



**BUSINESS DAY**

Legal Business Unit



# **NIGERIA'S WOMEN IN BUSINESS LAW**

*A SPECIAL REPORT ON 20 OUTSTANDING WOMEN ACROSS 10 SECTORS*

# HOW BD LEGAL BUSINESS SELECTED THE 20 INFLUENTIAL WOMEN IN BUSINESS

In recent years the Nigerian Legal Profession has undergone significant change. There are more women in partner position across the biggest commercial firms in the country than there have ever been in Nigerian history. Women have shown a proclivity for solicitor practice and hence have significantly more presence in commercial/business law. No doubt gender disparities still exist in favour of men, but there have been encouraging strides made by women over the last decade. We think it is important to highlight these women to serve as an inspiration to young female lawyers as well as stimulate the trajectory of excellence that they have injected into the legal profession.

In acknowledgement of this, the BD Legal Business set out to create a report recognising twenty influential and inspiring women in law covering ten practice areas.

Our selection criteria took the following into account.



## A Note From the Editor

### 1. Influence

The extent of their reach? Does the person in question have power or influence over large numbers of people? How many employees do they oversee? What resources do they control? Do they have a big budget to wield? Any national appointments?

### 2. Recognition

The international bodies that they are members of, e.g. Chartered Institute of Arbitrators UK. Do they have credibility even beyond the shores of Nigeria?

### 3. Achievement

What has the individual achieved? How significant has that achievement been? How will we remember their contribution?

### 4. Legacy

Have they created a commercial legacy, perhaps, through a landmark transaction or judgment? Did they engineer substantial change? Were they the first to perform their role? Or, perhaps, did they achieve in a challenging environment, facing additional barriers?

Our aim while embarking on this was to make sure the selection process was as fair and subjective as possible. To this end, we shortlisted five women in each category based on research conducted by our Business Research and Intelligence Unit. Following the shortlist, we identified 40 legal practitioners at different stages of post-call, these being three years post-call, five years post-call, seven years post-call, and ten years post-call. We asked each individual to rank the shortlisted candidates based on the four criteria above. We awarded maximum points for a 1st choice, next highest for the 2nd choice, and so on down to the 5th choice.

We intentionally omitted In-House Counsel category as we did not feel we had established criteria at this point to provide a fair deduction of that area. We are currently working to improve our methods in anticipation of subsequent reports.

The legal business team would like to specially honour Mrs. Bisi Akodu, Managing Partner of Olisa Agbakoba Legal who was shortlisted but who passed away this year. She was an inspiration to many young lawyers. May her soul rest in peace.

Every year is unique. Still, 2020, like man's first trip to the moon stands in a league of its own. Descriptions of this year range from "unusual" to "what next?!" Yet we have witnessed ourselves as individuals, families, organisations and nations, in many respects, respond to each twist with creativity, courage and the bare best of our abilities.

The agile and elegant responses of the members of the legal profession to the disruptive effects of the pandemic, have been nothing short of remarkable and I am especially proud and privileged to be part this incredible group of people.

When we at BD Legal conceived of this report, we had just begun to feel the first wind of the new normal and are especially glad to have succeeded in producing this special report celebrating Nigeria's Women in Business Law for the year 2020.

Our thanks go to the outstanding women featured in these pages for their immeasurable support of this report and who continue to stand as beacons of inspiration to young wigs, and also to everyone who participated in the selection process.

To the remarkable team at BusinessDay: "Look, we did it!"

ONYINYE UKEGBU





**STELLA DURU**  
Oil & Gas/Energy

**Years of Practice:** 20  
**Law Firm:** Banwo & Ighodalo  
**Position:** Partner

**Profile**

Stella is a Partner in Banwo & Ighodalo (B&I)'s Energy & Natural Resources Practice Group. She is a consummate professional with excellent mastery of the entire value chain of energy projects and almost twenty (20) years of cognate experience advising on a broad range of transactions including Oil & Gas, Power.

Stella has deep experience in oil, gas and power projects in Nigeria and has indeed been involved in World Bank sponsored work streams advising on the power sector reforms in Nigeria. Stella was actively involved in several of the power privatization transactions, and presently leads multiple teams advising on several transactions within the power sector, including infrastructure projects in the generation and distribution segments of the Nigerian Electricity Supply.

Stella continues to advise on transactions along the entire value chain of generation, transmission and distribution; as well as on deals pertaining to IPPs, off-grid and on-grid solutions to the power deficit in Nigeria. She is very passionate about monetizing and utilizing Nigeria's natural gas resources in order to get Nigeria powered up.

Many Describe Stella as: Knowledgeable, Progressive, Attentive.

**Landmark Achievement**

Stella authors articles in leading law publications and is also a key resource person for continuing legal education for young and aspiring lawyers. She is continually invited as a speaker at different conferences and seminars in Nigeria and internationally, including conferences held at the prestigious Harvard Business School in Boston and Power Africa in South Africa.

**Professional Memberships**

Stella is a member of the Nigerian Bar Association, International Bar Association (Section on Energy and Natural Resources Law) and Association of International Petroleum Negotiators.

**Professional Achievement**

Stella was appointed as a member of the Council of the Section of Business Law of the Nigerian Bar Association.

**Quote to my Younger self**

"Remain focused on the matters that matter and never doubt your ability to achieve anything you put your mind to."



**FOLAKE ELJAS ADEBOWALE**  
Private Equity, M&A

**Years of Practice:** 24  
**Law Firm:** Udo Udoma & Belo Osagie  
**Position:** Partner

**Profile**

With prestigious institutions such as Oxford and University College London on her resumé it was presumable that Folake Eljas-Adebowale's was destined for an exemplary career. She joined leading firm, UUBO, in 2002, made partner in 2007 and has since raised the level of the firm's Private Equity and M&A practice, while becoming one of the foremost lawyers in the country within the sector. She advises multinationals,

corporates, private equity houses, financial investors and other business clients on diverse matters including domestic and cross-border acquisitions and divestments, restructuring and compliance matters.

**Landmark Achievement**

She has also been appointed to advise the Impact Investors Foundation and the Federal Ministry of Industry, Trade, and Investment on a joint initiative to promote impact investing in Nigeria.

**Professional Memberships**

She is a member of the legal and regulatory council of the Emerging Markets Private Equity Association (EMPEA) and the legal and regulatory committees of the African Venture Capital Association (AVCA) and the Private Equity and Venture Capital Association, Nigeria (PEVCA).

**Professional Achievement**

She headed the legal and regulatory sub-committee of the Federal Minister for Industry Trade and Investment's Nigerian Private Equity and Venture Capital Development project established to make recommendations for boosting private equity and venture capital activity in Nigeria. Her regulatory review and advocacy practice has also included assisting with the review of, and preparation of draft legislation for the downstream gas sector.

**Quote to my Younger self**

"Grind, discipline and integrity fuel success; mindful work-life balancing sustains it. You cannot pour from an empty cup. Passionately explore opportunities. Add value, selflessly. Challenge self-doubt. Earn impactful mentorship. Learn, even failing upwards. Resilience and kindness are superpowers. Remember: 'Honour and shame from no condition arise; Act well your part - there all the honour lies' (Alexander Pope)"



**ADEDOYIN RHODES-VIVOUR, SAN**  
Arbitration

**Years of Practice:** 39  
**Law Firm:** Doyin Rhodes-Vivour & Co, Solicitors, Advocates and Arbitrators.  
**Position:** Partner

**Profile**

Her pedigree is so renowned she almost seems transcendental in the context of arbitration in Nigeria. This is evident in her numerous foreign certifications. She is a British Chevening Scholar, a prestigious international award. In recognition of her leadership qualities, she was nominated by the United States Information Services (USIS) to participate in the 'Young African Leaders Programme' in 1990. Ade Doyin has practiced law for nearly four decades, has acted as arbitrator and counsel in a vast number of cases and has extensive experience under various institutional rules. She specializes in commercial transactions, international and domestic arbitration and alternative dispute resolution. Her areas of expertise include energy and natural resources, construction and infrastructural projects, maritime, labour, banking and finance, telecommunications, franchise and commercial disputes generally. Her legal practice actively encourages alternative dispute resolution and she has successfully mediated several disputes. She has also acted as consultant to regulatory bodies for the drawing up arbitration/ADR industry specific schemes. She is a Notary Public of Nigeria. She is listed in editions of Guide to the World's Leading Commercial Arbitration Experts as one of the preeminent professionals in the world. She is an author and published by LexisNexis

Many Describe Doyin as: Virtuoso, Versatile, Leader.

**Landmark Achievement**

Mrs. Rhodes-Vivour SAN has held various leadership positions including: immediate past Chairperson of the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators [CIARB] (UK) Nigeria Branch, pioneer President and Founding Member of the Maritime Arbitrators Association of Nigeria [MAAN], pioneer Chairperson of the Nigerian Bar Association Section on Business Law [SBL] Arbitration & ADR Committee.

**Professional Memberships**

Holds Panel Certificate of the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators, United Kingdom/Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators, England.

**Professional Awards & Honours**

International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) in collaboration with NECA'S Network of Entrepreneurial Women (NNEW) International Women's Day Award 2020.

**Quote to my Younger self**

I must have faced several challenges like other people but to be sincere my attitude towards challenges is to pray to surmount them. I do not dwell on them. Nothing is impossible with God.

My positive mind set has kept me in good stead to coast along life challenges and remember "Do you see those who are skilled in their work? They will serve before Kings, they will not serve before officials of low rank" [Proverbs 22: 9]



**FUNKE AGBOR, SAN**  
Maritime

**Years of Practice:** 38  
**Law Firm:** ACAS-Law  
**Position:** Partner

**Profile**

Funke is highly lauded for her extensive experience in Admiralty law, Shipping & Marine Insurance Law & Litigation, Shipping Registration, Cabotage Registration & Compliance, Ship Finance & Securitisation and International Trade Law & Commercial Arbitration.

She has represented clients on a broad range of commercial transactions before trial and appellate courts all over Nigeria. In addition, Funke is a seasoned maritime arbitrator and has represented the firm in numerous international arbitration cases. Her active participation in the development and formulation of policy in the Nigerian maritime industry has contributed to her acknowledgement as an authority in the industry.

At ACAS-Law, along with her team, she has assisted in the successful privatisation and concessioning of the largest container terminal facility in Nigeria. Through her dedication to the profession and sector, she became the 1st Vice President, Nigerian Maritime Law Association (an affiliate of the Committee Maritime International).

Many describe Funke as: Reliable, Driven and Inspiring.

**Landmark Achievement**

First Female Maritime lawyer to become a Senior Advocate of Nigeria.

**Professional Memberships**

Council Member of the Maritime Arbitrators Association of Nigeria.

**Professional Awards & Honours**

She was ascribed to Hall of Fame, Legal 500 in Shipping and Transport.

**Quote to my Younger self**

"In life, there may be several rooms on the way to your goal. Whatever rooms or opportunities you encounter, do your best in them and the value you create will speak for you. Be humble, acknowledge your limitations and seek help where you think you can find it; be courageous, recognize the challenges and strategically employ them as a catalyst for forward movement."





**SANDRA OYEWOLE**  
Telecommunications  
Media & Communications

Years of Practice: 27  
Law Firm: Olajide Oyewole  
Position: Partner

**Profile**

Sandra Oyewole could easily just have made the Intellectual Property Section in this report owing to her achievements and vast experience in this practice area. She heads Olajide Oyewole's Technology & Intellectual property practice, primarily in media, sports, entertainment and technology sectors and is renowned for her deep knowledge of the sector. She leverages this dual knowledge to influence the industry on a macro-economic level by guiding and proposing business models that aid with the creation of distribution channels and revenue streams.

Beyond the law Sandra is also an avid philanthropist and is the founder and supporter of several non-profit organisations including Heritage Homes Orphanage, the BRICON foundation, Widows and Development Support Services.

Many Describe Sandra as: Inventive, Intellectual, Altruistic.

**Landmark Achievement**

Sandra Oyewole led the legal services required on the foreign investment deals in 2 of Nigeria's biggest music companies last year by Olajide Oyewole last year. The deals pertained to the copyright assets, other forms of IP, artiste contracts, etc. Investments of this kind in the music industry are rare and both were heralded as new and landmark in nature.

**Professional Memberships**

Founding member of Heritage Homes Orphanage.

**Professional Achievement**

Her work has been noted in several International Law Review Expert Guides. Recently, she was recognized as a "Global Leader" for her vast knowledge in corporate practice and a "National Leader" for her Labour and Employment practice by Who's Who Legal (Nigeria) 2019.

**Quote to my Younger self**

"If you can't be a pine on top of the hill, be a scrub in the valley - but be the best little scrub by the side of the rill ..."



**MFON USORO**  
Maritime

Years of Practice: 38  
Law Firm: Paul Usoro & Co  
Position: Managing Partner  
(leave of absence)

**Profile**

Mfon Usoro is among the foremost maritime lawyers in Nigeria. She has robust experience in legislative drafting and advocacy and led the Paul Usoro & Co [PUC] team in the drafting and legislative advocacy of the numerous legislations including: Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency Act 2007, Council for the Regulation of Freight Forwarding in Nigeria Act 2007, Coastal and Inland Shipping (Cabotage) Act 2003.

Mfon Usoro was the pioneer Director-General and Chief Executive Officer of Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency, (NIMASA) a position she vacated in 2007. She is the chairperson of the Inter-Ministerial Committee for the Finalization of the National Transport Policy for Nigeria.

**Landmark Achievement**

Legal Consultant and project team member to Geometric Power Limited (an Independent Power Producer) in a green-field US\$386,000,000.00, 188MW Integrated Power Project.

**Professional Memberships**

Mfon currently serves as Chairperson, Board of Directors of TIB Asset Management Limited.

Past Chairperson, NBA Section on Business Law, 2010/2011.

**Professional Awards & Honours**

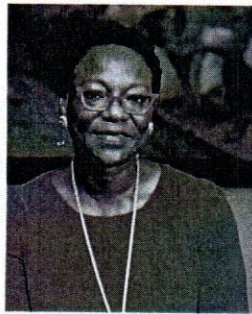
Mfon Usoro was conferred with Chevalier de l'Ordre du Merite Maritime, a National honour of the

Republic of Cote D' Ivoire in 2015; and Officier de L'Ord de Mono, a national honour of the Republic of Togo in 2002.

WISTA International Personality of the Year 2011 by Women International Shipping and Trading Association (WISTA) and Maritime Award of Excellence by the WISTA Nigeria.

**Quote to my Younger self**

"Early determination of one's goal in life, coupled with resolute, concerted efforts to attain the identified goals while at the same time being agile and flexible to accommodate life's lessons without derailment is very critical for self-development and joy".



**KOFO DOSEKUN**  
Banking and Finance

Years of Practice: 39  
Law Firm: Aluko & Oyeboode  
Position: Managing Partner

**Profile**

Kofo Dosekun's illustrious career spans nearly four decades across many facets of the legal industry. She began as a Legal Officer at the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs in 1980, after which she worked as an Associate in Debo Akande & Co. (Barristers & Solicitors). She has served as the Company Secretary/Legal Advisor, Nigerian International Bank (Affiliate of Citibank, N.A.) and Assistant General Manager, Corporate Finance and Financial Institutions, amongst other like positions.

Currently, Kofo leads the Corporate and Commercial, and Banking practices of Aluko & Oyeboode. She advises on a broad range of lending and commercial transactions, such as large local and foreign currency loan syndications and leases, mergers and acquisitions, project finance and transaction restructuring. She has also served as counsel to offshore lenders in the structuring of the security package and the extension of foreign currency facilities to oil exploration and production companies.

With expertise in banking, mergers and acquisitions, project development and finance, her sector specialisations include Energy, Natural Resources, Oil & Gas, Real Estate, Technology and Telecommunications as well as Transport.

Many describe Kofo as: Resourceful, Passionate and Thorough.

**Landmark Achievement**

Advised a Consortium of International Commercial Banks and Export Credit Agencies (ECA's) in the US\$1,060,000,000.00 (One Billion and Sixty Million United States Dollars) financing of the 4th and 5th trains of the Nigeria Liquefied Natural Gas (NLNG) Plant Expansion Project (NLNGPlus).

**Professional Memberships**

She is a member of the Nigerian Bar Association

**Professional Achievement**

Severally recognised as a leading lawyer by various law review publications. Kofo was ranked Band 1 in Banking and Finance by Chambers Global.

**Quote to my Younger self**

"Keep self-aware. Let your innate sense of self direct your career choices and don't get weighed-down by other people's achievements, or their expectations. Compete against yourself and strive to do better than the last great thing you did. Complete self-awareness is the acceptance that sometimes you will fail, but that failure shouldn't define, but inspire, you to rise above your own inadequacies and conquer them."



**OLUBUNMI FAYOKUN**  
Capital Market

Years of Practice: 35  
Law Firm: Aluko & Oyeboode  
Position: Partner

**Profile**

A stalwart of the industry for several decades and one of the most respected senior lawyers in the legal profession Olubunmi Fayokun inclusion in this list is one of the least contentious. She is a Senior Partner in the law firm of Aluko & Oyeboode and heads the firm's Capital Markets and Mergers & Acquisitions practice groups. She is also an integral member of the firm's Management Board.

Olubunmi has 35 years' experience in all aspects of corporate/commercial practice. She represents top-tier indigenous, international and multinational clients in various sectors, including banking, energy and natural resources, power, insurance, mining, aviation, pharmaceuticals and agriculture.

Olubunmi has served on various committees established by the Securities and Exchange Commission to promote the development of the Nigerian capital market, including the CMC Rules and Compliance Sub-committee and the CMC Market Infrastructure Sub-committee. She played a key role in the establishment of the Nigerian Association of Securities Dealers OTC market.

Many Describe Ms Fayokun as: A Leader, Scrupulous, Dynamic.

**Landmark Achievement**

She advised on the Nigerian aspects of the US\$8.1 Billion sale by Unilever Plc of its spreads business; and the demutualization of The Nigerian Stock Exchange.

**Professional Memberships**

The International Bar Association

**Professional Awards & Honours**

Securities & Exchange Commission Award for contributions to the development of the Nigerian Capital Market.

**Quote to my Younger**

"It is important to believe in yourself, draw on your God-given reservoirs of inner strength and take control of your destiny. On your journey through life, you will face many challenges and obstacles, but do not be dismayed as there will also be abundant opportunities to embrace. Be bold and step out in confidence because you have everything it takes to excel in all areas of your life."





**DOROTHY UFOT, SAN**  
*Arbitration*

**Years of Practice:** 31  
**Law Firm:** Dorothy Ufot & Co  
**Position:** Founding Partner

**Profile**

You cannot mention arbitration in Nigeria without You cannot mention arbitration in Nigeria without mentioning Dorothy Ufot, she has effectively become synonymous with arbitration in Nigeria, and recently, Africa. After amassing an impressive experience record, she set out to establish her own firm in 1994.

At the turn of the millennia, she embarked on the defining journey of her professional career. She qualified as a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators in 2000 following her success at the fellowship examination of the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators (UK) which took place in Barcelona, Spain in 1999. Thereafter, she commenced her pupillage training with the renowned Mr. Anthony Canham, Chartered Arbitrator and Past President of the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators, leading up to her qualification as a Chartered Arbitrator in May 2003. Dorothy has practical experience in both Institutional and Ad-hoc Arbitration, having received several appointments as an Arbitrator from an extensive array of corporate and government institutions. She now currently heads the International Arbitration and Litigation departments for her firm.

She was admitted to the Inner-Bar as a Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN) on 12th April 2009.

Dorothy Ufot is well known for her relentless work ethic, willpower and dynamism.

**Professional Memberships**

Past member of the Governing Council of the Nigerian Stock Exchange (NSE)(chaired its Rules and Adjudication Committee).

Board member of SO&U Limited (one of Nigeria's premier advertising and media relations companies), Dangote Cement Nigeria PLC (Africa's largest cement producer), Dangote Cement Ethiopia, The International Chamber of Commerce (ICC)- Nigeria National Committee and The Nigerian Prize for Leadership (NPL).

Past member of the Nominations Committee of the International Bar Association (IBA) and a former Council Member of the Legal Practice Division of the IBA.

Member of the Council of the ICC Institute of World Business Law in Paris and a Member of the General-Purpose Committee of the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA).

**Landmark Achievement**

Dorothy Ufot, SAN won the prestigious award of the African Arbitrator of the Year 2020, which election took place on the sidelines of the 8th East African International Arbitration Conference held in Nairobi, Kenya on 28th August 2020.

**Professional Achievement**

Admitted to the Inner-Bar as a Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN) on 12th April 2009.

Listed in the Global Arbitration Review's (GAR) International Who's Who of Commercial Arbitration Practitioners consecutively from 2009 to 2020 as one of the world's leading experts in the field of International Arbitration.

Appointed one of the 8 Global Vice-presidents of the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) Commission on Arbitration and ADR in Paris, (January 2014 – June 2018).

Admitted to the Panel of Arbitrators of the following International Arbitration Institutions: The International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID) Washington DC, The Korean Commercial Arbitration Board-International (KCAB), The American Arbitration Association(AAA)/ International Centre for Dispute Resolution (ICDR), The Singapore International Arbitration Centre (SIAC), The Beijing Arbitration Commission (BAC)/Beijing International Arbitration Center (BIAC), The Hong Kong International Arbitration Centre (HKIAC), Energy Disputes Arbitration

Centre (EDAC) Turkey, The Asian International Arbitration Centre (AIAC)Kuala Lumpur, The Dubai International Arbitration Centre (DIAC), The Energy Arbitrator's List and the Regional Centre for International Commercial Arbitration, Lagos.

**Quote to my Younger self**

"Dream dreams and work very hard to convert your dreams into reality, believing that nothing is impossible. There is no substitute to hard work and hard work doesn't kill anyone. To shatter the glass ceiling, you have to work much, much harder than your contemporaries. Many women have done it in various fields. You too can do it."



**UCHE NWOKOCHA**  
*Intellectual Property*

**Years of Practice:** 17  
**Law Firm:** Aluko & Oyeboode  
**Position:** Partner

**Profile**

Uche Nwokocha is a Harvard alumnus, and stands as one of the leading I.P lawyers in the country.

She heads the Intellectual property department of Aluko & Oyeboode, a firm largely regarded as amongst the top three in the country and advises local and international clients on the full range of brand-related matters including licensing.

She has experience in trademark clearance and exploitation, patents, dispute resolution, franchising, technology transfer, product registration with NAFDAC.

Many describe Uche as: Passionate, Intelligent, Inventive

**Landmark Achievement**

She successfully argued cancellation proceedings for GSK against an application by a third party to register a trademark conflicting with their Panadol and Lucozade trademarks.

**Professional Memberships**

Uche is a member of the board of directors of INTA and sits on its finance committee for 2020.

**Professional Awards & Honours**

She has been ranked among the 2020 World Trademark Review (WTR) 1000 and Top 250 Women in IP for 2020 by Managing Intellectual Property (MIP).

**Quote to my Younger**

One must transform from ME to WE in order to find one's purpose as a leader.



**AYOTUNDE OWOIGBE**  
*Project Finance*

**Years of Practice:** 23  
**Law Firm:** Sefton Fross  
**Position:** Founding Partner/ Managing Partner

**Profile**

Ayotunde Owoigbe joined B&I in February 2001 and was admitted into the firm's partnership in 2010. Her core practice areas are banking & finance, capital markets, M&A and project finance; in all of which she has garnered 20 years of hands-on technical and practical experience, nationally and internationally.

She is actively engaged in legal development and reform initiatives; particularly in the capital market space. She is immediate past chairperson of the Capital Market Solicitors Association, an independent self-regulatory association of law firms engaged in capital market practice in Nigeria. Ayotunde is also a member of the Investors, Issuers & Intermediaries Engagement/Education Sub-Committee set up by FMDQ to make recommendations on the Debt Capital Market Development Project.

Many Describe Ayotunde as: Eloquent, Resilient, Galvaniser.

**Landmark Achievement**

Advised First City Monument Bank Limited in connection with the establishment of a N100,000,000,000 Bonds Issuance Programme through its wholly owned special purpose vehicle, FCMB Financing SPV Plc, under which programme the bank has issued three tranches of bonds.

**Professional Memberships**

She is a member of the Investors, Issuers & Intermediaries Engagement/Education Sub-Committee set up by FMDQ to make recommendations on the Debt Capital Market Development Project.

**Professional Awards & Honours**

Her work has been noted in several International Law Review Expert Guides. Recently, she was recognized as a "Global Leader" for her vast knowledge in corporate practice and a "National Leader" for her Labour and Employment practice by Who's Who Legal (Nigeria) 2019.

**Quote to my Younger**

Like everything else worthwhile, your career too will require time, dedication, passion and non-stop growth. The reward will come... For now, remember to enjoy the journey, Girl.



**FUNMI ROBERTS**  
*Dispute Resolution/ Commercial Litigation*

**Years of Practice:** 38  
**Law Firm:** Funmi Roberts & Co  
**Position:** Founder & Principal Partner

**Profile**

Funmi Roberts is the founder and principal partner of Funmi Roberts & Co., a leading female owned-law firm, which she grew from a single room chambers in Ibadan into an internationally recognised law firm with impressive chambers in Ibadan and Lagos, with focal point in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, as well as several international collaborating law firms.

Widely regarded as a dispute resolution expert of no mean repute, Funmi has acted as arbitrator or mediator in several corporate commercial, real estate, investments, construction, banking and finance-related, transport and security, insurance disputes including an ICC administered international oil and gas dispute.

She has received global recognition for her dispute resolution expertise and sits on the board of several national and multinational organisations including her appointment as a member of the National Executive Council (NEC), the highest decision-making body of Nigerian Bar Association.

Many describe Funmi as: Astute, Tenacious, and Dauntless.

**Landmark Achievement**

Funmi Roberts is the co-visioner of the Covid-19 ADR Initiative (CADR), an initiative that promotes the use of Alternative Dispute Resolution mechanisms for the settlement of COVID-19 related disputes outside of litigation at low cost without compromising quality.

**Professional Memberships**

Kigali International Arbitration Centre Panel of International Arbitrators (KIAC)

**Professional Awards & Honours**

National Leader in Arbitration, Who's Who Legal, 2020





**YIMIKA PHILLIPS**  
M&A/Private Equity

Years of Practice: 19  
Law Firm: Olaniwun & Ajayi  
Position: Partner

**Profile**

Olayimika Phillips is one of the rare lawyers who didn't study law as her first degree but still rose to the top of the profession after obtaining a law degree relatively late.

Olayimika has gained experience advising both local and international clients on group reorganizations, M&A, demergers, corporate finance and general corporate governance matters.

Many describe Yimika as: Conscientious, Composed, Kind-hearted.

**Landmark Achievement**

Advised on the acquisition of GlaxoSmithKline Plc's Lucozade and Ribena business and brand rights by Suntory Beverage & Food Limited.

**Professional Memberships**

Institute of Directors (Nigeria)

**Professional Achievement**

Securities & Exchange Commission Award for contributions to the development of the Nigerian Capital Market.

**Quote to my Younger self**

"In an age and society where the default position is disruption and chaos, and the propensity of any business to survive directly depends on its ability to constantly innovate, a sound commercial lawyer is one who holds her clients by the hands and guides them through the maze of regulatory uncertainties and economic upheavals. Anything short of this is professionally untenable."



**FUNKA ADEKOYA, SAN**  
Dispute Resolution/  
Commercial Litigation

Years of Practice: 45  
Law Firm: ALEX  
Position: Founding Partner

**Profile**

Another no brainer on this list, Funke Adekoya, SAN is a founding Partner ALEX and heads the Dispute Resolution Practice Group. Appointed Notary Public in 1986 and elevated to the rank of Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN) in 2001, Funke was only the 5th woman in history to be bestowed this prestigious rank. She has over 45 years' experience in Litigation and Arbitration. As a Litigator, she represents clients regularly before the Nigerian courts at all levels. She also provides expert opinions and has appeared as an expert witness on Nigerian law issues before the courts of England, United States and Turkey.

Many Describe Funke as: Visionary, Motivated, Erudite.

**Landmark Achievement**

She was elevated to the rank of Senior Advocate of Nigeria in 2001 as the 5th woman to be so elevated exactly 20 years after the first woman was elevated to the rank.

**Professional Memberships**

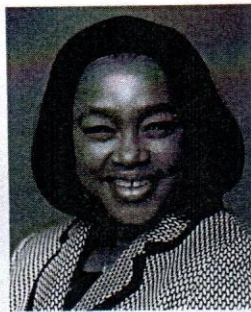
International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA)

**Professional Awards & Honours**

Arbitrator /ADR Practitioner of the year 2020 – African Arbitrator Association Awards

**Quote to my Younger self**

"To achieve anything, you must have a clear objective – something you want, whether it's a new dress or a promotion at work. And then you must plan on how to get it. Achievement is hardly a straight line, more usually a series of baby steps, sometimes forward, sometimes sideways. But just keep at it. Perseverance is the key."



**JUMOKE LAMBO**  
Telecommunications  
Media & Technology

Years of Practice: 30  
Law Firm: Udo Udoma & Belo-Osagie  
Position: Partner

**Profile**

Jumoke Lambo LLB (Bristol), BL (Nigeria), is a Partner at Udo Udoma & Belo-Osagie. She was called to the Nigerian Bar in 1989 and has over the last 30 years gathered significant experience and achievement across a wide array of industries, notably, Technology, Media and Telecommunications. She also oversees her firm's company secretarial arm, Alsec Nominees Limited.

Jumoke was seconded to both Etisalat Nigeria (9 Mobile) (2009-2010), and Union Bank of Nigeria (2014-2017) where she successfully restructured their legal departments and introduced processes and structures in order to improve their efficiency and optimise output. These secondments broadened her experience through the exposure to in-house legal work.

Many describe her as: Methodical, Erudite, Meticulous.

**Landmark Achievement**

Jumoke was seconded to both Etisalat Nigeria (9 Mobile) (2009-2010), and Union Bank of Nigeria (2014-2017) where she successfully restructured their legal departments and introduced processes and structures in order to improve their efficiency and optimise output.

**Professional Memberships**

She is a fellow of the Centre for International Legal Studies (CILS) and sits on the board of various entities.

**Professional Achievement**

Her work has been noted in several International Law Review Expert Guides. Recently, she was recognized as a "Global Leader" for her vast knowledge in corporate practice and a "National Leader" for her Labour and Employment practice by Who's Who Legal (Nigeria) 2019.

**Quote to my Younger self**

"Do not limit yourself, the picture is much larger than you can ever imagine; the colours and the landscape are beyond your most vivid imagination. Trust in the Lord and lean not on your own understanding."



**FELICIA KEMI SEGUN**  
Oil & Gas/Energy

Years of Practice: 29  
Law Firm: ACAS-Law  
Position: Managing Partner

**Profile**

Kemi advises on petroleum taxation, general business compliance and commercial matters ancillary to corporate

activities and also advises oil company independents on structuring their entry into the Nigerian Oil and Gas Industry either through direct acquisitions (licensing rounds or discretionary allocations), farm in or stock transfers, on relevant laws regulating entry and operations, and generally on transactional matters within the Nigerian Oil and Gas Industry.

Many describe her as: Poised, Articulate, Thorough.

**Landmark Achievement**

Kemi has worked on several groundbreaking transactions that are of strategic importance to the Nigerian economy within the energy sector, including Nigeria's first gas to liquids project and Nigeria's first IPP from the stage of implementation with AES Sirocco as well as Nigeria's first IPP financing.

**Professional Memberships**

Kemi is the chairperson of the Energy and Environment Committee of the Nigerian Bar Association.

**Professional Awards & Honours**

She was recognised in the IFLR1000 Women Leaders Guide 2020 and is Consistently ranked in Tier One, as one of Nigeria's leading legal experts on Nigerian Oil and Gas Law.

**Quote to my Younger self**

"Hang ups, real and perceived are unseen limitations to individual progress, but there are no limits beyond one's self as to what one can attain when you truly believe that you can do all things – not in your strength, but in Christ's."



**IBILOLA OGUNBIYI**  
Project Finance

Years of Practice: 17  
Law Firm: Olaniwun & Ajayi  
Position: Partner

**Profile**

At a relatively early stage in her legal career, Ibilola Ogunbiyi has already made quite the impact from a transactional perspective in the project finance sector.

Ibi is a Partner in the Power and Infrastructure team of Olaniwun and Ajayi (widely regarded as Nigeria's flagship power practice). She has amassed several years of cross-disciplinary experience.

Ibi has been integral to many of the Firm's notable transactions in complex project financings, power and infrastructure project developments, power sector advisory, public-private partnerships, concessions, and corporate financings.

Many describe Ibilola as: Intelligent, Meticulous, Attentive.

**Landmark Achievement**

Advising a private investor on a PPP project with the Lagos State Government on the US\$1.4 Billion development of a mixed-use real estate development of approximately 28.6 hectares.

**Professional Memberships**

The International Bar Association

**Professional Achievement**

Securities & Exchange Commission Award for contributions to the development of the Nigerian Capital Market.

**Quote to my Younger self**

"Keep self-aware. Let your innate sense of self direct your career choices and don't get weighed-down by other people's achievements, or their expectations. Compete against yourself and strive to do better than the last great thing you did. Complete self-awareness is the acceptance that sometimes you will fail, but that failure shouldn't define, but inspire, you to rise above your own inadequacies and conquer them."





**CHINYERE OKOROCHA**  
*Intellectual Property*

**Years of Practice:** 29  
**Law Firm:** Jackson, Etti & Edu  
**Position:** Partner

**Personal Records of Achievement**

Known for her energetic personality and strategic mind, Chinyere Okorochoa is a Partner & Head of Sectors at Jackson, Etti & Edu, one of the top firms in the country. With over 29 years practical experience as a lawyer with a leaning towards IP law, she has established herself as an authority and an expert in this area. JEE is considered by many to be the leading firm in intellectual property in Nigeria, and as a key member of its IP team, Chinyere has helped mould this status with her wealth of knowledge on the sector.

Chinyere has excellent interpersonal skills, a trait that is highlighted by her key client management role in her firm. Furthermore, she has also developed a keen sense for strategy and was recently appointed Head of Sectors & Head of the firm's Leadership Team.

She is described as relentlessly driven, articulate, and innovative.

**Professional Memberships**

Chairperson, Intellectual Property (IP) Committee - NBA, Section on Business Law.

Vice Chairperson, Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) Women Forum.

**Landmark Achievement**

She is ranked in Chambers Global 2016 - 2020, as a Leading Individual in IP in Nigeria as well as is recognised as an expert in Who Is Who Legal Nigeria, (2017-2020).

**Professional Awards & Honours**

She is also recognised in the Trademark Law Practitioners Expert Guides (2012 - 2018); an IP Star (2014 - 2020), in Managing Intellectual Property.

**Concrete Personal Achievement**

"A defining moment of my career was when, as a law firm with the most prominent and well-known Intellectual Property Practice in Nigeria, we were called upon to nominate one of our Partners as the inaugural Chairperson of the Intellectual Property Committee of the NBA, Section on Business Law (SBL). I will be forever grateful to my Senior Partner, Lookman Durosinmi-Etti, and Managing Partner, Koye Edu, for nominating me for the position, out of all the Partners within the firm at that time. The confidence reposed in me, propelled me to put all my energy into building a sustainable foundation for what has now come to be known as one of the most active and impactful Committees of the NBA SBL. Our extensive work in the IP Committee, spanning 8 years (2007 - 2015), through engagement and advocacy initiatives with both the government officials and the private sector alike, remains a source of immense pride to me and has gone a long way in ensuring the growth and development of this specialist area of practice, both locally and internationally."

**Quote to my Younger self**

"As a young lawyer, you must recognise that your life is like a blank page and the pen is literally in your own hand. You can decide to be swayed by the wind, or you can take a hold of the pen and create the storyline you desire... Either way, the best way to determine your future is by creating it yourself."



**OLAYEMI ANYANECHI**  
*Project Finance*

**Years of Practice:** 23  
**Law Firm:** Sefton Fross  
**Position:** Founding Partner/  
Managing Partner

**Profile**

Olayemi Anyanechi's rise in the legal profession has been meteoric, and this is credited to her indefatigable spirit and astute legal mind. After leaving Templars as a partner, she set out to start her firm, Sefton Fross and its rise has been as meteoric as her career.

She has set herself apart by being one of Nigeria's foremost finance lawyers with more than 23 years of cognate banking & finance experience. She represents various organisations and multinational companies, attending to the full range of their business and transactional needs on a range of local and cross border transactions, and most renowned for her experience in Project financing and M&As in the financial services, energy and natural resources, and infrastructure sectors.

She has led teams in some of the largest and most sophisticated financings in Nigeria and is internationally recognised as a Highly-Regarded Finance Lawyer by IFLR1000, Leading Individual in Corporate & Financial Law by Legal 500, National Leader in Capital Markets by Who's Who Legal, amongst others.

Technically gifted and consistent in the quality of her service to her clients, Olayemi doesn't even look to have hit full potential which is something that when assessing her current position in enough to leave one awestruck.

Many describe her as Methodical, Visionary, Dependable.

**Professional Memberships**

- International Bar Association
- Institute of Directors
- Nigeria Economic Summit Group
- Capital Markets Solicitors Association of Nigeria

**Landmark Achievement**

Some landmark achievements for Olayemi revolve around the recognition of the firm and its capabilities in record time following establishment. In the first year of operation, Sefton Fross won the ESQ Oil & Gas Team of the Year (2014) and subsequently went on to win the Energy Team of the Year in 2015.

**Professional Awards & Honours**

- 2020: Women to Watch in Law, African Women in Law
- 2020: Global Leader, Energy & National Leader, Capital Markets Who's Who Legal
- 2018: Leading Individual - Banking, Finance and Capital Markets, Legal 500

**Quote to my Younger self**

"The practice of law is an exacting one, to excel at it, you must be passionate about it, and believe that if you do it well enough, you are helping businesses grow, creating value, saving livelihoods. Having found this passion, you must pursue it, hone it, excel at it and perfect it. Ultimately, people will see that you are great at it; they will recognise and applaud you for it." coast along life challenges and remember "Do you see those who are skilled in their work? They will serve before Kings, they will not serve before officials of low rank" [Proverbs 22: 9]