

Nigeria's Simi Nwogugu wins Africa Education Medal 2023

Nigeria's Simi Nwogugu, CEO of Junior Achievement (JA) Africa, has been named the winner of this year's Africa Education Medal, an education accolade which was founded last year by T4 Education and HP in collaboration with Microsoft.



Source: www.africa-newsroom.com

The Africa Education Medal was founded to recognise the tireless work of those changemakers who are transforming African education. Unesco data show that sub-Saharan Africa has the highest rates of education exclusion in the world. Over one-fifth of children between the ages of 6 and 11 are out of school, with girls particularly disadvantaged.

However, tireless international efforts have seen Africa make great strides in boosting enrolment in the decades leading up to the pandemic. By celebrating the stories of those working every day to expand upon these vital gains, the Africa Education Medal aims to inspire others to follow in their footsteps and bring lasting change in African education.

Simi Nwogugu is CEO of JA Africa, part of the Nobel Peace Prize-nominated JA Worldwide, one of the world's largest youth-serving NGOs that prepares young people for the future of work. She was first introduced to JA while working at Goldman Sachs in New York City. Impressed by the organisation, she quit her lucrative job at age 24 to bring JA to Nigeria, where it now reaches more than 100,000 young people annually, before going on to head up JA's operations across the continent.

The vital importance of Nwogugu's work is highlighted by the fact that 60% of the population of sub-Saharan Africa and about 37% of its workforce are under the age of 25. By 2025, Africa will be home to 25% of the world's youth population. Through the delivery of hands-on, blended learning in financial literacy, work readiness, and entrepreneurship, her organisation empowers young people to grow their entrepreneurial ideas, hone their work readiness skills, manage their earnings and secure better lives for themselves, their families, and their communities.



2 South Africans in the running for Africa Education Medal 2023

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For 25 years, Nwogugu has been leading JA's efforts in various capacities as it embarked on a mission to help young people to generate and effectively manage wealth, create jobs for their communities, as well as apply entrepreneurial thinking to the workplace and skills that will secure their financial future. Her passion for strategy and innovation led to the development of many impactful programmes that ensure young Africans have the skillset and mindset to succeed.

She is a passionate advocate for girls' education and one of her unique initiatives includes the Leadership, Empowerment Achievement & Development (LEAD) Camp for Girls, which has inspired and empowered over 1,200 young girls to become high-achieving women leaders in society.

Another initiative she has championed is the Venture in Management Programme (ViMP), which is designed to empower young people in the different facets of managing a business, making crucial business decisions and developing skills for General Management and social responsibility.

Graduates of the programme have gone on to become founders of Nigeria's leading businesses as well as leaders of the most impactful non-profit organisations on the continent. She also built digital and out-of-school youth programs that enabled her organisation to reach underserved populations in the North of Nigeria, even during the Boko Haram crisis and the Covid-19 pandemic.

Prior to becoming JA Africa CEO in 2020, she led JA Nigeria to impact the lives of over one million Nigerians in 5,000 schools. Among the many JA alumni who have gone on to become job creators and social entrepreneurs is Iyin Aboyeji, the founder of two unicorns, Andela and Flutterwave, who said, "JA gave me my first taste of entrepreneurship when I participated in the company programme in secondary school. I'm grateful to Simi for bringing this programme to Nigeria."

Nwogugu also serves as President of the governing board of the Harvard Business School Alumni Association of Nigeria (HBSAN) and has been recognised by the school with numerous awards including the Bert King Award for Social Impact presented by the Harvard Business School African-American Alumni Association. She is currently a fellow of the Aspen Institute's Africa Leadership Initiative for West Africa (ALIWA) where she is pursuing her passion to empower and equip 10 million African girls to build thriving communities by 2050.

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