

SISPIRATION

SPECIAL WOMEN'S MONTH EDITION

ISSUE 5



POWERHOUSES OF IMPACT

AFRICAN WOMEN SHAPING THE
PRESENT AND THE FUTURE



The Visionary
Power Issue



We don't just Support **NGOS & PROJECTS** We Help them to **SCALE**

We partner with NGOs, Social Enterprises, CSR teams, and public institutions to help you design, structure, and scale your impact with clarity and excellence.

We offer hands-on support in:

- ✓ Program design & Implementation
- ✓ NGO setup & structuring
- ✓ Design of Impact documents & Impact reports
- ✓ Impact storytelling & visibility
- ✓ Staff capacity building & founder advisory
- ✓ CSR design & implementation

SIS walks with you to build sustainable systems, tell your impact story powerfully, and attract the resources and recognition you deserve. Let's work together to amplify your impact.

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Editor's Note

Hey, Woman

March always arrives with a different kind of energy. You can feel it almost immediately; in conversations, in the number of events popping up, and of course in the unmistakable wave of purple that begins to appear everywhere. It's Women's Month!

So if I may ask, **what does this month mean for you personally? What do you intend to do differently?**

Are you planning to attend one of the many International Women's Day events organized by communities and organizations?

Will you be showing up at networking brunches, conferences, and panel conversations?

Or perhaps just following the conversations online, reading stories of remarkable women and reflecting on your own journey.

However you choose to engage with it, **this month belongs to women and the stories we carry.**

For this edition of Sispiration, we decided to approach Women's Month a little differently. You may notice that some of our regular columns are absent. That is intentional. This issue is a special **Women's Worth Edition**, dedicated to spotlighting women whose work, leadership, and innovation are shaping communities across Africa.

Our editorial team set out to identify **25 women making remarkable impact across the continent**, and what we quickly discovered was really inspiring.

Africa is filled with women doing extraordinary work and It is our responsibility to bring those stories into the light.

So this edition is our tribute, a celebration of women who are influencing policy, transforming communities, building institutions, leading movements, and redefining possibilities in their fields.

If you find yourself reaching for a purple outfit, accessory, know that you are participating in a global expression of support for women everywhere. To every woman reading this: your story matters. Your work matters. Your journey contributes to the collective progress of women everywhere. So wherever you are reading this from, at home, in between meetings, on your commute, or perhaps while attending an IWD event; we celebrate you.

On behalf of the entire Sispiration team, **I wish you a thoughtful, inspiring, and joyful International Women's Month.**

With Gratitude and love,

The future of Africa is being written by women who refuse to stay silent about their worth; women who are rising beyond limitations, breaking barriers, and redefining what leadership, impact, and influence truly mean.

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Sispiration Magazine is a monthly digital and print publication from Social Impact Steward (SIS), dedicated to celebrating the achievements, voices, and impact of women across the globe. Each issue blends insightful features that inspire women to lead with purpose, create meaningful change and connect with opportunities for growth.

The Art of Being a Woman

In every era, femininity has taken different forms. But its finest expression has always been deliberate.

It is not an accident of personality. It is an art shaped through awareness, restraint, and self-respect.

Presence

A woman's presence becomes clear within moments of entering a room.

It shows in her posture, the calmness of her movements, and the way she acknowledges the people around her.

Nothing about it feels forced. She simply carries herself with certainty.

Emotion

Emotion is a natural strength in women. Refinement lies in how those emotions are expressed.

A woman of character understands that emotions are real, but not every emotion deserves an audience.

Composure protects both her dignity and the atmosphere around her.

Awareness

A refined woman pays attention to the subtle dynamics of a room. She notices who is comfortable, who is being overlooked, and when a conversation is losing its grace.

This awareness allows her to move through any room with grace rather than reaction.

Self-Respect

Refinement appears in the smallest decisions. The way she dresses, the way she speaks, and the way she carries herself reflect a sense of balance.

Nothing is excessive. Nothing is careless.

Her choices reveal judgment rather than display.

Closing

The art of being a woman is not about perfection or performance.

It is the discipline of moving through the world with presence, intelligence, and self-respect.

The world notices a woman like this. It always has.

Courtesy: *Century Apart*



Editorial

The Sound of Shattering Glass

How Women Around the World Broke the Ceilings Meant to Contain Them

Bola Oyedele

The first time I truly internalized the phrase “breaking the glass ceiling” was in 2021, when Kamala Harris became the first woman, first Black American, and first South Asian American Vice President of the United States. I remember watching the inauguration and feeling this mix of awe and excitement, seeing what everyone thought was impossible actually happening. And then there was that famous “**We did it, we did it Joe.**” video, a spontaneous moment where she **phoned Joe Biden to celebrate the win.**

Of course, the glass ceiling didn’t start in 2021, The phrase “**glass ceiling**” refers to the invisible yet seemingly gigantic barriers that prevent women and other marginalized groups from rising to the top and surmounting the seemingly unattainable feats.

The term is widely credited to American management consultant **Marilyn Loden**, who used it during a 1978 Women’s Exposition panel in New York. While discussing why women were underrepresented in leadership roles, she described the unseen structural barriers holding women back as a “glass ceiling.”

The phrase gained broader recognition in 1986 when it appeared in an article in **The Wall Street Journal**, which examined the obstacles preventing women from reaching top corporate roles. By the 1990s, the term had become a global shorthand for systemic gender inequality in leadership. And over the decades, courageous women have been shattering glass ceilings.

Here are some of the women whose lives and legacies echo the sound of shattering glass.



Margaret Thatcher

In 1979, she became the United Kingdom’s first female Prime Minister. Whether loved or critiqued, her leadership disrupted a political order that had been exclusively male for centuries.



Ellen Johnson Sirleaf

When she became Africa’s first elected female president in 2006, it was more than a victory for Liberia; it was a statement to the continent that women belong at the helm of nations.



Kamala Harris

In 2021, she became the first woman, first Black American, and first South Asian American Vice President of the United States; a historic political milestone.



Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala

In 2021, she became the first woman and first African Director-General of the World Trade Organization. Global economic leadership had a new face and it looked like a Nigerian woman who refused to shrink herself.



Mary Barra

When she became CEO of General Motors in 2014, she broke through one of the toughest corporate fortresses - the global automotive industry.



Serena Williams

On tennis courts across the world, she won titles and challenged gender pay gaps, racial stereotypes, and outdated expectations of how powerful a woman is “allowed” to be.



Simone Biles

She redefined excellence in gymnastics and, more importantly, redefined strength by prioritizing mental health on a global stage. Sometimes breaking ceilings also means breaking silence.



Angela Merkel

As Germany's first female Chancellor, she led Europe's largest economy for 16 years, proving that steady leadership does not need to be loud to be powerful.



Oprah Winfrey

From humble beginnings to becoming one of the most influential media moguls in the world, she shattered ceilings in broadcasting, business, and philanthropy; all while rewriting narratives about Black women in media.



Ursula Burns

She became the first Black woman to lead a Fortune 500 company as CEO of Xerox. That breakthrough echoed across corporate America.



Mo Abudu

She built one of the continent's most influential media platforms and took African storytelling to global audiences. Through film and television, she shattered ceilings in entertainment and narrative control.



Joyce Banda

In 2012, she became Malawi's first female president. In a political landscape where women are often sidelined, she stepped into leadership during a national crisis and steadied the ship.



Sahle-Work Zewde

In 2018, she became Ethiopia's first female president and one of the continent's few female heads of state. She broke through decades of male-dominated political leadership in the Horn of Africa.



Ibukun Awosika

When she became the first female Chairperson of First Bank of Nigeria, she didn't just take a seat at the table, she redefined what leadership in Nigeria's banking sector could look like. For many young Nigerian women in corporate spaces, her appointment felt personal.



Amina Mohammed

As Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, she became one of the highest-ranking Nigerian women in global diplomacy. From national planning to global sustainability advocacy, she embodies leadership that moves beyond borders.



Folorunsho Alakija

In Nigeria's oil industry, one of the most male-dominated sectors, she rose to become one of Africa's wealthiest women. Her journey disrupted long-standing assumptions about who can build and own power in extractive industries.



Fatou Bensouda

As the former Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, she became one of the most powerful legal voices in global justice, handling cases that shaped international law.



Ketanji Brown Jackson

In 2022, she became the first Black woman ever appointed to the United States Supreme Court, one of the most powerful judicial institutions in the world. Her confirmation marked a historic milestone in American legal history, expanding representation at the highest level of the judiciary and inspiring a new generation of women and girls to pursue careers in law and public service.

For African women, the glass ceiling has often been thicker layered with tradition, economic barriers, and political exclusion. Women have risen not because the system made space, but because they created it.

Glass ceilings are rarely shattered in dramatic explosions. Sometimes they weaken over decades and consistent efforts. The glass ceiling is not only "up there" in politics or boardrooms. It exists in our minds. In the rooms we hesitate to enter. In the opportunities we talk ourselves out of. In the dreams we downplay.

This International Women's Day, besides celebrating the women who made headlines, we're also recognizing that woman who dares to apply, to speak up, to build, to invent.

And so, to every woman reading this, you do not have to wait for perfect conditions; you do not have to wait for someone to lower the ceiling.

You can stretch, push and break it yourself. *Happy International Women's Day.*

LIFE HACKS FOR CHANGE AGENTS

How to **INTRODUCE** Yourself in a way that gets you **REMEMBERED**



Your introductions may not work for you or make any impact until you start to see them as positioning.

In rooms that matter, you rarely get more than 30 seconds to be remembered.

Yet many women waste that moment. They swish words together, they list titles, or worse, they shrink.

What do you think is the essence of an introduction? Another opportunity for small talk, or just another filler?

Your introductions may not work for you or make any impact until you start to see them as positioning. And powerful positioning can be done in just three sentences.

When someone asks, “What do you do?” most women respond with:

A job title, vague description, or an apology disguised as humility.

None of these communicate impact, or authority.

The 3-Sentence Rule

A strategic introduction has three parts:

WHO You Serve. WHAT Problem You Solve.

WHAT Impact You Create.

That’s it.

Sentence 1: WHO You Serve (Be specific.)

Sentence 2: WHAT Problem You Solve Now people understand your value.

Sentence 3: WHAT Impact You Create. Impact is what makes you memorable.

A Before & After Example

Weak Introduction: “I run an NGO that helps women.”

Strategic Introduction: “I support women-led organizations in structuring their operations and improving visibility.

We help founders attract funding and strategic partnerships.”

The Confidence Hack

If you struggle to introduce yourself in three sentences, your strategy may not be clear enough.

Clarity in speech reflects clarity in structure. Refine your introduction until it feels strong, grounded, and aligned.

Practice it, own it and say it without shrinking.

Try This Exercise

Write your introduction using this template:

I help _____ (who)

to _____ (solve what problem)

so they can _____ (achieve what impact).

Say it out loud.

If it sounds vague, refine it. If it sounds apologetic, strengthen it.

If it sounds powerful, that’s the one!

Remember, the goal isn’t just to introduce yourself, **it’s to be remembered.**

The Room Strategy

The Art of Choosing Spaces That Elevate Your Influence

Not every room deserves your presence. And not every invitation deserves your energy. One of the most overlooked strategies in movement-building is this: **the rooms you enter determine the results you experience.**

Many change agents focus on working harder. Few focus on choosing better rooms. One important factor to understand about upscaling is that efforts alone will not do the work; the environment you are in also matters a lot.

Why Rooms Matter

A “room” goes beyond a physical space. It can also imply the conversations you’re part of, the people you have access to.

If you constantly sit in rooms where vision is small, resources are scarce and ambition is criticized, this may be a sign that your growth is moving at a slow pace.

For women building bold work, proximity changes perception, and perception influences opportunity.

The 4 Types of Rooms Every Changemaker Must Evaluate

The Validation Room

These are rooms where people clap for you. They admire your work, they celebrate you, they encourage you. But they cannot fund you, elevate you nor expand you. In this kind of space, stay grateful, but don’t get stuck there.

The Learning Room

These are rooms that stretch you. You are not necessarily the smartest nor the most experienced. In these rooms, you are listening more than speaking. This is healthy because if you are always the most accomplished person in the room, you are limiting your expansion.



The Access Room

These rooms contain decision-makers, prospective funders, policy influencers and high-level collaborators.

The Alignment Room

These are people who share your values, your long-term vision and your standard of excellence. Not every powerful room is aligned. Some are impressive but misaligned, so it is worthy to choose carefully.

The Room Strategy requires something different. You must stop asking, “Am I good enough for this room?” And start asking, “Is this room good enough for my vision?” That shift changes everything.

Before committing to any room, ask:

1. Does this space stretch me?
2. Does this space expose me to opportunity?
3. Does this space respect my expertise?
4. Does this space align with my long-term mission?

If the answer is no to all four, it may be a distraction disguised as networking.

Strategic Presence Over Constant Presence

Not every event matters.

Not every panel is necessary.

Not every collaboration is wise.

Selective visibility builds authority.

Scattered presence builds exhaustion.

The most powerful change agents are not everywhere.

They are intentional about where they are seen.

You don’t wait to be invited into better rooms.

You prepare for them. You position for them. You build credibility before the opportunity arrives.

And when the door opens, you don’t shrink inside it. You expand.

Rooms shape results. Conversations shape confidence. Proximity shapes power.

Choose rooms that stretch you and add value to you and your brand.

Playbook Rule:
Choose rooms that stretch your vision, expand your access, and align with your goals. The spaces you occupy shape the impact you create.

NGOCSW70 Forum

A Global Gathering for Gender Equality
9–20 March 2026 | New York City

NGO CSW/NY 70 Forum Reception

The NGO CSW Forum is organized by and for global civil society, non-governmental organizations, and feminists to connect them with the official United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (UN CSW) process. With over 750 events, the NGO CSW Forum informs, engages, and inspires grassroots efforts and gender equality advocacy around the world. While the NGO CSW Forum runs parallel to and complements the UN CSW, it is a separate process with separate organizers.

Register at <https://ngocsw.org/csw70/>



COVER FEATURE

POWERHOUSES OF IMPACT

African Women Shaping the Present and the Future

Across Africa, a powerful generation of women are reshaping leadership, business, culture, and social impact.

Their influence spans presidential offices, corporate boardrooms, grassroots movements, and creative industries, reshaping what progress means across the African continent.

These women are excelling in their fields; they are building institutions, challenging systems, opening doors for others, and amplifying Africa's voice on the global stage. In fields ranging from governance and entrepreneurship to technology, advocacy, healthcare, and the arts, African women are driving transformation in every sector.

This special Women's Month feature celebrates a dynamic group of trailblazers whose strength, innovation, and commitment to change has shaped the present and will shape the future of Africa.

With bold vision, unwavering resilience, and decisive leadership, these women show how empowering women breed thriving communities and stronger nations.

These are the women moving Africa forward; with bold steps, breakthroughs, and lasting legacies.



Ellen Johnson Sirleaf
(Liberia)

Governance and Global Leadership

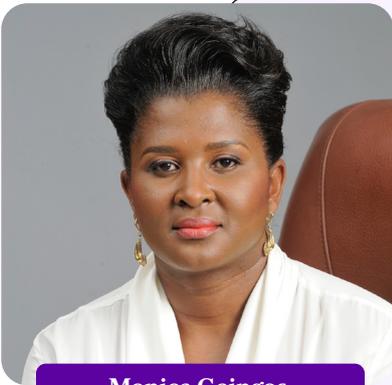
Africa's first elected female president, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf led Liberia through post-war reconstruction and institutional reform while championing women's political participation. Her Nobel Peace Prize recognized her work advancing democracy and peace. Today, she is still mentoring emerging leaders through global initiatives focused on women in governance. Her legacy proves that inclusive leadership can transformations.

Diplomacy and National Leadership

A seasoned diplomat and Ethiopia's first female president, Sahle-Work Zewde spent decades representing her country in international diplomacy and the United Nations. Her presidency symbolizes progress toward gender inclusion in political leadership across Africa. Her work has, and still is, highlights the importance of women's participation in peacebuilding and governance.



Sahle-Work Zewde
(Ethiopia)



Monica Geingos
(Namibia)

Governance & Social Advocacy

As Namibia's former First Lady, Monica Geingos became one of Africa's most influential voices on youth empowerment, governance, and social equity. Her initiatives supporting education and leadership development have helped shape conversations on ethical leadership across the continent. She has served as board member and director within many of the country's large companies. She has also chaired the Presidential Economic Advisory Council. Her advocacy is an inspiration to a new generation of African leaders.

Governance and Public Accountability

A respected economist and former government minister, Oby Ezekwesili has become one of Africa's strongest voices for transparency and accountability. As co-founder of the Bring Back Our Girls movement, she amplified global attention to human rights and girls' education. Her continued advocacy reinforces the importance of civic engagement in shaping democratic societies.



Oby Ezekwesili
(Nigeria)



Graça Machel
(Mozambique)

Humanitarian Advocacy

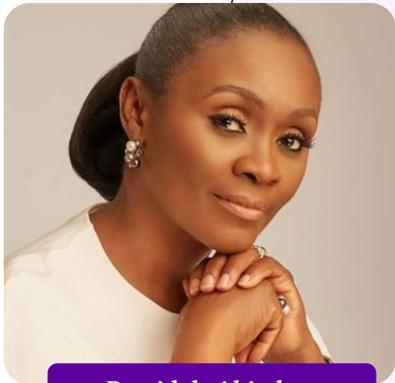
Graça Machel is a globally respected advocate for women’s and children’s rights whose work has shaped international conversations on education, health, and social justice. Through decades of humanitarian engagement and collaboration with global organizations, she has championed policies that protect and empower vulnerable communities. She previously served as Mozambique’s Minister for Education and Culture, leading major reforms that expanded access to education after independence. In recognition of her humanitarian impact, she was made an honorary Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire. Machel also holds a unique place in history as the only woman to have served as First Lady of two countries; Mozambique and South Africa.

Social Advocacy

As First Lady of Sierra Leone, Fatima Maada Bio leads the “Hands Off Our Girls” campaign combating sexual violence and promoting girls’ education. The initiative has mobilized national and international support to address gender-based violence. Her advocacy has elevated conversations around protecting and empowering young women in Africa.



Fatima Maada Bio
(Sierra Leone)



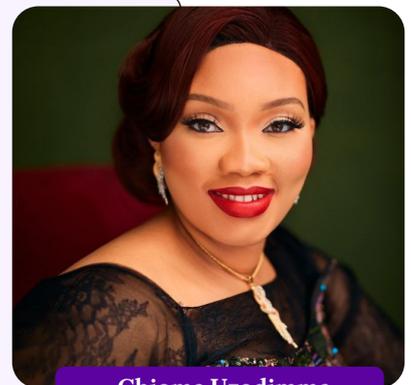
Bamidele Abiodun
(Nigeria)

Social Impact and Community Development

Through the Ajose Foundation, Bamidele Abiodun has championed maternal health, youth development, and women’s empowerment in Ogun State. Her initiatives focus on improving social welfare and supporting vulnerable populations. Her work highlights the growing role of philanthropic leadership in driving community transformation.

Community Development

As First Lady of Imo State, Chioma Uzodimma leads the GoodHope Flourish Foundation, supporting women’s empowerment and humanitarian initiatives. Her programs provide support for families and communities facing economic and social challenges. Her work reflects the growing influence of women in advancing grassroots development.



Chioma Uzodimma
(Nigeria)



Olufolake AbdulRazaq
(Nigeria)

Social Development and Women's Empowerment

As First Lady of Kwara State, Olufolake AbdulRazaq is the founder of the Ajike People Support Centre, an initiative dedicated to supporting women, youth, and vulnerable populations through empowerment programs and social services. Her work focuses on skills development, social welfare, and strengthening opportunities for economic independence. Through these initiatives, she continues to promote inclusive development and community advancement across the state.

Women's Empowerment and Social Development

Through initiatives supporting women's livelihoods and community welfare in Katsina State, Zulaihat Dikko Radda has become an advocate for social inclusion. Her programs focus on skills development and empowerment for women across local communities. Her leadership demonstrates how public service platforms can drive tangible impact.



Zulaihat Dikko Radda
(Nigeria)



Hajiya Aisha Bala Mohammed
(Nigeria)

Social Impact and Community Development

As First Lady of Bauchi State, Hajiya Aisha Bala Mohammed leads several initiatives focused on improving the welfare of women, children, and vulnerable communities. Through advocacy and community programs, she has championed maternal health, girl-child education, and economic empowerment for women. Her work reflects the growing role of women in public leadership who leverage influence to drive meaningful grassroots development.

Banking and Finance

Funke Osibodu broke barriers as one of the few women to lead a major Nigerian bank. During her tenure as Managing Director of Union Bank, she played a critical role in corporate restructuring and strengthening financial leadership. Her career helped open pathways for more women in executive banking roles.



Funke Osibodu
(Nigeria)



Halima Buba
(Nigeria)

Banking and Financial Markets

As Managing Director of SunTrust Bank Nigeria, Halima Buba has built a reputation for strategic leadership in corporate banking and financial markets. Her career reflects the growing presence of women leading financial institutions in Africa. Her leadership contributes to shaping a more inclusive banking sector.

Banking Leadership

Yemisi Edun made history as the first female Managing Director of First City Monument Bank. Her leadership has guided the bank through transformation and innovation in Nigeria's financial sector. She represents a new generation of women redefining executive leadership in finance.



Yemisi Edun
(Nigeria)



Nkemdilim Uwaje Begho
(Nigeria)

Technology and Digital Transformation

As CEO of Future Software Resources, Nkemdilim Uwaje Begho has been at the forefront of digital transformation initiatives across Africa. Her work focuses on leveraging technology to improve governance, business efficiency, and public service delivery. Her influence highlights the importance of digital innovation in Africa's future.

Security and Entrepreneurship

Divine Ndhlukula founded Securico Security Services, building one of Zimbabwe's largest security companies from the ground up. Her success in a traditionally male-dominated industry has made her a role model for women entrepreneurs across Africa. Her work demonstrates how resilience and innovation can redefine industries.



Divine Ndhlukula
(Zimbabwe)



Salwa Idrissi Akhannouch (Morocco)

Retail and Luxury Commerce

As founder and CEO of AKSAL Group, Salwa Idrissi Akhannouch has built one of Morocco's most influential retail empires. Her company has introduced international luxury brands to North Africa while developing local retail infrastructure. Her leadership reflects the growing strength of African women in global commerce.

Mining and Energy

Bridgette Radebe is one of South Africa's pioneering women in the mining industry and founder of Mmakau Mining. Her career has broken gender barriers in one of Africa's most strategic economic sectors. She continues to advocate for inclusive participation in the continent's natural resource industries.



Bridgette Radebe (South Africa)

Corporate Leadership

As CEO of Naspers South Africa, Phuti Mahanyele-Dabengwa leads one of Africa's most influential technology and media companies. Her career spans investment, corporate governance, and economic development. She represents the expanding influence of African women in global corporate leadership.



Phuti Mahanyele-Dabengwa (South Africa)

Business and Philanthropy

A respected entrepreneur and philanthropist, Wendy Appelbaum has supported education, healthcare, and women's empowerment initiatives across South Africa. As Chair of De Morgenzon Wine Estate, she has also contributed to innovation within the country's agricultural sector. Her work blends business success with meaningful social impact.



Wendy Appelbaum (South Africa)



Isabel dos Santos
(Angola)

Corporate Leadership and Investment

Former Chairperson of Sonangol and prominent investor in telecommunications, banking, and energy, Isabel Dos Santos has played a transformative role in shaping corporate investment across Africa. Her work demonstrates how African women can lead at the highest levels of business, driving growth and inspiring future female leaders.

Beauty and Creative Arts

Joy Adenuga has built an international reputation in editorial beauty and fashion makeup. Her work has appeared across global campaigns and publications, showcasing African talent on the world stage. She represents the growing global influence of African creatives.



Joy Adenuga
(Nigeria)



Zainab Ashadu
(Nigeria)

Luxury Accessories Design

Zainab Ashadu founded Zashadu, a luxury leather accessories brand rooted in African craftsmanship. Her work blends sustainability with modern design aesthetics. Her brand has helped elevate African-made luxury products globally.

Fashion Industry Development

Omoyemi Akerele founded Lagos Fashion Week, a platform that has propelled African designers onto the global fashion stage. Through her work, she has built an ecosystem supporting emerging fashion talent across the continent. Her efforts continue to position Africa as a creative powerhouse in the global fashion industry.



Omoyemi Akerele
(Nigeria)



Ola Brown
(Nigeria)

Healthcare Innovation

Ola Brown founded Flying Doctors Nigeria, Africa's first air ambulance service, revolutionizing emergency medical response across the region. Her work has improved access to critical healthcare services and emergency transport. Today, her organization continues expanding healthcare innovation across Africa.

2026 EVENT CALENDER

Activity	Description	Date	Venue
Virtual Book Review Session	Discussion of the selected book, member contributions, questions, key lessons + personal reflections	Fortnightly	Zoom
Documentary/Movie Review Session	Discussion of the selected documentary, contributions, reflection questions, lessons, and insights	Monthly	Zoom
Savvy Skill Session (Virtual Masterclass)	A practical learning session led by an expert or member, focused on building personal and professional skills, with actionable takeaways	Monthly	Zoom
Author Reading & Conversation Session	A curated session where a featured author reads excerpts from their book, shares insights, and engages members in an interactive discussion and Q&A.	Quarterly	TBA
Savvy Ladies Book Signing & Literary Soiree	A special event where members meet a featured author, enjoy short conversations, networking, and photo moments.	October	TBA
Savvy Reads Podcast / IG Live	A live or conversation exploring the monthly book, and real-life insights, featuring member voices, guest experts, or authors.	Periodically	Instagram
Member Spotlight (side bar)	A feature spotlighting an active Savvy Ladies Book Club member, sharing her story, reading journey, and achievements	Periodically	Instagram



This International Women's Day (and going forward) we are normalizing



**Women raising
their prices**
without an apology



**Women
building
slowly**

and still calling
themselves
successful



**Women
coming
together**

to collaborate
and support one
another



**Women
rebuilding
their
brands**

instead of forcing
what does not fit
anymore

TRENDS AND EXPRESSIONS OF THE MODERN WOMAN

by Andrea Adimora

Power in Purple

How to Represent the Purple Culture This International Women's Day

Every March 8, the world turns purple. From social media graphics to corporate campaigns, from scarves to statement blazers, purple dominates International Women's Day.

Why Purple?

Purple became associated with the women's movement in the early 1900s through the Women's Social and Political Union, a British suffrage group founded in 1903. The organization adopted purple, white, and green as its official colors.

Purple symbolized dignity and justice, white represented purity, while green stood for hope.

Over time, purple emerged as the dominant global color of International Women's Day; representing justice, leadership, and the fight for equality.

This year, when you wear purple on IWD, you are aligning with over a century of advocacy.



SISterly

HOW TO REP THE PURPLE CULTURE



THE POWER BLAZER MOMENT

A tailored purple blazer over a neutral outfit instantly commands authority. Pair with black, white, beige, or denim for a clean leadership aesthetic. Perfect for corporate events or panel appearances.



STATEMENT ACCESSORIES



Not ready for a full purple look? Go subtle. can elevate a neutral outfit while still honoring the day.



CULTURAL FUSION

In African fashion, purple translates beautifully in prints. You and your crew can rep by doing customized tie and die/adire.



MONOCHROME CONFIDENCE

Head-to-toe purple - lavender, plum, lilac, or deep violet makes a striking statement. Mixing shades within the same colour family adds depth and sophistication.



BEAUTY AS EXPRESSION



A soft plum lip, lilac nails, or violet eyeshadow can be your quiet nod to the movement subtle yet intentional.

LEVEL UP

Become So Valuable They Can't Ignore You

By Seun Gbadamosi



Let me tell you something I've observed. Some people attend high-level events like they're going to collect destiny.

They enter the room scanning for "Who can help me?" Who has the money? Who has influence? Who can open a door?

They rehearse their elevator pitch. They position themselves strategically. They even take selfies for evidence.

Humm... If your only value in the room is "need", people can smell it. And need is not networking currency, rather, Value is.

I once attended a leadership conference and a point shared by one of the speakers made a whole lot of sense to me. She shared that many young people walk up to her and always ask "Please can you mentor me," or they just go straight to talking about their services like it's a sales pitch.

Until she met particular young lady who made the difference.

"I saw your organisation's last campaign. I noticed your storytelling angle could be stronger. I run a small media team, I'd love to volunteer a content strategy session."

Same room. Same access. Different posture. She didn't approach with a "beggy" tone, she approached as an asset.

And guess what? That conversation didn't end in the hallway.

Networking Is Not Extraction. It's Exchange.

Some of us think "networking up" means standing next to power and hoping some of it

rubs off. But powerful people are constantly asking one silent question:

"What do you bring?"

The truth is that Influence protects its ecosystem. If you want access to higher rooms, your value must grow to match the temperature of that room.

So What Do You Actually Bring?

Let's break it down. Value can be in terms of insight, execution, technical skill, creative thinking, reliability, solutions or something as simple as a needed perspective.

Sometimes, what you bring is energy and excellence.

Sometimes, it's data.

Sometimes, it's your network.

But if you cannot clearly articulate your value, then there must be an issue.

Flip the Question

Rather than thinking of how to milk people and thinking of ways that they can help you, why not look for ways you can contribute meaningfully to what they're building?

Or when you see an opportunity with someone, rather than presenting it in that way, present it as a gap you noticed and are willing to help fill, or simply offer the "gap" on the spot, sis, no time!

That shift alone changes how you are perceived.

If you're trying to enter rooms where you genuinely have nothing to offer yet, that's not networking, it can be considered as aspiration, which is not bad in itself.

But then the work is to build yourself until your presence adds weight.

So before you reach for bigger rooms, ask yourself quietly:

"If I were them... would I invest in me?" And if the answer is shaky, don't be discouraged. Just continue to build. The goal is not to meet powerful people.

The goal is to become valuable enough that powerful people are glad they met you.

This or That (IWD Edition)

A surprise ₦10 million alert with no backstory

A fully paid year in Paris to write, rest, and rediscover yourself.

Becoming the youngest director in your organisation this year.

A private investor who believes in you and funds your vision quietly.

A high-paying role at a prestigious multinational organisation.

Being invited into powerful political spaces to shape national conversations.

Taking a sabbatical year to fully heal and recalibrate.

The soft life with zero stress for you and just your nuclear family.

A partner who earns less but worships the ground you walk on.

A thriving business that consumes most of your time and funds your lifestyle.

The opportunity to speak at the biggest conference in your industry.

A promotion with a bigger paycheck but double the pressure.

A 6 month mentorship under the richest woman in Africa

Seed funding to launch the idea you've been sitting on for three years.

Quitting to build a brand with your name on it.

Winning a global award that instantly makes you a household name.

Buying your dream home this year.

Moving abroad permanently with guaranteed comfort.

Taking a high-risk equity deal that could change your net worth forever.

The high-impact, time consuming life that changes generations.

One who matches your ambition but challenges you daily.

A stable 9-5 with less burden where you earn just enough.

A private island getaway for a week.

A guaranteed 3-day workweek with your current pay.

OR

GIVE TO GAIN

How LSETF Is Empowering Women to Build Thriving Enterprises

Message from Feyisayo Alayande, *Executive Secretary, Lagos State Employment Trust Fund*



This Women's Month, I want you to meet four women who make me proud every single day.

There is the woman with a disability who refused to be told what she couldn't do. Through our D2A (Disability to Ability) programme, she learned device repair which is a field where men dominate and PWDs are invisible. Today, she is thriving and proving that disability is not inability.

There's the trader in Surulere who we gave a loan at 9% per annum. She scaled her liquid soap trading line from just receiving orders to having products on ground for sale which means one loan led to two revenue streams.

There's the lady who was a domestic staff, determined to build something better for herself. She enrolled in our HVAC training and today, she works at LG, one of Nigeria's biggest companies in electronics.

We build intentionality into our programmes and that can be seen with a female-owned social enterprise that took part in our idea hub and scaled and built a community.

When we give women an opportunity, they gain momentum and when we invest in women, they transform their stories.

They came home and lifted their families differently, they

employed others.

They inspired their communities, they cared for Lagos like they care for their homes.

That is Give To Gain.

It's recognizing that when women are given support which is fair capital, honest training, genuine belief, They nurture prosperity that touches everything.

To every woman reading this, I want you to deeply

understand you and your story matters.

Whether you are a PWD, a domestic worker, a trader, or even unemployed, you belong in the conversations and rooms that matter, your voice deserves to be heard and you deserve support that trusts you.

This is #CitizensOfLSETF. This is Give To Gain. This is Lagos growing stronger.

Women by the Numbers: LSETF's Impact

- Since inception, the Fund has reached about 72,653 women with numerous programmes and projects.
- Women account for 57% (11,541) of LSETF's loan beneficiaries, receiving about N6.8bn worth of disbursements since inception.
- Almost the same rate was observed in grant disbursements with nearly N1.57bn to 5,247 women, representing 56% of total beneficiaries.
- 58% or 13,590 of the Fund's employability programme beneficiaries are women, indicating targeted focus on inclusion through women empowerment.

Stories of Impact: Women Beneficiaries of LSETF

From Domestic Work to Skilled Technician: How One Woman Rewrote Her Future in Six Weeks

In a city as fast-paced as Lagos, opportunity can often feel distant for those caught in cycles of informal work. For Favour, life was defined by survival; moving from month to month while working in domestic service, with no formal training, no certification, and little visibility of what the future could hold.

But she carried something powerful: the desire for more.

Everything began to change when she heard about the **HVAC technical training programme** offered by the **Lagos State Employment Trust Fund (LSETF)** in partnership with **King's Trust International (KTI)**.

The programme was intensive and lasted just six weeks. Favour had no technical background, no prior experience in engineering. What she did have was determination.

During the training, she discovered skills she never knew she possessed. With each week, confidence replaced doubt.

By week six, Favour graduated with a professional

certification.

Today, she works as an HVAC technician with **LG Electronics**, one of the world's leading appliance manufacturers. What once felt impossible has become her new reality: a stable income, technical expertise, and a career with real growth potential.

"I wanted a better life for myself," Favour says. "LSETF and KTI gave me the tools to build it."

The Bigger Picture

Across Lagos, thousands of young women remain trapped in informal work with limited pathways for advancement. Favour's story highlights what becomes possible when access to skills training meets opportunity.

In just six weeks, one certification opened the door to an entirely new future.

When institutions invest intentionally in people, transformation can happen faster than we imagine.

At Lagos State Employment Trust Fund, We Give to Gain



Fair Capital Changes Everything: The Mrs. Rashidat Story

For eight years, **Mrs. Rashidat** ran her drinks and POS business in Surulere. She was hardworking, consistent, and committed, but growth felt slow. Traditional bank loans carried interest rates too high for her to scale.

Then came a turning point: **a loan from Lagos State Employment Trust Fund (LSETF) at just 9%.**

But she didn't just use the money to expand what she already knew. Mrs. Rashidat **pivoted entirely**. She learned to produce liquid soap and washes, building a brand from scratch. Within months, what had started as a side experiment became a thriving revenue stream. She hired another employee and created a new job in Surulere.

Her story is proof that **accessible support helps entrepreneurs and also builds communities.**

At LSETF, We Give to Gain.



From Local Brand to Regional Force: How House of Zibima Transformed a Vision into a Fashion Movement

House of Zibima began as a small sustainable fashion business, with limited market reach and an unclear growth path. The team had vision, but needed structure, strategy, and guidance.

Participation in the Lagos State Employment Trust Fund Idea Hub Accelerator Programme provided House of Zibima with structured training, mentorship, and strategic support, tools that helped strengthen operations, refine its growth strategy, and identify new expansion opportunities.

The results speak for themselves. With targeted guidance and practical tools, House of Zibima evolved from a small operational business into a revenue-generating social enterprise, ready to make a mark on the regional fashion scene.

This story shows that when training meets strategic support, local brands can grow beyond borders.

At LSETF, We Give to Gain.





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Women SDG Advocates Conference 2026

Mobilizes Women Leaders for Shared Action
on Sustainable Development



More than 200 women leaders, advocates, entrepreneurs, and development professionals gathered in Lagos for the Women SDG Advocates Conference 2026, organized by the African Cleanup Initiative (ACI) and co-hosted by CSR-in-Action.

Held at the Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Victoria Island, the conference commemorated International Women's Day under the theme "Give to Gain: Empowering Women Through Shared Action." The event convened a diverse network of women working across sustainability, governance, entrepreneurship, and community development to advance the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).



A Call for Intentional Collaboration

In her welcome address, Bekeme Masade-Olowola, Chief Executive of CSR-in-Action, expressed appreciation to Dr. Alexander Akhigbe, CEO of the African Cleanup Initiative and Global HeForShe Advocate, for creating a platform that encourages collaboration and empowerment among women in the SDG space.

She noted that women have long contributed to societal progress through leadership and service, but emphasized that sustained impact requires stronger support systems among women. Mentorship, partnerships, and inclusive leadership opportunities, she explained, are essential to ensure women not only participate in development efforts but also influence key decisions. She also encouraged participants to embrace financial empowerment as a means of expanding their social impact.



Leadership, Voice, and Shared Impact

The keynote address was delivered by Dr. Oreoluwa Finnih-Awokoya, Special Adviser to the Lagos State Governor on SDGs, represented by Mrs. Kafayat Olayemi Sarummi from the Lagos State Office of Sustainable Development

Goals. The keynote urged women to see themselves as drivers of systemic change rather than passive participants in development conversations.

Participants were encouraged to strengthen collaboration, share knowledge, and amplify each other's work to expand their collective impact.



Insights from Expert Speakers

Panel discussions explored how women-led initiatives can scale their impact through partnerships, data, and strategic communication. Speakers included sustainability and development experts such as Victoria Nwadoka, Agharese Lucia, Natalie Beinisch, Kofoworola Awotoye, Ibronke Olubamise, Belinda Odeneye, Victoria Uwadoka, Titilope Oguntuga, and Monica Nwaosu.

Discussions emphasized the importance of documenting impact, using data-driven storytelling, and strengthening accountability mechanisms to attract partnerships and funding.

From Dialogue to Action

Participants later engaged in breakout sessions focused on key SDG clusters, including gender equality, economic empowerment, environmental sustainability, and governance. Each group developed collaborative project ideas to be submitted by June 2026, ensuring the conference would translate dialogue into action.

As the event concluded, participants reaffirmed a shared pledge to empower one another, build strategic partnerships, and advance sustainable development through collective action.



Rising Force



Dionne Akom Tweneboah

Championing Dignity, Health, and Opportunities for Women and Girls

Dionne Akom Tweneboah is part of a new generation of African changemakers who understand that sustainable progress begins when women and girls are given the support, knowledge, and dignity they deserve. With a deep passion for community development and social justice, Dionne has committed her work to addressing the everyday challenges that limit the wellbeing and opportunities of vulnerable women and girls.

She is the Founder of the Nzuri Uhai Foundation, an organization dedicated to improving the lives of underserved communities through initiatives focused on menstrual health, education, and empowerment. Through the foundation, Dionne has created platforms that break the silence around menstrual health while providing practical support for girls who often miss school due to lack of access to sanitary products and information.

Under her leadership, Nzuri Uhai Foundation has carried out outreach programs that distribute menstrual hygiene kits, provide health education, and encourage open conversations that challenge stigma and misinformation. By equipping girls with knowledge and essential resources, Dionne is helping them stay in school, build confidence, and navigate adolescence with dignity.

Beyond health advocacy, Dionne's work is rooted in a broader vision of empowerment. She believes that when girls are informed, supported, and confident in their bodies and abilities, they are better positioned to pursue education, leadership, and economic independence. Through community engagement and partnerships, she continues to amplify the importance of creating environments where women and girls can thrive.

Her growing impact reflects the power of grassroots leadership and the role young women play in shaping Africa's future. Through the Nzuri Uhai Foundation, Dionne Akom Tweneboah is not only addressing urgent health needs but also nurturing a culture where girls feel seen, valued, and empowered.

With compassion, and a commitment to lasting change, Dionne is helping build a future where dignity, opportunity, and wellbeing are not privileges, but realities for every girl.

DEAR SIS

Why do some grants require applicants to post videos and tag them? Are applicants being used to generate content and traffic for their page?



Dear SIS,

I'm a passionate NGO founder who regularly applies for grants. I've noticed that some applications, especially women-focused grants, require recording a video after completing the form, and sometimes even ask applicants to post the video on Instagram while tagging or collaborating with the organization.

I understand that videos can help reviewers see the person behind the application, but it raises a question for me. If many applicants go through the effort of recording and posting these videos but are not selected, could the requirement also be serving as a way for organizations to generate engagement and content for their platforms?

Is this practice truly about selecting the best candidates, or something else?

A Thoughtful Applicant

Dear TA,

Your question is both insightful and timely, and you're certainly not the only one who has wondered about this.

Many organizations include video submissions because they provide something written applications cannot always capture: personality, conviction, and the authenticity of an applicant's story. For grant reviewers, especially when dealing with hundreds of applications, a short video can make it easier to understand the person behind the proposal.

However, when those videos are required to be posted publicly or tied to social media engagement, the intention can sometimes become less clear.

In some cases, organizations genuinely want to amplify the voices of women entrepreneurs and showcase the diversity of people applying. In other cases, social media visibility becomes part of the program's marketing ecosystem. The truth is that both motivations can exist at the same time.

That said, ethical grant programs should ensure that the effort required from applicants is reasonable and directly related to the selection process. If videos are necessary for evaluation, they do not always need to be public.

Transparency about why certain requirements exist can go a long way in maintaining trust.

For applicants, it's helpful to approach these opportunities with a balance of enthusiasm and discernment. Before submitting, consider whether the requirements feel aligned with the opportunity being offered. If the process demands significant public promotion before any support is given, it's reasonable to pause and assess whether the exchange feels fair.

Your story, and your time are valuable. Grants should not only identify promising entrepreneurs but also respect the effort applicants invest in the process.

And for organizations designing these programs, your question serves as an important reminder: when the pursuit of visibility overshadows the purpose of empowerment, even the most well-intentioned initiatives risk losing the trust of the very people they aim to support.

SIS is rooting for you.

With purpose,

SIS

Dear SIS is a segment where we respond to questions from our community, gathered through our channels, To have your question featured, kindly send an email to sis@socialimpactsteward.com

Resources

THE POWER TOOL KIT: 10 Things Every Ambitious Woman Should Have

Ambition is powerful, but ambition alone isn't enough. The women who consistently step into bigger rooms, seize opportunities, and build meaningful careers usually have something else in common, they stay prepared.

Not just for the jobs they have today, but for the opportunities they haven't even been offered yet.

From how you present yourself to how you document your wins, build your network, and invest in your own growth, the right tools can position you for the moments that change everything.

A well-structured planner (clarity)



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A personal brand bio ready at all times (opportunity readiness)

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A signature blazer (authority)



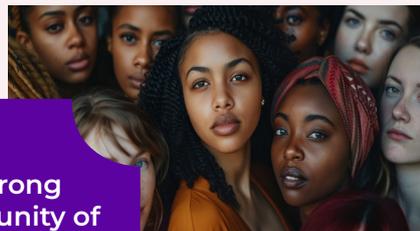
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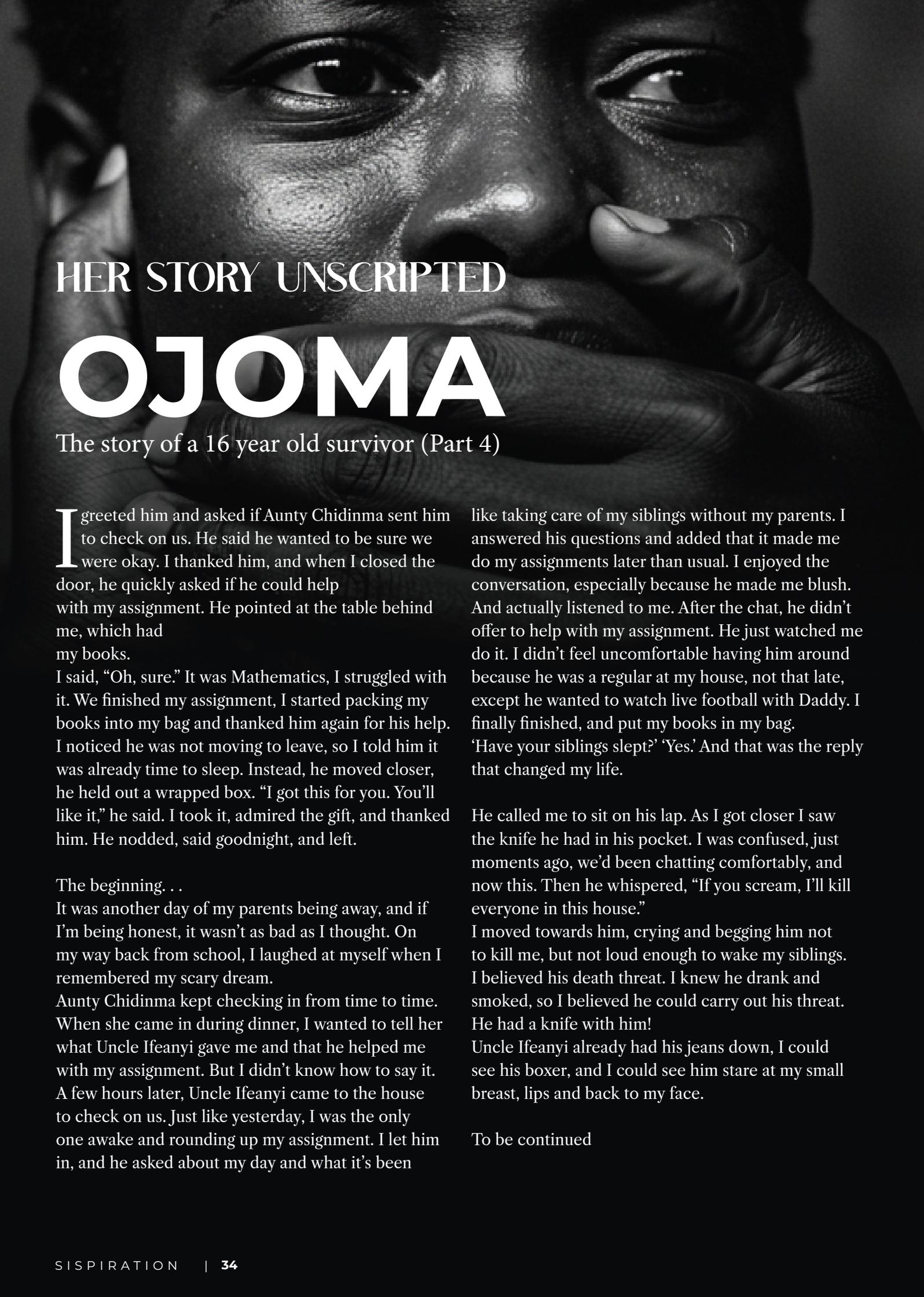


A strong community of women



A 'wins' folder (for self-reminders)





HER STORY UNSCRIPTED

OJOMA

The story of a 16 year old survivor (Part 4)

I greeted him and asked if Auntie Chidinma sent him to check on us. He said he wanted to be sure we were okay. I thanked him, and when I closed the door, he quickly asked if he could help with my assignment. He pointed at the table behind me, which had my books.

I said, "Oh, sure." It was Mathematics, I struggled with it. We finished my assignment, I started packing my books into my bag and thanked him again for his help. I noticed he was not moving to leave, so I told him it was already time to sleep. Instead, he moved closer, he held out a wrapped box. "I got this for you. You'll like it," he said. I took it, admired the gift, and thanked him. He nodded, said goodnight, and left.

The beginning. . .

It was another day of my parents being away, and if I'm being honest, it wasn't as bad as I thought. On my way back from school, I laughed at myself when I remembered my scary dream.

Auntie Chidinma kept checking in from time to time. When she came in during dinner, I wanted to tell her what Uncle Ifeanyi gave me and that he helped me with my assignment. But I didn't know how to say it. A few hours later, Uncle Ifeanyi came to the house to check on us. Just like yesterday, I was the only one awake and rounding up my assignment. I let him in, and he asked about my day and what it's been

like taking care of my siblings without my parents. I answered his questions and added that it made me do my assignments later than usual. I enjoyed the conversation, especially because he made me blush. And actually listened to me. After the chat, he didn't offer to help with my assignment. He just watched me do it. I didn't feel uncomfortable having him around because he was a regular at my house, not that late, except he wanted to watch live football with Daddy. I finally finished, and put my books in my bag. 'Have your siblings slept?' 'Yes.' And that was the reply that changed my life.

He called me to sit on his lap. As I got closer I saw the knife he had in his pocket. I was confused, just moments ago, we'd been chatting comfortably, and now this. Then he whispered, "If you scream, I'll kill everyone in this house."

I moved towards him, crying and begging him not to kill me, but not loud enough to wake my siblings. I believed his death threat. I knew he drank and smoked, so I believed he could carry out his threat. He had a knife with him!

Uncle Ifeanyi already had his jeans down, I could see his boxer, and I could see him stare at my small breast, lips and back to my face.

To be continued



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World Bank Sounds Alarm on Gender Law Gaps



WORLD BANK GROUP

The numbers are in, and they're uncomfortable.

A recent report by the World Bank reveals that while many countries have gender-equality laws on paper, enforcement is the real problem. Fewer than 5% of women globally live in countries with near-full legal equality in practice.

Translation? Policies may exist, but access, protection, and economic participation still lag behind.

For women building businesses, leading institutions, or navigating corporate systems, this isn't abstract. Weak enforcement affects access to credit, property rights, childcare systems, and workplace protection.

This means that progress headlines don't always equal lived reality.

Source: Reuters, World Bank Gender Equality Report (2026)



Grassroots Mobilisation Against Gender Violence

The streets are still speaking.

From South Asia to parts of Africa, activists marked this season with rallies, art protests, and public performances demanding stronger action against gender-based violence.

Campaigns under movements like One Billion Rising are mobilising communities with one message: awareness is not enough and accountability is overdue.

What's powerful? These aren't just symbolic gatherings. Local organisers are tying activism to policy demands, funding for shelters, and stronger law enforcement frameworks.

The energy feels less like annual commemoration... and more like sustained resistance.

Source: The Times of India, global movement coverage (2026)

International Women's Day Gets Creative



This year's International Women's Day celebrations didn't stop at panel discussions. Across major cities, the month has featured concerts honouring forgotten female pioneers, immersive art exhibitions spotlighting immigrant women's stories, and community storytelling forums that feel more like movements than events.

So what's the exact shift? Culture is being used as activism. Creativity as confrontation. And celebration as strategy.

Yes, women are being applauded, they're being archived, amplified, and historicised in real time.
Source: San Francisco Chronicle, Women's History Month coverage (2026)



CSW70 Pushes "Access to Justice" to the Front

At the 70th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW70), one theme rose above the applause: justice.

Delegates and advocates are calling for stronger legal systems that don't just recognise women's rights but actively protect them, especially in fragile states and conflict zones.

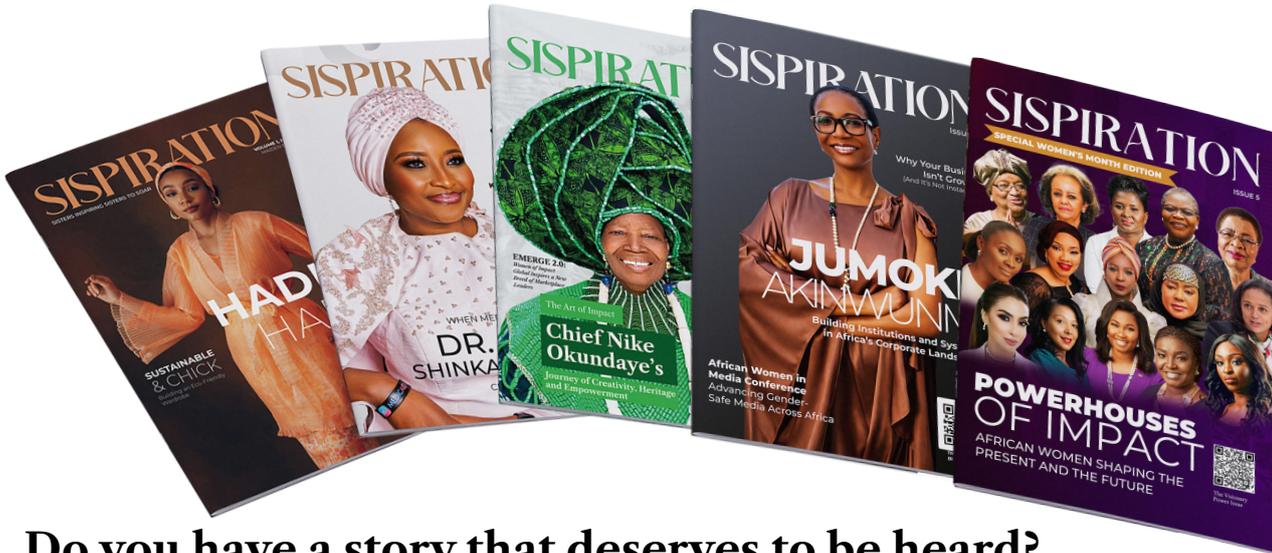
The tone this year feels sharper, less symbolic and more structural. Without functioning justice systems, empowerment conversations stall.

CSW70 is signalling a pivot: from inspiration to implementation.

Source: United Nations Women, CSW70 briefings (2026)

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An intimate gathering is on the horizon

This upcoming brunch will bring together a select group of women leaders, founders, and changemakers for an afternoon of connection, insight, and shared inspiration.

More details will be unveiled soon.

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**Attendance will be
by invitation.**

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