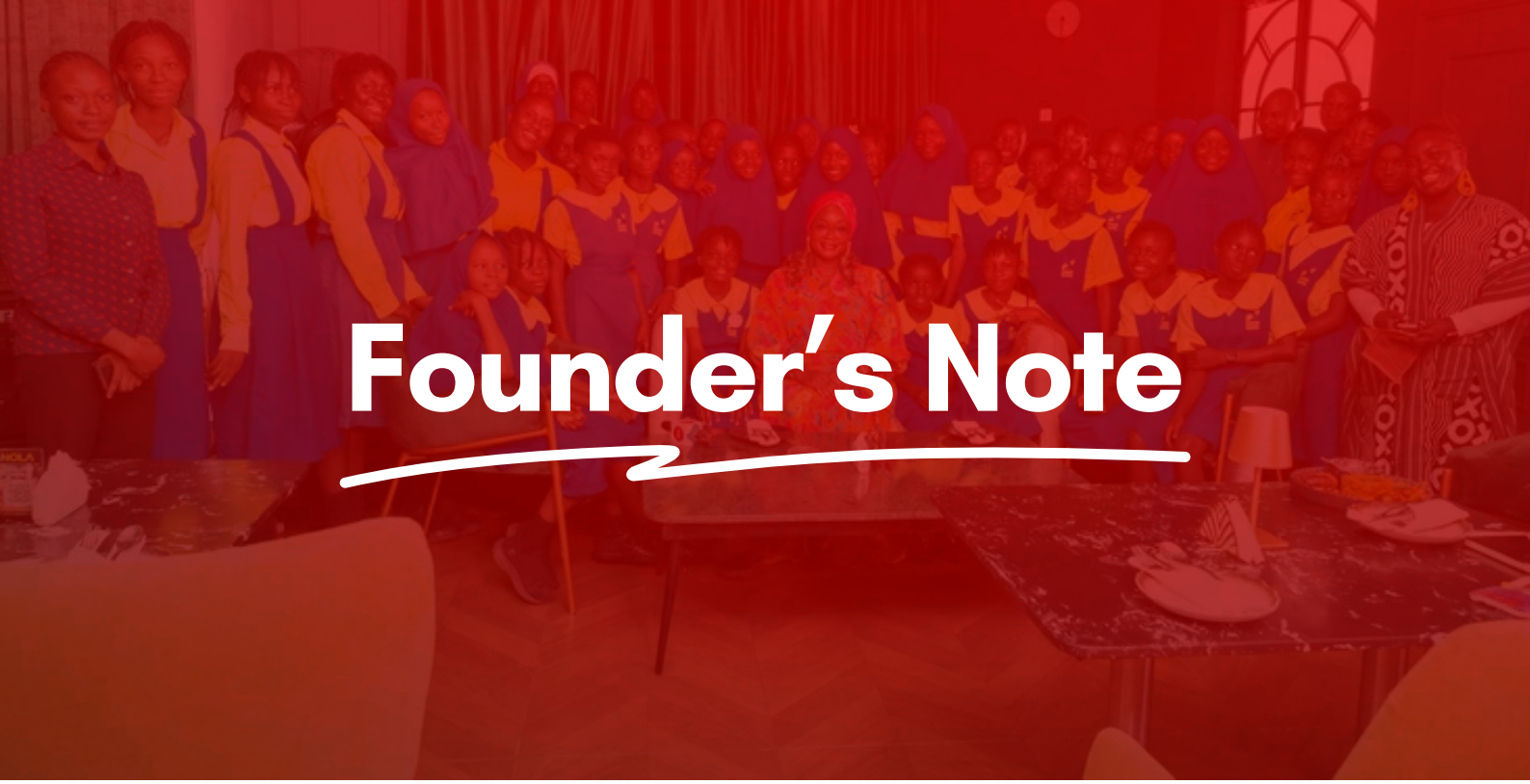
TOS
FOUNDATION AFRICA

VOICES OF IMPACT

TOS FOUNDATION AFRICA NEWSLETTER



OCTOBER, 2026.



Founder's Note

A girl's future is often decided by a number of fundamental factors: whether her fees are covered, whether she has what she needs to stay in school, whether she is told that her voice counts, and whether the people and systems around her are built to hold her up.

That is what October looked like at TOS Foundation Africa, a month in which we kept the girl child at the centre of our work.

In this edition of our monthly newsletter, you will read about our afternoon with 50 girls from KNOSK School, where the conversation was about their ambitions and their right to stay in school. You will meet Blessing Benjamin, whose journey from Makoko to KNOSK shows what one open door can do, and you will hear our scholars in their own words. You will also find our reflections on ending child marriage, and on why menstrual health is a matter of dignity and equal opportunity.

For us, this is one body of work. The girl we invest in today is the young leader we will need tomorrow, and she will need institutions that make room for her. Neither happens overnight, and the years that matter most are often the quiet ones.

That conviction carried into my engagements this month. At the MIVA Open University masterclass, I spoke about how power, politics and policy really work, and why good ideas are only the beginning. At the 2026 Social Norms Conference, I spoke about young people as leaders of today, and about resilience that goes hand in hand with accountability. In both rooms, my message was the same: we must pursue inclusion in political institutions, including the Reserved Seats for Women Bill, and reject the idea that endurance alone is enough.

To the girls who spoke so boldly at our table, thank you for reminding us why we do this work. To our team, esteemed partners and colleagues, thank you for standing with us. Let's keep building.

Osasu

Chief (Mrs.) Osasu Igbinedion Ogwuche
Founder, TOS Foundation Africa

Investing in Girls' Right to Education: Every Year in School Is a Year Won (I)

This month the world marks the International Day of the Girl Child under a theme that is as urgent as it is simple: "End child marriage and invest in girls' rights." For Nigeria, it is not an abstract slogan. It describes the single biggest threat to the futures of millions of girls in our own communities.

The numbers are hard to read. Nigeria's 2021 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey found that 44.1 per cent of girls marry before 18, about 25.9 million child brides, the largest number in Africa. Behind each figure is a girl whose classroom, ambitions and choices were closed off before she became an adult.

Education is where this fight is won or lost. Research funded by UNICEF Nigeria found that child marriage cuts a girl's chance of completing secondary school or higher education by 23 per cent, and that women married as children earn 12 per cent less over their lives. A girl who stays in school marries later, earns more and decides more for herself. Every additional year in the classroom is a year protected.

But enrolment alone is not enough. We have seen how fragile a girl's path can be: a scholarship that secures the first year and leaves the next five uncertain. For a family on the edge, that uncertainty is exactly when a daughter's schooling is traded for a marriage. The gap between a girl getting a place in school and a girl being able to stay there until graduation is where we lose far too many of them. Investment must therefore mean continuity: sustained scholarships, safe schools, and mentors and role models who show that another future is possible.

The law must also keep up. Nigeria enacted the Child Rights Act in 2003, which sets 18 as the minimum age of marriage, but not every state has adopted it. A girl's protection should not depend on which side of a state boundary she was born. States that have yet to domesticate the Act should do so, and states that have should enforce it.

Nor can we leave this to government alone. Traditional and religious leaders shape what a community considers acceptable. Schools can notice when a girl stops coming. Employers and corporate Nigeria can fund the years that families cannot. Boys and men must be part of the conversation, because norms change when those who benefit from them decide to change them.

At TOS Foundation Africa, we believe the girl child is not a problem to be solved but a leader to be invested in. That is why we sit down with girls, not just speak about them, and why we back their schooling beyond a single year. On this International Day of the Girl Child, we challenge every reader to ask one question: what can I do to keep one girl in school until she graduates?

If we get this right, the 11th of October will stop being a day we mark and become a promise we keep.



44.1% of girls marry **before 18**

25.9 **million child brides,** the largest number in Africa.



More Than a Meal: 50 Girls, One Table, One Big Conversation

TOS Foundation Africa marks International Day of the Girl Child with students from KNOSK School

To commemorate this year's International Day of the Girl Child, TOS Foundation Africa hosted 50 secondary school girls from KNOSK School at Nola Restaurant & Lounge in Wuse 2, Abuja, for an afternoon built around one idea: that every girl deserves to be seen, heard and invested in.

The girls came from different ethnic and religious backgrounds, and among them were girls on the Foundation's scholarship programme. Over about two hours, the programme blended conversation, learning and fun, with our Founder at the table alongside the girls.

At the centre of the afternoon was this year's global theme, **"End Child Marriage and Invest in Girls' Rights."** The Founder spoke to the girls about why staying in school protects their futures, and why their voices matter in decisions about their own lives. The girls were also encouraged to ask questions, share their dreams and speak openly. And when prompted with the question: "What do you want to become?" their answers pointed to a generation with big ambitions, from doctors, engineers, lawyers, and public servants.

The afternoon carried a quieter message too. For girls in communities where early marriage can still end a schooling story before it is finished, being invited, welcomed and celebrated is itself a statement of worth. The Foundation's hope is that each girl left feeling that her education, her safety and her ambitions are worth protecting.

As the day closed, the girls left with and a reminder that when girls are supported to stay in school, whole communities benefit.



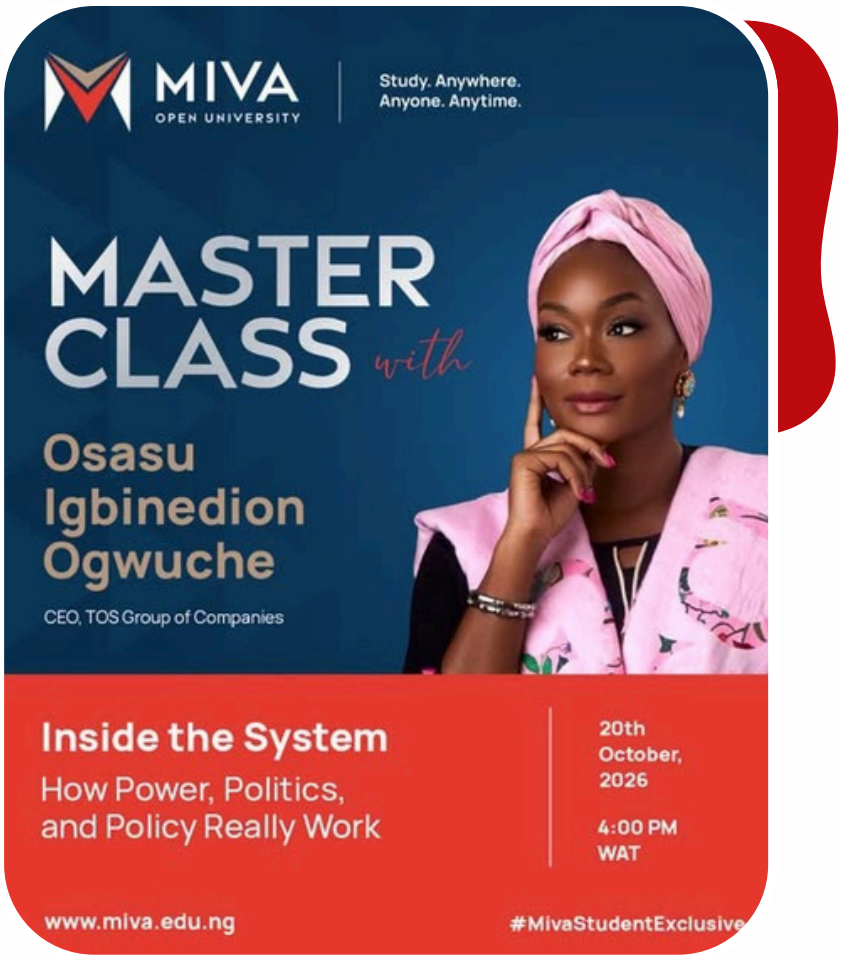
Inside the System: Chief Osasu Igbinedion Ogwuche on Power, Politics and the Work of Change (I)

What does it take to turn a good idea into a policy that changes lives? This question framed Chief Osasu Igbinedion Ogwuche's conversation with Udochi Obiukwu at a masterclass organised by MIVA Open University on October 20, 2026, on the topic, Inside the System: How Power, Politics, and Policy Really Work.

Drawing on her experience in governance advocacy, Chief Osasu offered candid insights into Nigeria's political landscape, highlighting the often-overlooked realities of translating policy ideas into meaningful change.

Good ideas are only the beginning. She explained that policymaking is shaped not only by formal institutions but also by informal relationships, political incentives and negotiations. Effective advocacy requires understanding the interests of decision-makers and building strategic relationships to advance reform. Her experience leading the campaign for the Reserved Seats for Women Bill illustrates this reality: the case for women's representation may be compelling, but translating that principle into legislation requires sustained engagement and political negotiation.

Reflecting on the TOS Symposium, she emphasised that "the conference begins after the conference." For TOS Foundation Africa, convening stakeholders from government, the private sector and civil society must lead to more than dialogue. It must produce actionable solutions, mobilise resources and establish pathways for implementation. In Nigeria, where policy commitments often encounter funding constraints and disruptions from changing administrations, continuity and accountability are essential to lasting impact.





Inside the System: Chief Osasu Igbinedion Ogwuche on Power, Politics and the Work of Change (II)

Chief Osasu also challenged the tendency to attribute Nigeria's governance challenges solely to individual leaders. She argued that institutional weaknesses, gaps in public-sector capacity and the exclusion of people with relevant lived experiences contribute to poor policy outcomes. Sustainable progress therefore requires systems reform, alongside more inclusive leadership and accountable institutions.

Her most compelling messages was a call to reject civic hopelessness. She urged Nigerians, particularly young people, to become active citizens by understanding public issues, knowing their elected representatives, attending town hall meetings, scrutinising public spending and engaging leaders constructively. She stressed that participation does not require holding public office; everyone has a role in shaping the country's future. Businesses, too, must look beyond profit to the social conditions that sustain inclusive and prosperous societies.

For TOS Foundation Africa, these reflections reaffirm the importance of connecting advocacy with implementation. From championing women's political representation to convening stakeholders around critical development challenges, the Foundation's work recognises that meaningful reform demands persistence, collaboration and institutional commitment.

Ultimately, understanding how power works is only the beginning. The greater task is using that understanding to build institutions that serve people better and create a more inclusive future for Nigeria



A World Beyond Makoko: The KNOSK School, TOS Foundation Africa, and Blessing Benjamin's Journey to New Possibilities (I)

For 13-year-old Blessing Benjamin, the dream of completing her secondary education meant leaving behind everything she knew. Home was Aiyetoro Makoko, Lagos State, a waterside community where opportunities for quality education remain limited for many children. But Blessing's determination, coupled with the willingness of others to invest in her potential, would take her farther than she had ever imagined.

In 2025, Blessing made history as the first student from outside the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) to gain admission into KNOSK ₦100-A-Day Charity Secondary School in Kuje, Abuja. It was a remarkable achievement for a girl whose journey began at Makoko Dream Foundation School, where she completed her primary education.

Recognising her academic promise, her headmaster, Mr. Emmanuel A., sought opportunities for deserving pupils to continue their education. Through a referral, he learned about KNOSK, a school committed to making quality education accessible to children from underserved households. Blessing obtained a free entrance examination form alongside four other pupils. Of the five candidates who sat for the examination, she was the only one to meet the admission benchmark. And just like that, a door opened.



"In 2025, Blessing made history as the first student from outside the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) to gain admission into KNOSK ₦100-A-Day Charity Secondary School in Kuje, Abuja."



A World Beyond Makoko: The KNOSK School, TOS Foundation Africa, and Blessing Benjamin's Journey to New Possibilities (II)

Soon, Blessing was leaving Lagos for Abuja, embarking on her first journey beyond the city she had always known. The excitement of a new school came with the uncertainty of leaving her family and familiar surroundings behind. Everything was different: the environment, the routine, and the experience of living away from home. Yet, with the care of the school community and encouragement from her peers, she gradually settled in. A place that once felt strange began to feel like home.



At KNOSK, she received school uniforms, learning materials, meals, sanitary supplies and access to STEM-based learning, all at no cost to her family. These provisions gave her room to focus on her education and begin to imagine a future beyond the boundaries of her childhood community. But while admission had brought her this far, the question of how she would sustain her education remained.

A Day That Made the World Feel Bigger

In October 2025, Blessing was among the KNOSK girls invited to attend the TOS Symposium, organised by TOS Foundation Africa in commemoration of the International Day of the Girl Child. What awaited her was more than a school outing. It was an opportunity to encounter new ideas, meet people beyond her immediate environment and experience places she might never otherwise have visited.

One moment stood out: her first visit to the National Assembly.

For a girl whose world had once been largely confined to Makoko, the visit offered a glimpse of how much existed beyond the familiar. Her journey to Abuja had already taken her into a new environment; the symposium widened that horizon further. It was an experience that invited her to see herself not simply as a girl from a waterside community, but as a young person with a future full of possibilities.



A World Beyond Makoko: The KNOSK School, TOS Foundation Africa, and Blessing Benjamin's Journey to New Possibilities (III)



Then came a surprise that would make the day even more memorable.

During the event, TOS Foundation Africa Founder, Chief Osasu Igbinedion Ogwuche, announced a one-year education scholarship for ten girls from KNOSK. Blessing was among the beneficiaries.

The announcement meant more than the excitement of being selected. It brought hope closer to home. Having left her family and everything familiar to pursue an education in Abuja, Blessing needed the assurance that she could continue the journey she had begun. The scholarship offered that reassurance, strengthening her prospects of remaining at KNOSK and completing her secondary education.

In that moment, an experience that had begun with an invitation to attend a symposium became something much more personal: a reminder that someone believed in her future and was willing to invest in it.

When Opportunity Meets Potential

Blessing's story is a reminder that talent is not confined by geography or circumstance. In communities where access to opportunity is limited, there are children whose abilities may never be fully discovered- not because they lack promise, but because the doors that could help them progress remain closed.

Blessing found one such door through her school. At KNOSK, she found an environment that supported her learning and wellbeing. Through the TOS Symposium, she encountered a wider world. And through TOS Foundation Africa's scholarship, she gained renewed hope that her educational journey could continue.

Her story also speaks to the importance of sustained investment in education. A child needs more than an admission letter to thrive. Learning materials, nutritious meals, personal care, safe accommodation and a supportive learning environment all help turn access to education into a meaningful opportunity.

Blessing's journey from Makoko to Abuja is still unfolding. There are lessons to learn, challenges to overcome and dreams yet to be discovered. But her world has already grown larger than the one she knew as a child. And with every opportunity to learn, she is taking another step towards a future she can shape for herself.

Sometimes, changing a child's story begins with a single open door. For Blessing, that door has opened onto a world of possibilities.

A Generation in Motion: Chief Osasu on Power, Participation and Leadership and Progress for People and Places

What does it mean to lead in a country where young people are told to wait their turn, women remain underrepresented in politics, and resilience is often mistaken for the ability to endure what should change?

At the 2026 Social Norms Conference, themed Norms in Shifting Landscapes: Powering Progress for People and Place, Our Founder, Chief Osasu Igbinedion Ogwuche, explored these questions as the sole guest at a fireside session titled The Social Exchange – A Generation in Motion: On the Changing Ways Young People Are Shaping Culture, Building Enterprise, and Redefining Participation and Leadership.

Chief Osasu challenged the notion that Nigerians must suffer to prove their capacity to hustle. Resilience, she argued, must go hand in hand with accountability and the right to demand responsible leadership and basic services. Building a better society requires more than individual survival; it demands a collective commitment to changing the conditions that hold people back.

She also emphasised the importance of networking, personal development, and discipline. Meaningful connections, she noted, should extend beyond traditional hierarchies, creating opportunities for collaboration and mutual growth. Getting into the room matters, but remaining there requires competence, preparation, and continuous self-development.





A Generation in Motion: Chief Osasu on Power, Participation and Leadership and Progress for People and Places

Her message was equally direct on leadership: young people are not merely the leaders of tomorrow but leaders of today. Age and gender should not determine who leads; integrity, competence, and commitment should. She urged young people to recognise their collective power, organise, and advocate for a future that reflects their aspirations.

On women's political representation, Chief Osasu called for renewed advocacy for the Reserved Seats for Women Bill, stressing the urgency of creating meaningful pathways for women to participate in governance. Nigeria's ambitions as a continental leader, she implied, must be matched by greater inclusion in its political institutions.

Her message was clear: progress requires personal responsibility, collective action, and the courage to challenge limiting norms.

For TOS Foundation Africa, this vision reinforces the importance of empowering young people, advancing women's participation, and building a society where everyone has a meaningful opportunity to lead and shape the future.





International Day of the Girl Child Luncheon Experience. Our Scholars Speak (I)

The afternoon at Nola taught me what leadership really means. It is not about titles but about the solutions I bring to problems, the way I carry myself, and how I make others feel at home. I learned that we girls should be part of the solution, that we should hold on to our values to earn respect, and that the only person we should compete with is ourselves. Most of all, I learned that my voice matters. Before, I used to feel that when brilliant people were talking, my idea was no longer useful, but now I know that my ideas are very important. I will build my self-esteem and confidence so that I can speak in public without fear. - **Divine Ede**

I learnt the importance of self-confidence, continuous learning, hard work, faith, intelligence, and strong values. Girls should never look down on themselves but should remain determined, ask questions when necessary, educate themselves on important issues, and keep practising and putting themselves in positions where they can grow and succeed. Learning is a lifelong process, and we must continue to develop ourselves and face challenges with confidence. - **Olatunji Comfort, JSS2**

The International Day of the Girl Child Luncheon with TOS Foundation Africa taught me that my voice really matters. When someone tells me I can do something, I should believe them, and when someone tells me I am not good at a subject like maths or English, I should not fall but stand on my feet and prove them wrong. I also learned that the best way to resist peer pressure is to never trade away what is important to me for anything that tempts me. - **Sheribawai Danjuma**



My experience was nice. I was so happy to spend a great day in such a cool place. Most importantly, I learned that as a girl child, my voice matters. I should be satisfied with what I have, be confident in myself, never be jealous of my friends or classmates, know my value, and understand that I can be a leader who changes my community. - **Blessing Aniekwe**

International Day of the Girl Child Luncheon Experience. Our Scholars Speak (II)

The International Day of the Girl Child event meant a lot to me because it helped me understand my emotions and showed me that I can succeed in life, solve problems, and help people. I learned that every girl, in Nigeria and beyond, has the power to be heard, and that my voice matters everywhere I go. Among the nine keys I learned, I will keep studying at any age, be intelligent, avoid copying others or envying what they have, lead by the way I make people feel, and give back by changing my community. I loved the food, the gifts, and the way I was treated as someone who can make it in life. Thank you, Chief (Mrs) Osasu Igbinedion Ogwuche, for your kind heart. - **Blessing Benjamin**

The International Day of the Girl Child event with TOS Foundation Africa showed me how I can become someone in life and make it, and how I can help other people solve their problems so that they too can become something. I learned that the day is about building the power of every girl. For me, that starts with education: by reading and practising, my voice can be heard everywhere. I must be intelligent, communicate with intelligent people, and keep studying no matter where I go. I must also not follow what others are doing or measure myself by what another person has. - **Audu Victory**

For me, the event was a celebration of the International Day of the Girl Child, and a reminder that every girl must be celebrated. I learned that the day was created by the United Nations to honour girls, and that I should ask questions when I need to, never look down on myself, learn about the subjects that matter, and keep putting myself forward while setting my own boundaries. What I liked most was seeing Chief Osasu speak to the crowd. I want to be like her and learn to speak well in public. The chicken at lunch was also a treat. Thank you, Chief Osasu, and God bless you and your family. - **Ternenge Terdoo Eunice**



Dear Girl Child: Menstrual Health Is Your Right (I)

For many girls, the first experience of menstruation comes with confusion, anxiety and questions they may not feel comfortable asking. What should be a natural milestone in growing up can instead become a source of shame, especially in communities where conversations about the body remain taboo. Beyond the discomfort of an unfamiliar experience, many girls must navigate silence, stigma and the practical challenges of managing their periods without adequate support.



Menstruation is a natural part of life, yet the attitudes surrounding it can have consequences that reach far beyond a few difficult days each month. In some communities, girls are made to feel that their changing bodies are something to conceal. The reluctance to discuss menstrual health can leave them unprepared, while misconceptions and cultural restrictions reinforce the idea that menstruation is something shameful. These experiences can quietly undermine a girl's confidence, dignity and sense of belonging.



For girls from low-income households, the burden is often compounded by the cost of sanitary products. When basic menstrual supplies are unaffordable, some resort to unsuitable alternatives or use products for longer than recommended. Others miss school because they lack the supplies, facilities or confidence to manage their periods safely. Estimates cited in the original article suggest that menstrual challenges affect millions of adolescent girls, while school absenteeism linked to menstruation remains a concern across sub-Saharan Africa. Each missed school day can widen existing educational gaps and make it harder for girls to participate fully in their own futures.





Dear Girl Child: Menstrual Health Is Your Right (II)

Addressing menstrual health therefore requires more than access to sanitary products. It calls for open conversations at home, informed teachers, menstrual health education in schools, clean and private sanitation facilities, and communities willing to challenge the stigma that leaves girls unsupported. Parents must be able to prepare their children before their first period; schools and policymakers must recognise menstrual health as part of the conditions necessary for girls to learn and thrive.

A girl should not have to choose between her dignity and her education. Nor should a natural stage of development become a barrier to her confidence, participation or opportunity. Protecting the girl child means paying attention to the everyday challenges that can limit her progress, even when they are rarely discussed. Menstrual health is not a private inconvenience to be endured in silence; it is a matter of dignity, wellbeing and equal opportunity.





QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"Girls must be supported to stay in school, and the systems around them must be strengthened to protect that promise."

Chief (Mrs.) Osasu Igbinedion Ogwuche

Contact Us

www.tosfafrica.org
contact@tosfafrica.org
17 Nun Street, Maitama, Abuja, Nigeria



OCTOBER, 2026.