Duchess
INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE
. . . inspiring & showcasing women
ISSN 2632 - 4709
A Custodian Global Consult Publication

# DR. MRS. RONKE SOYOMBO:

## The Reformer Bridging Education, Ethics, and Innovation



IWD 2025 SPECIAL EDITION



# POWER, PROGRESS, & IMPACT:

## HOW AFRICAN WOMEN ARE SHAPING POLICY, BUSINESS, AND INNOVATION IN THE 21ST CENTURY



### MARIE KHONE FAYE:

Senegal's Compassionate Visionary Redefining the Role of First Lady



### MRS. OGHOGHO G. MUSA:

An Exemplary Leader Fostering Unity, Empowerment, and Service as DEPOWA's 15th President



### FIRST LADY OF KEBBI STATE, H. E. HAJIYA ZAINAB NASARE:

A heroine who Empowers and Inspires

# INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY CONFERENCE ITINERARY

| Date | Activity | Venue | Time | Dress Codes |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| April 23 | Registration \| Meet & Greet | Pullman Hotels & Resorts, Dakar, Teranga | 4pm-9pm | Smart Casual |
| April 24 | Tree Planting | (Senegal Tours) | 10am-4pm | Souvenir T-Shirt and Jeans |
| April 25 | Sightseeing | (Senegal Tours) | 10am-5pm | Smart Casual |
| April 26 | Conference | Pullman Hotels & Resorts, Dakar, Teranga | 9am-5pm | Elegant Native |
| April 26 | Dinner and Awards Night | Pullman Hotels & Resorts, Dakar, Teranga | 8pm-11pm | Native Attire |

PARTNERS:

POWERED BY:

SPEAKERS

**Red Carpet/ Coffee/ Networking/ Meet and Greet- 9:00am-9:30am**

**Theme presentation - 9:35am-10:20am**

**Questions and Answers - 10:20am-10:40am**

**First Session - 10:45am-12:50pm**

**Lunch - 1:00pm-1:45pm**

**Second Session - 2:00pm-4:00pm**

**Coffee Break - 4:00pm-4:15pm**

**Wrap-up Session - 4:20pm-5:00pm**

SPEAKERS



HER EXCELLENCY,
**HAJ ZAINAB NASARE NASIR IDRIS**
First Lady, Kebbi State



**DR. (MRS.) RONKE SOYOMBO**
National Director,
Professional Women's Council
S. A. to the Ogun State Governor on Education



**MRS OGHOGHO GWABIN MUSA**
President, Defence and Police Officers Wives Association (DEPOWA).



**AMB.BETTY MAHUGU**
Hon. Commissioner for Women, Youth, and Children, African Tourism Board.



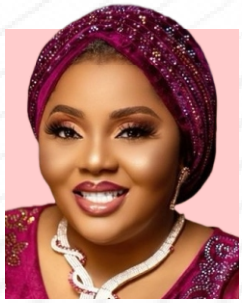
**MRS KAFILAT ARAOYE**
Managing Director, LOTUS Bank



**LISA CHRISTOFFERSEN**
Founder, Lioness Rally



**ALHAJI BASHIR ADEWALE ADENIYI, MFR**
Comptroller General,
Nigerian Customs Service



**DR. SAFIYA STEPHANIE MUSA**
Deputy National Director,
Professional Women's Council
Executive Director, Zaihar Healthcare Ltd



**HONOURABLE LAMI DANLADI**
Deputy Speaker,
Benue State House of Assembly



**PROFESSOR IFEYINWA NSUDE**
Department of Mass Communication,
Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki, Nigeria



**MRS. NDEYE FATOU MBODJ**
General Administrator of
FONGIP, Senegal



**DR.VICTORIA WANAMBIRO**
Author, HR Consultant,
Executive Coach, & Keynote Speaker

# SPEAKERS' CITATION



HER EXCELLENCY,
**HAJ ZAINAB NASARE NASIR IDRIS**
First Lady, Kebbi State

Hajia Zainab Nasare Nasir Idris, the First Lady of Kebbi State, advocates for women's welfare, children's rights, and community development through her Nasara Foundation. She champions healthcare, education, and poverty alleviation, empowering women and supporting orphans. Her compassionate leadership and humanitarian dedication inspire women in leadership.



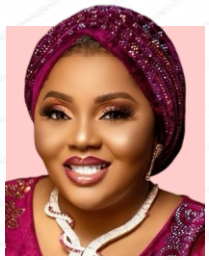
**DR. (MRS.) RONKE SOYOMBO**
National Director, Professional Women's Council
S. A. to the Ogun State Governor on Education

Dr. Ronke Soyombo is a distinguished educationist, business lawyer, and Microsoft-certified professional with over three decades of teaching experience across Nigeria and the UK. She is a pioneer in ICT-enhanced pedagogy, former Director General of Education Quality Assurance in Lagos, and Special Adviser on Education in Ogun State.



**MRS. NDEYE FATOU MBODJ**
General Administrator of
FONGIP, Senegal

Ndèye Fatou Mbodj has brought transformative leadership to FONGIP, prioritising support for marginalised groups, including street vendors and persons with disabilities. Her commitment to inclusive economic development, transparent governance, and grassroots empowerment reflects Senegal's progressive vision. By championing local entrepreneurship and social justice, she exemplifies public service at its most impactful.



**DR. SAFIYA STEPHANIE MUSA**
Deputy National Director,
Professional Women's Council
Executive Director, Zaihar Healthcare Ltd

Dr. Safiya Stephanie Musa, MPI is a visionary leader with expertise in economics, healthcare, and humanitarianism. A Yale and INSEAD Alumna, she drives innovation as Executive Director of Zaihar Healthcare Ltd and empowers through initiatives like EduShine Support Foundation, promoting education and economic inclusion.



**MRS OGHOGHO GWABIN MUSA**
President, Defence and Police Officers
Wives Association (DEPOWA).

Mrs Oghogho Gwabin Musa is the current President of Defence and Police Officers' Wives Association (DEPOWA), promoting women's socio-economic empowerment through entrepreneurship and mindset reorientation. She is a distinguished educator, humanitarian, and philanthropist, passionate about mentoring, community development, and healthy living, with a vision to empower women and girls.



**AMB.BETTY MAHUGU**
Hon. Commissioner for Women, Youth,
and Children, African Tourism Board.

Ambassador Betty Mahugu is a transformative leader in tourism and philanthropy, dedicated to positioning Africa as a global cultural hub. She is a multiple award-winner, pioneering sustainable tourism and empowering youth and women through job creation and heritage preservation, inspiring change with her rallying cry, "Go Tell Africa—Arise & Shine".



**MRS KAFILAT ARAOYE**
Managing Director, LOTUS Bank

Mrs Kafilat Araoye, the Managing Director of Lotus Bank, is a distinguished banker with over three decades of experience. She's a pioneer in non-interest banking, promoting financial inclusion and ethical practices. A Harvard Business School alumna, she is a role model for women in leadership, advocating diversity and sustainable economic growth.



**LISA CHRISTOFFERSEN**
Founder, Lioness Rally

Lisa Christoffersen is a resilient entrepreneur, rally driver, and interior designer. Born in Tanzania, she founded ventures like Life Style Nairobi and The Lioness Rally Club, raising funds for children with cancer. As a cancer survivor, she is a motivational speaker and author, championing women's empowerment and unyielding determination.



**ALHAJI BASHIR ADEWALE ADENIYI, MFR**
Comptroller General,
Nigerian Customs Service

Alhaji Bashir Adewale Adeniyi, MFR, is a visionary Comptroller-General of the Nigerian Customs Service, renowned for strategic reforms and modernizing customs operations. With over three decades of service, he champions trade facilitation, revenue optimization and border security, driving the NCS towards greater efficiency and global standards.



**DR.VICTORIA WANAMBIRO**
Author, HR Consultant,
Executive Coach, & Keynote Speaker

Dr Victoria Wanambiro is a seasoned HR practitioner and university lecturer with 15 years experience. She holds a PhD in HRM and has lectured at several institutions. As Director of Mindvalley Consulting, she provides strategic HR solutions, focusing on leadership development, performance management, and organisational change.



**PROFESSOR IFEYINWA NSUDE**
Department of Mass Communication,
Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki, Nigeria

Prof. Ifeyinwa Nsude is a distinguished academic in Mass Communication at Ebonyi State University. She is a pioneer in media studies and development communication, shaping journalists and media practitioners through innovative pedagogy and research. She champions female academics and elevates professional standards, enriching Nigeria's communication landscape with intellectual rigour.



**HONOURABLE LAMI DANLADI**
Deputy Speaker,
Benue State House of Assembly

Honourable Lami Danladi, Deputy Speaker of Benue State House of Assembly, is a dynamic leader advocating for good governance, inclusive representation, and legislative reforms in education, women's empowerment, and rural infrastructure. She is a trailblazer for women in leadership, promoting gender equality and youth engagement in Nigeria's evolving democracy.

# PUBLISHER'S NOTE: THE POWER OF PURPOSEFUL CIRCLES

Dearest Magnificent Duchesses,

What an honour it is to welcome you to this edition of Duchess International Magazine—a sanctuary where women ignite, empower, and elevate one another to create transformative realities. Your unwavering trust and love for this publication, and for me personally, continue to fuel our mission. For that, I am eternally grateful.

This year, I invite you to reflect deeply on a fundamental truth: the circles we move in shape our destinies. Every association, every friendship, every collaboration either propels us toward our greatest potential or quietly stifles our growth. As we embrace this year's theme of "Accelerated Action," I urge you to be ruthlessly intentional about the company you keep. Surround yourself with those who challenge you, even when it feels uncomfortable—because true growth rarely happens in comfort zones. The right circle will stretch your thinking, amplify your vision, and unearth the extraordinary within you.



To that end, I am thrilled to announce a bold new chapter for our community, beginning next year, Duchess International Magazine will join forces with the DuchessAfrica Foundation to host an annual conference dedicated to actionable strategies for women's leadership, enterprise, and legacy-building. This is not just another event—it's a movement. Within these pages, you'll find the first glimpse of what we're crafting, and I cannot wait to stand alongside you as we turn vision into reality.

Ladies, the era of passive conversation is over. It's time to act with intention, to demand results, and to hold ourselves accountable to the greatness we're called to. Let this magazine be your compass, and let our collective sisterhood be your unstoppable force.

With all my love and admiration,

**Bolaji Odunuga:**
***Founder & Publisher,***
***Duchess International Magazine***

*P.S.—Your support is the heartbeat of this mission. Thank you for being the change.*


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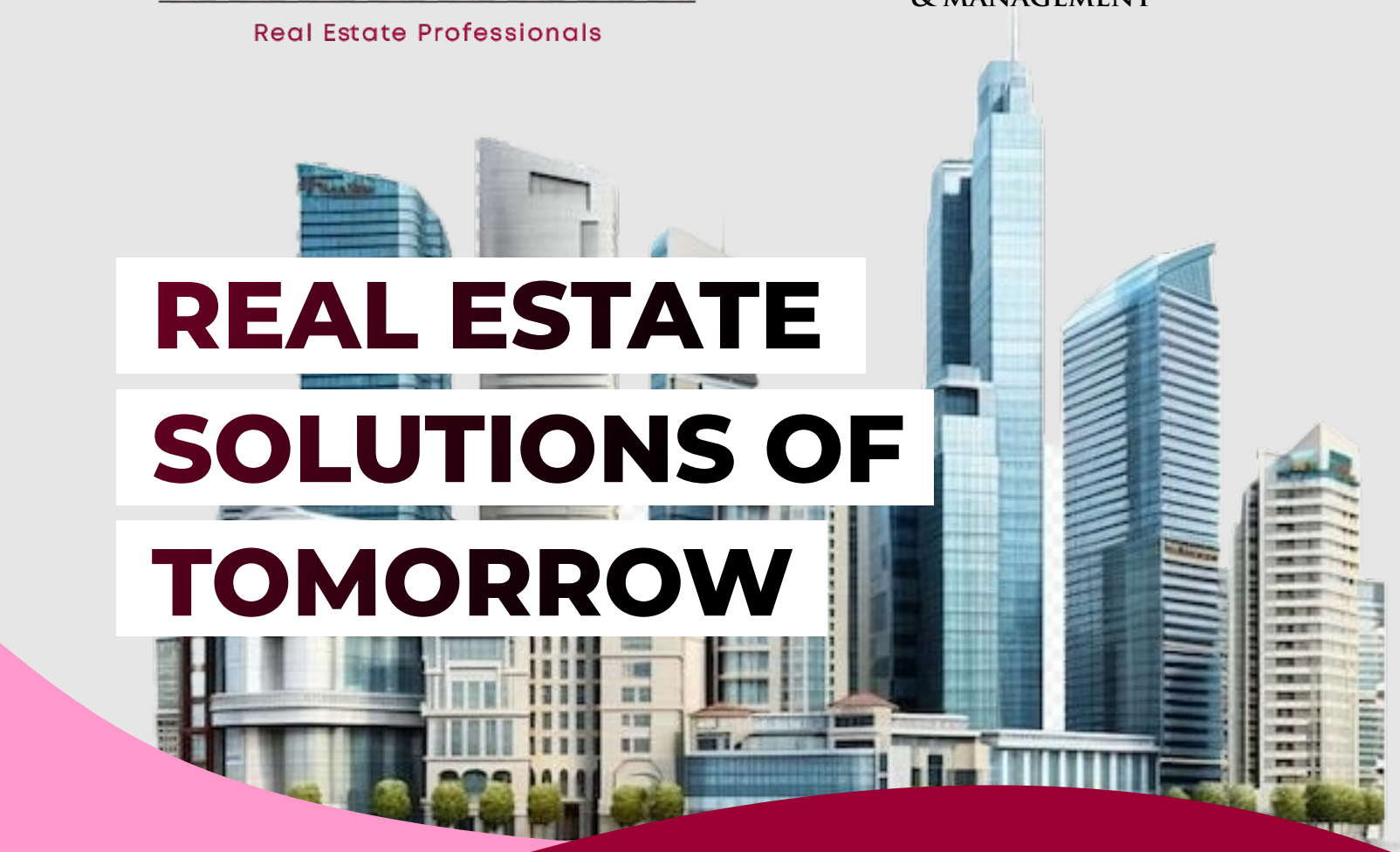
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# Marie Khone Faye:

## SENEGAL'S COMPASSIONATE VISIONARY REDEFINING THE ROLE OF FIRST LADY

In the vibrant heart of Dakar, where tradition meets modernity, Marie Khone Faye, Senegal's First Lady, emerges as a dynamic force of grace, intellect, and advocacy. Since her husband, President Bassirou Diomaye Faye, assumed office in 2024, Marie Khone has carved a distinct path, blending her deep-rooted Senegalese values with a forward-thinking approach to social change. More than a ceremonial figure, she is a lawyer, mother, and philanthropist whose work resonates far beyond the presidential palace.

### Roots of Resilience

Born into a family steeped in education and public service, Marie Khone's journey began in Thiès, a city known for its rich cultural heritage. Her early years were shaped by a commitment to learning—a value instilled by her parents, both educators. She pursued law at Cheikh Anta Diop University in Dakar, where she honed a passion for justice and human rights. Later, she balanced motherhood and career, earning respect as a dedicated attorney advocating for women's legal empowerment in Senegal's often male-dominated judicial landscape.

### A First Lady with Purpose

Marie Khone's ascent to the role of First Lady marked a new chapter for Senegal. Rejecting the confines of tradition, she reimagined the position as a platform for tangible impact. Her flagship initiative, Éducation Pour Tous (Education for All), focuses on bridging the gap between rural and urban schools, providing technology resources and teachers' training to underserved communities. "When we educate a girl, we uplift a nation," she declared at the program's launch, underscoring her belief in gender equity as a cornerstone of progress.

Her advocacy extends to healthcare, where she partners with NGOs to combat maternal mortality and improve access to prenatal care. During the



2024 global health summit, she rallied African leaders to prioritize women's health infrastructure, stating, "A nation's strength lies in the well-being of its mothers."

## Style with Substance

A fashion icon in her own right, Marie Khone seamlessly integrates Senegalese culture into her public persona. She champions local designers like Adama Paris, often seen in bold bazin prints and modernized mbubb styles, transforming state events into celebrations of Senegalese artistry. Her wardrobe choices are more than aesthetic—they're a statement of cultural pride and economic support for homegrown talent.

## The Heart of the Home

Despite her public role, Marie Khone prioritizes family. Married to President Faye since 2015, the couple shares three children. She speaks openly about the challenges of balancing motherhood and leadership, once quipping, "My children remind me that humility is the greatest lesson a leader can learn." Her authenticity resonates with Senegalese women, who see her as both a role model and a relatable figure navigating modern life.

## A Legacy in the Making

Marie Khone's vision for Senegal is rooted in inclusivity. She recently launched Femmes en Action, a network supporting female entrepreneurs through microloans and mentorship. Collaborating with global entities like UNESCO, she amplifies Senegal's voice on education and climate resilience.

Yet, her true impact lies in her accessibility. Whether visiting a rural school or hosting youth forums, she listens intently, often remarking, "Leadership is not about speaking—it's about hearing."

## The Road Ahead

As Senegal navigates rapid urbanization and global challenges, Marie Khone Faye stands as a bridge between generations. Her blend of warmth and tenacity, tradition and innovation, offers a blueprint for compassionate leadership. For her, the title "First Lady" is not an honorific—it's a call to action. "Service," she says, "is the highest form of patriotism."

In a world hungry for authentic leaders, Marie Khone Faye is not just Senegal's First Lady—she is a beacon of hope, proving that true influence begins with a heart committed to others.





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# Mrs. Oghogho Gwabin Musa:

## An Exemplary Leader Fostering Unity, Empowerment, and Service as DEPOWA's 15th President

Mrs Oghogho Gwabin Musa serves with distinction as the 15th and current President of the Defence and Police Officers' Wives Association (DEPOWA), a position she has held with remarkable dedication since her appointment. As an accomplished educationist with over two decades of teaching experience, she brings a wealth of knowledge to her role, combined with her passionate commitment to humanitarian causes and philanthropic work focused on uplifting society's most vulnerable members, particularly women and children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Beyond her official duties, Mrs Musa has demonstrated extraordinary initiative as the co-founder of the Christopher Oghogho Foundation, a registered non-governmental, not-for-profit organisation that has made significant strides in improving lives across Nigeria. Through this foundation, she has implemented numerous programmes that provide critical support to widows, orphans, internally displaced persons, and young girls facing educational and social challenges.

Her professional credentials reflect her multifaceted expertise - as a qualified Educationist holding multiple degrees, a certified Food Safety Professional accredited by international standards, and a strategic leader whose governance approach has been honed through years of impactful leadership across various sectors. Those who have worked with Mrs Musa frequently describe her as an exceptionally focused, strong-willed yet a compassionate leader,





whose work is fundamentally driven by her unwavering commitment to improving welfare standards for military and police families.

A central pillar of her advocacy work involves championing initiatives that advance the holistic well-being of women and youth throughout Nigeria. She has personally overseen the establishment of technical and vocational skills training programmes in multiple states, equipping participants with marketable abilities for sustainable personal development. Recognising the particular challenges faced by young people in barracks communities, she has pioneered innovative schemes that simultaneously promote entrepreneurship and employability. These include comprehensive starter-pack distributions and the creation of mentorship networks that connect beneficiaries with established professionals in their chosen fields.

Mrs Musa's vision for DEPOWA represents a transformative approach to military spouses' associations. Under her leadership, the organisation has adopted a three-pronged mission focusing on mindset reorientation, entrepreneurial development, and skills enhancement - all designed to empower women to become active contributors to both their families' economic stability and broader societal progress. This institutional mission perfectly aligns with her personal vision of creating "a society where women and girls recognise their inherent value and harness their potential through diligence and self-belief."

The Christopher Oghogho Foundation's initiatives have gained particular recognition for their innovative, practical approaches to longstanding social issues. The Purity Pouch programme, for instance, not only addresses period poverty through sanitary product distribution, but has developed a comprehensive educational curriculum covering menstrual health, personal hygiene, and gender sensitivity that is now being adopted by schools in three states. Similarly, the foundation's skills acquisition centres have trained over 1,200 women in various trades since their establishment.

Mrs Musa's leadership philosophy emphasises practical solutions and measurable impact. As DEPOWA President, she has instituted regular needs assessments to ensure programmes remain responsive to members' evolving requirements. Her approach to fostering solidarity among officers' wives combines traditional social activities with professional development workshops, creating spaces for both camaraderie and personal growth.




This balanced perspective originates from her extensive experience in military spouse associations, including various leadership roles in the Nigerian Army Officers' Wives Association where she implemented several enduring welfare initiatives.

Her academic background includes teacher's training at the College of Education, Warri, undergraduate studies at the University of Jos, and postgraduate qualifications from Nigeria's premier University of Ibadan. Complementing these formal credentials, she has pursued continuous professional development, including her Food Safety Professional certification from Lagos' prestigious Hospitality Business School and participation in numerous international conferences on education, women's empowerment, and leadership development.

Beyond her professional accomplishments, Mrs Musa maintains an active lifestyle that reflects her holistic approach to wellbeing. An advocate for preventive healthcare, she incorporates regular exercise and balanced nutrition into her routine, famously reminding associates that "true wealth begins with health." Her personal interests include culinary experimentation (having developed numerous healthy recipes), gospel music, and cultural dance forms. She is married to General Christopher Gwabin Musa, the Chief of Defence Staff of the Nigerian Armed Forces, and their family includes four children along with several foster children they support through educational sponsorships.

**The President's Vision Statement:**
"To cultivate a generation of women and girls who recognise their intrinsic worth and harness their potential through diligence, innovation and purposeful contribution to family and societal development."

**The President's Mission:**
"To implement sustainable empowerment programmes that transform mindsets while equipping women and girls with practical skills, entrepreneurial capabilities and the confidence to become change agents in their communities."






# POWER, PROGRESS, & IMPACT:
## HOW AFRICAN WOMEN ARE SHAPING POLICY, BUSINESS, AND INNOVATION IN THE 21ST CENTURY

In the 21st century, African women are emerging as transformative forces in policy, business, and innovation, redefining the continent's narrative and dismantling long-standing gender barriers. From corporate boardrooms to legislative halls, tech hubs to rural enterprises, women across Africa are leveraging resilience, creativity, and strategic leadership to drive sustainable progress. Their contributions are not only reshaping Africa's socio-economic landscape but also offering the world a masterclass in the power of diversity, innovation, and inclusive leadership.

### Breaking Barriers in Policy and Governance

African women are redefining leadership in politics and policy, advocating for equitable development, peace, and human rights. Their influence spans from local governance to global institutions, proving that women's leadership is indispensable in shaping a just and prosperous future.

- **Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala** (Nigeria) – The first woman and first African to lead the World Trade Organization (WTO), she has championed fair trade policies, vaccine equity, and economic resilience in developing nations.
- **Samia Suluhu Hassan** (Tanzania) – Tanzania's first female president, known for her pragmatic leadership, diplomatic acumen, and commitment to education and healthcare reform.
- **Ellen Johnson Sirleaf** (Liberia) – Africa's first elected female head of state and Nobel Peace Prize laureate, who steered Liberia through post-war recovery and institutional reforms.
- **Graça Machel** (Mozambique) – A global advocate for women's and children's rights, former freedom fighter, and widow of both Nelson Mandela and Samora Machel.
- **Amina J. Mohammed** (Nigeria) – Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, leading global efforts on sustainable development and climate action.

At the grassroots level, women are driving change through political representation and activism. Rwanda, where women hold over

60% of parliamentary seats, has enacted ground-breaking laws on gender equality, land rights, and anti-violence protections. Meanwhile, activists like Leymah Gbowee (Liberia), who mobilized women to end civil war, and Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka (South Africa), former head of UN Women, continue to push for systemic reforms.

## Revolutionizing Business and Entrepreneurship

African women are the continent's most dynamic entrepreneurs, launching ventures that solve critical challenges while fuelling economic growth. The World Bank reports that African women are more likely to start businesses than men, with many focusing on sustainability, job creation, and social impact.

### Trailblazing Business Leaders:

- Bethlehem Tilahun Alemu (Ethiopia) – Founder of SoleRebels, an eco-friendly footwear brand that has achieved global success while empowering local artisans.
- Folorunsho Alakija (Nigeria) – One of Africa's richest women, a self-made billionaire in oil and fashion, and a philanthropist supporting women's entrepreneurship.
- Irene Charnley (South Africa) – Telecom tycoon and founder of Smile Telecoms, driving digital inclusion across Africa.
- Tabitha Karanja (Kenya) – Founder of Keroche Breweries, Kenya's first major female-owned brewery, challenging corporate monopolies.
- Magatte Wade (Senegal) – Founder of Skin Is Skin, a beauty brand promoting African products globally while advocating for trade policy reforms.

### Social Impact Innovators:

- Temie Giwa-Tubosun (Nigeria) – Founder of Life Bank, a health-tech start-up using AI and logistics to deliver blood and medical supplies, saving thousands of lives.
- Sara Menker (Ethiopia) – Founder of Gro Intelligence, an AI-driven agricultural analytics platform helping farmers and policymakers combat food insecurity.
- Njeri Rionge (Kenya) – Serial entrepreneur behind Wananchi Group, pioneering affordable internet and digital solutions in East Africa.

These women exemplify how African entrepreneurship blends profit with purpose, proving







that business success and social transformation go hand in hand.

## Leading the Charge in Innovation and Technology

Africa's tech revolution is being fuelled by women who are bridging gaps in STEM, launching disruptive startups, and using digital tools to solve pressing challenges. Despite systemic barriers, female innovators are making waves globally.

### Tech Pioneers:

- Rebecca Enonchong (Cameroon) – Founder of AppsTech, a global enterprise software leader, and advocate for African tech startups.
- Juliana Rotich (Kenya) – Co-founder of Ushahidi, an open-source crisis-mapping platform used worldwide for election monitoring and disaster response.
- Dr. Naledi Pandor (South Africa) – As Minister of International Relations, she has championed STEM education and Africa's role in the Fourth Industrial Revolution.
- Ory Okolloh (Kenya) – Co-founder of Ushahidi and former Google Africa policy lead, a key voice in tech governance and transparency.
- Judith Owigar (Kenya) – Founder of AkiraChix, empowering young African women in coding and tech careers.

### Health & Science Innovators:

- Dr. Francisca Nneka Okeke (Nigeria) – Renowned physicist and advocate for women in science, contributing to climate and space research.
- Dr. Segenet Kelemu (Ethiopia) – Award-winning microbiologist, leading agricultural innovations to combat food insecurity.














- Dr. Ameenah Gurib-Fakim (Mauritius) – Former president and biodiversity scientist, promoting sustainable development through biotech.

Initiatives like Women in Tech Africa, African Girls Can Code, and She Leads Africa are accelerating female participation in tech, ensuring the next generation of innovators reflects Africa's diversity.

## Overcoming Challenges & Driving Systemic Change

Despite their strides, African women still face limited funding, cultural biases, and policy gaps. The African Development Bank estimates a $42 billion financing gap for women entrepreneurs, while societal expectations often burden women with balancing career and caregiving roles.

Yet, African women are turning obstacles into opportunities through:

- Advocacy & Networks: Organizations like AWDF (African Women's Development Fund) and AFAWA (Affirmative Finance Action for Women in Africa) provide funding and mentorship.
- Policy Reforms: Campaigns for equal pay, parental leave, and anti-discrimination laws are gaining traction.
- Digital Empowerment: Platforms like MarketWomen (Ghana) and Jumia's women-led e-commerce initiatives are expanding market access.

## A Blueprint for Global Progress

The stories of Africa's women leaders offer a roadmap for inclusive growth.

From Wangari Maathai's environmental activism to Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala's economic diplomacy, they prove that women's leadership is not optional—it is essential for solving global crises like inequality, climate change, and health disparities.

As Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie powerfully stated, *"We should all be feminists."* African women are embodying this call, shaping a future where power, progress, and impact are not determined by gender but by vision, courage, and action.

The 21st century belongs to those who dare to lead differently, and African women are showing the world how it's done.







*First Lady of Kebbi State,*

# H. E. HAJIYA ZAINAB NASARE:

## A HEROINE WHO EMPOWERS AND INSPIRES

In the heart of Northern Nigeria, where tradition and transformation often intersect, Hajiya Zainab Nasare Nasir Idris stands tall as a champion of girl child education. Born on May 17, 1973, she grew up with a strong foundation in Islamic knowledge and formal education, shaping her into the remarkable leader that she is today. Married to Governor Nasir Idris for over 33 years, she is a devoted mother to seven children and many grandchildren.

As the First Lady of Kebbi State, she has turned advocacy into action, ensuring that young girls are not just seen, but educated, empowered, and equipped for the future.

Her dedication has not gone unnoticed. In recognition of her relentless efforts in advancing girl child education, the Sultan of Sokoto, Alhaji Muhammad Sa'ad Abubakar, conferred upon her the prestigious title of North West Ambassador of Girl Child Education.

"We have monitored you keenly, and you deserve this role. Make sure our girls return to the classroom and pursue knowledge to any level they desire," the Sultan declared, cementing her role as a leader in education reform.

**A Lifelong Mission: Educating and Empowering Girls**

For Hajiya Zainab, education is not a privilege, it's a necessity. She has broken barriers and redefined possibilities for young girls in Kebbi State and beyond through several life-changing initiatives:

➡ School Enrollment Drives: Under her leadership, thousands of out-of-school girls have returned to the classroom, thanks to aggressive re-enrollment campaigns that address financial, cultural, and societal barriers.

➡ Scholarship & Learning Support: Through her work with the Adolescent Girls Initiative for Learning and Empowerment (AGILE), she has facilitated scholarships, school supplies, and

mentorship programs, ensuring that no girl is left behind due to economic hardship.

➡ Fighting Early Marriage & Gender Bias: Understanding the impact of early marriages on education, she has worked tirelessly to educate families and communities on the importance of keeping girls in school, leading to stronger enforcement of protective policies.

➡ Female Teachers for Female Students: Knowing that representation matters, she has championed teacher-training programs, increasing the number of female educators and making schools a more inclusive and safe space for young girls.

**A Legacy of Service, Faith, and Compassion**

Beyond education, Hajiya Zainab is a beacon of kindness and philanthropy. Known affectionately as "Mamarmu mai albarka, baya goya marayu"—which translates to "our blessed mother, benevolent to all"—she has touched countless lives through her generosity and commitment to helping orphans, widows, and the less privileged.

Her unwavering faith and dedication to Islamic education also earned her the prestigious title of Khadimatul Qur'an, awarded by the Centre for Islamic Studies at Usmanu Danfodio University. Through her support for Qur'anic and Islamiyyah schools, she is ensuring that, young girls in Kebbi State embrace both religious and secular education, creating a generation of well-rounded, empowered women.

Hajiya Zainab Nasare Nasir Idris is not just a First Lady but an important figure in education and women's empowerment. Her work is reshaping mindsets, breaking generational cycles of illiteracy, and paving the way for a future where every girl has the right to learn, grow, and succeed.





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# DR. MRS. RONKE SOYOMBO:

## The Reformer Bridging Education, Ethics, and Innovation

In a world where education systems grapple with evolving challenges, Dr. Mrs. Ronke Soyombo stands as a beacon of transformative leadership. With a career spanning three decades across Nigeria and the United Kingdom, she has masterfully blended pedagogy, technology, and ethics to redefine what it means to be an educator, administrator, and changemaker. A polymath with accolades in chemistry, law, and ICT, Soyombo's journey is a testament to the power of relentless curiosity and principled leadership.

### A Multifaceted Maverick

Dr. Soyombo's career began in 1989 with a first degree in Chemistry Education from the University of Lagos, but




her ambitions stretched far beyond the classroom. By 1997, she had added an LLB in Business Law from London Guildhall University (now London Metropolitan University) to her repertoire, alongside a pioneering Microsoft certification in Server and Workstations—a rare feat at the time. This fusion of science, law, and technology laid the groundwork for a career marked by innovation and boundary-pushing.

Her teaching journey saw her rise to prominence in London, where she became the first Black Advanced Skill Teacher (AST) for ICT in Lambeth Borough—a distinction placing her among the top 3% of educators in England and Wales. As Head Teacher in both London and Nigeria, she turned around underperforming schools with a blend of rigorous standards and empathetic leadership. "Education isn't just about grades," she reflects. "It's about equipping minds to navigate an ever-changing world."

**Architect of Educational Reform**

In 2007, Soyombo earned the National Professional Qualification for Headship, cementing her reputation as a strategic leader. Her administrative acumen shone brightest as the inaugural Director General of Lagos State Education Quality Assurance, a role she held across two gubernatorial administrations. Here, she spearheaded the creation of Nigeria's first national evaluation framework for the Federal Ministry of Education, embedding accountability and excellence into the system.

Later, as Special Adviser on Education to the Ogun State Governor, she orchestrated groundbreaking initiatives. During the COVID-19 pandemic, her foresight birthed Ogun Digi Class, a virtual learning platform that positioned the state as a trailblazer in Nigeria's remote education response. She also championed digitisation through Microsoft 365 integration for teachers and introduced E-lesson notes—a digital toolkit revolutionising classroom planning. "Technology," she asserts, "is the great equaliser in education."

**Ethics as a Cornerstone**

Soyombo's intellectual pursuits are as profound as her professional ones. With an MSc in Educational Ethics and a freshly minted PhD in Professional Ethics (2024), she has emerged as a thought leader on moral frameworks in education. Her research underscores the symbiotic relationship between ethical governance and student success, a philosophy she implemented through teacher training programmes focused on integrity, inclusion, and pedagogical innovation.





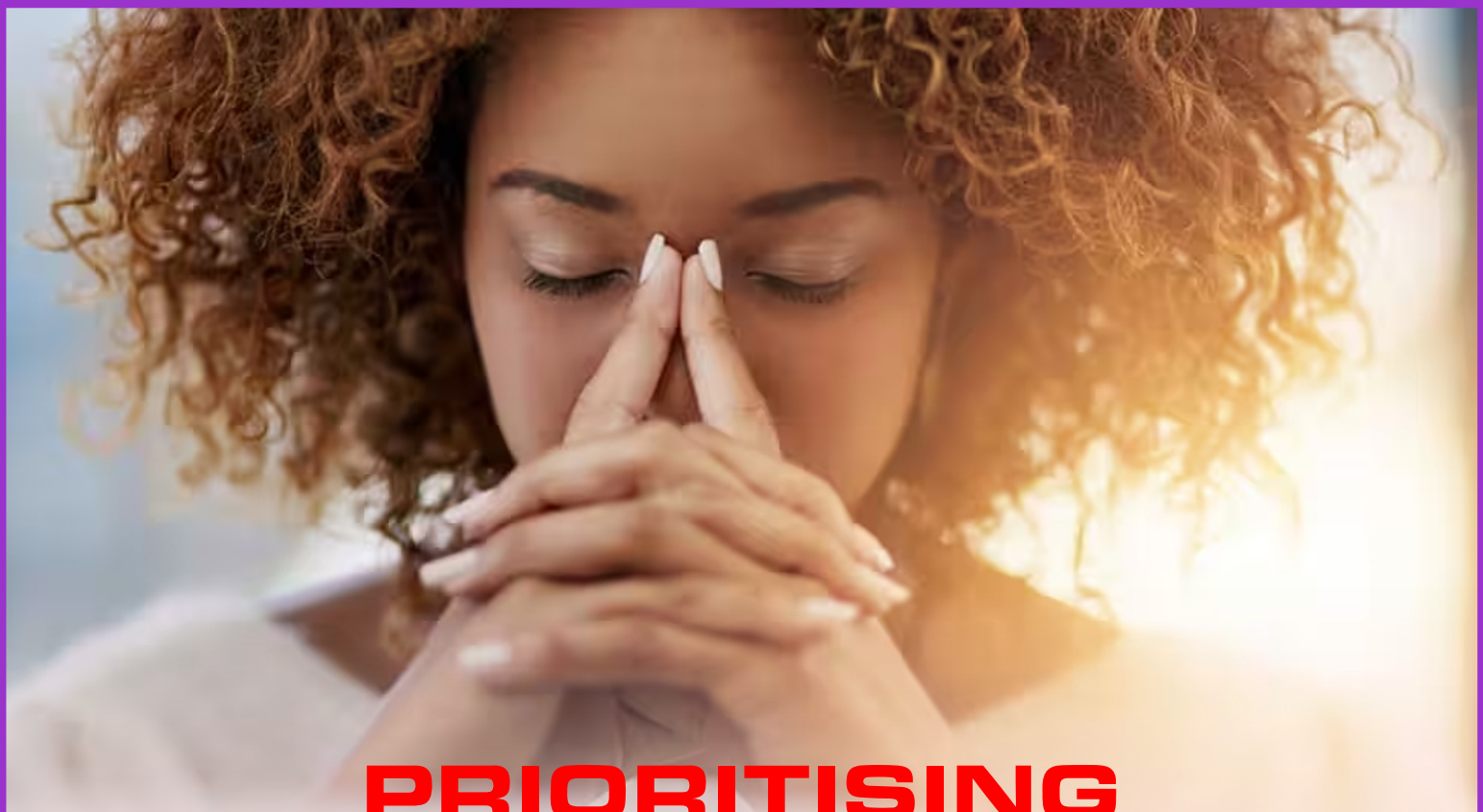
**Legacy of Empowerment**

Beyond policy, Soyombo's legacy lies in her human-centric approach. She has trained thousands of teachers, authored prolific works on educational best practices, and advocated for gender equity in STEM and leadership. Her mantra—"Raise the teacher, and you raise the nation"—resonates in every initiative she champions.

**A Life of Purpose**

Today, Dr. Soyombo remains a sought-after speaker and consultant, merging her legal expertise and tech savvy to advise governments and institutions. Yet, she measures success not by titles, but by impact. "Every child who thrives, every teacher who grows—that's my blueprint for progress," she says.

In a rapidly digitising world, Dr. Mrs. Ronke Soyombo stands at the intersection of tradition and innovation, proving that education, when rooted in ethics and empowered by technology, can transform societies. For her, the classroom is limitless, and her work is a masterclass in living purposefully.



# PRIORITISING MENTAL HEALTH IN AFRICAN WOMEN

Despite progress in education, political representation, and social development, women of colour—particularly African women—continue to face immense pressures. From systemic sexism and economic disparities to cultural expectations, the modern African woman carries the weight of multiple roles: caregiver, professional, community leader, and nation-builder. This relentless demand to be a "superwoman" takes a toll, manifesting in both physical and mental health challenges. Yet, while physical ailments often prompt immediate concern, mental wellbeing remains sidelined—a silent crisis masked by resilience.

**Breaking the Silence: Why Mental Health Matters**

Globally, 9.5 million women grapple with health struggles, yet data on African women's mental health remains scarce. Cultural narratives label her as "unbreakable," leaving minor issues unaddressed until they escalate into crises. Mental health conversations must shift from whispers to widespread dialogue delivered in native languages, free from stigma, and prioritised at the earliest signs of anxiety or depression.

Too often, African women prioritise physical health over mental wellness, dismissing psychological distress as transient or shameful. The fear of being labelled "mad" or losing social standing, leads to silence, even as untreated conditions—from postpartum depression to chronic stress—erode quality of life. But mental illness is not weakness; it is a treatable health issue, deserving the same urgency as cancer or diabetes.

## A Call to Action: Building Resilience

Change begins with collective support:

- Family & Community: Normalise mental health check-ins. Encourage vulnerable conversations without judgment.
- Healthcare Systems: Integrate mental health education into antenatal clinics, inviting men to participate. Postpartum depression screenings should be done routinely.
- Cultural Shifts: Challenge stereotypes that equate strength with suffering. A woman who speaks up is not "failing"—she's healing.

## The Ripple Effect of Mental Wellness

Investing in mental health isn't self-indulgence, it's societal preservation. An African woman's wellbeing shapes her

children, her workplace, and her community. Benefits include:

- Stronger Relationships: Emotional stability fosters empathy, communication, and resilience in partnerships.
- Enhanced Productivity: A healthy mind navigates challenges—menopausal shifts, caregiving stress, or workplace inequity—with clarity.
- Physical Health Synergy: Mental wellness aids recovery from chronic illnesses and bolsters immunity.

## Daily Practices for Mental Strength

Incorporate small, powerful habits:

1. Mindfulness: Meditate, practice gratitude, or try yoga to centre your thoughts.
2. Emotional Agility: Pause when agitated. Literally talk to yourself ("Lore, calm down") to reset.
3. Cognitive Fitness: Play brain games, reframe negative thoughts, and embrace lifelong learning.
4. Boundaries: Audit your inner circle. Surround yourself with growth-minded allies who respect differences.
5. SMART Goals: Structure ambitions to be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound, and celebrate progress.

## Food for Thought (and Mood)

Nutrition directly impacts mental health:

- - B Vitamins (B12, B9): Boost serotonin and dopamine for mood regulation.
- - Magnesium & Omega-3s: Combat depression and stabilise neurotransmitters.
- - Vitamin D: Sunlight and supplements improve brain function.
- - Mood-Boosting Foods: Dark chocolate, leafy greens, nuts, fermented foods, and turmeric reduce inflammation linked to anxiety.

## To Every Woman Reading This:

You are not just a backbone, you are a living, feeling force. Your strength is not measured by how much you endure, but by how wisely you preserve your mind and spirit. Today, choose to prioritise you. Seek help without shame, rest without guilt, and thrive, not in spite of your struggles, but because you honoured them.

Your mental health is your legacy. Protect it fiercely.



**ZEANAB OLAJIDE,**
Nurse Practitioner/ Health Educator,
P.R.O. APC PROFESSIONAL WOMEN COUNCIL.









# Dr. Aminata Touré:
## Senegal's Fearless Champion of Justice and Equality

Women leaders of this era still navigate a labyrinth of societal expectations, but Dr. Aminata Touré has spent decades dismantling barriers with quiet determination and intellectual rigour. More than just Senegal's second female Prime Minister—a title she held from 2013 to 2014—Touré embodies the very essence of a modern African stateswoman: economist, human rights crusader, and diplomatic force, all woven into one formidable presence.

Born in Dakar in 1962, Touré's academic brilliance was evident early on. Credentialed with a master's degree in Economics from France's prestigious University of Dijon Business School and a PhD in International Business Administration from ISM (split between New York and Paris), she could have carved out a lucrative career in Global Finance. Instead, she chose the less predictable—but infinitely more impactful—path of public service, driven by an unshakable belief in gender equity and social reform.

Her early work with Senegal's International Planned Parenthood Federation was a harbinger of the advocacy that would define her life. A 24-year tenure at the United Nations saw her shape policies across the continent, from advising UNFPA in Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire to spearheading gender and human rights initiatives at the organisation's New York headquarters.

When President Macky Sall appointed her Minister of Justice in 2012, Touré launched an unrelenting anti-corruption campaign, earning her the nickname "Iron Lady"—a label she accepts with characteristic dry humour. "If demanding accountability makes me seem tough," she once quipped, "then consider it my contribution to redefining strength."

Her premiership, though brief, was marked by bold economic reforms and a push for institutional

transparency. Even after leaving office, her influence persisted through roles as Presidential Envoy and later as head of Senegal's Economic, Social and Environmental Council, where she continued to champion sustainable development.

Beyond governance, Touré has become a guardian of democracy, leading election observation missions for the African Union and The Carter Center. Her 2021 book on the historic Hissène Habré trial—a landmark case in African-led international justice—showcases her legal acumen and commitment to accountability.

Today, as High Representative for Senegal's President and a member of the UN's elite Advisors Committee, she remains a sought-after voice in global diplomacy. Fluent in Wolof, French, and English, she moves effortlessly between grassroots activism and high-stakes negotiations, proving that true leadership knows no boundaries.



So what drives someone who's already achieved so much? Touré puts it simply: "Complacency is the enemy of progress." For her, the fight for a fairer world is never finished—and Senegal, along with the wider global community, is all the better for it.

# Adeola Ajibade:

## KEEPING AFRICAN CULTURE AT THE HEART OF FASHION



Adeola Ajibade is the visionary founder and creative director of Lanlo Fashion, a Nigerian fashion brand rooted in the celebration of African identity. Through her work, she has consistently shown a deep love for African culture, staying true to her mission of promoting locally made designs and indigenous fabrics.

Lanlo was born from her desire to represent African heritage through fashion, and over the years, Adeola has remained fully committed to that vision. She uses Lanlo as a platform not only to design clothes but to tell cultural stories through fabric, color, and craftsmanship. Her designs incorporate traditional textiles like Adire, Kente, and other African prints, transforming them into contemporary outfits that speak to both style and tradition.

Adeola doesn't just work with African prints, she champions them. Every Lanlo piece is a deliberate statement of cultural pride. From formal wear to casual outfits, her collections reflect a respect for heritage and a modern interpretation of what it means to be stylishly African today. This commitment to authenticity is evident in collections like the Arewa Collection, which she



launched to highlight the elegance and diversity of Northern Nigerian culture.

Her personal fashion choices also reflect this same commitment. On her Instagram and business pages, she consistently wears African prints, often styling them in bold, graceful ways that stay connected to tradition. This is not just branding—it is an expression of her identity and beliefs.

Adeola has always made it clear that Lanlo Fashion is about more than just looking good—it's about representing culture with confidence. She believes in wearing your roots proudly, and this belief is woven into every aspect of her brand—from the fabrics she chooses to the stories she tells with each design.

Beyond her creative work, she supports local artisans and tailors, ensuring that her business contributes to the growth of the local economy and the preservation of African textile traditions.

In a fashion world that often leans toward Western trends, Adeola Ajibade stands firm in her cultural lane—proud, intentional, and original. Through Lanlo, she continues to show that African fashion is not just beautiful, but powerful.





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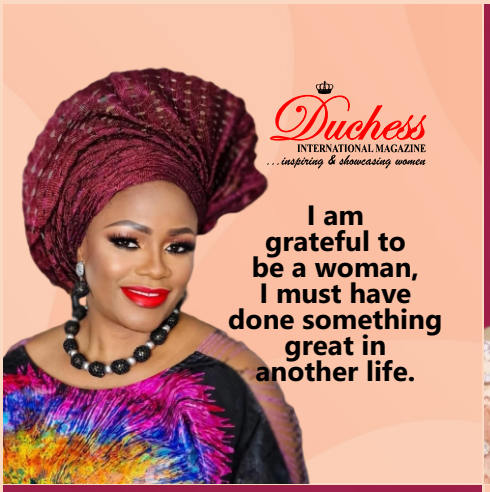


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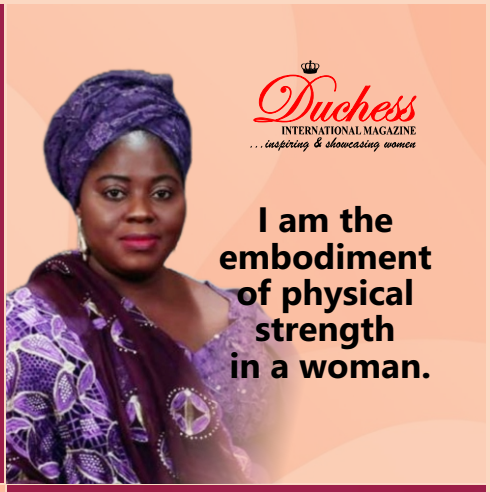
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# MAGNIFICENT WOMEN GALLERY









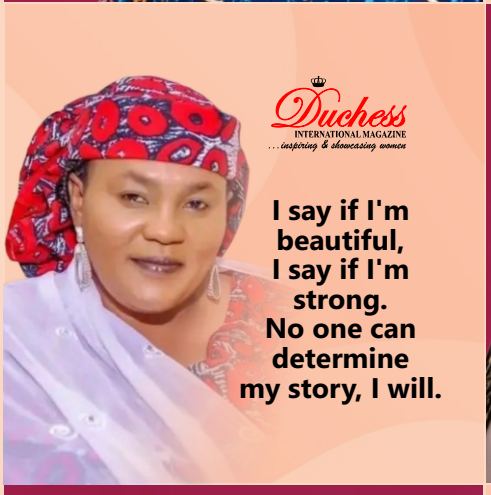






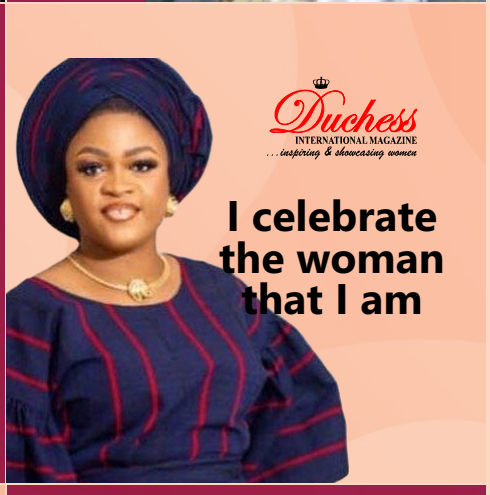




















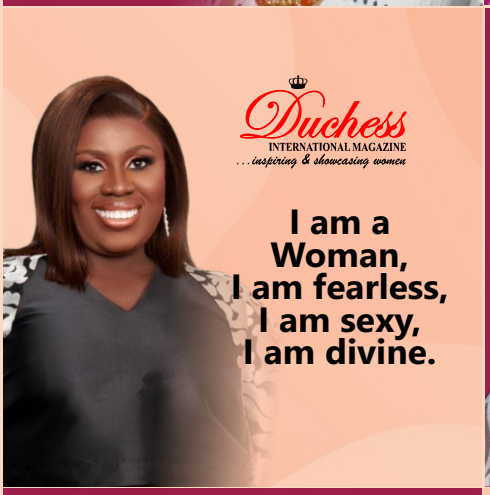

# MAGNIFICENT WOMEN GALLERY





















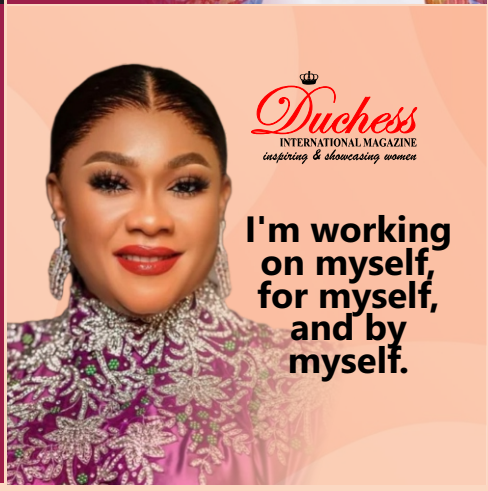












# MAGNIFICENT WOMEN GALLERY

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I am a woman in progress. I'm just like everybody else, striving to grow. I try to embrace every challenge, every experience, and learn from it, because life is never dull.

Duchess
INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE
...inspiring & showcasing women



If I cannot do great things, I can do small things in a great way.

Duchess
INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE
...inspiring & showcasing women



I'm thankful for my struggles because without them, I wouldn't have discovered my strength.

Duchess
INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE
...inspiring & showcasing women



I am learning every day to embrace the space between where I am and where I want to be. I seek to inspire myself and others.

Duchess
INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE
...inspiring & showcasing women



They said I changed a lot, but I said a lot changed me.

Duchess
INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE
...inspiring & showcasing women



I didn't change; I just found myself.

Duchess
INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE
...inspiring & showcasing women



I am just who I am. I don't try to change myself for others.

Duchess
INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE
...inspiring & showcasing women



I am beautiful, and I shine my light for all to see.

Duchess
INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE
...inspiring & showcasing women



I am thankful for all the struggles people said I couldn't overcome, because proving them wrong made me even stronger.

Duchess
INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE
...inspiring & showcasing women



I am a woman, a force, and I will make a difference.

Duchess
INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE
...inspiring & showcasing women



I raise my voice not just to shout, but to ensure it is heard. We cannot all succeed if half of us are held back.

Duchess
INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE
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I am a Woman. I am powerful. I am beautiful.

# MAGNIFICENT WOMEN GALLERY




































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# Duchess International Women's Day Conference 2024: A Look Back



Duchess International Magazine's second edition of the International Women's Day Conference, held in April 2024 in Nairobi, Kenya, was a remarkable gathering that left a lasting impact on everyone who attended. Looking back, the four-day event was a powerful testament to the strength of African women, bringing together voices from across the world to engage in meaningful discussions, foster connections, and take action toward a more empowered future.

The conference opened with an engaging meet-and-greet session, where attendees from countries such as South Korea, the U.K., the U.S.A., the Republic of Ireland, Rwanda, Kenya, Nigeria, and beyond had the opportunity to reconnect and form new relationships. The energy in the room was undeniable, as women from different backgrounds came together, united by a common goal—to uplift, inspire, and create opportunities for the next generation.

One of the defining moments of the conference was the tree-planting initiative at Ngong Forest in Bomas of Kenya, led by Bolaji Odunuga, the event's Convener and CEO of Duchess and Duke International Magazines. This symbolic act reflected the essence of laying down roots for the empowerment of African women and ensuring that the next generation has a











solid foundation to thrive.

The sessions throughout the conference were filled with thought-provoking discussions, shedding light on the challenges that African women face while exploring actionable solutions. Bolaji Odunuga urged participants to go beyond conversations and embrace real change, reminding them of Malala Yousafzai's words: "We cannot all succeed when half of us are held back." The event was a call to action, encouraging women to break barriers, lift one another, and actively work toward a future where their voices are heard and valued.

Beyond discussions, the conference also provided a chance for cultural immersion. Delegates visited Nairobi National Park, a moment of reflection that reinforced the strength and beauty of Africa and its people. It was an experience that added a unique touch to the event, reminding attendees of the importance of preserving not only the environment, but also the rich heritage that connects them all.

Looking back, the Duchess International Women's Day Conference 2024 was not merely an event, it was a catalyst for renewed






commitment to empowerment, leadership, and collaboration.

As we are gathered for the 2025 edition, the experiences from last year's event remain a powerful reminder of what we can achieve together. The journey toward uplifting African women continues, and with every conversation, connection, and action, we take another step toward a future where every woman has the opportunity to rise, lead, and thrive.















BOMAS OF KENYA


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INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE
Duchess International
WOMEN'S DAY
CONFERENCE
2024
DAY 3
SIGHTS & SOUNDS
OF NAIROBI


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# About Duchess Africa: Our Mission, Vision, and Impact

Established in May 2023, Duchess Africa is a dynamic non-profit fellowship of Black women from various countries around the globe. We are dedicated to celebrating sisterhood, empowering women, and safeguarding our members as well as the wider female community. Our goal is to foster a community that nurtures meaningful relationships, offers educational opportunities, and serves as a platform for enacting positive change in local communities and the broader world.

Our mission is to empower Black women to reach their full potential and become leaders in their personal and professional lives. We believe that Black women have the power to achieve greatness in all aspects of life, and we are committed to providing the support and resources needed to make this a reality.

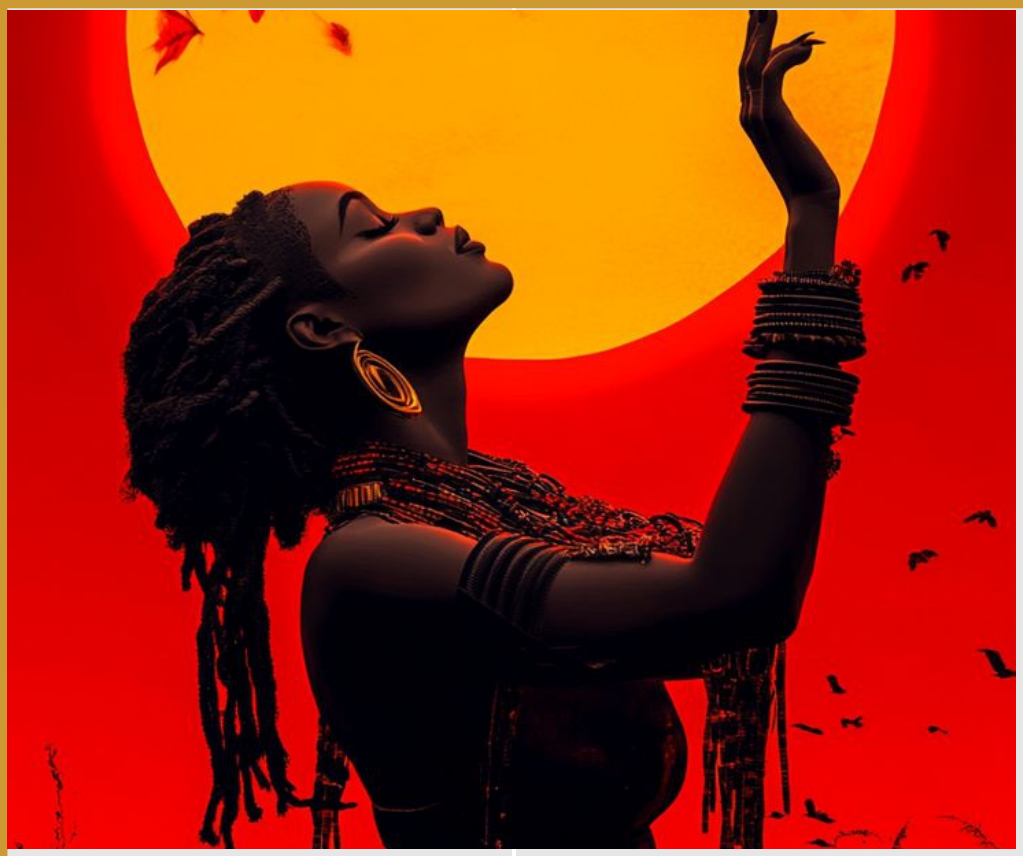
As a young organization, we bring a fresh perspective and an energy that comes with the excitement of new beginnings. We are eager to create a dynamic community that is inclusive, diverse, and welcoming to all women. We believe that our strengths lie in our ability to harness the power of collaboration, inspire change, and bring new ideas to the table.

Through our virtual and physical components, we offer a range of events and initiatives that cater to the needs and interests of our members. We encourage continuous learning, personal growth, and professional development. We also provide resources and support to help our members achieve their goals.

We understand the importance of addressing systemic barriers and challenges that Black women face, that is why we actively advocate for equity, inclusion, and representation in all areas of society. We work to amplify the voices of Black women and create pathways for their success, ensuring that their contributions are recognized and celebrated.

At the heart of our mission is the believe that; empowered women empower communities. By investing in the growth and leadership of Black women, we are building a brighter future for everyone.





Together, we will redefine what is possible, challenge the status quo, and pave the way for a world where every Black woman can thrive.

## Our Vision

At Duchess Africa, we envision a world where empowerment transcends gender—a world where every individual has the opportunity to thrive, lead, and inspire change. We believe in the transformative power of nurturing both boys and girls and in elevating Black women as catalysts for progress in every sphere of life.

Our approach is holistic. We understand that, while empowering the female child is essential, sustainable change demands that we prepare both genders for the challenges of tomorrow. Empowered women, after all, often build their futures alongside empowered men, creating a balanced, dynamic society where every contribution is valued.

We also have a vision to create an inclusive, dynamic community that celebrates sisterhood, harnesses the strength of collaboration, and fuels innovation. Through education, mentorship, and advocacy, we aim to break down systemic barriers and create pathways to success for Black women and the broader community alike.

By championing equitable opportunities and fostering meaningful relationships, we are not only shaping empowered individuals, we are redefining the future of communities around the world.

## Our Aim

Our aim at Duchess Africa is to build a thriving global network that supports, uplifts, and empowers Black women while fostering inclusivity by recognizing the role of both genders in creating lasting societal change. We strive to provide educational resources, mentorship, and advocacy to ensure that every woman and child—regardless of gender—has the opportunity to succeed.

## Our Objectives

**1. Empowerment & Leadership Development**

We equip Black women with essential tools, advanced skills, and personalized mentorship to excel as leaders in both personal and professional realms.

**2. Gender-Inclusive Growth**

We advocate for the empowerment of both boys and girls, understanding that sustainable societal transformation requires nurturing all individuals.

**3. Education & Skill Building**

We offer comprehensive workshops, training programs, and mentorship opportunities designed to provide Black women with the knowledge, technical expertise, and resources needed to achieve their aspirations.

**4. Community Building & Networking**

We work to build a robust and supportive network that connects Black women from diverse backgrounds.

**5. Advocacy & Representation**

We actively challenge systemic barriers by championing equity, inclusion, and increased visibility for Black women.

**6. Social Impact & Outreach**

We design and implement community-driven initiatives that promote economic independence, Improved health and wellbeing, as well as improved social justice.

**7. Innovation & Collaboration**

We encourage a culture of innovation where Black women are inspired to develop creative solutions and challenge conventional norms.

# The Future of Duchess Africa: A More Inclusive Approach

At Duchess Africa, our commitment to empowerment has always been clear. However, as we continue to grow and evolve, we recognize the need for a more inclusive approach—one that nurtures both boys and girls. This belief is at the heart of our mission and the driving force behind our next steps.

Starting next year, our annual conference will be organized under the **Duchess Africa Empowerment Foundation**, a dedicated platform focused on sustainable impact. This expansion reflects our vision to not only uplift women but also ensure that the male child is equally empowered, creating a ripple effect that strengthens families, communities, and society as a whole.

## MEET THE VISIONARIES BEHIND DUCHESS AFRICA

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## Our Commitment

We stand firm in our belief that, when Black women rise, entire communities flourish. Through our initiatives and collaborative spirit, we pledge to invest in continuous learning, leadership development, and community engagement.

Our work is not limited to today; it is an ongoing movement to create a legacy of empowerment and opportunity for generations to come. Together, we are shaping a future where, every empowered woman, every nurtured child, and every connected community contributes to a more just and vibrant world.

# AMB. BETTY MAHUGU:
## A VISIONARY SHAPING AFRICA'S FUTURE THROUGH TOURISM & EMPOWERMENT



There are leaders who dream, and then there are those who turn dreams into legacies. Ambassador Betty Mahugu belongs to the latter. A powerhouse in tourism, business, and philanthropy, she has dedicated her life to branding Africa as a global hub of culture, enterprise, and opportunity. With an unshakable belief in the power of passion, she embodies the essence of transformational leadership—one that doesn't just inspire but builds bridges between nations, industries, and generations.

### A Trailblazer in Tourism & African Excellence

Amb. Mahugu's relentless pursuit of excellence has earned her prestigious accolades, including:

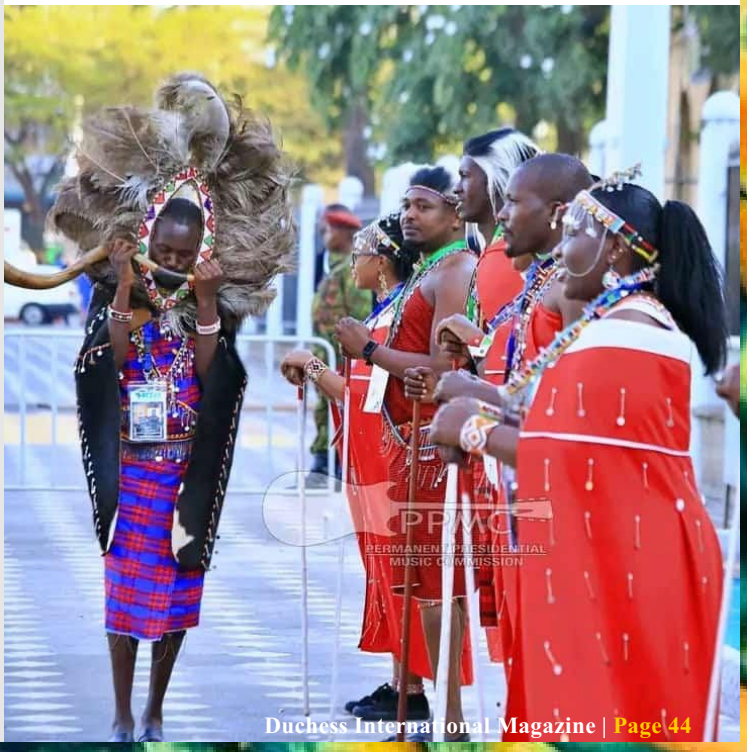
- Rwanda Tour Operator of the Year (2022 & 2023)– A testament to her innovative approach in redefining travel experiences in East Africa.
- Leader in Developing Tourism in Rwanda– Spearheading initiatives that position Rwanda as a premier destination for sustainable and immersive tourism.
- Promoter of African Culture– Championing the continent's rich heritage through curated experiences that celebrate its diversity.
- Creator of Gastronomy Adventure in East Africa – Pioneering culinary tourism by blending local flavors with storytelling, offering travelers a taste of Africa's soul.

These honors reflect her unwavering commitment to elevating Africa's global tourism standing while fostering economic growth and cultural pride.

## A Life Committed to Impact

Born on August 8, Betty Mahugu's journey began in Kenya, where she nurtured her passion for hospitality and tourism from an early age. Armed with a degree in Hospitality and Tourism from Kenyatta University, she deepened her expertise with further studies in International Relations, Public Administration, and Home Economics. But for Mahugu, education was just the starting point. What mattered most was putting knowledge into action.

In 2012, she founded the Twende Jerusalem Foundation,








a pioneering initiative that fostered trade and cultural exchange between Kenya and Israel. The foundation's groundbreaking Israel Experience Expo in Nairobi became a launchpad for Israeli businesses in Kenya and inspired young Kenyans to embrace agribusiness as a pathway to economic empowerment and food security.

Her work did not go unnoticed. Recognized for her strategic mind and relentless commitment, she was appointed Ambassador to the African Tourism Board, a role that amplifies her mission to position Africa as a vibrant destination for culture, history, and sustainable tourism.

**Tourism as a Tool for Transformation**

For Mahugu, tourism is not just about showcasing landscapes and wildlife; it's about telling Africa's story in a way that reshapes global narratives. She envisions the continent as the hotbed of rich culture, fauna, and flora, where tourism is leveraged to drive economic growth, create jobs, and preserve heritage.

Her appointment as High Commissioner for Women, Youth, and Children in the African Tourism Board speaks volumes about her dedication to ensuring that tourism benefits the most vulnerable. She actively promotes policies that encourage youth entrepreneurship, believing that Africa's next generation should not only appreciate their cultural wealth, but also monetise it.

## A Heart for Humanity

While her professional accolades are impressive, Mahugu's true essence lies in her humanitarian efforts. Deeply moved by the plight of orphans, she chose to dedicate time and resources to Faith Home, a shelter for children in need.

## A Call to "Go Tell Africa"

Beyond tourism and business, Mahugu champions a broader vision encapsulated in her mantra:
"Go Tell Africa—Arise & Shine."
She believes that Africa's greatness lies in its ability to tell its own stories, control its own resources, and build partnerships that benefit its people.

Ambassador Betty Mahugu is more than an industry leader—she is a relentless advocate for Africa's potential. Through innovation, empowerment, and unyielding determination, she continues to push boundaries, forge alliances, and uplift communities, leaving an indelible mark on the continent and beyond.



# HAIRVOLUTION:

## THE TRIBAL CROWNS OF AFRICAN WOMEN

Hair is more than just strands; it is history woven into identity, a testament to ancestry, and a silent language of self-expression. Across Africa, hairstyles have carried profound significance, signaling royalty, wisdom, and social standing. Each braid, knot, and coil tells a story that stretches across time, whispering the legacy of a people who have long understood that hair is a sacred form of artistry.

But how many truly know the depth of these styles? Beyond their stunning aesthetics lies a history of resilience, tradition, and meaning that cannot be ignored. These are not just hairstyles; they are symbols of culture and pride, shaping the narrative of African beauty long before the world caught on.

# THE ROOTS, SYMBOLISM, AND SECRETS BEHIND AFRICA'S SIGNATURE HAIRSTYLES



### 1. EDAMBURU – THE MANGBETU BRAIDED CROWN

Nestled in the northeastern region of the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Mangbetu people were known for their strikingly elongated heads—a feature they proudly accentuated with an intricate braided crown known as Edamburu. This was not merely a fashion choice; it was a mark of intelligence and nobility.

In Mangbetu society, cranial elongation was a revered practice. From infancy, children's heads were gently bound with tight cloth to encourage an elongated skull shape, symbolizing wisdom and status. Edamburu, with its fine, interwoven braids, was designed to highlight this feature, turning the head into a canvas of regal beauty.

Though the skull-elongation tradition has faded, the Braided Crown remains an iconic style, worn to honor the heritage of the Mangbetu people. Today, modern interpretations grace fashion runways and red carpets, yet few know its deep historical roots.

### 2. CORNROWS – THE LANGUAGE OF BRAIDS

One of the oldest hairstyles in the world, cornrows are more than just an aesthetic choice—they are a form of identity, communication, and survival. Tracing back to at least 3000 B.C., cornrows were worn by warriors, queens, and everyday people across Africa.

In Ethiopia and Sudan, kings and warriors used specific braid patterns to signal their rank and achievements, while among the Akan people of Ghana, young girls wore cornrows to indicate rites of passage into womanhood. In times of oppression, particularly during the transatlantic slave trade, enslaved Africans used cornrows to make intricate patterns as maps for escape routes, encoding paths to freedom within their hairstyles.

Decorated with cowrie shells, beads, and glass, cornrows also told stories of wealth and spirituality. Today, while many see them as a simple protective style, they remain a powerful connection to African ancestry—one that has survived displacement, discrimination, and cultural appropriation.



### 3. FULANI BRAIDS – THE MARK OF A NOMADIC LEGACY

The Fulani people, a semi-nomadic ethnic group spread across West Africa, are known for their unmistakable braiding style—a mix of thin, carefully arranged cornrows with a single central braid and long side plaits adorned with cowrie shells, gold cuffs, and amber beads. These were not just accessories; each decoration carried its own meaning.

Cowrie shells, once used as currency, signified prosperity and spiritual protection, while amber beads, often passed down through generations, held ancestral significance. In Fulani tradition, a woman's braids were a living story of her lineage, status, and beauty, with different patterns signifying whether she was single, married, or coming of age.

These braids have found their way into global pop culture, often donned by celebrities without credit to their origins, but their meaning remains deeply personal to the Fulani people.





### 4. BANTU KNOTS – COILS OF STRENGTH AND FEMININITY

For over a thousand years, Bantu-speaking tribes across Central and Southern Africa have shaped their hair into small, coiled knots that resemble tiny crowns. More than just a stylish formation, Bantu knots are a symbol of heritage, self-care, and community.

Among the Zulu, Xhosa, and Shona people, these knots were seen as a way to preserve hair's health and retain energy, a belief rooted in the idea that hair carries a person's spiritual essence. The formation of each knot was a ritual passed down, as mothers taught daughters the precise method, ensuring that the tradition continued through generations.

Despite their African origins, Bantu knots have been culturally appropriated and misrepresented, often renamed in Western spaces as "mini-buns" or "twisted knots."

Yet their true essence remains untouched: a style of resilience, pride, and a reminder that African beauty is deeply rooted in history.





## 5. HIMBA RED OCHRE LOCKS – A SACRED CONNECTION TO EARTH

In the arid landscapes of Namibia, the Himba people have perfected the art of natural hair preservation, coating their locks with Otjize, a rich blend of butterfat and red ochre clay. This unique practice serves multiple purposes: it protects the hair from the scorching desert sun, repels insects, and symbolizes fertility and ancestral connection.

Otjize is not just for the hair—it is a sacred mixture applied to the skin, believed to enhance beauty and create a spiritual link to the earth. Among Himba women, the number of braids and their formation indicate social status and life stage—young girls wear two braids, while married women adopt more elaborate, cascading locks.

This tradition, passed through centuries, remains untouched by time, a living testament to African beauty practices that honor nature, identity, and heritage.

## 6. ISICHOLO – THE ZULU CROWN OF MATRIMONY

In Zulu culture, a woman's transition into marriage is marked by more than just a change in name—her hair transforms too. The Isicholo, a wide, circular hat originally crafted from a woman's own hair, symbolizes wisdom, maturity, and respect.

Historically, the process of creating the Isicholo took years, as the woman's natural hair was woven with grass, wool, and beads to form a towering headpiece. To wear an Isicholo is to be recognized as a woman of honor, and till today, the meaning hasn't changed.

African hairstyles are not mere trends; they are cultural heirlooms, carrying stories of power, love, and resistance. For centuries, these styles have survived colonization, forced assimilation, and even laws policing Black hair, yet they continue to thrive.

Every braid, knot, and twist is a reminder of a people who have never let their history fade. Whether worn in the villages of Africa or the streets of New York, these hairstyles are a declaration of beauty, strength, and belonging.

As these styles continue to shape global beauty trends, one truth remains: our hair is our history, and our history is our crown.

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# HON. LARAI SYLVIA ISHAKU

## – A Visionary Leader in Governance, Technology, and Women's Empowerment.

In an era where effective leadership intersects with technological progress and inclusive governance, Hon. Larai Sylvia Ishaku stands as a transformative figure – a public servant whose influence extends across local government administration, professional advocacy, and digital innovation. As Executive Chairman of Jaba Local Government Area, Secretary of the Association of Local Governments of Nigeria (ALGON) in Kaduna State, and North-West Coordinator of the Professional Women Council (PWC), she exemplifies the rare combination of strategic governance, technological expertise, and an unwavering commitment to community development and gender equality.

Born and raised in Kaduna State, Hon. Ishaku's intellectual journey demonstrates her steadfast dedication to education. A distinguished alumna of Ahmadu Bello University (ABU), Zaria, she earned both her Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Library and Information Science, establishing herself as a scholar passionate about knowledge management, digital literacy, and information dissemination. Currently pursuing a second Master's degree in her field, she embodies the principle that effective leadership requires continuous personal development.

Her academic pursuits reflect a global outlook, evidenced by her certification in Latex Allergy from a U.S.-based training programme, showcasing her adaptability and cross-cultural competencies. This multidisciplinary approach has equipped her with the analytical skills and problem-solving abilities essential for modern governance in our increasingly digital world.

## Transformational Leadership: Advancing Jaba LGA and Beyond

As the first female Executive Chairman of Jaba Local Government Area, Hon. Ishaku has redefined public service through transparency, innovation, and community empowerment. Under her leadership, Jaba LGA has achieved:



- Digital Modernisation: Applying her IT expertise to revolutionise local government operations through e-governance initiatives, digital record-keeping, and improved public service delivery.
- Sustainable Development: Leading infrastructure projects, educational programmes, and healthcare improvements designed to benefit both rural and urban communities.
- Participatory Governance: Championing youth and women's involvement in decision-making processes, ensuring inclusive development planning.

Her role as ALGON Secretary for Kaduna State further extends her influence, where she works collaboratively with fellow local government chairpersons to align policies, advocate for fiscal autonomy, and drive meaningful progress across the state. This position highlights her ability to connect grassroots governance with broader strategic objectives.

As North-West Coordinator of the Professional Women Council, Hon. Ishaku serves as an inspiration to women in leadership, technology, and public service. Her contributions include:

- Mentoring aspiring female leaders through skills development workshops and professional networks.
- Promoting gender-sensitive policies across public and private sectors to ensure equal opportunities in governance and STEM fields.
- Advocating for digital skills training to reduce gender disparities in technology-related sectors.

This leadership role reflects her fundamental belief that societal advancement requires women's full participation in all spheres of decision-making.

## A Leader of Integrity: Bridging Policy and Community Needs

Beyond her official responsibilities, Hon. Ishaku's leadership is characterised by her approachability, compassion, and hands-on engagement. Whether consulting with traditional leaders, youth organisations, or civil society groups, she emphasises open dialogue, inclusivity, and practical solutions. Her leadership approach combines evidence-based policymaking with a profound





understanding of community realities – a balance that has earned her widespread respect.

Her personal journey – from her early education in Kafanchan to her current position as a trailblazing local government chairman and regional leader– speaks volumes about her resilience, adaptability, and steadfast dedication to public service.

Hon. Larai Sylvia Ishaku doesn't simply hold leadership positions; she redefines what leadership means. Her work in digital governance, women's empowerment, and community development establishes her as a model for progressive leadership in contemporary Nigeria. With each policy implemented, each initiative launched, and each life positively affected, she reinforces the fundamental truth that leadership is ultimately about serving people.

As she continues to break new ground and establish higher standards, one fact remains evident: Hon. Larai Sylvia Ishaku's legacy will be measured not merely by the titles she holds, but by the enduring positive change she creates.

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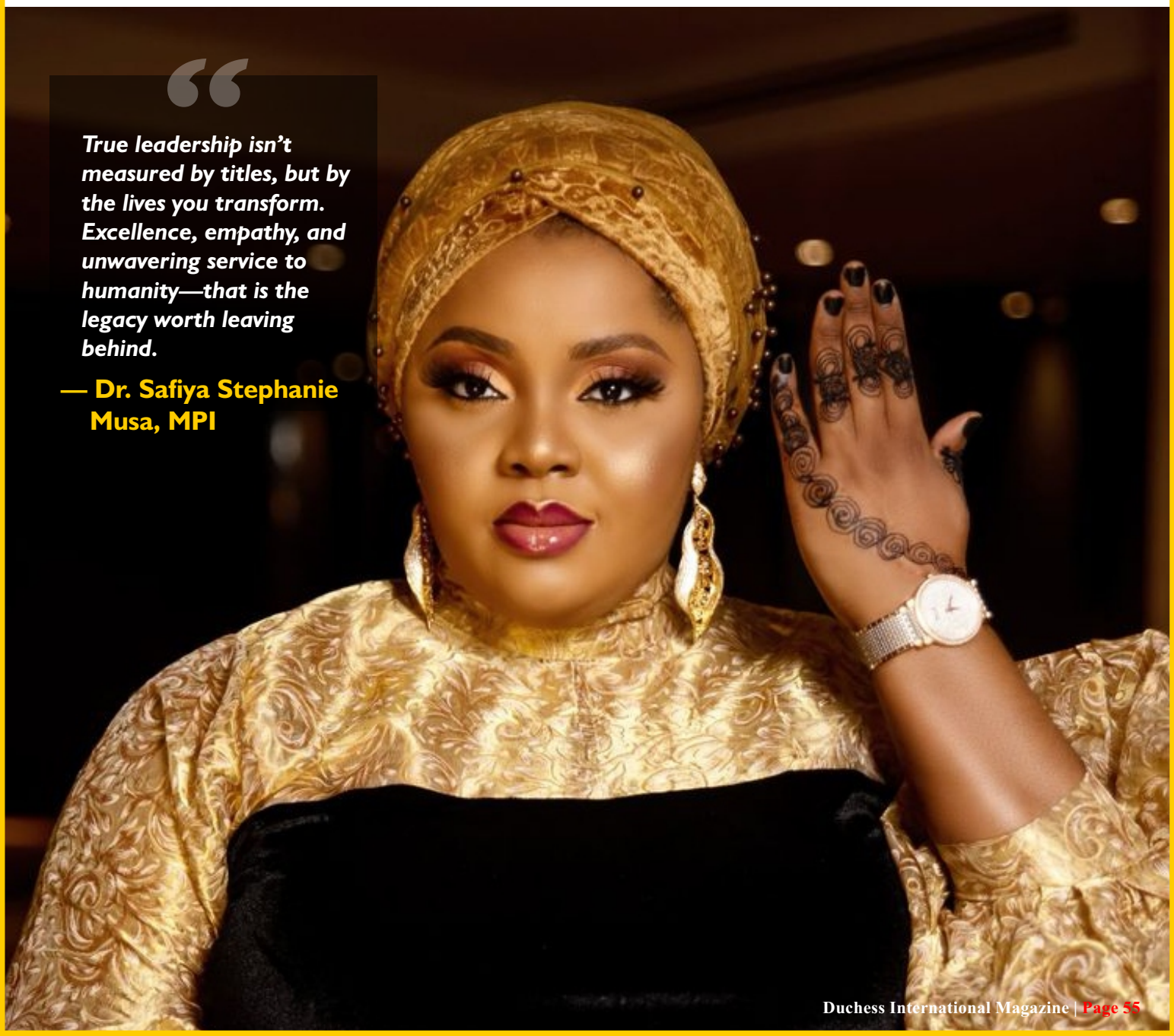
# DR. SAFIYA STEPHANIE MUSA, MPI

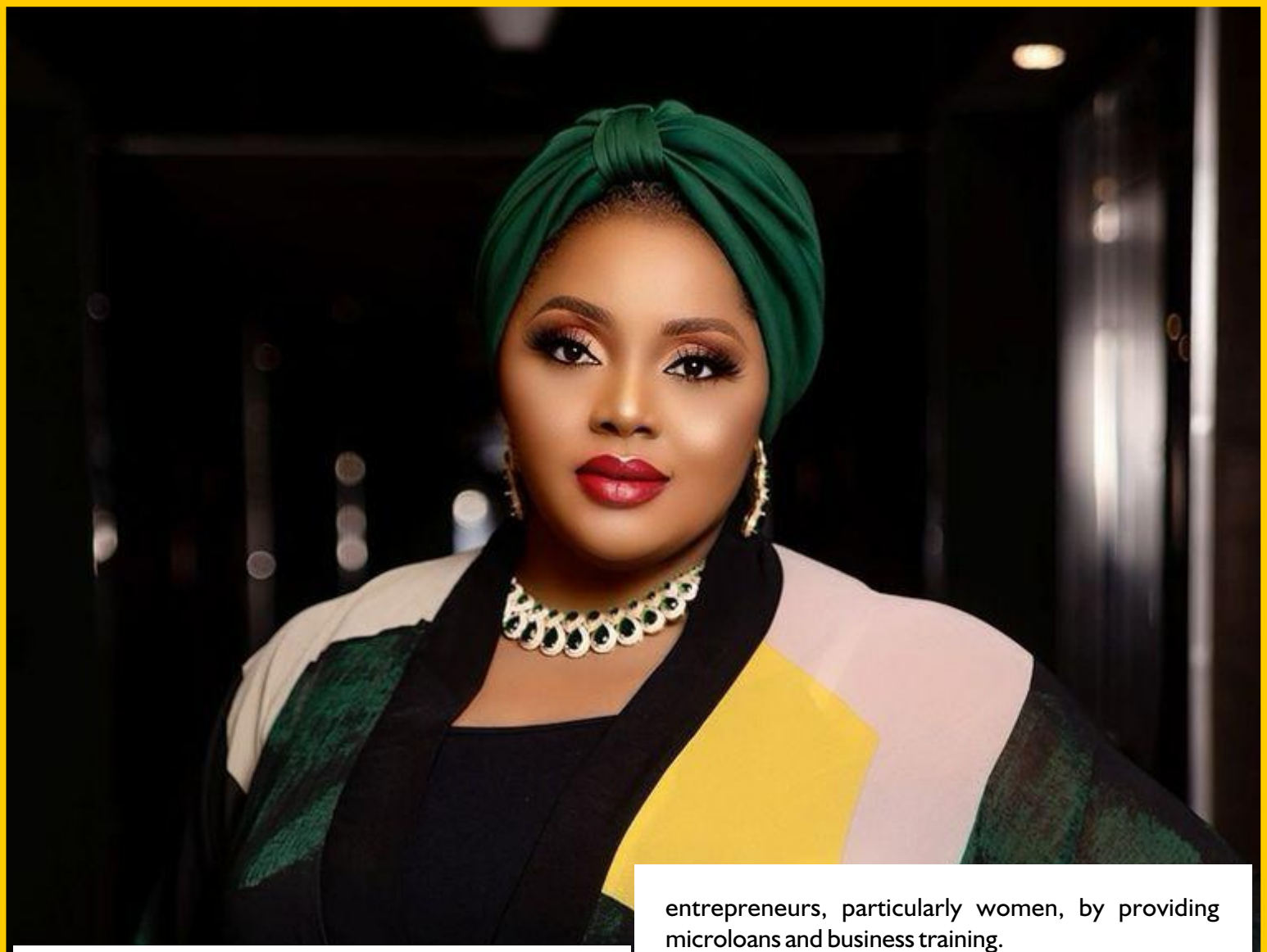
## –A VISIONARY FORCE BRIDGING ECONOMICS, HEALTHCARE, AND HUMANITY

In a world often defined by titles and achievements, Dr. Safiya Stephanie Musa Mpi stands as a transformative leader whose work encompasses economics, healthcare, and humanitarian efforts. Her career, spanning over two decades, has impacted lives globally, seamlessly blending professional excellence with a deep commitment to service.

### A Multifaceted Pioneer

Dr. Safiya's impressive journey begins with a degree in Economics from Bayero University Kano, later enriched by advanced training at prestigious institutions like Yale University and INSEAD. Her professional trajectory includes roles such as the Chief Representative Officer for FirstBank of Nigeria in Abu





Dhabi, where she expanded the bank's international presence. Currently, as Executive Director at Zaihar Healthcare Ltd., Dr. Safiya leads innovations in neurohealth and digital healthcare, making significant strides in Nigeria's medical sector.

In addition to her corporate leadership, Dr. Safiya contributes as a Development Consultant at The EduCapital Learning Centre Ltd., focusing on educational empowerment and professional development. Her connections to global organizations, such as the Project Management Institute (PMI) and the Institute of Chartered Economists of Nigeria (ICEN), reflect her dedication to lifelong learning.

**A Heart Anchored in Humanity**

Dr. Safiya's impact goes beyond her professional success. She is the Founder of the EduShine Support Foundation, ensuring underprivileged students have access to education, despite financial constraints. The Power of N50k initiative empowers small-scale entrepreneurs, particularly women, by providing microloans and business training.

Her humanitarian work extends globally, from cancer research fundraising to collaborating with Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA) to combat impunity in Africa. These projects demonstrate her dedication to peace, justice, and equality, touching lives far beyond her home country.

**A Leader Among Leaders**

Leadership is at the core of Dr. Safiya's career. She actively supports women in leadership roles through the African Women in Leadership Organisation (AWLO) and leads peacebuilding initiatives as Chairman of the Resource Mobilisation Committee for the Rotary Action Group for Peace (RAGFP) in North Central Nigeria.

Her leadership extends to various roles, including former National Vice President of ICEN and President of the FGGC Gboko Old Girls Association, Abuja Chapter. Known for her ability to unite people, she fosters community and collaboration in every role she undertakes.

## A Legacy of Excellence and Empathy

Dr. Safiya's legacy is not only defined by her impressive titles but by her genuine commitment to creating opportunities for others. She believes that true leadership involves uplifting communities and empowering individuals to thrive. Through her efforts, Dr. Safiya continues to challenge the norms, pushing for a more equitable world where access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities are not privileges but rights.

## A Vision for the Future

Dr. Safiya remains focused on her vision of a world where education, healthcare, and economic opportunity are accessible to all. Her work with Smile Missions Health Care (SMHC) and the Kogi Young Professionals Network (KYPN) is helping nurture the next generation of leaders and changemakers. She is laying the foundation for a more just society, where empowerment and equity are at the forefront of global development.

## A Legend in the Making

Dr. Safiya Stephanie Musa Mpi is a living legend, who has transformed industries while remaining deeply grounded in her humanitarian mission. She is a leader, mentor, philanthropist, and visionary, committed to changing lives through education, healthcare, and economic empowerment.

Her story serves as a powerful reminder that leadership is about creating lasting change. Dr. Safiya's life and work continues to inspire, proving that true impact comes from empowering others and shaping a better future for all.



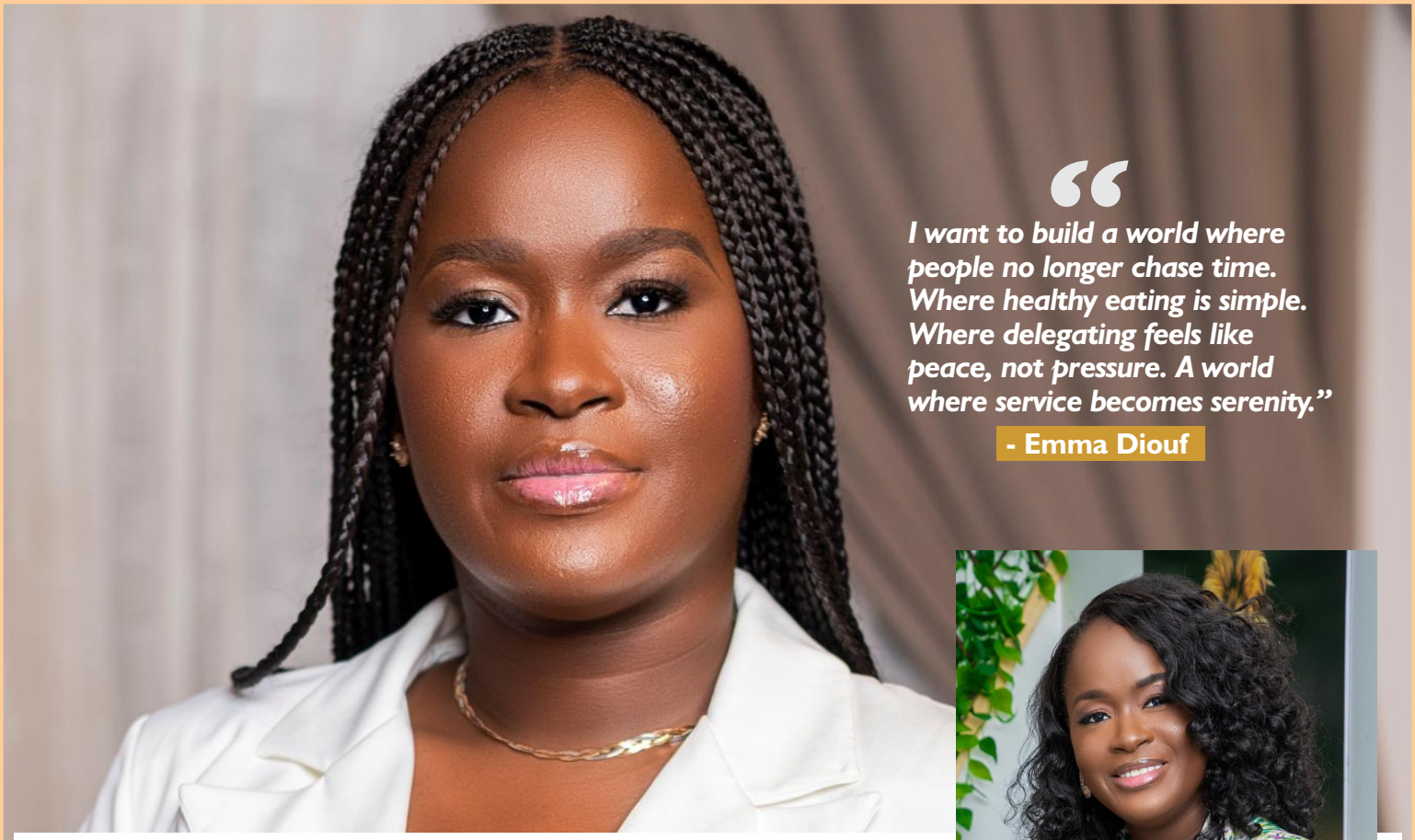
# EMMA DIOUF: BUILDING SOLUTIONS FOR BETTER LIVING



Emma Diouf turns service into an art, organization into power, and daily life into meaningful value. She builds businesses, systems—and above all—purpose-driven solutions with one clear intention: to help people live better, with more time, more balance, and more peace of mind. Her strength lies in connecting everyday needs with responses that are concrete, thoughtful, and deeply human.

Educated entirely in Senegal, Emma earned a Bachelor's degree in Business Management from ESUP Dakar and a Master's degree in Project Engineering from ETICCA Dakar. Beginning her career before completing her studies, she gained invaluable experience across diverse industries that sharpened her versatility and operational insight. Yet her journey is not defined by titles—it's shaped by her mindset. A proud multipotentialite, she continuously strengthens her skills through certifications in leadership, team management, hospitality, tourism, service quality, and customer experience. Her mission goes far beyond merely providing services; she designs solutions that elevate everyday life.

Reflecting her philosophy, Emma once said, "I've never aimed to be important. I've always wanted to be useful. Every minute I return to someone, every task I ease, every service I design—that's one more life breathing easier.



*"I want to build a world where people no longer chase time. Where healthy eating is simple. Where delegating feels like peace, not pressure. A world where service becomes serenity."*

**- Emma Diouf**



And that, to me, is true success."

**M'ma Conciergerie: Mastering Everyday Complexity.**

With M'ma Conciergerie, Emma has crafted a dynamic platform that simplifies daily routines for both individuals and businesses alike. Whether managing errands, deliveries, travel arrangements, administrative support, relocations, property management, or professional event planning—including VIP and facility services—her approach is always tailored to free clients from the nental load and daily friction.

**M'ma BioDélice: Nourish Better, Live Lighter**

Not stopping at service alone, Emma has reimagined fast food with a modern, health-conscious twist. Her vibrant snack venture blends varied plant-based meals, balanced recipes, seasonal fruits, and vegetables with a carefully curated selection of healthy, local options. This concept proves that eating quickly doesn't have to compromise well-being; it creates a lifestyle hub where freshness, simplicity, and responsibility coexist.

**Proxy EMobility: Driving a Greener Future**

Emma is also a partner at Proxy EMobility, a pioneering Senegalese startup dedicated to advancing electric transportation solutions. By championing initiatives such as e-motorcycles, battery swap stations, and smart urban mobility systems, she helps shape a future where African cities move faster and cleaner—transforming mobility into a lever for sustainable progress.

**A Voice of Impact**

Emma's influence extends well beyond her entrepreneurial ventures. A passionate advocate for service, excellence, and women's empowerment, she has actively contributed to organizations that share these values. An engaged member of Junior Chamber International (JCI)—where she once served as Director of Business & Entrepreneurship—Emma now leads as Head of Partnerships & Events at WE4CCA, a pan-African organization that empowers women leaders in customer experience and service excellence. Rather than seeking the spotlight, she leads to open doors, build bridges, and improve systems for the better.

Emma Diouf is not just a name, it's a presence embodied by:

- Someone who listens, anticipates, and builds
- A multipassionate entrepreneur with vision and precision
- A modern African leader who speaks the language of clarity, elegance, and action.

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# Lisa Christoffersen: A Fearless Visionary

Lisa Christoffersen is a dynamic and multifaceted individual whose life is a testament to resilience, passion, and empowerment. An accomplished interior designer, rally driver, entrepreneur, and author, Lisa seamlessly integrates her African heritage with functional aesthetics, creating a uniquely inspired style that defines her work and personal brand.

Born in Tanzania to Danish parents, Lisa grew up on the foothills of Mount Kilimanjaro, an environment that shaped her adventurous spirit and deep-rooted love for conservation. Now based in Nairobi, Kenya, she continues to push boundaries, whether in the world of motorsport, luxury safari curation, or the arts. Her entrepreneurial ventures include founding Life Style Nairobi and curating art exhibitions that support young and emerging artists.

A trailblazer in the male-dominated world of motorsport, Lisa is the founder of The Lioness Rally Club, East Africa's first all-women safari rally, and the Chui Racing Team. She competes in 4X4 challenges, rallying under the Kenya Motorsport Federation. Through these platforms, she actively champions the empowerment of women, encouraging them to take charge of their destinies and drive towards their goals—both literally and metaphorically.

Lisa's unwavering resilience is exemplified by her battle with cancer. Given only ten days to live a decade ago, she emerged stronger, embodying the mantra: What doesn't kill you makes you stronger. Today, she is Driving for Change, using her rallying prowess to raise

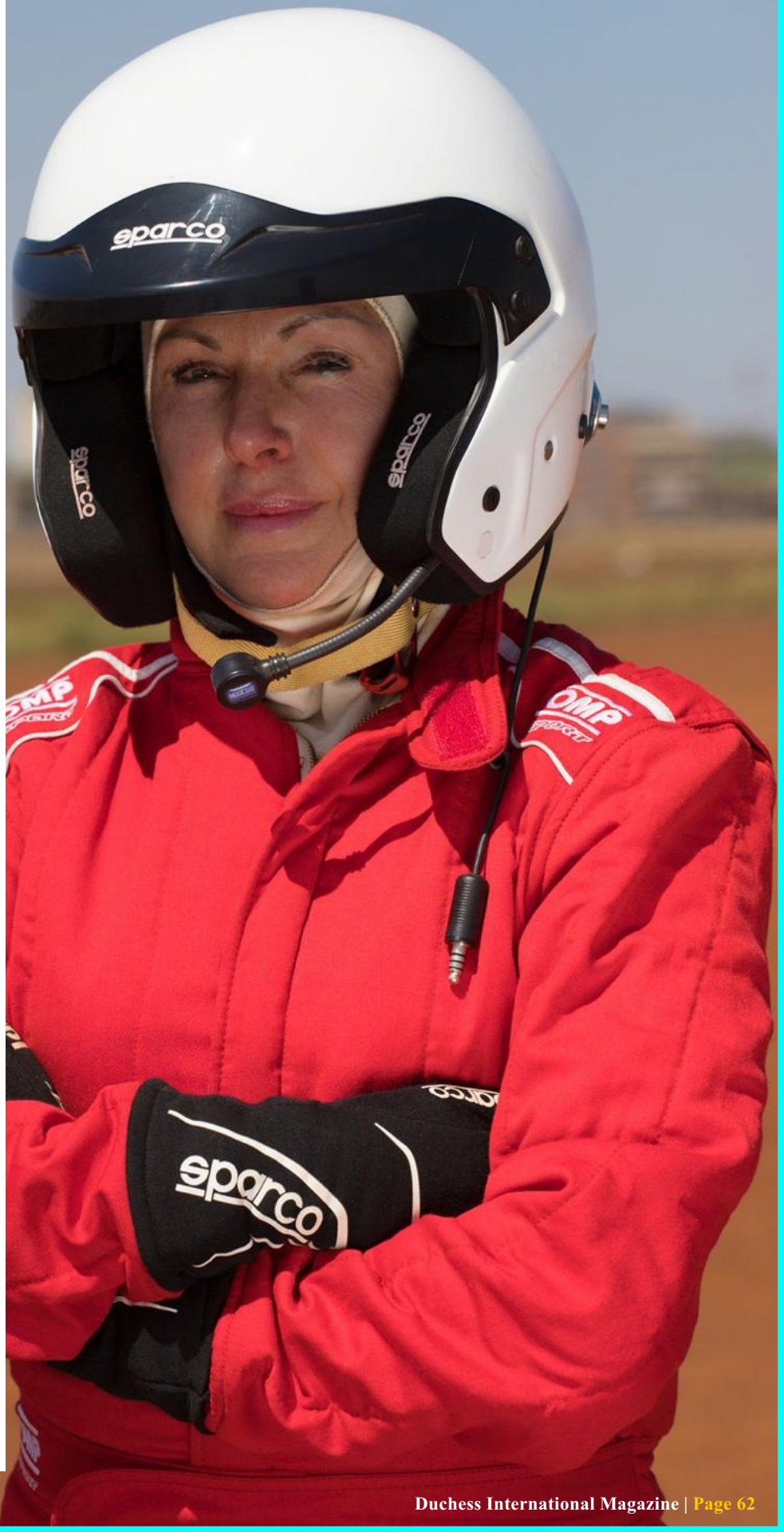
funds for children with cancer in Kenya.

Her life has been punctuated by significant setbacks, including financial losses due to fraud and the collapse of Imperial Bank. Undeterred, Lisa rebuilt her career with relentless determination, proving that setbacks are merely setups for greater comebacks.

Beyond motorsport and design, Lisa is a sought-after speaker, recently addressing over 40,000 young entrepreneurs at Strathmore University. She is also a curator of Bespoke luxury safaris, an author of the leading guidebook; 'Bushfriendly Tips' and a children's book, titled 'A monkey's wedding'. Her role as a brand ambassador for the Kenyan automobile company Mobius further underscores her influence in the automotive industry.

Lisa's vibrant and adventurous personality is encapsulated in the Kikuyu name given to her; 'Makena', meaning the happy one. As a single mother of two grown children, she continues to inspire those around her, embodying the philosophy of dreaming, believing, and achieving.

Recently, Lisa added another feather to her cap as a leading cast member in Kenya's first international reality TV show, Real Housewives of Nairobi. Whether she is kickboxing, rallying, designing, or inspiring others, Lisa Christoffersen is the epitome of strength, elegance, and fearless ambition.




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