



INITIATIVE FOR RESEARCH,  
INNOVATION AND ADVOCACY  
IN DEVELOPMENT

# NIGERIA FEMALE FIRSTS

TRAILBLAZERS IN POLITICS, PUBLIC SERVICES,  
ACADEMIA, AND PROFESSIONAL FIELDS



**NIGERIA FEMALE FIRSTS**  
**TRAILBLAZERS IN POLITICS, PUBLIC SERVICE,**  
**ACADEMIA, AND PROFESSIONAL FIELDS**

**Knowledge| Innovation | Inclusion**  
**...promoting electoral knowledge, accountability, and integrity.**

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**The Initiative for Research, Innovation, and Advocacy in Development (IRIAD)** is an interdisciplinary knowledge, advocacy and policy hub focused on developing critical understanding of governance processes and regimes from research, public education, policy dialogues and multilogues, and impact advocacy. Whilst promoting governance inclusivity, and encouraging active citizenship through citizens engagement, participation and representation in democratic governance. **Our mission** is to strengthen governance and accountability in Nigeria through knowledge production, innovation, and impact advocacy. **Our vision** is to be a knowledge and innovation centre for ethical governance and just development. **Our values** are knowledge-exchange, inclusion, justice, equity, transparency, accountability, and integrity.

## IRIAD-The Electoral Hub

Phone: +234 908 6998 850 +234 704 7998 525

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# Acronyms

|        |                                                                  |
|--------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| AIG    | Assistant Inspector General of Police                            |
| CBN    | Central Bank of Nigeria                                          |
| CEO    | Chief Executive Officer                                          |
| DIG    | Deputy Inspector General of Police                               |
| ECOWAS | Economic Community of West African States                        |
| EFCC   | Economic and Financial Crimes Commission                         |
| FCSC   | Federal Civil Service Commission                                 |
| FIRS   | Federal Inland Revenue Services                                  |
| FUT    | Federal University of Technology, Minna                          |
| FUTA   | Federal University of Technology, Akure                          |
| FUTO   | Federal University of Technology, Owerri                         |
| FPRO   | Female Public Relations Officer (Nigeria Police Force)           |
| ICAN   | Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria                    |
| INEC   | Independent National Electoral Commission                        |
| IRIAD  | Initiative for Research, Innovation, and Advocacy in Development |
| IoD    | Institute of Directors                                           |
| LASU   | Lagos State University                                           |
| NA     | Not Available                                                    |
| NAACP  | National Association for the Advancement of Colored People       |
| NAFDAC | National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control     |
| NBA    | Nigeria Bar Association                                          |
| NBS    | National Bureau of Statistics                                    |
| NEMA   | National Emergency Management Agency                             |
| NISER  | National Institute of Social and Economic Research               |
| NNPC   | Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation                          |
| NPA    | Nigerian Ports Authority                                         |
| NSE    | Nigerian Society of Engineers                                    |
| NVMA   | Nigerian Veterinary Medical Association                          |
| OPEC   | Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries                    |
| PSN    | Pharmaceutical Society of Nigeria                                |
| PWD    | Persons with Disability                                          |
| SAN    | Senior Advocate of Nigeria                                       |

|          |                                                                   |
|----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| UBA      | United Bank of Africa                                             |
| UI       | University of Ibadan                                              |
| UPN      | Unity Party of Nigeria                                            |
| UN       | United Nations                                                    |
| UNESCO   | United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation |
| UNN      | University of Nigeria                                             |
| VCN      | Veterinary Council of Nigeria                                     |
| WTO      | World Trade Organisation                                          |
| YabaTech | Yaba College of Technology                                        |



# Introduction

March is a month of reflection, celebration, and renewed commitment to advancing the rights and dignity of women and girls everywhere. International Women’s Day (IWD) and Women’s Month (IWM) remind us that progress is never achieved by chance; it is won through deliberate action, courage, and the breaking of barriers. This year’s theme, “Give to Gain: Rights, Justice, and Actions for All Women and Girls,” calls us to recognize that societies flourish when women are empowered, included, and given equal opportunities to thrive.

In Nigeria, the story of women’s progress is illuminated by extraordinary trailblazers, our Female Firsts, who shattered glass ceilings and redefined what is possible. From the first Nigerian woman to earn a university degree to the first female senator, judge, pilot, and professional association leader, these pioneers not only claimed space in traditionally male-dominated fields but also paved the way for generations to come. Their achievements are not just personal milestones, but are national victories that demonstrate the limitless potential of women when stereotypes and systemic barriers are dismantled.

In celebrating IWM 2026, the **Initiative for Research, Innovation, and Advocacy in Development (IRIAD)**, under its Gender Rights and Justice Programme, conducted desk review research to identify, document, and celebrate these extraordinary Nigerian women who, as first movers, shaped the nation’s course across diverse domains. By meticulously recording their groundbreaking accomplishments, IRIAD not only honors their legacy but also uses their achievements and milestones as powerful tools of advocacy and inspiration, reminding us that the courage of yesterday must fuel the progress of tomorrow.

The achievements of women, as documented here, show their limitless potential in Nigeria. This knowledge product offers insight into the achievements of the first Nigerian women to hold pivotal positions in politics, public service, academia, professional associations, and sports. Providing a catalogue of the specific roles held by each trailblazer and their accomplishments.

The names and achievements documented here serve as concrete evidence of progress in gender equity and social inclusion. Importantly, the achievements of women documented here can serve as a motivation for other women to actively pursue their dreams.

Therefore, celebrating these women is more than an act of remembrance; it is a call to action. Their leadership proves that when women rise, nations rise. Their achievements and stories inspire younger women and girls to dream boldly, pursue education, enter politics, excel in sports, and lead with vision.

Through this documentation, these women are celebrated not simply for being “**First**,” but for the ceilings they shattered, doors they opened, and the barriers they dismantled. Their journeys serve as living lessons, encouraging future generations to learn from their resilience and vision. By identifying these women pioneers and documenting their achievements, IRIAD seeks to celebrate these achievements, whilst encouraging future generations to learn from their example. Thus, fostering continued progress toward gender equity, ensuring that the path they carved becomes a highway for many more women and girls to follow.

As we mark International Women’s Day and Month, let us honor Nigeria Female Firsts by recommitting ourselves to advocacy, inclusion, and justice. Let us ensure that every girl has the right to education, every woman has the opportunity to lead, and every voice is heard in shaping the future. To give to gain is to invest in women and girls, because their empowerment is the foundation of an inclusive, just, equitable, and prosperous Nigeria.



# Why Women-Firsts<sup>1</sup> Should Be Celebrated

Women's groundbreaking "firsts" throughout history not only stand as remarkable personal achievements but also represent pivotal milestones in the ongoing pursuit of gender rights, justice, and equity. These pioneering women shattered long-entrenched social, institutional, and cultural barriers that systematically excluded them from leadership roles and influential positions across political, academic, business, and public service sectors. By stepping into these traditionally male-dominated arenas, they created new pathways and broadened the horizons of possibility for future generations, sending a powerful message that gender must never limit ambition, capability, or success. The trailblazers who became the first Female governors, senators, professors, judges, or heads of institutions helped transform societal expectations and inspired countless girls and women to envision themselves in roles previously thought unattainable.

Celebrating these historic "women-firsts" is crucial because it embodies the spirit of International Women's Day and Month, reimagining leadership, advancing justice, and affirming that progress is made when women are included in leadership and decision-making. Their diverse journeys illustrate that leadership is not a one-size-fits-all quality narrowly defined by outdated norms but a multifaceted trait enriched by different perspectives and experiences. Women-firsts have demonstrated innovation, empathy, and resilience in their fields, challenging institutions to reconsider their standards for success and merit. This broadening inclusivity fosters richer, more dynamic environments that benefit from a variety of approaches to problem-solving and decision-making, ultimately driving societal progress.

Importantly, honoring these first women also highlights the formidable barriers they faced and overcame, barriers that persist today in many forms. Discrimination, stereotypes about women's roles and abilities, unequal access to education and resources, and limited institutional support have frequently made the journey toward these firsts extraordinarily challenging. By recognizing their struggles alongside

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<sup>1</sup> 'Women first' and 'female first' are used interchangeably in this paper to mean the same thing.

their achievements, society gains a clearer understanding of the enduring inequalities that require ongoing attention and action. Such recognition galvanizes policymakers and stakeholders to work toward creating more equitable systems that dismantle these obstacles for all women, ensuring that rights and justice are not privileges but guarantees.

Equally significant is the role of representation that these women-firsts play in reshaping societal attitudes. When women occupy prominent leadership positions, whether in government, academia, or business, it normalizes female leadership and gradually dispels harmful stereotypes. This normalization influences not only public perceptions but also private spaces, affecting hiring practices, educational guidance, and the aspirations of young girls. The presence of women in these roles creates a ripple effect, encouraging broader gender-balanced participation in many facets of life, proving that when women gain, society gains.

Furthermore, celebrating women's firsts weaves their stories into the collective memory of nations, rectifying historical omissions and ensuring that future generations recognize women's contributions to societal development. Preserving these narratives fosters national pride and strengthens the resolve to continue making progress toward gender parity. It also reinforces the idea that these trailblazers are not isolated exceptions but integral parts of the ongoing story of societal advancement.

Ultimately, the cumulative impact of women's firsts contributes to building a more just, inclusive, and democratic society where the talents and voices of all individuals, irrespective of gender, are valued and heard. These pioneering women have laid the foundation for a future in which "firsts" become commonplace rather than celebrated anomalies, ushering in an era where gender ceases to be a barrier to achievement across all fields of human endeavor. Their legacies inspire ongoing efforts to break new ground, affirming that opportunities and leadership roles should be accessible to everyone, regardless of gender. In celebrating Nigeria's Female Firsts during the International Women's Month, we affirm that giving women their rights and opportunities is the true gain for social inclusion, justice, equity, and national progress.

# Nigeria's Women-Firsts and their Contributions

Nigeria, like many other African societies, has been historically patriarchal, structured around male dominance. However, the path for women's participation across politics, governance, education, literature, law, and social welfare was paved by remarkable individuals who shattered glass ceilings and transformed the landscape of opportunity for future generations.

Pioneers such as Margaret Ekpo and Professor Flora Nwapa Nwakuche stand out as foundational figures. Margaret Ekpo, a fearless women's rights activist, nationalist politician, and social mobiliser, became the first Aba woman to win a seat in the Eastern Regional House of Assembly in 1961 and inspired generations of women to enter active politics. Professor Flora Nkiru Nwapa, known as "mother of modern African literature". She was the first African and Nigerian woman novelist to be published in English and the first African and Nigerian woman to own a publishing company. She contributed immensely to post-Civil War reconstruction and served as the first female Commissioner for Health and Social Welfare in the East Central State (1970–1971), while her writings laid critical groundwork for Nigerian and global feminism.

These early breakthroughs were built upon by an extraordinary lineage of trailblazers who continually raised the bar: Adunni Oluwole (Nigeria's first female political party leader, Nigerian Commoners Liberal Party (NCLP)<sup>2</sup>), Wuraola Esan (first appointed female Senator) nominated by the Western Region to the federal legislative house, Senator Franca Afegbua (first elected female Senator), Sarah Nnadzwa Jibril (first woman to aspire for the position of president of the Republic under the Social Democratic Party – SDP and first woman presidential candidate of a registered political party, Progressive Action Congress - PAC), Patricia Etteh (first female Speaker of the House of Representatives), Justice Aloma Mariam Mukhtar (first female Justice of the Supreme Court and later Chief Justice of Nigeria), Dr.

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<sup>2</sup>She founded the Nigerian Commoners Liberal Party (NCLP)

Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala (first female Finance Minister and first woman and African to lead the World Trade Organisation), Professor Grace Alele-Williams (first Nigerian woman to earn a PhD and first female Vice-Chancellor), and countless others listed throughout this chronicle.

From the struggle for independence through military rule to the return to democracy, and into the 21st century, these women, through their courage, intellect, and unrelenting determination, created irreversible milestones. Each “first” became a doorway for others, gradually normalising women’s leadership in every sphere of national life and proving that excellence, vision, and service know no gender boundaries. In the spirit of the 2026 International Women’s Day theme “*Give to Gain: Rights, Justice and Action for all Women and Girls*,” Nigeria’s Female First legacies remind us that progress is achieved when societies invest in women’s rights, uphold justice, and take collective action. Each achievement is not only a personal triumph but a gift to future generations, opening doors, dismantling barriers, and affirming that when women and girls are empowered, entire nations gain. Their courage continues to inspire Nigerian women and girls to aspire, achieve, and lead, ensuring that justice and equality remain at the heart of our shared future.

## Politics

The journey of women’s political participation and representation began with visionary leaders who challenged traditional power structures and opened doors for future generations. Adunni Oluwole, with courage and foresight, became Nigeria’s first female political party leader in the 1950s when she founded the Nigerian Commoners Liberal Party (NCLP) in 1954, establishing a precedent that continues to inspire women’s political empowerment<sup>3</sup>. This groundbreaking achievement was followed by Wuraola Esan, who made history in 1960 as Nigeria’s first female Senator, nominated by the Action Group to represent Ibadan West at the Senate. Her achievement, at the dawn of independence, symbolised the justice and inclusion women deserved in legislative governance.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://archivi.ng/the-archivist/issue-3/nigerian-women-in-history/adunni-oluwole>

Margaret Ekpo continued this momentum by becoming the first female from Aba to win a seat at the Eastern Regional House of Assembly in 1961<sup>4</sup>. Her victory proved that women could successfully compete for legislative positions, reinforcing the principle that rights and representation must extend to all.

The 1970s witnessed a significant expansion of women's roles in executive positions. Dorothy Miller (Akanya) broke new ground as Nigeria's first female Commissioner in 1967<sup>5</sup>, while Professor Flora Nwapa Nwakuche became the first female Commissioner for Health and Social Welfare in the East Central States, 1970 - 1971<sup>6</sup>. These appointments marked crucial progress in women's participation in governance and policy-making, embodying the theme of action for justice, equality, and equity

The return to democratic governance brought new opportunities and challenges. Oyibo Odinamadu served as the first woman to hold the position of National Vice President of the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) from 1979 to 1983<sup>7</sup>, demonstrating women's capacity for high-level party leadership. Senator Franca Afegbua made history in 1983<sup>8</sup>, as the first elected female Senator, proving that women could successfully compete in national elections.

The 1990s marked a significant turning point with the emergence of female executives at the state level. Alhaja Lateefah Okunnu became Nigeria's first female Deputy Governor in Lagos in 1990<sup>9</sup>, followed by Aisha Pamela Sadauki in Kaduna State, the same year<sup>10</sup>. Sinatu Aderoju Ojikutu then became the first elected female Deputy Governor in Lagos State (1992 to 1993<sup>11</sup>). These milestones reflected the growing recognition that women's leadership strengthens justice and governance.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://zodml.org/discover-nigeria/people/historicalpeople/margaret-ekpo>

<sup>5</sup> <https://leadership.ng/first-Woman-commissioner-in-northern-nigeria-dies-at-90/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://artsloungenyc.com/2022/02/12/black-history-month-flora-nkiru-nwapa/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://archivi.ng/the-archivist/issue-3/nigerian-women-in-history/oyibo-odinamadu>

<sup>8</sup> <https://archivi.ng/the-archivist/issue-3/nigerian-women-in-history/franca-afegbua>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2022/01/lateefat-okunnu-public-servant-activist/>

She was appointed deputy governor under the military regime of General Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida

<sup>10</sup> <https://dailytrust.com/reminiscences-with-aisha-pamela-sadauki/>

She was also appointed deputy governor under same military regime

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.todayinhistory.com.ng/?alhaja-sinatu-ojikutu-the-first-elected-Woman-deputy-governor-in-nigeria-was-born-729663>

A particularly significant milestone occurred in 1992 when Sarah Nnadvwa Jibril became the first female to contest for the Office of the President<sup>12</sup>, and later in 2003, she became the first female presidential candidate of a political party<sup>13</sup>, breaking the ultimate political barrier and inspiring countless women to aspire to the highest office in the land. Legislative leadership also evolved significantly during this period. Hon. Margaret Icheen became the first female Speaker of a House of Assembly in 1999, while Chief Stella Omu broke barriers as the first female Chief Whip in the Nigerian Senate in 2000. At the state level, Dorathy Obasi became the first female legislator to be elected to Ebonyi State House of Assembly in 2003, and Madam Eucharia Azodo Okwuna made history as the first female Speaker of Anambra State House of Assembly in 2003<sup>14</sup>.

The 21st century has witnessed unprecedented achievements in female political leadership. Dame Virginia Etiaba achieved a historic milestone by becoming Nigeria's first female Governor in 2006, also serving as the first female Deputy Governor of Anambra State. Rt. Hon. Patricia Etteh broke another barrier as the first female Speaker of the House of Representatives in 2007. The expansion of Female leadership continued across various states, with Funmilayo Olayinka becoming the first female Deputy Governor of Ekiti State in 2010, Pauline Tallen as the first elected female Deputy Governor in Northern Nigeria as Deputy Governor of Plateau State in 2011, and Mulikat Adeola-Akande as the first female Majority Leader at the Federal Legislative level in 2011.

Recent achievements include Hajia Saddatu Kolo as the first female Principal Officer of the Niger State House of Assembly in 2011, Valerie Maurice Ebe as the first female Deputy Governor of Akwa Ibom State in 2012, and Ipalibo Banigo as the first female Deputy Governor of Rivers State in 2015. Lolo Cecilia Ezeilo became the first female Deputy Governor of Enugu State in 2015, while Lois Auta made history as Nigeria's first PWD legislative candidate in 2019. Hadiza Sabuwa Balarabe broke barriers as the first elected Female Deputy Governor in Nigeria's North-West region in 2019.

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<sup>12</sup> <https://gazettengr.com/international-womens-day-women-who-wanted-to-be-nigerias-president/>

<sup>13</sup> Ibid

<sup>14</sup> <https://thenationonlineng.net/nigerias-Woman-assembly-speakers-since-1999/>



The momentum continues with recent groundbreaking appointments including Hajiya Khadijat Abdullahi-Iya as the first female governorship aspirant and candidate in Niger state in 2022, Princess Patricia Obila as the first female Deputy Governor of Ebonyi State in 2023, and Comfort Nwochiola as the first female Deputy Speaker of Kogi State House of Assembly in 2023, demonstrating the continued expansion of women's political participation across all regions of Nigeria. Alhaja Basirat Nahibi also holds the distinction of being Nigeria's first female governorship aspirant, further enhancing women's growing participation in executive politics.

## Public Service

The contributions of women in public service extend far beyond traditional administrative roles. Francesca Yetunde Emmanuel broke barriers and made multiple historic '*firsts*' achievements, by becoming the first female Administrative Officer of the Federal Civil Service of Nigeria in 1959 and later the first female Permanent Secretary of the Federal Civil Service in 1975<sup>15</sup>, establishing women's capability in public administrative leadership and policy implementation. Victoria Eronini made history as the first Nigerian female Accountant-General of Imo State in 1976<sup>16</sup>, while Victoria Onejeme became the first female Attorney General of old Anambra State<sup>17</sup> in 1977<sup>18</sup>.

Adenike Ebun Oyagbola advanced Nigeria's global presence by founding the International Delphic Council, embodying the theme of rights and justice through cultural diplomacy, and serving as the first woman to ever be appointed as a Federal Minister in Nigeria in 1979. Justice Fati Lami Abubakar, Nigeria's former First Lady, also holds multiple '*firsts*' as Niger State's first Female Lawyer<sup>19</sup>, Solicitor-General in 1985 and Chief Judge in 1989. She is also the first First Lady with a university degree. While Rosaline Ajoke Omotosho broke new ground as Nigeria's first female Chief Judge in 1995<sup>20</sup>, demonstrating women's capability to interpret

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<sup>15</sup> <https://businessday.ng/opinion/article/mrs-francesca-emanuel-and-the-golden-era-of-nigerian-public-service/>

<sup>16</sup> <https://sites.google.com/site/firstnigerian/home/first-Woman>

<sup>17</sup> Old Anambra State includes current Anambra and Enugu States as well as parts of Ebonyi State

<sup>18</sup> <https://archivi.ng/the-archivist/issue-3/nigerian-women-in-history/victoria-onejeme>

<sup>19</sup> Date not available

<sup>20</sup> <https://archivi.ng/the-archivist/issue-3/nigerian-women-in-history/rosaline-omotosho>

law, lead the judiciary, and uphold justice at the highest levels. Justice Nana Aisha Abdullahi served as Jigawa State's first female High Court Judge from 2000 to 2005 and later as Solicitor General, Attorney General, and Commissioner for Justice in 2010, reinforcing women's role in shaping legal frameworks.

Professor Dora Nkem Akunyili is the first female Director-General of the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) and became the first African woman to win the Transparency International Integrity Award in 2003, which recognized her fight against counterfeit drugs and corruption. Ifueko Omoigui became the first female Chairperson of Federal Inland Revenue Services (FIRS) in 2004 and the first female Chairman of the Joint Tax Board of Nigeria. Justice Aloma Mariam Mukhtar first ascended to the Supreme Court bench in 2005 as the first woman to achieve this milestone and later became the first female Justice of Nigeria in 2012.

Cecilia Ugowe achieved multiple firsts as Nigeria's first female Chief Superintendent of Police, Commissioner of Police, Assistant Inspector General, and Deputy Inspector General of Police. While Ivy Okoronkwoto is the first female to lead a Police Command between 2005 and 2006<sup>21</sup> as Ekiti State Commissioner of Police. Wahir Ayuba Mshelia became Nigeria's first female Deputy Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria in 2005, while Bosede Folake Oyelowo served as the first female Auditor-General of the Federation in 2006.

Professor Adenike Grange became the Nigeria's first female Minister of Health in 2007, while Engineer Ebele Okeke served as the first female Head of Service of the Federation in 2007. Farida Waziri became Nigeria's first female Head of Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) in 2008.

Professor Joy Ogwu served as Nigeria's first female Permanent Representative to the United Nations in 2008 and later Nigeria's first female Chair of the UN Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations in 2010, showcasing Nigerian women's leadership on the global stage. Cecilia Ugowe became the highest-ranking female Police Officer in Nigeria in 2010, while Diezani Allison-Madueke also made history as Nigeria's first female Minister of Petroleum in 2010 and first female President of Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) in 2014. While in the over

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<sup>21</sup> Some literature has 2005 others 2006

100 years of elections in Nigeria and 68years of creation of a central and federal electoral management bodies (EMBs) / electoral commissions (ECs), Hajia Amina Zakari is the first and only woman to have served two terms (10years) as a national commissioner of an EMB.

Dr. Sarah Alade influenced Nigeria's economic policies and became the first female Acting Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) in 2014. Amina J. Mohammed served as the first female Senior Special Assistant to the President on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in Nigeria from 2005 to 2010 (SSA on MDGs) and first female Minister of Environment in 2015, later rising to global prominence as UN Deputy Secretary-General 2017 -present.

Olabisi Alofe-Kolawole became the first female Public Relations Officer (FPRO) of the Nigeria Police Force in 2015. Priscilla Ekwere Eleje served as the first Female Director of Currency at the CBN in 2018, becoming the first female to have her signature on Nigerian banknotes. Dr. Maimuna Abdullahi Habib became the first female Chief Veterinary Officer of Nigeria in 2022.

Professor Antonia Simbine became the first Female Director-General (DG) of Nigeria's National Institute of Social and Economic Research (NISER) in 2022<sup>22</sup>. Oluwatoyin Sakirat Madein became the first female Accountant-General of the Federation in 2023<sup>23</sup>, while Zubaida Umar was appointed as the first female Director-General of the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) in 2024<sup>24</sup>.

Additional public service achievements include Hairat Aderinsola Balogun as the first female Attorney General of Lagos State, Ndi Okereke-Onyiuke as the first Female Director-General of the Nigerian Stock Exchange, and Nima Salman Mann as the first Female Solicitor-General and Director-General, Ministry of Justice, Kwara State.

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<sup>22</sup> <https://www.thecable.ng/buhari-appoints-antonia-simbine-as-niser-dg-first-Woman-to-ever-lead-the-institute/>

<sup>23</sup> <https://guardian.ng/news/buhari-appoints-oluwatoyin-sakirat-madein-as-nigerias-first-Woman-agf/>

<sup>24</sup> <https://statehouse.gov.ng/news/president-tinubu-appoints-new-nema-director-general/>

# Academia

While efforts to enhance women's participation and representation in Nigerian politics remain ongoing, the nation's history is rich with the contributions of remarkable women who broke barriers in academia. These trailblazers, though not holding elected offices themselves, laid intellectual groundwork for future generations and indirectly shape Nigeria's political landscape. The academic journey of Nigerian women began with Lady Kofo Ademola, the first Nigerian and West African woman to earn a university degree from Oxford in 1932<sup>25</sup>. Her achievement set a precedent for higher education attainment and academic excellence, inspiring generations of Nigerian women to pursue academic achievements.

Universities became springboards for many pioneering women. Professor Grace Alele-Williams achieved multiple historic milestones: she was the first Nigerian woman to earn a doctorate in Mathematics in 1963<sup>26</sup> and later in 1985, the first female Vice-Chancellor in Nigeria at the University of Benin<sup>27</sup>. She confronted the pressing issue of campus cultism and demonstrated strong leadership during a turbulent era. Similarly, Professor Adetowun Ogunshye became the first female professor in Nigeria in 1973<sup>28</sup>, opening the path for women in academic research and leadership.

Professors Jadesola Akande and Bolanle Awe played crucial roles in shaping national security policies and advancing women's studies. Professor Jadesola Akande became the first Nigerian female Professor of Law in 1989<sup>29</sup> and later the first female Vice Chancellor of the Lagos State University, LASU<sup>30</sup>, while Professor Bolanle Awe was the first female lecturer at the Department of History at the University of Ibadan and became Nigeria's first female Professor of History. Professor Irene Pogoso brought her expertise to policy development, directly influencing national governance. She became the first female lecturer in Political

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<sup>25</sup> <https://businessday.ng/life-arts/article/the-untold-story-of-kofoworola-ademola-first-black-african-Woman-to-graduate-from-oxford/#:~:text=Lady%20Kofoworola%20Ademola%20was%20a,from%20the%20University%20of%20Oxford.>

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.documentwomen.com/the-remarkable-journey-of-prof-grace-alele-williams-nigerias-first-Woman-vice-chancellor>

<sup>27</sup> Ibid

<sup>28</sup> <https://archivi.ng/the-archivist/issue-3/nigerian-women-in-history/adetowun-ogunshye>

<sup>29</sup> <https://thejournalnigeria.com/jadesola-akande-biography-first-nigerian-Woman-professor-of-law/>

<sup>30</sup> Ibid

Science at the University of Ibadan in 2008 and the first female Head of Department of Political Science at the same institution in 2022.

The impact of these women extended far beyond traditional academic pursuits. Professor Deborah Ajakaiye became Nigeria's first female Professor of Physics in 1980, pioneering geo-visualization techniques that aided the discovery of vital natural resources

Professor Adebambo Ayoka advanced poultry development in Nigeria as the country's first female Professor of Animal Breeding and Genetics, while Professor Omotayo Olutoye championed the Yoruba language preservation as the world's first female Professor of Yoruba Studies in 1983. These women confronted diverse challenges, highlighting the breadth and depth of Nigeria's female intellectual power.

Humulkhair Oyindamola Anjorin became the first African and Nigerian Polytechnic Rector in 1985 after serving in an acting capacity from 1982 -1984 at Lagos State Polytechnic. Felicia Abimbola Odugbesan served as the first Female Rector of Yaba College of Technology (Yabatech)<sup>31</sup> in 1993. Larai Sa'adatu Jibrin Ahmed made history in 1988 as 'the first woman to be so appointed into that exalted position in the history of university education in Nigeria' when she was appointed Registrar of Federal University of Technology (FUT), Minna<sup>32</sup>.

Similarly, the medical field has seen exceptional female leadership across diverse specializations. Professor Adenike Grange is the first female Professor of Pediatrics at the College of Medicine, University of Lagos. Professor Aisha Indo Mamman became Northern Nigeria's first female Hematologist in 1999, and also achieved recognition as the first female Professor of Hematology. Professor Arinola Olasumbo Sanya broke new ground as Nigeria's first female Professor of Physiotherapy in 2000, while Professor Cecilia Igwillo achieved multiple firsts in pharmacy and university leadership. She became Nigeria's first female Professor of Pharmacy in 2001 and later the first female Dean at the University of Lagos in 2017. Meanwhile, Professor Olayinka Olusola Omigbodun addressed critical mental health issues affecting children and adolescents as Nigeria's first female Professor

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<sup>31</sup> YabaTech founded in 1947 is the first higher education /tertiary institution in Nigeria

<sup>32</sup> <https://futminna.edu.ng/registry/>

of Psychiatry in 2008, shining light on a previously neglected social concern, and later becoming the first female Provost of the University of Ibadan's College of Medicine in 2020. Professor Olajire Bosede Ajayi, as the first female Professor in Optometry and a pioneer of Pediatric Optometry in Nigeria

Other STEM fields include Professor Tomilayo O. Adekanye, the first female Professor of Agriculture and the first female Professor of Agricultural Economics in Africa in 1983. Professor Adenike Osofisan earned recognition as the nation's first female Professor of Computer Science in 2006. Professor Francisca Okeke actively championed female participation in science, serving as the first female Head of Department at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (2003-2006), and later as the first female Dean of the Faculty of Physical Sciences (2008-2010). Professor Adeline Bisi Durotoye was the first female Professor of Geology, and Francisca Bassey was the first Professor of Food Chemistry at the University of Calabar.

The expansion of Female academic leadership continued with Professor Chinyere Stella Okunna is the first female Professor of Mass Communication in 2001. Professor Folake Onayemi became Africa's and Nigeria's first female Professor of Classics in 2008. Professor Oyeronke Olademo was Nigeria's first female Professor of Comparative Religion in 2011 and the first woman to hold that title at the University of Ilorin. Professor Olubola Babalola is recognized as Africa's and Nigeria's first female Professor of Quantity Surveying in 2012.

Recent decades have witnessed unprecedented achievements in university leadership and specialized fields. Dr. Blessing C. Ijioma became the first female Provost of Federal College of Education, Owerri in 2013. Professor Charity Angya became the first female Vice-Chancellor of the Benue State University in 2015. Dr. Pauline Iwuegbu was the first female Provost of Federal College of Education, Eha-Amufu, Enugu State in 2018. Dr. Francisca Nwafulugo became the first female Rector of Federal Polytechnic, Oko, Anambra State in 2019, while Dr. Josephine Anene-Okeakwa was the first female Provost of Federal College of Education (Technical), Asaba, in 2019.

The 2020s marked a new era of female leadership and unprecedented achievements in university system leadership. Professor Kaletapwa Farauta became the first female Vice-Chancellor in the North-East at Adamawa State University in 2020. The



same year, Professor Florence Obi was appointed as the first female Vice-Chancellor at the University of Calabar. In 2021, Professor Nnenna Oti<sup>33</sup> became the first female Vice-Chancellor of Federal University of Technology, Owerri (FUTO). The following year, 2022, both Professors Adenike Oladiji and Folasade Ogunsola became the first female Vice-Chancellors of the Federal University of Technology, Akure and the University of Lagos in 2022 respectively.

Additional specialized achievements include Dr. Olufunke Fayehun, the first female Head of Department of Sociology at the University of Ibadan in 2022, and Professor Omolara Quadri, the first female Professor of Political Science and Head of Department at the University of Lagos. Other notable pioneers include Professor P.K. Igbokwe, Nigeria's first female Professor of Chemical Engineering, Ruqayyatu Ahmed Rufai, as the first female Professor from the North-West geo-political zone, Professor Ogbazi Joy Ukamaka as the first female Professor of Urban and Regional Planning, and Professor Jane Ande as the first female Professor of Accounting.

## Career Trailblazers

The professional journey began with Dr. Elizabeth Abimbola Awoliyi, who made history as the nation's first female Medical Doctor in 1937, laying the foundation for women's participation in healthcare, inspiring generations of medical professionals. Ekei Essien Oku became Nigeria's first female Chartered Librarian in 1953, while Chief Dr. Olusola Olakunri was the first female Chartered Accountant in 1965.

Captain Chinyere Kalu broke ground as the first Nigerian female Commercial Pilot in 1981, proving women's capabilities in aviation. Justice (Chief) Folake Solanke achieved multiple historic firsts: she became Nigeria's first female Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN) in 1981 and the first African International President of Zonta International. Elizabeth Ogbon-Day also made history as Nigeria's first female Ambassador in 1981.

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<sup>33</sup> Professor Oti demonstrated unwavering commitment to electoral integrity during the 2023 general election in Abia State as the Governorship Returning Officer

Chief (Dr.) Bola Kuforiji-Olubi's leadership blazed trails in corporate governance and leadership. She became the first female Chairperson of United Bank for Africa (UBA) in 1984, the first female to lead a publicly listed company in Nigeria, and the first female CEO of a multinational company, VYB Industries Limited, and in 1993 she was appointed as the first female Minister of Commerce and Tourism. At UBA, she not only expanded operations and growth but also empowered female entrepreneurs through targeted financial programs.

Chief Cecilia Ibru is the nation's first female Bank Chief Executive in 1997. Dr. Remi Aribisala served as the first female Deputy Executive Secretary of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in 1999. Justice Honsine Donli became the first female President of the ECOWAS Community Court of Justice in 2001.

Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala's economic reforms as Nigeria's first female Finance Minister (2003-2006) and later as the nation's first female Managing Director of the World Bank (2007-2011) strengthened public finances, promoted homeownership, and implemented initiatives focused on women's and youth empowerment.

Women such as Squadron Leader Blessing Liman and Captain Abimbola Jayeola defied stereotypes by excelling in traditionally male-dominated professions. Squadron Leader Liman as Nigeria's first female Military Pilot in 2011 and Captain Jayeola as Nigeria's first female helicopter pilot and first female to graduate from Bristow Academy. Jayeola Captain Jayeola's heroism during a helicopter emergency in 2014 solidified her place in aviation. While Rear Admiral Itunu Hotonu became the first female Rear Admiral in the Nigerian Navy in 2012.

Chigozie F. Obi-Nnadozie served as Nigeria's first female Ambassador to Liberia in 2012, while Dr. Abimbola Ayodeji Abolarinwa became Nigeria's first female Urologist in 2013. Similarly, Dr. Hadiza Aliu became the first indigenously trained female Neurosurgeon in Nigeria and the first woman certified as a Neurosurgeon in West Africa, inspiring countless women to pursue careers in this demanding field.

Additional professional achievements include Chief Ebun Oyegbola as the first female Cabinet Minister, Theresa Chukwuma as Nigeria's first female Permanent Representative to UNESCO, Grace Chijinwa Ezekoka as the first Female Engineer, Stella Thomas as the first female lawyer and Magistrate, Engr. Yelwa Tella as the

first female Engineer in the North, Dr. Fabunmi as the first female Veterinary Doctor, Sandra Aguebor as the first celebrated female Auto-Mechanic in Nigeria, Florence Nwanzuruahu Nkiru Nwapa as Africa's and Nigeria's first female writer of English-language novels. Also, becoming the first African and Nigerian female publisher, Chief Bisoye Esther Tejuoso OON (nee Karunwi) as Nigeria's first female industrialist, Josephine Okwekeleke Tolefe as the first female Commissioned Officer in the Nigerian Army, Dr. Doyin Abiola as the first female Editor and Engineer Ebele Okeke achieved distinction as the first female Civil Engineer in Nigeria.

## **Professional Association Leadership**

Nigerian women also have an impressive history of breaking barriers in professional associations and institutions, achieving excellence in diverse fields. From aviation pioneers to economic powerhouses, they paved the way for future generations by defying gender roles and expectations and carving their own paths. Professional organizations in Nigeria have witnessed groundbreaking female leadership.

Emem Ekaette became Nigeria's first female President of the Pharmaceutical Society of Nigeria in 1977, while Chief (Dr.) Bola Kuforiji served as the first female President of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria (ICAN) in 1989. Chief Priscilla Omoba Kuye served as the first female President of the Nigeria Bar Association (NBA) in 1991, and the only woman to have held the position in the over 90 years of NBA. AIG (Dr) Aisha Abubakar Bajju became the first female President of the Veterinary Council of Nigeria in 2020, and Engr Margaret Oguntala became the first female President of the Nigerian Society of Engineers in 2024.

These pioneering achievements in professional leadership demonstrate the breadth of women's capabilities across diverse organizations and underscore their commitment to advancing their respective fields while creating opportunities for future generations of female professionals.

# Sports

Nigerian women have also excelled in sports and set records that have brought global recognition. In 1996, Chioma Ajunwa-Opara achieved the ultimate milestone by becoming Nigeria's first Olympic gold medalist and the first black African woman to win gold in a field event at the Olympics<sup>34</sup>. This landmark achievement positioned Nigeria as a powerhouse in international athletics and confirmed the exceptional athletic talent of Nigerian women.

Asisat Oshoala made history as the first African woman to compete in England's Top Women's League in 2015<sup>35</sup>. She has established herself as one of the world's premier footballers and opened doors for other African women in international football. Blessing Oborududu became the first Nigerian Female wrestler to win a silver medal at the Olympics and at the World Championships in 2019<sup>36</sup>, breaking new ground in combat sports.

Tobi Amusan achieved multiple historic milestones, becoming Nigeria's first-ever World Champion and World Record Holder in the World Athletics Championships in 2022<sup>37</sup>, reflecting the highest level of athletic excellence and bringing global recognition to Nigerian track and field. Ese Brume made her mark as the first African woman to jump four legal marks over 7.00m in 2022<sup>38</sup>, setting new standards of excellence in field events and inspiring young athletes across the continent.

These pioneering women represent more than individual achievements; they embody the transformation of Nigerian society and the dismantling of gender barriers across all sectors. Their contributions have created precedents, with each "first" creating pathways for others, normalizing female leadership and participation in previously male-dominated fields. They have inspired future generations, with their achievements serving as powerful examples of what is possible, encouraging young women to pursue ambitious goals without gender-based limitations. Nigerian women's expertise and leadership have directly contributed to Nigeria's progress in education, healthcare, governance, international relations, and economic

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<sup>34</sup> <https://ogbonoblog.com/education/chioma-ajunwa-first-nigerian-to-win-an-olympic-gold-medal/>

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/football/2015/mar/21/asisat-oshoala-liverpool-ladies-nigeria-wsl-africa>

<sup>36</sup> <https://punchng.com/blessing-oborududu-meet-nigerias-first-wrestler-to-win-silver-in-olympics/>

<sup>37</sup> <https://rpublic.com/june-july-2022/tobi-amusan-historic-win/>

<sup>38</sup> <https://www.makingofchamps.com/2022/08/08/ese-brume-the-nigerian-sure-bet-for-an-international-medal/>

development, while enhancing the country's global reputation for excellence and gender equity.

Their presence in leadership positions has led to more inclusive policies and practices, benefiting not only women but society as a whole, creating institutional change that continues to shape Nigerian society. The remarkable achievements documented here form a foundation upon which future generations can build. As Nigeria continues to evolve, these women's legacies provide both inspiration and practical pathways toward gender equity and national development. Their stories remind us that excellence knows no gender boundaries and that diversity in leadership strengthens institutions and society alike.

## First Women in Politics

| S/N | Name                           | Position                                                                                                                                         | Year               |
|-----|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1   | Adunni Oluwole                 | Nigeria's first Female Political Party leader. Founded the Nigerian Commoners Liberal Party (NCLP).                                              | 1954               |
| 2   | Chief Wuraola Esan             | First Female Senator in Nigeria (nominated)                                                                                                      | 1960               |
| 3   | Margaret Ekpo                  | First Aba Female to win a seat at the Eastern Regional House of Assembly                                                                         | 1961               |
| 4   | Dorathy Miller (Akanya)        | First Female Commissioner                                                                                                                        | 1967               |
| 5   | Professor Flora Nwapa Nwakuche | First Female Commissioner for Health and Social Welfare for the East Central States                                                              | 1970               |
| 6   | Oyibo Odinamadu                | First Female to serve as National Vice President of the Unity Party of Nigerian – UPN                                                            | 1979 -1983         |
| 7   | Elizabeth Afadzwana Ivasse     | First Female appointed Commissioner in the Benue State Cabinet<br>First Female in the former Northern Region to be appointed a Minister of State | 1982<br>1982 -1983 |
| 8   | Senator Franca Afegbua         | First elected Female Senator in Nigeria (Bendel North Sen. Dist.)                                                                                | 1983               |
| 9   | Alhaja Lateefah Okunnu         | First Female Deputy Governor in Nigeria and Lagos                                                                                                | 1990               |
| 10  | Aisha Pamela Sadauki           | First appointed, Deputy Governor in Kaduna State                                                                                                 | 1990               |
| 11  | Sarah Jibril <sup>39</sup>     | First Female Presidential Aspirant in Nigeria<br>First Female Presidential Candidate of a Political Party                                        | 1992<br>2003       |
| 12  | Sinatu Aderoju Ojikutu         | First elected Deputy Governor in Nigeria and Lagos State                                                                                         | 1992-1993          |
|     | Rosaline Ajoke Omotosho        | First Female Chief Judge in Nigeria                                                                                                              | 1995               |

<sup>39</sup> As aspirant – Social Democratic Party  
As Candidate – Progressive Action Congress



|           |                                        |                                                                                                                          |                      |
|-----------|----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|
| <b>13</b> | <b>Rt. Hon. Margaret Icheen</b>        | First Female Speaker of a State House of Assembly (Benue State)<br>First Female Speaker of Benue State House of Assembly | 1999                 |
| <b>14</b> | <b>Alhaja Basirat Nahibi</b>           | First Female Governorship aspirant                                                                                       | 1999                 |
| <b>15</b> | <b>Chief Stella Omu</b>                | First Female Chief Whip in the Nigerian Senate                                                                           | 2000                 |
| <b>16</b> | <b>Dorathy Obasi</b>                   | First Female Legislator to be elected to the State House of Assembly in Ebonyi State                                     | 2003                 |
| <b>17</b> | <b>Rt. Hon. Eucharika Azodo Okwuna</b> | First Female Anambra State Speaker of the House of Assembly                                                              | 2003                 |
| <b>18</b> | <b>Dame Virginia Etiaba</b>            | First Female Governor<br>First Female Governor of Anambra State<br>First Female Deputy Governor of Anambra State         | 2006<br>2006<br>2006 |
| <b>19</b> | <b>Rt. Hon. Patricia Etteh</b>         | First Female Speaker, House of Representatives                                                                           | 2007                 |
| <b>20</b> | <b>Funmilayo Olayinka</b>              | First Female Deputy Governor of Ekiti State                                                                              | 2010                 |
| <b>21</b> | <b>Dame Pauline Tallen</b>             | First Female Deputy Governor in Northern Nigeria                                                                         | 2011                 |
| <b>22</b> | <b>Hon. Hajia Saddatu Kolo</b>         | First Female Principal Officer of the Niger State House of Assembly                                                      | 2011                 |
| <b>23</b> | <b>Hon. Mulikat Adeola-Akande</b>      | First Female Majority Leader of the House of Representatives                                                             | 2011                 |
| <b>24</b> | <b>Valerie Maurice Ebe</b>             | First Female Deputy Governor of Akwa Ibom State                                                                          | 2012                 |
| <b>25</b> | <b>Senator Ipalibo Banigo</b>          | First Female Deputy Governor of Rivers State                                                                             | 2015                 |
| <b>26</b> | <b>Lolo Cecilia Ezeilo</b>             | First Female Deputy Governor of Enugu State                                                                              | 2015                 |
| <b>27</b> | <b>Lois Auta<sup>40</sup></b>          | Nigeria's first PWD Legislative Candidate                                                                                | 2019                 |
| <b>28</b> | <b>Hadiza Sabuwa Balarabe</b>          | First Female Deputy Governor, North-West region in Nigeria                                                               | 2019                 |
| <b>29</b> | <b>Hajiya Khadijat Abdullahi-Iya</b>   | First Female Governorship aspirant and Candidate in Niger State                                                          | 2022                 |
| <b>30</b> | <b>Princess Patricia Obila</b>         | First Female Deputy Governor of Ebonyi State                                                                             | 2023                 |
| <b>31</b> | <b>Hon. Comfort Nwochiola</b>          | First Female Deputy Speaker, Kogi State House of Assembly                                                                | 2024                 |
| <b>32</b> | <b>Chinyere Ihuoma Ekomaru, PhD</b>    | First Female Deputy Governor of Imo State                                                                                | 2024                 |

<sup>40</sup> In 2019 Lois Auta contested under the All Progressive Congress (APC) for the AMAC/Bwari House of Representative Seat.

## First Women in Public Service

| S/N | Name                                 | Position                                                                                                                                               | Year                 |
|-----|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|
| 1   | Francesca Yetunde Emmanuel           | First Female Administrative Officer of the Federal Civil Service of Nigeria<br>First Female Permanent Secretary of the Federal Civil Service           | 1959<br>1975         |
| 2   | Cecilia Ugowe                        | First Female Chief Superintendent of Police in Nigeria<br>First Female Commissioner of Police<br>First Female Deputy Inspector General of Police (DIG) | 1968<br>1988<br>1990 |
| 3   | Florence N. Nkiru Nwapa              | First Female Minister of Lands, Survey and Urban Development                                                                                           | 1971 -74             |
| 4   | Victoria Eronini                     | First Nigerian Female State Accountant-General (Imo State)<br>First Female Accountant -General of Imo State                                            | 1976<br>1976         |
| 5   | Justice Victoria Onejeme             | First Nigerian Female State Attorney General and Commissioner of Justice (Anambra State)                                                               | 1976                 |
| 6   | Chief (Dr.) Bola Kuforiji Olubi      | First Chairperson of the Osun River Basin Development                                                                                                  | 1976 –<br>1980       |
| 7   | Chief Adenike Ebun Oyegbola          | First Nigerian Female Minister, Ministry of National Planning<br>First Female Minister of Ministry of National Planning                                | 1979                 |
| 8   | Hairat Aderinsola Balogun OON        | First Female Attorney General and Commissioner of Justice (Lagos State)<br>First Female Chairman of the Body of Benchers                               | 1984-1986<br>1998    |
| 9   | Justice Fati Lami Abubakar, PhD, CON | First Female Solicitor-General of Niger State<br>First Nigerian First Lady with a university degree<br>First Female Chief Judge of Niger State         | 1985<br>1998<br>2013 |
| 10  | Justice Aloma Mariam Mukhtar GCON    | First Female Justice of the Court of Appeal<br>First Female Justice to the Supreme Court                                                               | 1987<br>2005         |

|           |                                |                                                                                                                                |                              |
|-----------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|
|           |                                | First Female Chief Justice of Nigeria (CJN)                                                                                    | 2012 -2014                   |
| <b>11</b> | Barr. Nima Salman Mann, mni    | First Female Solicitor-General and Director-General, Ministry of Justice, Kwara State                                          | 1994                         |
| <b>12</b> | Professor Ndi Okereke-Onyiuke  | First Female Director-General and CEO of the Nigerian Stock Exchange                                                           | 2000                         |
| <b>13</b> | Justice Nana Aisha Abdullahi   | First Female High Court Judge in Jigawa State<br>Solicitor General, Attorney General and Commissioner for Justice              | 2000 –<br>2005<br>2010       |
| <b>14</b> | Justice Rose Nonyem Ukeje      | First Female Chief Judge of the High Court of Nigeria                                                                          | 2001 -2008                   |
| <b>15</b> | Professor Dora Akunyili (OFR)  | First Female Director-General of NAFDAC<br>First Female Minister of Information and Communication                              | 2001<br>2008                 |
| <b>16</b> | Dr Ngozi Okonjo – Iweala GCON  | Nigeria’s first Female Minister of Finance<br>Nigeria’s first Female Minister of Foreign Affairs                               | 2003-2006<br>2006            |
| <b>17</b> | Ifueko Omoigui                 | First Female Chairperson, Federal Inland Revenue Services (FIRS)<br>First Female Chairperson of the Joint Tax Board of Nigeria | 2004 -2012<br>2004           |
| <b>18</b> | Ivy Okoronkwo                  | First Female to Head a Police Command as Ekiti State Commissioner of Police                                                    | 2005<br>(2006) <sup>41</sup> |
| <b>19</b> | Wahir Ayuba Mshelia            | First Female Deputy Governor of Central Bank of Nigeria                                                                        | 2005                         |
| <b>20</b> | Bosedé Folake Oyelowo          | First Nigerian Female Auditor-General of the Federation                                                                        | 2006                         |
| <b>21</b> | Professor Adenike Grange       | first Female Minister of Health                                                                                                | 2007                         |
| <b>22</b> | Engineer Ebele Okeke, CFR, OON | First Female Head of Service of the Federation                                                                                 | 2007                         |
| <b>23</b> | AIG. Farida Waziri OFR (rtd.)  | First Female Executive Chairperson of EFCC                                                                                     | 2008                         |
| <b>24</b> | Diezani Allison-Madueke        | First Female Minister of Ministry of Petroleum Resources                                                                       | 2010                         |
| <b>25</b> | Hajia Amina Zakari             | First Female Two -Term INEC <sup>42</sup> National Commissioner                                                                | 2010 -<br>2020               |

<sup>41</sup> Some literature has 2005 while others 2006

<sup>42</sup> Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC)

|           |                           |                                                                                                 |      |
|-----------|---------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| <b>26</b> | Sarah Alade               | First Female Acting Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN)                               | 2014 |
| <b>27</b> | Amina J. Mohammed         | First Female Minister of Environment                                                            | 2015 |
| <b>28</b> | Olabisi Alofe-Kolawole    | First Female Nigeria Police Force Public Relations Officer (FPRO)                               | 2015 |
| <b>29</b> | Priscilla Ekwere Eleje    | First Female Director of Currency, CBN                                                          | 2018 |
| <b>30</b> | Dr Maimuna Abdulahi Habib | First Female Chief Veterinary Officer of Nigeria                                                | 2022 |
| <b>31</b> | Professor Antonia Simbine | First Female Director-General of the National Institute of Social and Economic Research (NISER) | 2022 |
| <b>32</b> | Oluwatoyin Sakirat Madein | First Female Accountant-General of the Federation                                               | 2023 |
| <b>33</b> | Zubaida Umar              | First Female Director-General of the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA)                | 2024 |

## First Women in Academia

| S/N      | Name                                   | Position                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Year                 |
|----------|----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|
| <b>1</b> | Lady Kofo Ademola                      | First Nigerian and West African Female to receive a university degree (Oxford)                                                                                                                                           | 1932                 |
| <b>2</b> | Professor Bolanle Awe <sup>43</sup>    | First Female Academic Staff of a Nigerian University<br>First Female Professor of History in Nigeria                                                                                                                     | 1960<br>1976         |
| <b>3</b> | Professor Alele-Williams <sup>44</sup> | First Female PhD in Mathematics Education<br>First Female Professor of Mathematics Education<br>First Female Vice-Chancellor in Nigeria (University of Benin)<br>First Female Vice-Chancellor of the University of Benin | 1963<br>1985<br>1985 |
| <b>4</b> | Professor Adeline Bisi Durotoye        | First Female Nigerian Graduate of Geology from a Nigerian university<br>First Female PhD in Geology                                                                                                                      | 1966<br>1972         |

<sup>43</sup> Her firsts were achieved at the University of Ibadan

<sup>44</sup> Pioneer advocate for women in education and STEM fields

|    |                                |                                                                                                                                                          |                      |
|----|--------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|
|    |                                | First Nigerian Female Professor of Geology<br>Pioneer and First Female Registrar of the Council of Mining Engineers and Geoscientists (COMEG)            | 2003                 |
| 5  | Professor Adetowun Ogunshye    | First Female Professor in Nigeria                                                                                                                        | 1973                 |
| 6  | Professor Olabisi Ugbebor      | First Female PhD in Mathematics<br>First Female Professor of Mathematics                                                                                 | 1976<br>1998         |
| 7  | Professor Deborah Ajakaiye     | First Female Professor of Physics                                                                                                                        | 1980                 |
| 8  | Professor Omotayo Olutoye      | First Female Professor of Yoruba Studies in the world                                                                                                    | 1983                 |
| 9  | Professor Tomilayo O. Adekanye | First Female Professor of Agriculture in Nigeria and First Female Professor of Agricultural Economics in Africa                                          | 1983                 |
| 10 | Professor Elfrida O. Adebo     | First Female Professor of Nursing                                                                                                                        | 1984                 |
| 11 | Humulkhari Oyindamola Anjorin  | First Female African and Nigerian Polytechnic Rector                                                                                                     | 1985 <sup>45</sup>   |
| 12 | Professor Jadesola Akande      | First Female Professor of Law<br>First Female Vice Chancellor of the Lagos State University, LASU                                                        | 1987<br>1989         |
| 13 | Larai Sa'adatu Jibrin Ahmed    | First Female Registrar of a University<br>First Female Northern Nigeria's Registrar<br>First Female Registrar of Federal University of Technology, Minna | 1988<br>1988<br>1988 |
| 14 | Felicia Abimbola Odugbesan     | First Female Rector of Yaba College of Technology (Yabatech)                                                                                             | 1993 -2001           |
| 15 | Professor Adenike Grange       | First Female Professor of Pediatrics, University of Lagos<br>First Female Minister of Health                                                             | 1995<br>2007         |
| 16 | Professor Aisha Indo Mamman    | First Female Hematologists in Northern Nigeria<br>First Female Professor of Hematology in Northern Nigeria                                               | 1999<br>2011         |
| 17 | Professor Arinola O.Sanya      | First Female Professor of Physiotherapy in Nigeria                                                                                                       | 2000                 |
| 18 | Professor Jane Ande            | First Female Professor of Accountancy in Nigeria and Africa                                                                                              | 2001                 |
| 19 | Professor Funmilay Adebambo    | First Female Professor of Animal Breeding and Genetics                                                                                                   | 2002                 |

<sup>45</sup> She was Acting Rector 1982 -1984 before becoming substantive Rector in 1985

|    |                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                          |                        |
|----|----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| 20 | Professor Cecilia Igwillo        | First Nigerian Female Professor of Pharmacy<br>First Female Dean, University of Lagos                                                                                                    | 2001<br>2017           |
| 21 | Professor Chinyere Stella Okunna | First Nigerian Female Professor of Mass Communication                                                                                                                                    | 2001                   |
| 22 | Professor Ruqayyatu A. Rufa'i    | North-West First Female Professor                                                                                                                                                        | 2003                   |
| 23 | Professor Francisca Okeke        | First Female Head of Department, University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN)<br>First Female Dean of the Faculty of Physical Sciences, UNN                                                       | 2003-2006<br>2008-2010 |
| 24 | Professor Adenike Osofisan       | First Female Professor of Computer Science                                                                                                                                               | 2006                   |
| 25 | Professor Philomena K. Igbokwe   | First Female Professor of Chemical Engineering in Nigeria<br>First Female Dean of a Faculty of Engineering<br>First Female Dean, Faculty of Engineering, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka | 2006<br>2012<br>2012   |
| 26 | Professor Folake Onayemi         | First Female Professor of Classics in Africa                                                                                                                                             | 2008                   |
| 27 | Olayinka Olusola Omigbodun       | First Female Professor of Psychiatry in Nigeria<br>First Female Provost of the University of Ibadan College of Medicine                                                                  | 2008<br>2020           |
| 28 | Professor Ogbazi Joy Ukamaka     | First Nigerian Female Professor of Urban and Regional Planning                                                                                                                           | 2009                   |
| 29 | Professor Oyeronke Olademo       | Nigeria's first Female Professor of Comparative Religion<br>First Female Professor in the Department of Religion, University of Ilorin                                                   | 2011                   |
| 30 | Saheela Ibraheem                 | First Female Nigerian to be offered admission by 14 Ivy League schools                                                                                                                   | 2011                   |
| 31 | Professor Olubola Babalola       | First Nigerian Female Professor of Quantity Surveying in Africa                                                                                                                          | 2012                   |
| 32 | Professor Medinat F. Salman      | First Female Professor from Ilorin                                                                                                                                                       | 2012                   |
| 33 | Professor Olajire Bosede Ajayi   | First Female Professor in Optometry and a pioneer of Pediatric Optometry                                                                                                                 | 2013                   |
| 34 | Dr. Blessing C. Ijioma           | First Female Provost, Federal College of Education, Owerri                                                                                                                               | 2013                   |
| 35 | Professor Charity Angya          | First Female Vice Chancellor of Benue State University                                                                                                                                   | 2015                   |
| 36 | Professor Francisca Bassey       | First Professor of Food Chemistry at the University of Calabar.                                                                                                                          | 2017                   |
| 37 | Dr. Pauline Iwuegbu              | First Female Provost, Federal College of Education, Eha-Amufu, Enugu                                                                                                                     | 2018                   |
| 38 | Dr. Francisca Nwafulugo          | First Female Rector, Federal Polytechnic, Oko, Anambra State                                                                                                                             | 2019                   |

|    |                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                      |
|----|----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|
| 39 | Dr. Josephine Anene-Okeakwa      | First Female Provost, Federal College of Education (Technical), Asaba                                                                                                                                                                    | 2019                 |
| 40 | Professor Mary Odukoya           | First Female Professor in the Department of Geosciences at the University of Lagos                                                                                                                                                       | 2019                 |
| 41 | Professor Kaletapwa Farauta      | First Female Vice-Chancellor in the North-East (Adamawa State University)                                                                                                                                                                | 2020                 |
| 44 | Professor Florence Obi           | First Female Vice-Chancellor at the University of Calabar                                                                                                                                                                                | 2020                 |
| 45 | Professor Nnenna Oti             | First Female Vice-Chancellor of Federal University of Technology, Owerri                                                                                                                                                                 | 2021                 |
| 46 | Professor Adenike Oladiji        | First Female Vice-Chancellor of the Federal University of Technology, Akure                                                                                                                                                              | 2022                 |
| 47 | Professor Folasade Ogunsola      | First Female Vice-Chancellor at the University of Lagos                                                                                                                                                                                  | 2022                 |
| 48 | Professor Irene Pogosson         | First Female lecturer, Political Science Department, University of Ibadan<br>First Female Professor in the Political Science Department, University of Ibadan<br>First Female Head of Political Science Department, University of Ibadan | 2000                 |
| 49 | Professor Olufunke Fayehun       | First Female Head of Sociology Department, University of Ibadan.                                                                                                                                                                         | 2022                 |
| 50 | Professor Omolara Quadri         | First Female Head of Political Science Department, University of Lagos<br>First Female Professor of Political Science, University of Lagos                                                                                               | 2023<br>2025         |
| 51 | Professor Salome Hepzibah Waziri | First Female Professor of Engineering Geology in Nigeria<br>First Female Professor of Engineering Geology in West Africa<br>Northern Nigeria First Female Professor of Engineering                                                       | 2023<br>2023<br>2023 |
| 52 | Professor Addakano Bello Umar    | Northern Nigeria First Female Professor of Nursing                                                                                                                                                                                       | 2025                 |



## First Women Career Trailblazers

| S/N | Name                                | Position                                                                         | Year        |
|-----|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| 1   | Stella Jane Thomas                  | First Female Lawyer in Nigeria                                                   | 1935        |
|     |                                     | First Black Woman to be called to the Bar of Great Britain                       | 1933        |
|     |                                     | First Female Magistrate                                                          | 1943        |
| 2   | Dr. Elizabeth Abimbola Awoliyi      | First Female Medical Doctor                                                      | 1937        |
| 3   | Ekei Essien Oku                     | First Female Chartered Librarian                                                 | 1953        |
| 4   | Chief Bisoye Esther Tejuoso OON     | First Female Industrialist (Teju Industries)                                     | 1953        |
| 5   | Hannah Idowu Dideolu Awolowo        | First Nigerian distributor for the Nigerian Tobacco Company (NTC)                | 1957        |
| 6   | Grace Birogbemi Ogbemi              | First Female lawyer from Nigeria's Mid-Western Region                            | 1958        |
| 7   | Captain Josephine Okwekeleke Tolefe | First Female Commissioned Officer in the Nigerian Army                           | 1961        |
|     |                                     | First Female to attain the rank of an Army Captain in Nigeria                    | 1964        |
| 8   | Chief Shade Thomas-Fahm             | First Female Fashion Designer                                                    | 1960s/1970s |
| 9   | Funmilayo Ransome Kuti              | First Female to ride a motorcycle and drive a car                                | NA          |
|     |                                     | Nigeria's First Representative at a Women's International Conference in the USSR | 1963        |
| 10  | Adekunbi Macaulay FSS, DSM, RSM     | First Female commissioned as a Medical Corps Captain                             | 1963        |
| 11  | Chief Dr. Olusola Olakunri OFR      | First Female Chartered Accountant in Nigeria and Africa                          | 1965        |
| 12  | Florence N. Nkiru Nwapa             | First Female African and Nigerian Novelist to be published in English            | 1966        |
|     |                                     | First African Female publisher                                                   | 1970        |
| 13  | Engineer Grace Chijinwa Ezekoka     | First Female Engineer                                                            | 1966        |
|     |                                     | First Female Electrical Engineer                                                 | 1966        |
| 14  | Dr. Alayode Akanke Fabunmi          | First Female Veterinary Doctor                                                   | 1966        |

|    |                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                            |                            |
|----|-----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 15 | Engineer Ebele Okeke, CFR, OON          | First Female Civil Engineer in Nigeria                                                                                                                                                     | 1971                       |
| 16 | Catherine Kehinde- George               | First Female Town Planner in Africa and Nigeria                                                                                                                                            | 1972                       |
| 17 | Engr. Yelwa Tella                       | First Female Engineer in the North                                                                                                                                                         | 1974                       |
| 18 | Engr. Dr. Olatokubo A Somolu            | First Female to hold a PHD in Engineering<br>First Female Structural Engineer                                                                                                              | 1978                       |
| 19 | Dr Doyin Abiola                         | First Female Editor of a Newspaper                                                                                                                                                         | 1980                       |
| 20 | Justice (Chief) Folake Solanke          | First Female Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN)                                                                                                                                              | 1981                       |
| 21 | Ambassador Princess Elizabeth Ogbon-Day | First Female Ambassador                                                                                                                                                                    | 1981                       |
| 22 | Captain Chinyere Kalu                   | First Nigerian Female Commercial Pilot                                                                                                                                                     | 1981                       |
| 23 | Ambassador Judith Attah                 | Nigeria's first Ambassador and Permanent Delegate to UNESCO<br>First Female Ambassador and Permanent Delegate to UNESCO                                                                    | 1982<br>1982               |
| 24 | Professor Jadesola Akande CON, OFR      | First Female to be a Dean of University Faculty<br>First Female Professor of Law in Nigeria and West Africa<br>First Female Vice Chancellor of Lagos State University (LASU) <sup>46</sup> | 1977<br>1987<br>1989 -1993 |
| 25 | Chief Bola Kuforiji-Olubi               | First Female Chairperson of United Bank for Africa (UBA)<br>First Female CEO of a Multinational Company                                                                                    | 1984<br>1984               |
| 26 | Theresa Chukwuma                        | First Permanent Representative to UNESCO                                                                                                                                                   | 1988                       |
| 27 | Chief (Dr.) Bola Kuforiji Olubi         | First Female Chairperson, United Bank for Africa Plc                                                                                                                                       | 1984 -<br>1990             |
| 28 | Professor Grace Alele-Williams          | First Female Vice Chancellor in Nigeria                                                                                                                                                    | 1985                       |
| 29 | Major General Aderonke Kale (rtd.)      | First Female Nigerian Armed Forces (2 Star) Major General                                                                                                                                  | 1994                       |
| 30 | Chief Cecilia Ibru                      | First Female Bank Chief Executive in Nigeria                                                                                                                                               | 1997                       |
| 30 | Dr. Remi Aribisala                      | First Female Deputy Executive Secretary of ECOWAS                                                                                                                                          | 1999                       |
| 31 | Sandra Aguebor                          | First Female Celebrated Auto-Mechanic in Nigeria                                                                                                                                           | 2000 -2010                 |

<sup>46</sup> Second VC of LASU

|    |                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                              |
|----|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 32 | Justice Honsine Donli             | First Female President of ECOWAS Community Court of Justice                                                                                                                                                                                                                | 2001                         |
| 33 | Hajia Halima Ahmed                | First Nigerian Female Secretary-General of ECOWAS Parliament                                                                                                                                                                                                               | 2002                         |
| 34 | Adaku Viola Onwuliri              | First African Female and First Nigerian to be on the Council of the International AIDS Society, Geneva, representing Africa                                                                                                                                                | 2004 - 2012                  |
| 35 | Sohie Okonedo                     | First Female Nigerian to receive a NAACP Image Award nomination for the same role for which she was nominated for an Oscar                                                                                                                                                 | 2005                         |
| 36 | Dr. Ngozi Okonjo – Iweala<br>GCON | Nigeria's first Female Managing Director of the World Bank<br>First Female Director General of the World Trade Organization (WTO) <sup>47</sup><br>First African and Nigerian Director General of the WTO<br>First Female African and Nigerian Director General of the WTO | 2007<br>2021<br>2021<br>2021 |
| 37 | Professor Joy Ogwu                | Nigeria's First Female Permanent Representative to the UN<br>First Female Chairperson of the UN Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations                                                                                                                               | 2008<br>2010                 |
| 38 | Diezani Allison-Madueke           | First Female Minister of Petroleum Resources<br>First Female President of OPEC<br>First Female Executive Director of Shell Nigeria<br>First Female, Board of Shell Petroleum Development Company Nig.                                                                      | 2010<br>2014<br>2006         |
| 39 | Squadron Leader Blessing Liman    | First Female Military Pilot in Nigeria                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | 2011                         |
| 40 | Rear Admiral Itunu Hotonu         | First Female Rear Admiral in the Nigerian Navy                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | 2012                         |
| 41 | Justice Aloma Mukhtar GCON        | First Female Chief Justice of Nigeria<br>First Female Justice at the Supreme Court<br>First Female Justice of the Court of Appeal<br>First Female Justice from the North<br>First Female Lawyer from Northern Nigeria                                                      | 2012<br>2005<br>1987         |
| 42 | Chigozie F. Obi-Nnadozie          | First Female Ambassador to Liberia                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | 2012                         |

<sup>47</sup> She broke many intersectional identities (gender, continent, region, nation, and ethnic) barriers with her appointment as DG of the WTO.

|    |                                 |                                                                                                                            |      |
|----|---------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| 43 | Air Com. Habiba Garba           | First female Air Commodore in the Nigerian Air Force                                                                       | 2012 |
| 44 | Dr. Abimbola Ayodeji Abolarinwa | First Female Urologist in Nigeria                                                                                          | 2013 |
| 45 | Dr. Salamat Ahuoiza Aliu        | First indigenously trained Female Neurosurgeon in Nigeria<br>First Female to be certified as a Neurosurgeon in West Africa | 2013 |
| 46 | Captain Abimbola Jayeola        | First Female Helicopter Captain                                                                                            | 2014 |
| 47 | Amina Mohammed GCON             | First female Deputy Secretary General of the UN                                                                            | 2017 |
| 48 | Senator Aishatu Binani          | First Female Owner of an Airline                                                                                           | 2025 |
| 49 | Aminatu Dahiru Chiroma          | First Female CEO of an Airline Company                                                                                     | 2025 |

## First Women in Professional Association Leadership

| S/<br>N | Name                                     | Position                                                                                                                                        | Year    |
|---------|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| 1       | Emem Ekaette                             | First Female President of the Pharmaceutical Society of Nigeria                                                                                 | 1977    |
| 2       | Hairat Aderinsola Balogun OON            | First Female Secretary-General of the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA)<br>First Female Member of the Council of the International Bar Association | 1981-83 |
| 3       | Chief (Dr.) Bola Kuforiji Olubi          | First Female President of ICAN                                                                                                                  | 1989    |
| 4       | Chief Olutoyin Olakunri OFR              | First Female President of the Institute of Directors (IoD)<br>First Female Chairperson of the Governing Council of IoD                          | 1991    |
| 5       | Chief Priscilla Omoba Kuye <sup>48</sup> | First Female President of the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA)                                                                                    | 1991    |
| 6       | Dr. Alayode A. Fabunmi                   | First Female President of the Nigerian Veterinary Medical Association (NVMA)                                                                    | 1993    |

<sup>48</sup> In the over 90years history of the NBA, she is the only woman to have been president. NBA was established in 1933

|   |                                |                                                                                 |      |
|---|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| 7 | AIG (Dr) Aisha Abubakar Bajura | First Female President of the Veterinary Council of Nigeria (VCN) <sup>49</sup> | 2020 |
| 8 | Engr Margaret Oguntala         | First Female President of the Nigerian Society of Engineers (NSE)               | 2024 |
|   |                                |                                                                                 |      |

## First Women in Sports

| S/N | Name                      | Position                                                                                                                                                         | Year        |
|-----|---------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| 1   | Chioma Ajunwa-Opara       | First Nigerian to win an Olympic gold medal<br>First Female to win Olympic gold medal<br>First black African Female to win gold in a field event at the Olympics | 1996        |
| 2   | Eucharika Uche            | First Female to become the Head Coach of Super Falcons                                                                                                           | 2002 - 2008 |
| 3   | Christine Ijeoma Ohuruogu | First Nigerian Female to win two World Championship titles<br>First British Female to win two World Championship titles                                          | 2007        |
| 4   | Asisat Oshoala            | First African and Nigerian Female to Compete in England's Top Women's Football League                                                                            | 2015        |
| 5   | Blessing Oborududu        | First Nigerian Female wrestler to win a silver medal at the Olympics and a silver medal at the World Championships                                               | 2019        |
| 6   | Tobi Amusan               | First-ever Nigerian World Champion and World Record Holder in the World Athletics Championships                                                                  | 2022        |
| 5   | Ese Brume                 | First African Female to jump four legal marks over 7.00m                                                                                                         | 2022        |

<sup>49</sup> The Veterinary Council of Nigeria (VCN) was established in 1953

# Conclusion

Nigeria's trailblazing women have made history across politics, academia, professional spheres, sports, and beyond, breaking barriers, shattering ceilings, dispelling stereotypes, and inspiring generations. Their achievements, while rightfully celebrated, remind us that there is still much ground to cover in recognition, empowerment, and the pursuit of rights and justice for all women and girls.

At IRIAD, we believe that women's accomplishments deserve more than applause; they demand sustained celebration, purposeful investment, and collective action. To this end, we propose creating national campaigns that spotlight female firsts through public exhibitions, biographies, and digital storytelling, and bringing their stories into classrooms, boardrooms, and communities. Annual awards, mentorship platforms, and a National Women's Achievement Day would create ongoing opportunities honor, learn from, and network with these pioneers.

Moreover, integrating women's history into school curricula and leveraging multimedia will ensure every child grows up knowing the names and legacies of Nigeria's female trailblazers. Institutions, public and private, can launch scholarships, leadership boot camps, and grants in honor of distinguished women, transforming recognition into tangible opportunities for aspiring changemakers.

Celebrating women's achievements is not just about looking back; it is about building a more inclusive, just, and dynamic future. By amplifying their stories, investing in the next generation, and making celebration a living tradition, we ensure that the firsts of today open doors for countless others to follow.

This 2026 International Women's Month, Nigeria's pioneering women, from Lady Kofo Ademola, Florence Nwapa, Bola Kuforiji Olubi, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Amina Mohammad, to Blessing Liman remind us that progress is possible when barriers are broken and opportunities are shared. Their legacies call us to action: to invest in women, accelerate progress, and ensure that every girl has the right to dream, the justice to thrive, and the support to lead.

This 2026 **International Women's Month**, the message is clear and urgent: **Rights. Justice. Action. For All Women and Girls.** Nigeria's National Assembly Pass the **Special Seats for Women Bill** now. Because half of a nation cannot continue to wait for equity and justice in representation.

Happy International Women's Month 2026!

Rights. Justice. Action. For All Women and Girls.

**#IWD2026**  
**#RightsJusticeAction**  
**#GiveToGain**  
**#SpecialSeatsBillNow**  
**#ForAllWomenAndGirls**  
**#GenderEquityNG**  
**#IRIADForWomenRights**





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# NIGERIA FEMALE FIRSTS

## Address

9B Omolara Adeyemi Street, Kukwaba, Abuja, Nigeria

## Phone

+234 908 6998 850

+234 704 7998 525

[www.electoralhub.org](http://www.electoralhub.org)

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