She could be saying, "I am sad that you make me go to school rather than staying with you."

Experts can demonstrate to children that we are listening by rephrasing their words back and concentrating on their feelings rather than their words.

"Mom never understands me. She misinterprets everything I say, so I am often quiet at home," 6 years old Doreen complains to her teacher.

When you do not listen to your kids, you will constantly misunderstand them. This can destroy any iota of love and trust left. And they will always find it challenging to communicate with you. After all, if they open up to you, you will only misunderstand them.

Be truthful

Everyone, including children, appreciates it when they are told the truth. Don't use white lies on your kids. When you tell them the truth, it helps them develop good positive morals.

"I do not have to lie to my child that injection does not hurt. I just tell him that it hurts a bit, but because he needs to get well, it is important for him to take it," says Mrs Tracy.

Sometimes, telling the truth to your child may not be easy, but would you instead trade it for their trust? When you, a parent, is transparent, you show them that you will also appreciate it if they can be open. You leave them with no choice but to confide in you. Show them, unconditional love. One of the most vital means to build a trusting relationship with your child is to lavish them with love. In all your dealings, show your children that you always love them and say it to them often. When you leave your child in the position always to think if you genuinely love them, you will hardly gain their trust. "Even when my kids make a mistake, I tell them that I love them more than dislike their mistakes. When My 5-year-old daughter accidentally broke an expensive piece of glassware, I made her understand that I care more about her injured finger than the broken glassware. I

noticed that after the incident, she became more careful and coordinated around the house," says Grace.

Balance trust with expectations
One day, nine-year-old Johnson asked his mom if he could play baseball with some friends. His mom initially refused, but after some time, he was told that he might go if he wanted to go, and it was his choice to make. Johnson knew that it wasn't entirely his decision to make based on past experiences. When Johnson decided to play baseball, his mom said she was very disappointed in Johnson's decision.

When we give our kids the power to make a choice, we have to be okay with their decisions, whether it is what we expected from them or not. Experts advise

that we help our kids weigh the pros and cons of their choices before allowing them to decide. Again, when parents always want to help out, prevent mistakes, or lessen the pain, we deprive our children of one of the most practical ways to learn to trust themselves by figuring out their problems. We also send a message that we do not trust them.

Parenting is one of the most challenging jobs on the planet. Building trust is crucial to your success as a parent. However, when we keep to our promises, listen to understand, not judge, tell our kids the truth, shower them with love, and balance our trust with expectations, we successfully build a bond that makes our kids trust us.



Dear Mum

Dear Mom...

Letter from your Teen

By Tanya Maswaure

Being a mom includes several challenges, staying up late, changing diapers, and taking care of bruises: the primary communication is the baby crying throughout all of this. Communication should be much simpler when they grow up, but this is not always so easy. Teenagers are not always easy to understand because they are also trying to understand themselves, which can sometimes be challenging. Mothers can feel insecure, lost and confused because of communication difficulties. This mother's day, we would like to give you some insight into what they think and feel. Using anonymous notes, we asked teenagers and some young adults to say what they would like their moms to know this mother's day. Here are the few messages we received:

Dear mom...

I love you. You have always been enough.

Dear mom...

You are an angel sent from heaven above. I don't know what I'd do without May God bless you

Dear mom...

I wish you'd be happy for me. Your approval means the world to me.

Dear mom...

You were my guiding light and my best friend.

How I treat those around me is thanks to you

Dear Mom...

I never knew I was nothing without you

Dear Mom...

I'm going to make it in life so I will pay back for the bananas.

Dear Mom...

Thank you for giving birth to all those servants; I love my siblings

Dear Mom...

You are loved, you are appreciated, and you're the best

Dear Mom...

You deserve a lot more than this world could ever offer you. Only heaven could bless you as abundantly as you deserve, but still, I will compete

with the celestials just to see you smile.

Dear Mom...

I have a lot to tell you.

Dear Mom...

Not everyone from a certain country or culture is terrible. I just want you to understand that

Dear mom...

I love you, and I see all the sacrifices you make to give my siblings and me better life

Dear mom...

You are my rock. I am who I am today because of the wisdom you imparted in me. I love you

Dear Mom...

I really love you, and I really appreciate everything that you have done for me. Even though I didn't understand where you are coming from in certain situations, I will always love you, and I appreciate how you raised me. I will raise my kids the same way.

Dear Mom...

I know I am not moving at the pace you want, but I am also trying to figure it out. Please have a little more confidence in my methods. I know I can do it

Dear Mom...

If it weren't for you, I wouldn't be here today. Literally, if you didn't give birth, I wouldn't be here. Not only are you my pillar, but If it weren't for your trust and faith in me, I wouldn't be here. If it weren't for you showing me how to do things in life, I wouldn't be the woman I am today.

I'm able to say my name with confidence because of you. Thank you, mom, for always being there. Thank you, mom, for every little thing you do. Yes. Sometimes we fight argue, and I don't want to do the dishes. I don't want to do this or that, but I know I need your love.

I can't wait to be a woman just like you.

The messages are varied, some are begging for understanding, and some are appreciation. Either way, it is always satisfying to hear our children's voices. Take these messages as a chance for you to listen and reflect on your relationship with your child.



From The Streets To **PARLIAMENT**

By Khadija Yusra Sanusi

In July 2021, Dinidari Foundation – which envisions a society where fundamental rights of vulnerable women and youth are upheld – hosted a 4-hour conference titled From the Streets to Parliament: Strengthening Women's Political Power in Nigeria. The conference was curated by Abuja Discourse, a platform coordinated by the foundation to curate conversations about policy and legislative-driven solutions to different issues including women, youths, electoral reforms, access to justice, bills, and sexual harassment. The Executive Director of the foundation Ndi Kato holds a degree in Mass Communication and is a Nigerian politician; she is a member of PDP's (Peoples Democratic Party) strategy review and Interparty committee. When speaking to African Leadership Magazine, she explained that her motivation to join politics was wanting to be an active part of change. "I want to function. I want to do a lot. I want to bring new ideas to the table. I want to do many things," she told the magazine. Now, what she wants to do is ensuring that young women are seen and heard.



With Streets to Parliament, Kato wanted to ensure that young, so-called stubborn women are seen and heard instead of silenced and made pariahs in the society. She believes that Nigeria needs to see and hear these young, determined women and conferences like this are the best ways to achieve that mission. With the conference and beyond, she hopes to give women platforms to discuss politics; because with that, viewers will start

projecting and seeing women as powerful solution givers. "I think that imagery matters. I think that the visibility and loudness of our voices matter," Kato told African Leadership Magazine. "It normalizes our presence. We can't disappear from the entire conversation." There are currently a handful of women moderating conversations about politics that are not gender-related in Nigeria, such as Ijeoma Osamor, the political correspondent, newscaster

and presenter of Democracy Today on AIT channel and Maupe Ogun, a media personnel, journalist and the co-anchor of Sunrise Daily on Channels TV. "But anchors are not discussants," Kato said. "They are moderating, not discussing."

Young, stubborn women have always taken charge; they have shown growth and leadership and brought necessary change to society. They have never shied away from taking to the streets to lead peaceful protests or use their platforms to bring about essential change – especially when the conversations to be had are on sexual abuse and harassment. The activism of young, stubborn women is well documented. After popularising the #MeToo movement in the United States, a group of young women domesticated the international campaign to kick-start #ArewaMeToo, inspiring people from conservative northern Nigeria to speak up against sexual abuse and harassment. Some months later, architect Damilola Marcus inspired hundreds of peaceful protestors to take to the streets in the name of #MarketMarch, seeking to de-normalize sexual harassment in Nigerian markets and stand against a culture of customers being stroked, grabbed, groped and/or harassed without their consent in the markets. Kato would like to see this vigour harnessed towards politics. There is a need for women to discuss, to be active participants in important discussions about politics – whether it's gender-related or not. In the future, Kato hopes to create different platforms that amplify many young women to be seen and heard across different paradigms within political spaces. She wants to start conversations towards women's wings in political parties,

affirmative actions, and young, stubborn women “see things to the end” by holding the government accountable for its actions.

The end goal is to have young, stubborn, rebellious women in decision-making spaces. Kato believes that women are better equipped for leadership at a time like this, that we are better equipped to keep countries sane because of our upbringing. She told *African Leadership Magazine*: “The upbringing of a girl is different from her brother's. I wish we were raised with the selfishness that men were raised with. However, we have found ourselves at this crossroad and here women are the most equipped. At this place, we have found ourselves, selfless people – who have been raised to be selfless, who have been raised to think of every scenario before they take action – are empathetic thinkers; it makes us look at all perspectives. That's who women are. I think it's time we get the chance to enter there and do something.” And if we are unable to get there, then we must have representation.

Representation in political, decision-making spaces matters and is currently understood as local government chairmen or members of the House of representatives. “But we need representation and not just for the sake of it,” Kato told *African Leadership Magazine*, arguing that we need to start looking at representation through the lens of identity. Otherwise, nobody will make a case for the marginalized members of the society – for women, for Muslims, for people living with disabilities. Kato argues that there are people in charge of these identities on decision-making tables and if these people are not representatives of said

identities, they would not be able to understand the problems being faced and the solutions needed to tackle them.

In Nigeria, most of the people on the decision-making tables are male; so, Kato believes that as Nigerian men have failed us on every level. This is not because they are vindictive or actively trying to fail these identities; it is that they are unable to relate to the lived realities of the custodians of these identities and they refuse to create space for them on decision-making tables. If a proposed bill affects women, then women need to be part of the decision-making. Excluding them will lead to non-inclusive laws. Kato cites the Child Right Act and the Gender and Equal Opportunities bill, explaining that even within them, one could easily find clauses that endanger the girl child; “and you would know that there are not women in that room,” she said, adding that “men cannot relate to the issues we go through. If they could, there would be a permanent healthcare center every kilometre in Nigeria because giving birth in Nigeria to Nigerian woman is like playing Russian Roulette; it's a dangerous thing.” But these conversations aren't discussed in

the national assembly because the people making the decisions are not in danger of dying from childbirth. Representation matters because men cannot relate to the issues that plague women and people who aren't living with disabilities cannot understand the reality of living with one or several disabilities. It is when your identity is being properly and accurately represented on decision-making tables that you will be made a priority for the people making the laws; because as they are making the laws, they know how it affects them, they know what, how, where, and when something needs to be done.

Ndi Kato told *African Leadership Magazine* that she built her career on being functional, a career of bringing ideas and solutions to the tables and of wanting to do the work. This is true for many women. But unfortunately, it's hard for African women to actualize their visions, to take these ideas and turn them into reality because the doors to the decision-making rooms are often shut for women; we are locked out. Our only hope is for a generation of unruly, stubborn rebels to work together to break the door down.



THE SILENT FEMALE BATTLE

PAYING A LITTLE MORE ATTENTION TO FEMALE MENTAL HEALTH

Carrie Fisher, the award-winning writer and late actor, once said, "One of the things that baffle me is how there can be so much lingering stigma regarding mental illness!" Like many other women silently battling, Fisher struggled with a mental illness. She wrote about how living with a mental illness was not to be looked at with shame but rather with much admiration as it is one of the hardest things to do. Yet we are still struggling to face, discuss and even navigate mental health issues, especially women. The matriarch has often been labelled as super-human, which is true in most cases, but what happens when the heroine needs to take depression medication, recover from postnatal depression, or even have a self-care day?

We spoke to female psychology and mental health professionals across the globe to further unpack the silent battles and how we can do something about it.

Mrs Edinah Masiyiwa is the Executive director for the Women's Action Group in Zimbabwe. She has traveled her country and the world advocating for women's and girls' rights. As a speaker and protestor for women, she has been involved in several conversations about women who are heavily influenced by their



mental health. "As an organisation, we work through transformative leadership where we run feminist schools," she explained. In these schools, Mrs Masiyiwa described how they work to educate, support, and advocate female and girls' rights at a community level. Although many of these organizations and missions are working successfully, one key issue that remains prominent is the issue of mental health.

Mrs Edinah Masiyiwa spoke to us about the importance of mental health for all women and how we have heavily neglected women in this respect as a collective. "We need a lot of psychosocial support. As a country, we trivialize mental health. In our language, we say 'anopenga uyu,' which translates to she is crazy, instead of addressing the problem" Mrs Masiyiwa explained, "It is how we have been covering and pushing off this important conversation." As an organization, they have begun to actively work on this issue through training and introducing the conversation on all topics, whether about abortions or sexual abuse victims. She gave the example of postnatal depression, "I have witnessed severe cases of postnatal depression where people do not even recognize it is a problem

that needs to be addressed; this is where we try to step in with our counselors." Mrs Masiyiwa ended by emphasizing that fellow NGOs can fill these gaps by having such vital conversations. Women's Action group advocates in Zimbabwean, but they work in the SADC region and at an international level which Dr. Jacobs advises is a crucial problem solver.

Dr Liezille Jacobs, the head of the department for psychology at Rhodes University and a well decorated professor and researcher, educated us on the specifics of mental health in women. She explained, "As researchers, we are aware that mental health in women is not a well-researched area, but there are specific mental health issues that women face more severely than men; the first and main one is double jeopardy." Dr Jacobs explained that this is when a woman faces postpartum depression and sexual discrimination. This is because women can give birth whilst men do not. "In substance abuse cases, treatment centers sometimes refuse to treat female patients especially if they are pregnant; this is just one example where this applies."

The other mental health issue that women experience is called gaslighting, "Gaslighting is when someone, usually men, tell you that your reality is not real and blame you for your situation. For example, this is a common issue of rape and sexual assault victims," Dr Jacobs elaborated. This is very similar to Mrs Masiyiwa's interview when people labelled mental health victims as "crazy." According to Dr Jacobs, gaslighting also leads to illnesses such as eating disorders and psychosocial issues such as sexual discrimination and chronic poverty. "If a woman gives birth and you are supposed to be breastfeeding, chronic poverty affects the ability to do that. Although this is most common in Africa, similar mental issues are present in women internationally." Dr Jacobs later explained to us that this is why major NGOs such as Women's Action Group are essential.

Dr Amanda Helman confirmed and concurred with Dr Jacobs that issues affecting pregnancy or a lack thereof can have massive impacts on female mental health internationally. As an author, Ph.D. holder, and special needs educator, she has always been passionate about mental health, education, and leadership. She has personally made it her mission to combine these for the good of everyone, especially women and children. "I am determined to get to the root of the issue and make sure everyone is aware of their worth." She expressed. In her writings, Dr

Helman has said that the core of mental issues in women can sometimes be adjusted from within, but we have a duty to educate these women about this solution. In one of her books, she describes the journey of trial and overcoming, "as women we already have a lot of societal pressure," she explained, "but in that pressure, we need to celebrate that we are worthy simply because we are worthy regardless of the situation, we will change women's lives!". Relating to this directly was our final contributor Damilola Fisayo Adebayo, a mother and an academic.

The assistant lecturer, Ph.D. student, and published researcher has had first-hand experience in mental health prejudices as a woman. Just like Dr Jacobs, Dr Damilola has specialized in developmental psychology. "My goal is to make people, across any stage, attain optimum well-being," she explained to us. "Pregnancy is a strange event, and just like any strange event, things are bound to change. We shouldn't ignore this!" As a Nigerian woman, she explained that she has seen women struggling with their mental health, especially after birth. Some end up being labeled as "weakling," and she explained, "When women express their emotions and how they are feeling, especially when carrying, they will be considered 'not wife material' and not just men, but women do this too." When asked what can be done, she said what her fellow researchers have said, "We need orientation, we need wide publication, we need education about mental health."

It is refreshing to see that women worldwide are giving attention to mental health and the prejudices specific to women. We hope that with the guidance of the above academics, we take the extra step as a global community to address and tackle this silent battle. Many women have joined the effort to bring light to this tragedy, and hopefully, together, we can slowly make the silent battle a thing of the past.

"Let us commit to asking others, 'Are you okay?' As much as we may disagree, as physically distanced as we may be, the truth is that we are more connected than ever because of all we have individually and collectively endured this year." - Meghan Markle, Duchess of Sussex



CECILIA ADAMS **ORDEAL WITH** **UTERINE FIBROIDS**

By Janet Abena Quainoo

Most women across the world are concerned about their body shape. Therefore, some of them exercise and eat a balanced diet among other healthy lifestyles to maintain good physical form.

Regardless of all these healthy lifestyles, some are faced with health challenges that they do not expect. A typical example is fibroid.

It is estimated that a higher percentage of women will have the condition in their lifetime.

Some of them see the symptoms and are able to seek medical attention early, whereas others are not able to see it. According to the Office on Women's Health, some women have them by the age of 50. However, most women do not have any symptoms and may never know they have fibroids.

Fibroid tumors can be an endless source of pain, bleeding, frustration, and it is among the most resistant health problems confronted by modern medicine.

That is one reason why an increasing number of women are seeking relief through alternative or holistic treatments such as nutritional therapy, herbal medicines, and other, noninvasive, "natural" modalities. Unfortunately, the results, even with alternative natural treatments, have been mixed.

Cecilia Adams, a Registered General Nurse shared her story on surviving fibroid with our Correspondent in Ghana.

In December 2019, Cecilia started noticing a stubborn bulge on her tummy. She initially attributed it to late-night eating and decided to stop, but there was no improvement. With time, Cecilia totally ignored the changes in her abdomen, thinking it was part of growing up until her stomach started getting bigger when she ate or drank something small.

One sunny day, she went for a program and a lady described her to her friend as 'the lady who is pregnant. The description from her friend really got to her and compelled her to visit the hospital to see what was actually wrong with her.

In November 13th, 2020, she went to see a doctor, and she was asked to do a scan and some few tests after which it was then confirmed that she had Multiple Uterine Fibroid and that she needed to undergo surgery to remove it because it was big. She

could not hold her tears. She cried right in front of the doctor since she could not believe it that the once "flat tummy Cecilia had fibroids"? How? A lot of thoughts ran through her mind.

According to Cecilia, the Doctor referred her to another specialist, and he also confirmed it, but she still decided to get opinions from two different hospitals and the same information was given.

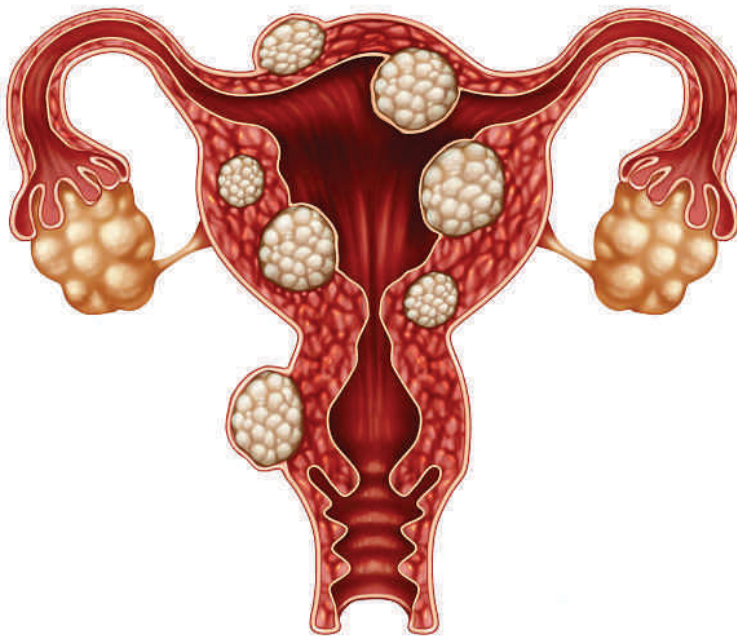
The doctor at the second hospital suggested she got pregnant and when she was due, they would remove the baby and the fibroids but she was not ready for a baby.

The Doctor then suggested that she could get an injection to shrink the fibroids, so she decided to go for that but she was told that she needed to take about three of the injections and one was costing about One Hundred and Ten Dollars (110), and also, she was informed that the side effects of the injection was severe menopause.

Cecilia then started to read a lot on fibroids and it was then that she decided not to do the surgery but go on diet because she was not ready for surgery as she had heard a lot of dangers associated with it.

In December 2020, she started bleeding profusely with severe pains. She bled for about four weeks, and it was then that she went to the hospital again and did another scan and this time, the fibroids had increased in size and taken over almost all her uterus, it was then that she decided to do the surgery.

In December 2019, Cecilia started noticing a stubborn bulge on her tummy. She initially attributed it to late-night eating and decided to stop,



According to Cecilia, it was not an easy decision since she was informed that she had a 50-50 percent chance of having a baby after the surgery.

Two weeks to her 29th birthday on the 28th of January 2021, Cecilia had the surgery. It was a scary one because she almost lost her life due to a lot of blood loss. She said eighteen of the fibroids were removed. Just two weeks after her surgery, Cecilia's neighbor asked when she was going to marry and have a baby. She was faced with the same stigmatization at her work place when her surgeon and some nurses kept asking when she would have a baby.

According to Cecilia, having a good support system is a huge coping mechanism for anyone going through the ordeal of fibroids. Cecilia had huge support from friends and family, which motivated her to do the surgery. She was supported emotionally, spiritually and financially. The surgery was done at the hospital where she works and so was pro bono. She only had to pay for her medications.

Cecilia's advice to those dealing with

fibroids is to talk to their doctors frankly so as to know all the treatment options available and make the best decision.

She said, fibroids are usually harmless but their location, amount and size make them dangerous. Cecilia's were multiple, some were in the uterus and others were outside the uterus. Other people get pregnant while having fibroid and it's

removed through a cesarean section when they are due, while others are unable to get pregnant at all.

IS SURGERY THE IDEAL WAY?

Treatment for fibroids depends on the location, amount and the size of the fibroid. Cecilia's was multiple and the size was big which required a surgery. Due to its amount, size and location, there was no way Cecilia could have had a baby because it was likely she would have had a miscarriage if she had gotten pregnant.

TIPS THAT COULD DECREASE A WOMAN'S RISK OF HAVING FIBROIDS

While the cause of fibroids is still unknown, there are certain things that can make one predisposed to having them and avoiding these could decrease one's risk of developing them at all. According to Cecilia, there is the need for ladies who have not been diagnosed with fibroid to take care of their health and pay attention to the changes in their bodies.

Smoking, alcohol consumption, sedentary life style, late child-birth, hereditary and race (Research shows that black women are at high risk of getting fibroids), are all factors that makes a woman predisposed to having fibroids.

Regular check-ups at the hospital, eating lots of fruits and vegetables as well as having regular exercise and enough rest is a good start. If there is a family history of fibroids, then a woman should plan well in order to marry early and start having kids on time.

BREAKING THE BIAS

Here's What Female Entrepreneur CAROLINE POMEYIE Is Doing In Agritech

By Janet Abena Quainoo

The ability to challenge the status-quo for the maximization of profit is very important for every individual. It is predicted that in the next 10 years the unemployment situation in Ghana and to an extent some part of Africa is going to be worse than we have seen. An increased unemployment means an increase in social vices. This is why the youths must be encouraged to challenge the status-quo by creating their own business for self-sustainability.

Quite recently, Ghana's Finance Minister, Mr. Ken Ofori Atta advised graduates of the 2021 University of Professional Studies-Accra (UPSA) graduating class to venture into entrepreneurship to make ends meet rather than channelling all their energy in seeking government jobs.

According to the Minister, government's payroll is full. "We have gone through a period where most people look for jobs with the government. That payroll is full because we are spending some 60% of revenue on the remuneration of some 650,000 people, and that is not sustainable," he said; adding that: "The future is not about jobs that are hiring 1,000 or so people, but it is really about you starting something new and hiring a few people because it's the SME sector that really does it.

Hence, being an entrepreneur in these current times is very vital for the growth and development of the nation's economy as it is one of the ways to reduce unemployment especially amongst graduates who have high expectations to be

successfully employed after school. Also, being an entrepreneur grants a person the ability to contribute to solving societal issues which cannot be solved by the reliance on government alone.

Caroline Pomeyie is a vibrant young female entrepreneur who has not only contributed to solving a societal issue but created an opportunity for employment in the fishery sector. Her innovative business strategy will inspire someone today.

Caroline Pomeyie is an Agritech Entrepreneur. She is the CEO of Oceans Mall Company Limited, a digital end-to-end supply chain platform that creates shared value for fish producers and consumers. Caroline is trained communications personnel with a Master's degree in Development Communication. In an interview with Caroline Pomeyie, the details about her inspiring journey is revealed.



Tell us about your journey?

It started at quite an early age even though I didn't really know that's what it was because as far back as high school to the university, in my vacation period, I would make beaded jewelry to sell. I started an online news website that did not go far. I tried a couple of things and tried exploring all aspects of me because I always wanted to build a company so I zoomed into full-time work in my own company without having to search for a job after I completed school.

How did Oceans Mall Start?

Oceans Mall started after we identified a gap during the lockdown season. People wanted sea food delivered to them. However, after sampling a couple of products in the supermarkets and hypermarkets especially in Accra, I realised that they were all imported. Around that time too our local and small-scale fishermen had enough that could have supplied a lot of people in villages or towns out skirt of Accra. There was no Ghanaian brand out there in the market. We had already been involved in the Fisheries space providing market access but it was fresh from the fisher folk straight to the restaurant or hotel that needed it but I felt we could do more so that was when the focus on working with the surplus began. We realised we can process the surplus into products that can be sold to these super markets for people to easily access which also provides employment for a lot of people. This is as a result of working with surpluses so we do not have a lot of post-harvest losses in our Fishery space. That's mainly the Oceans drive behind Oceans mall starting.

Tell us about your challenges from the onset?

As a startup, the initial challenges had to do with marketing or brand positioning, i.e., knowing how to build a brand, what it entailed as well as the resources needed. Letting people know who you are, the value you have to offer them and how your brand stands out from the rest. With my first entrepreneurship journey, we had funding from Cosmos Innovation Centre, so it breached the funding or financing gap that most startups would have. Another challenge is getting the human resources that you need. Most young people want to work with reputable brands so to get credible, skilled and qualified people to work with is another challenge I encountered.

Tell us about your current challenges and how you are dealing with them?

There are a few challenges currently but how to access funding support especially with the impact we are making in the Fisheries sector is the one that stands out. We are assisting Local Small-Scale Fisher Folks to access last mile market. Also, our short-term goal is to help them access financing so in order for us to be able to do this best, we need to scale the impact we are having currently and we need funding. We have been bootstrapping since we started in 2020 and it has not been easy but

we've had a good cash flow that allows us turn over revenues to keep thriving but if you want to grow, sales cash is not enough for you to expand so then we need external funding support to help us expand our operation. One of the major things we have put in place is to join accelerator programs that provide the capacity building or resources we need to help us grow. We have currently enrolled into Orange Corners Accelerator Program at the Ghana Innovation Hub and we are hoping to get the needed skill. We will go through series of training on our financial management, human resource, management strategy building and many more and all these are knowledge are needed to scale.

How do you feel knowing you have contributed to solving a societal issue?

We are excited because we are impacting and changing lives and that encourages us to do even better. A core part of my work is focused on supporting women in the fisheries industry, so my company ensures 60% of staff are women, that is also economic empowerment for a lot of women. The more we grow the more impact we can have. Most of fisher folks are living in deprived communities because they earn very little from what they do. Most of the money goes back to the boat owners, the

A core part of my work is focused on supporting women in the fisheries industry, so my company ensures 60% of staff are women

Queen Mothers. Their low incomes affect the welfare of their kids especially in education and healthcare. Being able to provide the last mile market access provides them training on best fishing practices, enabling them earn a better income and that translates to a better livelihood. A typical example is Priscilla, an agent in Tema who has three kids and prior to working with us she was earning about GHC 15 a day. Being with Oceans Mall, she is able to earn better and it is such a joy seeing her work and knowing that at least she can now cater for her kids. She is making something more decent to fend for herself as a woman.

Do you have bigger plans for the global sector, what are they and how do you hope to achieve them?

Our aim is to spread our solution which is the Pin Wheel. Pin Wheel is an integrated supply chain platform that creates shared value for both fish producers and consumers as well as businesses. The aim of this platform is to provide the last mile market access for these local fishermen and the solution is scalable across-country because the value chain is the same in most other African countries. We are hoping we can scale the solution to other African countries in a few years down the line. In the next five to 10 years, we should be looking at scaling to Ivory Coast.

Has there been any new innovation from you apart from what you started with?

Our focus at the beginning was just the market access but we realised that in the Fisheries Space just like any other agricultural chain crop value chain, there are off-seasons for these products. In seasons where there is abundance of fish, it is realised that there is a lot of food wastage hence post-harvest loss. We decided to add

processing so we provide the market access to the excess which is processed into a convenience food product which is sold in most of the hyper malls such as Palace Mall and supermarkets in Ghana. These seafood products are partly processed and ready-to-cook.

As a female in the Agricultural sector, what has been your greatest struggle and how did you overcome it?

Being a female in this space hasn't really posed a major challenge and I think it's also because women are predominantly the ones involved in the fishery supply chain. However, when it comes to production, I have always wanted to experience any fishing expedition but then it's a taboo and forbidden for a woman to get on board a fishing trolley. One thing I know is that there's a lot of support

now for women venturing into business.

What advice would you give to a young upcoming entrepreneur?

One of the major helpful tip is to have co-founder. I have a co-founder, Kwabena Narchie and together we have been able to build this company to where it is. Having the right co-founder is very essential to establishing a good thriving business. Secondly, learn, engage and know your target. Pivot your ideas where it is necessary and keep going back to the market for feedback because that's the only time you would know that you are actually providing something and be quick to adapt to change. The rest is you praying that God opens doors for you to get people who are willing to financially support you on this journey.



How Experts Make The Perfect Pancake Batter

Following the Pancake-day celebrations in the month of March 2022, many have been debating on the perfect consistency, crispiness and thickness of a perfect pancake. Every individual has their preference but we know we can trust the experts to tell us the ideal pancake recipe. In this article, we will be sharing the different variations of pancakes from international celebrity chefs such as Prue Leith, Jamie Oliver, Siba Mtongana, Paul Hollywood and Bobby Flay.

Prue Leith, the British-South African chef who is also the judge for the Great British bakeoff uses the basic ingredients that any pancake would have, except she adds an extra egg yolk. Prue's recipe is a French pancake. Egg yolks allow the batter to hold extra liquid and extra sugar. Her recipe is simple to duplicate but the results are visible. The pancake might be thinner but will not require as much syrup. This variation can even be used for dessert. Prue explains, "A good French Pancake should be too thin to toss with ease. When I was in the cookery school, our teacher used to say if we toss it we should toss it out." So, if you prefer your pancakes thinner and sweeter, Prue's pancakes are the best for you.



Her Co-judge on the other hand prefers a much simpler batter with only 5 ingredients. **Paul Hollywood**, the English chef and judge on The Great British Bakeoff prefers the well-known recipe but advises that it is the actual process that is the most crucial in making the perfect pancake batter. He begins by sifting all of his dry ingredients and doesn't pay much attention to the thickness. Paul advises "Don't be put off by the appearance of this pancake recipe, it's deceptively easy. All you need is a squeeze bottle and a steady hand to make your pancakes extra pretty."

Siba Mtongana, the South African chef, prefers to go all out with additional toppings including toasted coconut, raspberries and blackberries with filling. Her recipe is a guilty pleasure pile of thin pancakes filled with coconut and condensed milk filling in between each layer. Each bite will be filled with sweetness and fruitiness and not a recipe for calorie counters. However, she has a gluten-free alternative that substitutes her wheat flour with almond flour. The results will still be as satisfying and craving worthy but a lot healthier.



Jamie Oliver, the English chef, prefers a healthier pancake with granola dust. Granola is a breakfast and snack food consisting of rolled oats, nuts, honey or other sweeteners such as brown sugar, and sometimes puffed rice. The granola is then toasted and pulverised into the dust which can provide several health benefits such as fibre and natural sugars. "Used in these healthy pancakes, it adds a nutty twist to the naturally sweet and fluffy batter – a great way to get more of the good stuff into your diet," Jamie explains. The recipe also includes a fresh banana in addition to a single large egg. The simplest of all the recipes yet it is the healthiest.

Finally, the American chef **Bobby Flay** chooses buttermilk as his dairy element for fluffier pancakes. His buttermilk pancakes have the basic ingredients to any pancakes but with the additional dairy substituting full cream milk. His alternative would be using bananas and fewer eggs with whole wheat flour to make a healthier option. "Try to add cocoa powder, cinnamon and nutmeg for more flavour." Just like there are different ways to flip a pancake, or not in Prue's case, there are different ways of mixing pancake batters. Each additional or substitute ingredient has a good reason and improves each recipe in its unique way. The possibilities are endless, and according to our celebrity chefs it is okay to try it in your different pancake techniques, as long as it is all edible





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