

CITY BITE

B e t h e d i f f e r e n c e !

Sheila DEGRAFF'S FESTAC EXPERIENCE

TIPS
FOR GREAT
HEALTH

AFYCHRY

Driven by passion for African textile, AFYCHRY seamlessly blends both traditional and modern fashion trends to produce unique but classy outfits that match events of all contexts.

LET L.VICTORIA BREATHE!

In the fight against climate change and environmental degradation, campaigns and slogans play pivotal roles in raising awareness, shaping public opinion, and driving actionable change.

GENDER GAPS

Economists estimate that in Sub-Saharan Africa, the gender pay gap could be impeding GDP growth by up to 0.9%, compared to faster-growing Asian economies.

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MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

GET THE BUZZ.

EDITOR'S NOTE

This edition discusses a variety of topics that touch on issues concerning the society in many ways. From impact stories to business, we analyse, critically, the many different occurrences in the past and early this month, that at least made a difference in people's lives.

The major issue in this volume is the just concluded FESTAC AFRICA festival, which took place at the Jomo Kenyatta International Stadium in Mombasa, Kisumu.

For seven days, people from all walks of life and parts of the world gathered in the city to celebrate black excellence and embrace the beauty of African cultural heritage and diversity.

Pomp, color, Culture and food underscored the historic event that brought immense value to the city of Kisumu. Besides that the city has been buzzing with many other activities, that are featured on this volume, while seasoned medical practitioner Dr. Sunil also offers insights on how to maintain good health, in a world so infested with diseases.

Odima Osure



HEALTH

HOW TO AVOID SICKNESS

We live in time when everyone is susceptible to underlying illnesses or conditions. This is majorly influenced by unhealthy ways of living, and can be avoided with healthy living habits, as Dr. Sunil Panwar puts it on pages 10 -11



DETAIL >

JABALI REFLECTS ON FESTAC AFRICA FESTIVAL 2024

In a watershed moment, Kisumu City hosted the historic FESTAC AFRICA festival between August the 25th and September the 1st this year. It was an event of pomp, color, culture and food, intertwined with varied cultural performances and dialogue forums where high value topics that touch on the growth trajectory of Africa were discussed. On stage, massive performances went on throughout the week, with the biggest ones taking place on the day of the opening ceremony, which was graced by former Nigerian President Chief Olusegun

Obasanjo, Fmr. Kenyan P.M Raila Odinga and Prof. Anyang' Nyong'o.

On that day, legendary artists Suzanna Owiyo and Les Wanyika band graced the stage, while a host of other young and emerging artists got a platform to hone their talents.

At the heart of all these remarkable performances was one man, known to many as Jabali Afrika. His name: Joseck Asikoye. His passion for African art brought him to FESTAC, and his energy fuelled him to get out of the festival with his head raised high. CBM had an interview with him, and he recounts his story with FESTAC AFRICA 2024.

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A FESTAC EXPERIENCE FOR SHEILA DEGRAFF



Legendary Musician

SHEILA DEGRAFF

Between August 25th and September 1, Kisumu City played host to one of the biggest festivals in the world; FESTAC. Read fully as Festival Of Arts and Culture, the week-long event, according to its organizers is meant to bring World's Black together, through art, as a way to celebrate Africa's cultural diversity.

As an elevated platform for art, the festival attracted artists of different craft from all parts of the world to entertain the high profile dignitaries that graced different forums that took place within the week of the event. From the opening ceremony to the closing, iconic artists shared stage, en vogue. This underscored what many have referred as a watershed moment for the host country Kenya. From veteran Luo musician Suzanna Owiyo to emerging ones like Adoyo Afrique, the stage was set up to accommodate some of the finest black and African artists, among whom sits

the legendary Haitian queen of soul Sheila Degraff, who showcased her immaculate flair by performing some of her best songs, that promote the virtue of taking pride in our African diversity.

"Hello, Hello Africa," the melody of one of her biggest songs, titled *Africa Still, A Queen* rang around the Jomo Kenyatta International Stadium, as attendees danced to its tune. Every move she made on stage, was emulated by her tickled audience down stage.

As a major act in the festival, CBM followed her all through to New York, where she's based, to find out more about her experience in Africa.





SHEILA DEGRAFF

AT FESTAC AFRICA

Who is Sheila Degraff & how did she become a musician?

I am a multifaceted artist born into a rich tapestry of cultural heritage. My journey began with a passion for music and a deep connection to my Haitian roots. I initially joined the musical ensemble **Rara Machine** from **Shanachie Entertainment**, which allowed me to perform across the U.S, Canada and Germany. This experience ignited my lifelong commitment to music. Even as I pursued a career in nursing, my love for music never waned, leading me back to the studio and to the creation of several albums and projects that reflect my heritage and artistic vision.

What is your genre of music and what's its background story?

My musical career is deeply rooted in Haitian culture, and my work primarily revolves around the genres of World music and **Konpa**. These styles are integral to Haitian culture, blending traditional rhythms with contemporary influences. My albums, such as "**Kouray**" and "**Africa**," emphasize the vibrancy and depth of

Kisumu, Kenya

Haitian music, celebrating our heritage and sharing it with the world. The impact of my music is significant as it helps to preserve and promote Haitian cultural traditions while fostering a broader appreciation for our rich musical heritage.

What motivated your participation in FESTAC FESTIVAL 2024?

Visiting Africa has always been one of my dreams. I came to Kisumu for FESTAC AFRICA to connect with fellow artists and cultural enthusiasts, and to celebrate and promote African and diasporic cultural expressions. Great Afro-Caribbean dancer, Alexandra Jean-Joseph and I were very excited to bring a taste of Haiti to Kenya. FESTAC AFRICA is a platform that resonates with my own mission to bridge cultural gaps and highlight the richness of African and Caribbean heritage. It provides a unique opportunity to engage with and learn from diverse cultural practices and artistic expressions.

How does FESTAC relate to your cultural belief systems as a Haitian?

FESTAC AFRICA is a profound celebration of African culture, and it aligns closely with my beliefs as both a person and a Haitian artist. It honors the diversity and richness of African traditions, which are deeply intertwined with my own Haitian heritage. Participating in FESTAC allows me to honor and revel in our shared cultural roots, and to explore the ways in which African and Caribbean traditions intersect and enrich one another.

How did you find Kisumu and what feedback can you give about FESTAC AFRICA?

Kisumu is a wonderful and vibrant city to experience. The warmth and enthusiasm of the people made my visit memorable. FESTAC AFRICA 2024 itself was an impressive and well-organized event, celebrating the rich cultural heritage of Africa with great depth and respect. The festival provides a valuable platform for cultural exchange and artistic collaboration, and I commend the organizers for their dedication and vision.

As a Pan African artist, what do you think is the role of art in the future of black consciousness and black people?

Art plays a crucial role in shaping and enhancing black consciousness. It serves as a powerful medium for expressing identity, history, and aspirations. Through art, black people can tell their own stories, challenge stereotypes, and celebrate their cultural heritage. As a Pan African artist, I believe that art will continue to be a vital force in uniting communities, fostering pride, and inspiring future generations to embrace their heritage and work towards a shared vision of progress and empowerment.



Afro-Caribbean dancer Alexandra Jean-Joseph who accompanied Sheila Degraff to Kenya, for FESTAC AFRICA festival 2024

As an artist, what role do you think art plays in the furtherance of culture?

Art is fundamental to the preservation and advancement of culture. It acts as a vessel for transmitting cultural values, traditions, and histories to new generations. Through various artistic forms, culture is not only maintained but also evolves and adapts to contemporary contexts. Art fosters cultural dialogue and appreciation, helping to keep traditions alive while also allowing for creative innovation and expression.

As a Haitian artist based in the U.S, how do the audiences in the country receive and respond to your music?

Audiences in the U.S have shown a growing appreciation for my music, particularly those interested in world music and cultural diversity. There is a strong curiosity and respect for Haitian rhythms and traditions among American listeners. My work often serves as a bridge, introducing them to the richness of Haitian culture and fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of our music and heritage.

What are some of the challenges that cultural artists contemporarily face that can stultify their output?

Contemporary artists often face challenges such as limited access to funding, the commercialization of art, and the pressure to conform to mainstream trends. For artists whose work is deeply rooted in culture, there is also the risk of cultural appropriation or misrepresentation. Additionally, navigating the balance between staying true to one's cultural roots and appealing to a broader audience can be challenging. These obstacles can hinder an artist's ability to fully express and share their cultural heritage.

What are the cultural similarities between people of black descent in Kenya (Africa) and Haiti (Caribbean) judging by what you witnessed during FESTAC AFRICA festival 2024?

At FESTAC AFRICA, I observed that both Kenyans and Haitians share a profound sense of community and a deep connection to their cultural traditions. There is a strong emphasis on oral storytelling, music, and dance as means of preserving and expressing cultural identity. Both cultures also celebrate resilience and creativity through vibrant festivals and artistic expressions. These shared values and practices highlight a common heritage that transcends geographical boundaries. There are similarities in the cuisine as well which really pleases me.



Parting shot

In conclusion, my experiences at FESTAC AFRICA have reinforced in me, a sense of importance of cultural exchange and artistic collaboration. As an artist, I am committed to celebrating and preserving my Haitian heritage while also embracing and learning from the rich traditions of other cultures. Events like FESTAC AFRICA are vital for fostering a global dialogue about our shared histories and aspirations. I am grateful for the opportunity to contribute to this dialogue and look forward to continued exploration and celebration of our collective cultural legacy. Special thanks to Jamezany James who first invited me to FESTAC, my good friend Howard Katz who came along for the ride and Alexandra Jean-Joseph for a superb dance performance.

AFYCHRY'S MISSION TO REVITALISE AFRICAN FABRICS



FAITH ACHIENG'
FOUNDER; AFYCHRY

Here comes a beautiful story, of commitment to spotlight and revitalise African Fabrics. AFYCHRY is a portmanteau of two words from two different languages to express the core mission of the brand. One word; Afya is a swahili translation for wellness and Chrysalis, a Latin word for transformation.

This underscores the vision behind the brand, which was built to ensure the wellness and transformation of African Fabrics, in a time when culture-blend has diminished and threatened our traditional fashions and fabrics in so many ways. The founder? Faith Achieng' a young Kenyan with an immortal penchant for African Fashion.





Who is AFYCHRY

AFYCHRY, is an apparel brand founded with the vision to spearhead the fusion of traditional African textile heritage and modern fashion. This came in the backdrop of an increasingly pedestalized exotic wear, that threatened the existence of the African Fabrics and wear.

From the Olubugo of Uganda to the Lamba of Madagascar, AFYCHRY's products are crafted from diverse backgrounds and styles, to meet the varied demands and tastes of customers, passionate about the beauty in the diversity of the continent's fashion.

Headquartered in Kenya, the company pedestalizes the principle of mentorship for young people, as a way to pass on the African Fashion flair to future generations.

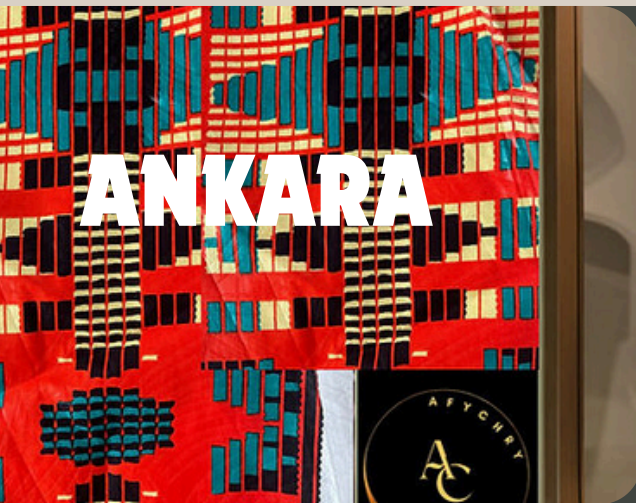
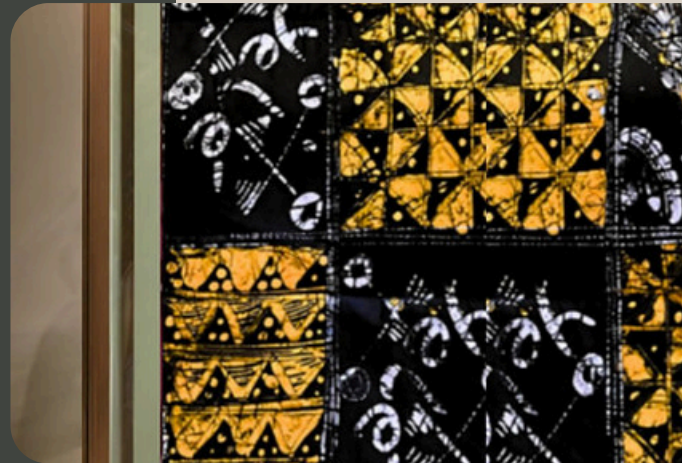
Since it's founding, the brand's portfolio has grown to accommodate more than ten different types of textiles drawn from across different cultures and countries in Africa.

06.

The Portfolio

Adire

Adire is a traditional Nigerian textile crafted by resist-dyeing techniques. Typically indigo blue, it features intricate patterns created by tying, stitching, or waxing before dyeing. It holds cultural significance and is used in clothing and contemporary design to symbolize Nigerian heritage and craftsmanship.



Ankara is a vibrant, colorful cotton fabric with intricate patterns originating from West Africa. Sophisticated styles that seamlessly blend cultural influence with contemporary designs. Ankara garments and Fabrics represent a celebration of cultural heritage, artistry, and modernity, offering a distinctive and stylish way to embrace one's roots while staying on-trend in the global fashion landscape.

The Kikoi is a colorful, rectangular garment from East Africa, originally worn by men as a wrap-around. It's made of cotton with vibrant stripes and patterns, reflecting Swahili culture. Lightweight and versatile, it's used as a sarong, skirt, scarf, or beach towel, embodying both practicality and cultural significance.

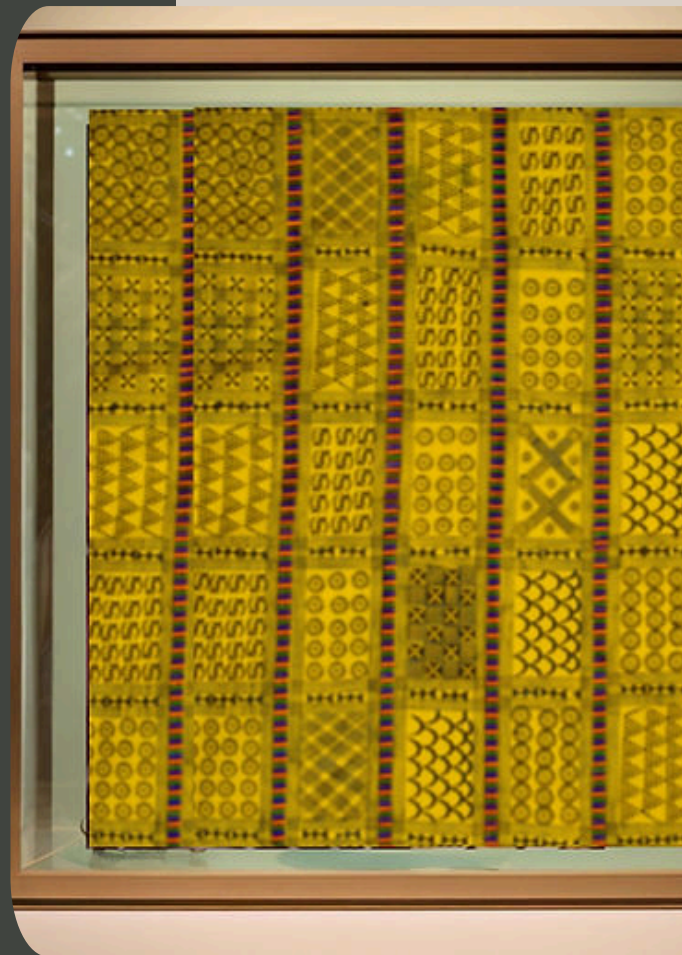


07.

The Portfolio

ADINKRA CLOTH

Adinkra Cloth from Ghana is adorned with over 700 symbols, each carrying profound meanings linked to Ashanti proverbs, historical narratives, or cultural concepts. These symbols serve as a visual language, conveying wisdom, values, and societal norms. Among the commonly used motifs are Aban, signifying strength and authority, Abe Dua, representing the resilience and resourcefulness embodied by the palm tree, and Nea Onnim, symbolizing the importance of knowledge and learning in Ashanti culture. Through intricate designs and symbolic representation, Adinkra Cloth preserves and communicates the rich heritage and traditions of the Ashanti people, serving as both a form of artistic expression and a means of cultural storytelling.



Kitenge fabric and garments represents a fusion of African tradition and modern fashion, allowing the wearer to showcase their cultural pride, individuality, and appreciation for sustainable and ethical fashion practices. Our skilled craftsmanship combines, precise measurements, and attention to detail, high-quality personalized tailoring ensures that every individual can experience the perfect fit, comfort, and confidence that comes with wearing garments that are truly tailored to their unique style and body.



KITENGE

visit www.afychry.com for more fabrics

THE CATALOGUE

Children too, have a place in Fashion!

Children too have a place in fashion, let's crown them like the future kings and queens they are.

At AFYCHRY, children are not left out. Quality products are designed to match their freshness and tenderness.

One of the many outfit varieties for children is Ankara Kids Gown. Made from Ankara fabric, the outfit provides a touch of class and imbues a child with a sense of pride and confidence.



Couples outfits

There is nothing like family!

How cute can it be, to step out for an occasion as a family looking all sassy? AFYCHRY gives you the opportunity to a classy family experience by providing products that match the taste of couples and the mood of the occasion. This way, couples are capable of showcasing, with pride, the identity and mood of their type of relationship, thereby strengthening their bond. The price tags are also affordable, with the guarantee for customers to get value for their money.



AFRICAN FABRICS ARE MADE FOR THE RUNWAY!

African fabrics and garments made by AFYCHRY offer runway models and the modeling industry a vibrant palette of possibilities. The rich textures, bold patterns, and diverse color schemes of African textiles provide striking visual impact on the catwalk, instantly capturing audience attention. These fabrics allow models to showcase a wide range of silhouettes, from flowing and dramatic to structured and avant-garde. Moreover, incorporating African designs promotes cultural diversity in fashion, resonating with a global audience and opening doors for models of various ethnicities. The versatility of African-inspired clothing enables models to express creativity and individuality, while also challenging Western beauty standards. Ultimately, African fabrics and garments enrich the modeling world with their unique aesthetics and cultural significance.



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By Dr. Sunil Panwar

How to avoid getting sick

I used to hear that good health is our first priority in life. Our second priority is wealth, which means if you have good health it is easy to work hard to make wealth.

In the current world, however, everyone has put wealth on the pedestal, with health going down the pecking order. Unfortunately, however, their hard earned wealth is retrospectively spent on health.

Everyone is currently somehow suffering from different lifestyle and chronic diseases, among them high blood pressure, diabetes, arthritis, gout and cancer, all of which are life threatening disorders.

Additionally, infectious diseases like pneumonia, tuberculosis, typhoid, etc are also ubiquitous. I personally follow certain principles of life to minimize these infections.

As a professional doctor, I'd advice all my readers to follow similar principles, with discipline notwithstanding to maintain well-health, free of avoidable illnesses.

First of all, you must understand that for our body cells to function normally, they need raw material from nature like oxygen, water and vegetables' (carbohydrates, proteins, vitamin and minerals), which regulate their functionality.

During these normal processes, bacteria, virus, fungi and parasites can invade our bodies through nose, eyes, mouth, ears and skin. While in the body, these micro-organisms also need food to survive. So, they start to feed on our cells and damage body tissues.

As they feed, they grow and multiply, while at the same time producing harmful toxins in our bodies.

That way, they inhibit normal body functions, by forcing the body to start repairing and removing the affected cells. The reparation process consume a lot of energy, and the body in turn becomes weak. This makes the disease causing micro-organisms more ruthless and finally cause a disease.

The key question is, should we prioritize healthy living or quick recovery? My principle is to maintain hygienic and eat just enough high quality food.

Healthy living starts from morning When you wake up; try to clean your nostril and throat by troughing out air which will push out micro-organisms held by your nose and throat mucus overnight.

Then do a dry whole-body massage to remove dead cells and microorganisms from your skin. After that, go and take a shower, keeping in mind that you are going to clean your nose, ears, eyes, mouth and whole body. By doing this, you are helping your body to reduce inhalation of microorganisms to your system, thereby reducing the chances of sickness.





Three factors play a role in the development of infections in the body.

Host



Vender

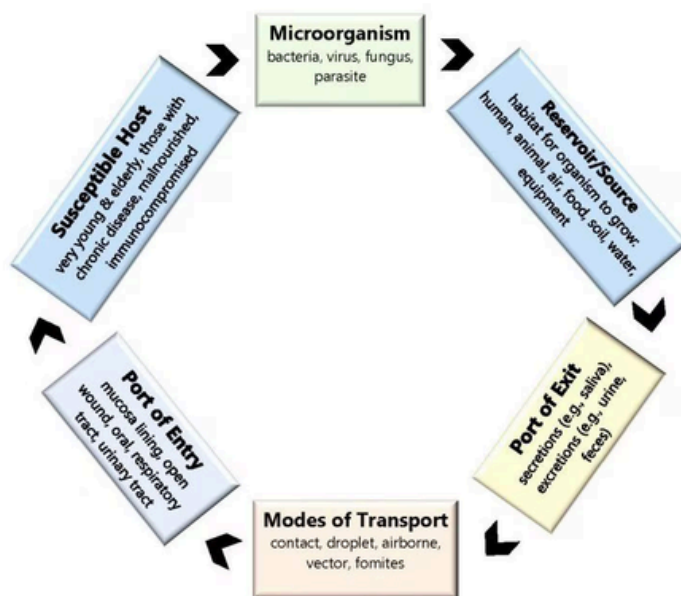
Environment

For instance, in tuberculosis, the bacteria that cause T.B is known as the vender, while the patient is the host. Finally, the human body is the environment.

If you practice healthy living habits, your body cannot be a conducive breeding environment for the bacteria that causes the disease and therefore you wouldn't easily contract it.

Another layman's example is a chick hatched out of an egg. The hen symbolizes the host while the egg is the vender. Assuming the hen does not provide conducive environment for the egg, it cannot hatch a chick.

Chain of Infection



The cycle of infection from CDC Website



An illustration of good habits for healthy living

Dr. Sunil Panwar is a health worker, running a pharmacy and clinic. He holds a Bachelors degree in B.Sc, pharmacy, Clinical Medicine and is a staunch believer in nature. In his point of view, we are made of five elements, all harmonized to regulate our body, in any circumstances. These elements can get imbalanced by microorganisms or by nature to lead to sickness. Therefore, Through doing research on his own body, he tries to establish how humans can limit sickness and ageing. Sunil has created his own package of healing with nature. His medical and research knowledge helps him have better ways of understanding health.

CONTACT DR. SUNIL : +254 722 246734

CLIMATE CHANGE

FROM POLLUTION TO PRESERVATION: LET LAKE VICTORIA BREATHE AGAIN

In the fight against climate change and environmental degradation, campaigns and slogans play pivotal roles in raising awareness, shaping public opinion, and driving actionable change. Campaigns broadly address environmental issues by educating the public and advocating for specific changes, while slogans serve as memorable calls to action. One such impactful slogan is “There Is No Planet B.”

A stand out example of grassroots activism is the “Let Lake Victoria Breathe Again” campaign, initiated by Rahmina Pullet, a founding member of the Kisumu Environmental Champions. “Lake Victoria is more than just a lake but it is a crucial lifeline for millions of livelihoods”, says Rahmina. The campaign has been able to mobilize a number of volunteers and young people to robust Climate Change.

This initiative has made significant strides in rejuvenating Lake Victoria by tackling pressing issues like severe pollution and overfishing, invasive species, industrial waste, untreated sewage that have lead to suffocation of aquatic life, algae bloom and reducing water quality. Through dedicated efforts in clean-up operations and raising of awareness, the campaign has shown that targeted actions and community involvement can lead to substantial environmental improvements.



Members of Kisumu Environmental Champions during a past Campaign to 'Let Lake Victoria Breathe Again'

Combating pollution that has severely affected Lake Victoria for decades unchecked especially from untreated sewage and agricultural runoff have led to severe eutrophication. Algae blooms have surged, depleting oxygen levels, in turn ending a lot of aquatic lives. Plastic pollution is also a threat to lake Victoria as it harms aquatic life through entanglement, ingestion and also put human health at risk who consume the fish.

The Kisumu Environmental Champions have been at the forefront of addressing this issue through organized clean-ups, restoration activities, and community mobilization.

Their efforts have led to noticeable depreciation in the levels of pollution, by focusing on removing key pollutants like plastic bottles and ending release of untreated sewage into the Lake.

The campaign's educational initiatives have been crucial in fostering environmental stewardship within the local community. By highlighting the importance of proper waste disposal, reducing pollution, maintaining clean water, encouraging reforestation through tree planting sessions and events and educating them on suitability practices, the organization has contributed to a decrease in waterborne diseases.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Additionally, these educational efforts have not only raised awareness but also spurred community involvement, furthering the campaign's success.

Addressing overfishing

Overfishing poses another significant threat to Lake Victoria, which is the depletion of native fish species and disruption of the ecological balance, which in turn affects the livelihoods of local fishermen. The "Let Lake Victoria Breathe Again" campaign has addressed this issue by educating fishermen on sustainable fishing practices and the use of appropriate gear. These efforts aim to prevent overfishing and support the lake's ecological balance.

Managing the invasive water hyacinth is another major gap we try to address on behalf of Lake Victoria. Hyacinth blocks sunlight, depletes oxygen levels, and disrupts local fisheries. The campaign has supported initiatives to remove water hyacinth through hand picking and explored sustainable uses for the plant, such as producing eco-friendly products like bags through Rahmina Pulet Eco-products. These efforts not only address the immediate environmental impact but also provide economic opportunities for the local community as well as relief to Lake Victoria as it is noticeable that there has been a reduction in water hyacinth in the lake.

A comprehensive approach, the multifaceted efforts of the "Let Lake Victoria Breathe Again" campaign exemplify a comprehensive approach to environmental conservation.



Edith Awino; Author.

By addressing pollution, overfishing, and invasive species, the campaign demonstrates the importance of targeted interventions, community engagement, and sustainable practices in restoring and preserving vital ecosystems.

The success of this campaign underscores the power of grassroots activism and the collective effort required to tackle complex environmental challenges. As Lake Victoria begins to recover, the "Let Lake Victoria Breathe Again" campaign serves as a beacon of hope and a model for similar initiatives worldwide. Through continued dedication and community involvement, Lake Victoria can once again thrive, providing a healthy ecosystem for future generations. "We have made significant progress but still much work to be done, our goal is to ensure that Lake Victoria not only survives but also thrive to providing a sustainable future for the next generation," says Rahmina Pulet .

Finally, the "Let Lake Victoria Breathe Again" campaign illustrates the significant impact that well coordinated, community-driven efforts can have on environmental conservation. By addressing key issues like pollution, overfishing, and invasive species, and fostering a sense of stewardship within the local community, this campaign has paved the way for a healthier, more sustainable Lake Victoria.



Rahmina Pulet [Left] is the founder of Kisumu Environmental Champions



JABALI

REFLECTS ON FESTAC
AFRICA FESTIVAL 2024.

EXCLUSIVE 19
FEATURE

INTERVIEW BY ODIMA OSURE

The incredible story of energy and resilience. From managing the main stage to hyping the event, Joseck Asikoye gave it all. Indeed, his name is in the annals of history of Kisumu, and FESTAC. Read more from page 14.



FESTAC
AFRICA

Media
LOCUS CAPTURE
Documenting the

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Joseck Asikoye a.k.a Jabali Afrika reflects on FESTAC AFRICA festival 2024

In a watershed moment, Kisumu City hosted the historic FESTAC AFRICA festival between August the 25th and September the 1st this year. It was an event of pomp, color, culture and food, accompanied by varied cultural performances and dialogue forums where high value topics that touch on the growth trajectory of Africa were discussed. On stage, massive performances went on throughout the week, with the biggest ones taking place on the day of the opening ceremony, which was graced by former Nigerian President Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, Former Kenyan P.M RT. Hon. Raila Odinga and Kisumu County Governor Prof. Peter Anyang' Nyong'o.

On that day, the legendary band Les Wanyika and the Luo queen of soul Suzanna Owiyo graced the stage, while a host of other young and emerging artists got a platform to hone their talents. At the heart of all these remarkable performances, throughout the week, both on the main stage and after-party venues was one man, known to many as Jabali Afrika. His name: Joseck Asikoye. His passion for African art brought him to FESTAC, and his energy fuelled him to get out of the festival with his head raised high. CBM had an interview with him, and he recounts his amazing story with FESTAC AFRICA 2024. To break the ice, CBM interviewers gave him the opportunity to introduce himself to our readers. With pride and confidence, Mr. Asikoye gave a brief introduction of himself in the following fashion.

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Introduction

"My name is Joseck Asikoye," he stated. "I am a Grammy nominated singer, songwriter, producer and curator," he declared.

"I am also a Founding member of the Grammy nominated multifaceted musical group Jabali Afrika which has been touring globally with their brand of roots music."

What is your relationship with FESTAC AFRICA?

"First of all, I'd like you to understand that FESTAC is not just an ordinary festival," Joseck told us. "Growing up as a young man, I used to hear about these great festivals in the continent; FESPACO and FESTAC," he said. "However, I never really understood what they entailed, but looking at the people that were part of it, I realised

that they were majorly accomplished artists, writers and respected global leaders from the African continent and beyond," Muzi, as he's otherwise known said. " Many of my musical influences were part of FESTAC Festival and when you listen to most of their musical works, they were based on the emancipation of the African people, both within the continent and in the diaspora," he said. " The principles of emancipation are so dear to my heart."

As a global artist, the more I toured the world and interacted with Africans living overseas, the more I came to understand how pivotal FESTAC is in uniting Africans and people of black descent by providing an umbrella platform or cultural exchange and the celebration of our diversity."

"My relationship with FESTAC Renaissance however, came through Ambassador Elkana Odembo, who introduced me to both Eng. Yinka Abioye and Ms. Grace Mumo, the Chairman and C.E.O of FESTAC Renaissance respectively," he said. "When we started chatting about it, I already knew what FESTAC was and realising that they had revived it after a four and a half decade hiatus, I decided there and then that I wanted to be part of it," he said. "This is because I am a pan-Africanist who believes in the ideals and principles of forging a one united African which stands on the same principles of our founding fathers."

Can you give us a rough idea of what FESTAC 24' was like?

"As you know, FESTAC 24' was held in Kisumu, a city that is not very far from my ancestral home in Luanda, Bunyore which is located in in the neighbouring Vihiga County," Joseck said. " To me, Kisumu and the neighboring countries have very special cultures that resonate with the ideals of FESTAC AFRICA," he



Joseck Asikoye a.k.a Jabali Afrika a.k.a Muzi during a past performance [Coutersy]

said. "Throughout the week, my role was to manage and program the main stage, and ensure that the diversity of the cultures were well represented and showcased through music and art," he said. "If I look back now, this was fully achieved."

Can you comment on the planning of the festival?

"In every sense of the word, the planning of the festival was meticulously done," he said. "I'd like to commend the Chairman and the C.E.O of the festival for their commitment and hardwork, throughout the year to ensure the 2024 festival happened," he stated. " Even after the floods interfered with the original plan, we still managed to soldier on till it was a complete success, and that's a major showcase of resilience."

How did playing a central role in keeping the stage active make you feel as a seasoned artist?

"As a seasoned creative and someone who has toured globally, I have been involved in a lot of diverse festivals, including the Smithsonian, and therefore I knew exactly what to do, with regards to showcasing what FESTAC is all about," he said. " I wanted to make sure that the diversity of Africa and the African diaspora was fully showcased on that stage, and a flashback to the festival, I see that this was achieved."

What role do you think FESTAC AFRICA plays in the development of young artists?

"First of all, if you dig into the background of what FESTAC is and who has been associated with it, as a young person you will be inspired to at least take part or contribute in any way towards this great pan- African Festival," he declared. " This is a festival that was created for us by our founding pan-African fathers," he said. " Some of our forefathers who have in one way or another contributed to the

Festival include Thomas Sankara, Jomo Kenyatta, and among others Julius Nyerere," he declared. "Some great African scholars and writers like Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe, and among others Ngugi wa Thiong'o have also taken part in the festival," Muzi said.

"Legendary artists and musicians like Fela Kuti, Miriam Makeba, Osibisa, Stevie Wonder and Harry Belafonte have also been part of FESTAC AFRICA," he said. "All these people stood up for something in the society, and are icons in their right ways. They represent greatness of Africa and black excellence. If that's not inspiration enough, then there's no inspiration at all."

What are the challenges you faced during the festival week and how did you navigate them?

"First of all, there's nothing that happens the world-over, without a single challenge," he said. "Noteworthy it is, to express my gratitude to the Governor of Kisumu County Prof. Anyang' Nyong'o, who proved to understand well the concept that is FESTAC AFRICA and it's value to the community," he said.

"He clearly understands the benefits and the magnitude of the festival," he said. "However, the main challenge was to make the rest of the county staff understand what the festival is about," he declared. "Most of those who work in the county government adamantly refused to understand both the spectrum and the magnitude of the festival," he said. "It saddened me when I realized that some of them were in it to attempt to wrongfully gain money from the festival and it's planners," he said. "A number of them failed to understand that there were way more valuable things to gain from FESTAC than just quick money," he stated.

Are you convinced that FESTAC AFRICA plays a pivotal role in preservation of African cultural heritage?

"Of course yes. If you were there and witnessed what was on display, we had diverse cultural events taking place," he stated. "Through FESTAC, we celebrate the roots of who we are and where we come from," he said. "FESTAC represents that to the maximum and we should continue doing it every year," he declared. "If other continents celebrate their culture, why not Africa? And is there any better way to celebrate our culture than through FESTAC?"

Given a chance, would you be an emcee again in a FESTAC festival?

"Yes. Of course I am an African and if given the opportunity to represent the continent, in whichever capacity, I take it with honor," he said. "The ideals of FESTAC are close to my heart, body and soul," he said. "I champion Afrocentricism through music with Jabali Afrika, and therefore, I'd gladly contribute to any positive concept that champions our diversity and heritage, like FESTAC does."

Did you satisfactorily experience cultural exchange during the festival?

"Of course. Cultural exchange was the basis of all those diverse performances from artists from different parts of the world," he said. "For instance, we had a Kenyan band performing with Cameroonian artists while at some point, Trinidad and Tobagonian artists shared stage with Haitian artists," Muzi declared. "Through that, we saw similarities of cultures and cultural exchange was evident," he declared. "This is part of the beauty of FESTAC AFRICA."





From far right, FESTAC AFRICA Chairman Eng. Yinka Abioye, Governor Gladys Wanga, Mercedes Nyagaya, H.E Olusegun Obasanjo, H.E Raila Odinga and Governor Nyong'o during FESTAC AFRICA opening ceremony on Mon. 26th Aug. 2024. Mercedes Nyagaya presented a mural to Fmr. President Obasanjo

What were the highlights of the festival in your opinion?

"Witnessing two iconic world leaders grace the opening ceremony of the festival was major," he stated. "Baaba Obasanjo and Baba Raila Odinga were both present on the day," Muzi told us. "Don't forget the fact that H.E Obasanjo was the President when FESTAC 77 took place," he declared. "The speeches that both of them gave at the opening ceremony were monumental," he stated. "The diversity of stage acts were also a highlight in my opinion," he said. "It acted as a reminder of the beauty of what unity can bring in Africa," Jabali said. "The presence of the African Diaspora was also something worth emphasizing on."

What do you think FESTAC can build up on from the 2024 festival?

"In my opinion, just smooth coordination of all activities," he said. "Some attendees missed out on events that took place in other venues which were located far away from the main stage," he declared. "This should be looked into and taken care of."

How did your participation in the festival impact you & your belief system?

"As I said before, FESTAC stands for everything that I believe in," he said. "A united Africa without borders, that can stand on it's own, manage it's resources independently and survive on intracontinental trade," he stated. "Those who partitioned Africa work in harmony in their continents and we must come together, as a people of Africa to build stable relationships," he stated. "If we can achieve one Africa, without borders and with efficient communication amongst her people, then we're set up to be a major force in the

international community," he declared. "To me, being part of FESTAC and witnessing the conversations that were taking place, that was the biggest impact in my life from FESTAC AFRICA festival 2024."

Your closing remarks?

"Africa for Africa, both for the Africans at home and the ones scattered abroad."



Joseck Asikoye pictured with Haitian songbird Sheila Degraff during FESTAC AFRICA festival 2024.

AUG. 25TH - SEPT. 1 2024

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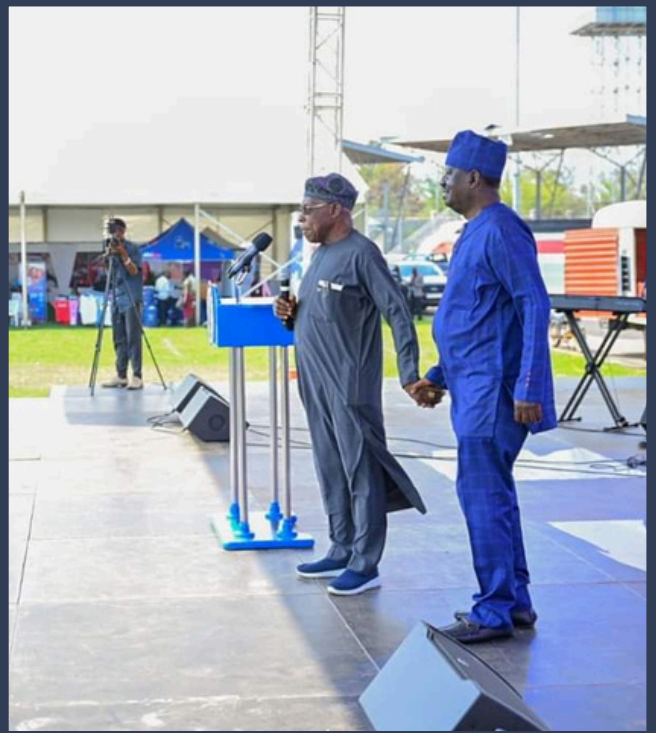
2024

In pictures...

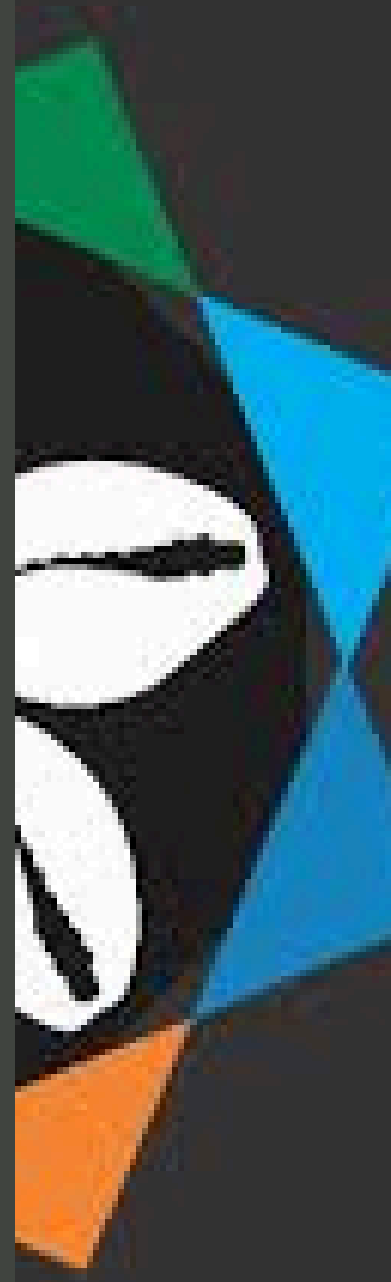
Get a pictorial representation of the week of FESTAC AFRICA festival 2024.

Vol. 19 | SEPT. 2024









FESTAC

2024



P R E S S R E L E A S E B Y F E S T A C A F R I C A R E N A I S S A N C E

FESTAC AFRICA Festival 2024 concluded its highly anticipated cultural festival, leaving an unforgettable mark on both attendees and the host city of Kisumu, Kenya. The festival, themed “Celebrating the Heartbeat of Africa: Culture, Unity, and Innovation,” brought together artists, entrepreneurs, and cultural ambassadors from across the continent and the African diaspora, solidifying its status as one of Africa’s most vibrant cultural and business festivals.

From August 25th to September 1st, 2024, the event welcomed participants from over 62 countries and beyond, celebrating Africa’s rich cultural diversity and fostering dialogue on innovation and economic growth. This week-long event featured African music, art, fashion, food, and entrepreneurship, providing a unique platform for cultural exchange and business networking.

The festival opened with a grand ceremony that set the tone for the week. Les Wanyika Band, Suzanne Owiyo and Benny Willis Nigerias Craziest Afrojam with the Festival opening song Mama Africa headlined the ceremony alongside traditional performances from African countries, creating a fusion -of music and culture that resonated deeply with festivalgoers. The opening ceremony was crowned by speeches from prominent leaders, including H.E. Olusegun Obasanjo, former President of Nigeria and FESTAC AFRICA's Chief Guest of Honour, Rt Hon Raila Odinga, former Prime Minister of Kenya and African Union Chairman candidate, and H.E. Anyang' Nyong'o, Governor of Kisumu County amongst many other dignitaries and all the Lake Region Economic Bloc Governors and Business leaders from across Kenya and the Lake Region. Their messages of unity, African pride, and economic empowerment reflected the festival’s core mission. As part of the festival week Investment opportunities were discussed leading to MOUs being signed and partnerships forged during the week long celebrations

The festival brought together some of The Lake Region Economic Bloc First Spouses championed by Mama Kisumu H.E Dorothy Nyong’o who graciously hosted and welcomed other counties to Kisumu for the week.

Music and dance performances were a major highlight, with top African musicians and local cultural groups captivating the audience. Festivalgoers experienced a diverse range of genres, from Afrobeats, jazz, and traditional drumming to Amapiano, Ohangla, Benga, Calypso, Cameroonian Cultures, Congolese Rhumba and Culture, The Steel Pan from Trinidad and Tobago, drama, and much more, showcasing Africa’s dynamic soundscape.

Throughout the week, the attendees, led by international sensation Joseck Asikoye (Jabali Afrika), engaged in a variety of programming that delved into different aspects of African life. The Fashion and Art Exhibitions spotlighted top African designers and artists, with standout names like Connie Aluoch, Suzzie Wokabi, Faith Achieng of Afychry, Eda-Ibile from Nigeria and Brenda Onono gracing the runway and galleries. The festival provided a global stage for Africa’s most talented designers, painters, and sculptors, drawing the attention of art lovers and buyers alike.

Festacwood, the film segment of the festival, celebrated African cinema and its diaspora connections. The film screenings and discussions featured prominent figures from African cinema, with support and messages from Hollywood legends like Euzhan Palcy, Lupita Nyong’o, and Oliver Litondo, culminating in the premiere of the documentary "Language of My Soul." A writer’s retreat paid homage to African literary icons, including Prof Austin Bukenya, further emphasizing the festival’s commitment to the arts.

s p e c i a l e v e n t s d u r i n g t h e f e s t i v a l

A series of engaging side events sparked a spirit of community unity, emphasizing inclusion for women, youth, and persons with disabilities. One standout event was the Dinner in the Dark Experience, hosted by Kenya Society for the Blind and the National Fund for the Disabled for Kenya an awareness initiative aimed at highlighting the challenges faced by visually impaired individuals. Nearly 200 participants gathered to take part in this immersive and enlightening experience.

Another highlight was the Global Culture Exchange: Africa | Asia Culture Night, organized by the Hindu Council of Kenya, Kisumu. Held at the HHSU Temple, this vibrant event celebrated the cultural ties between Africa and Asia, attracting over 1,000 attendees.

The Walk4Hope4Africa event carried the core message of the week, bringing attention to Gender-Based Violence (GBV). Participants, dressed in various shades of purple to symbolize solidarity with survivors, marched through the streets of Kisumu. The event saw the participation of over 800 people, with more than 100 riders joining the walk to support the cause. The walk was followed by a tree-planting initiative where over 1,000 trees were planted, and 10,000 trees donated to various institutions, in a strong push for climate change awareness.

In celebration of Trinidad and Tobago's Independence Day, an All-White Party Day was held, where attendees dressed in white to mark a day of peace and fun. The week concluded with the grand Africa Gala Dinner, a glittering event attended by more than 200 guests, bringing the festival to a celebratory close. FESTAC AFRICA Festival 2024 was not just a celebration of culture and innovation; it also served as a platform for meaningful social impact, with health being a critical focus. Throughout the festival week, FESTAC AFRICA partnered with a variety of health practitioners and organizations to provide essential healthcare services to attendees and the local community.

Over 1,000 people received free healthcare screenings, which included comprehensive check-ups and health education on prevalent issues like dental care, general wellness, and preventive health measures. Key healthcare partners such as the Kenya Dental Association, Aga Khan Hospital, Avenue Hospital, and Mwale Medical Technology Centre (MMTC) played pivotal roles in ensuring the success of these initiatives.

This collaborative effort underscored the importance of wellness within the broader cultural and economic conversations that FESTAC promotes. It also highlighted the intersection of health and cultural tourism, showing how health screenings and medical services can be integrated into large-scale cultural events, offering long-term benefits to communities.

These side events underscored the festival's commitment to inclusion, cultural exchange, and social causes, leaving a lasting impact on the community

Entrepreneurs and investors took part in workshops and panel discussions centered an Investment Trade Tour to the Mwale Medical Technical Centre (MMTC) in Kakamega County to learn about how Villages could be transformed into smart city's, Youth innovation, the creative economy, Sustainable Trade, Tourism and Travel beyond Beaches and Safari and business opportunities in Africa. Curated in partnership with the Kisumu Tourism Department (Kisumu My Pride), Kenya Tourism Board and Kenya Diaspora Alliance created new avenues for collaboration and business development, contributing significantly to Kisumu's economy. The influx of visitors provided a substantial boost to local businesses, hotels, and vendors, while cementing Kisumu's position as an emerging cultural hub. In fact, Kisumu is now set to host the United Nations World Tourism Day and Kenya Tourism Week, further elevating its international profile.

s p e c i a l e v e n t s d u r i n g t h e f e s t i v a l

Investors such as Future Trends, The Green Path, Elite Global Networking Club, Lamba Marble and Granite, Fashion with a View Foundation, Apparel India, Just Entertain, Mwalu City to mention but a few have greatly started forging alliances and partnership confirming the power of FESTAC AFRICA Trade mission as part of changing lives.

The key takeaway from FESTAC AFRICA 2024: Kisumu, Kenya is that Africa's creative industries are untapped sources of economic growth. The festival fostered connections between African countries and the global market, spotlighting Africa as a hub for innovation, culture, and trade.

K e y Q u o t e s

Engr. Yinka Abioye, Chairman, FESTAC AFRICA - "We are not just reflecting on the incredible success of FESTAC AFRICA 2024; we are actively shaping the future. The passion, unity, and cultural pride we witnessed in Kisumu, Kenya, have set a powerful standard for African excellence. For this, I express my deepest gratitude to the people of Kisumu and Kenya for their unwavering support. As we prepare to reveal the next host city for 2025, our vision grows even bolder. We aim for greater collaboration across the continent and beyond, and I look forward to seeing a vibrant Kenyan presence in this new chapter. Together, we are celebrating Africa's boundless heritage, creativity, and innovation, in a new land, with renewed energy, as we continue to tell the African story to the world."

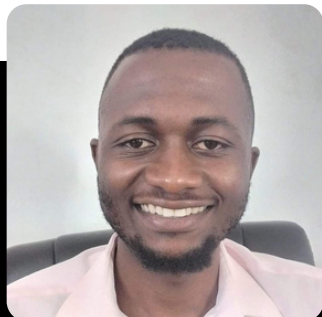
H.E. Prof. Anyang' Nyong'o, Governor of Kisumu County: "FESTAC AFRICA has brought global attention to Kisumu, demonstrating our city's capability to host large-scale international festivals. The event not only enhanced Kisumu's global standing but also created job opportunities and a platform for local businesses to thrive. We look forward to hosting more events that celebrate our culture and promote economic growth."

Grace Mumo, CEO of FESTAC AFRICA: "As organizers of FESTAC AFRICA, we are committed to pushing the boundaries of what this festival can achieve. Our vision is to integrate cutting-edge elements that will amplify our reach to global audiences, creating a broader platform for Africa's story. This year has proven the immense power of African unity, culture, and innovation to inspire and uplift not just our continent, but the world. We are determined to deepen collaboration between African nations, showcasing the brilliance and diversity of Africa as a beacon of strength, creativity, and limitless potential."

Victor Nyagaya, CEO, Lake Region Economic Bloc (LREB) - "The FESTAC AFRICA 2024 festival has been a transformative event for the Lake Region Economic Bloc (LREB). It not only showcased the vibrant cultural heritage of our region but also opened up significant investment opportunities across key sectors such as tourism, agriculture, and the creative economy. The festival brought global attention to our untapped resources and talent, attracting investors who now see the Lake Region as a hub for innovation and growth. The partnerships and collaborations initiated during this event will have a lasting impact, driving economic development and positioning the LREB as a gateway to prosperity in East Africa."
Victor Nyagaya, CEO, Lake Region Economic Bloc (LREB).

Lehlohonolo Peega, Festival Director of FESTAC AFRICA: "FESTAC AFRICA 2024 has surpassed all expectations, uniting and elevating Africa's artists, entrepreneurs, and cultural leaders. The success of this year's event is a testament to the immense talent and potential within Africa, and we are already excited to build on this momentum in 2025."

Special Thank You to all Partners



Technology

Odima Osure

NEURALINK BLIND SIGHT DEVICE

The device could give a chance for the blind to see again

Neuralink has achieved a significant milestone with its Blindsight device, which aims to restore vision to the blind. The device has received Breakthrough Device Designation from the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA), expediting its development process.

While details about Blindsight remain limited, Neuralink claims it can "bring back sight to those who have lost it." Elon Musk, the company's owner, elaborated that the device could potentially enable vision for individuals who have lost both eyes and their optic nerve. He added that, as long as the visual cortex is intact, even those blind from birth might see for the first time.

Musk tempered expectations by noting that initial vision from the device would be "low resolution," but he also suggested it could eventually surpass natural vision, allowing users to see in infrared, ultraviolet, or even radar wavelengths.

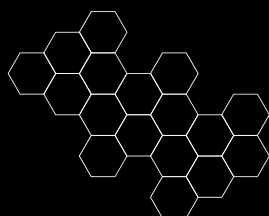
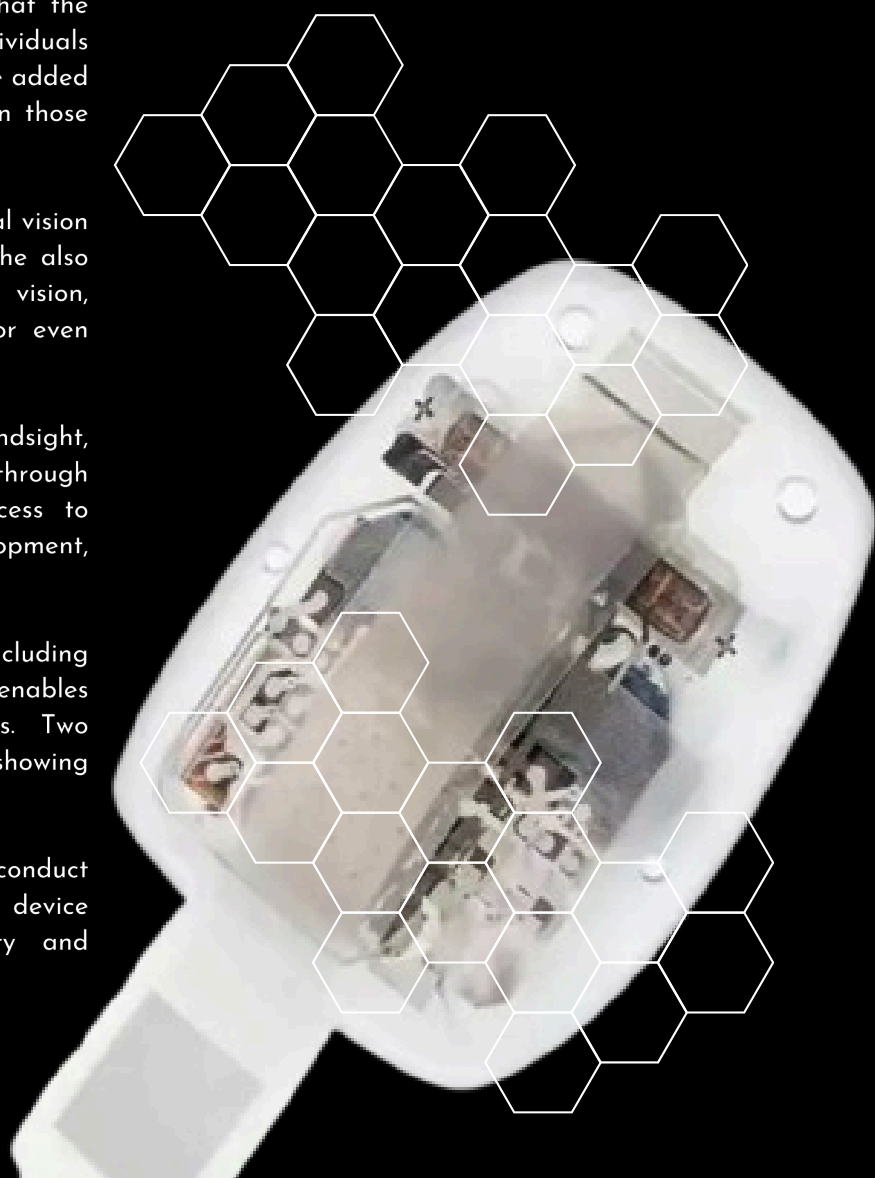
The FDA designation is a crucial step for Blindsight, facilitating its path to market. The Breakthrough Devices program aims to provide timely access to medical devices by accelerating their development, assessment, and review.

This achievement adds to Neuralink's progress, including human trials for a brain-implant device that enables interaction with devices without using limbs. Two patients have been implanted with this device, showing promising results.

Last year, Neuralink received FDA approval to conduct human clinical trials under an investigational device exemption, allowing the collection of safety and effectiveness data.

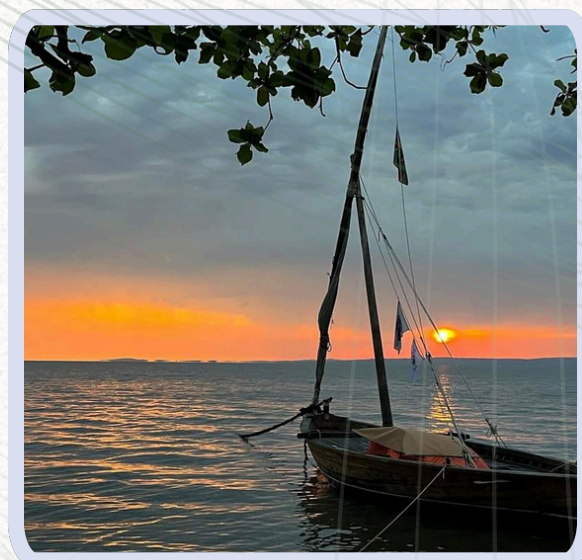
Neuralink has also tested its technology on pigs and monkeys over the years. One notable instance involved a monkey playing the classic video game Pong using only its mind, which garnered significant attention.

However, Neuralink has not been without controversy. The company has faced federal investigations in the US for potential animal welfare violations during its trials.



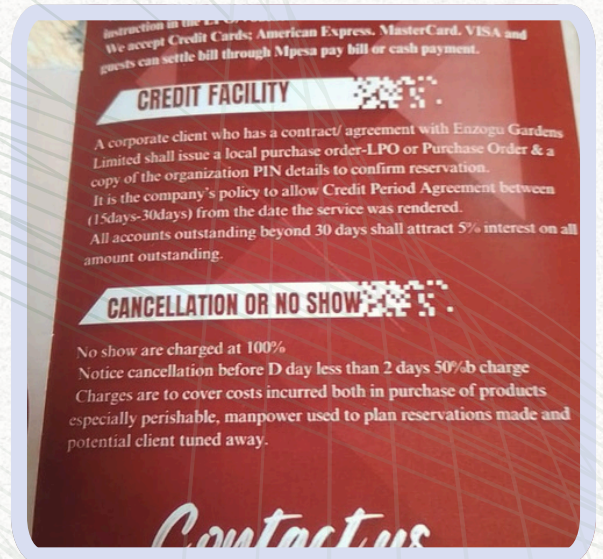
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DESERT ROSE RESORT

Situated along Kisumu – Kakamega Road, Desert Rose Resort Kisumu features accommodation with a beautiful garden, free private parking, a terrace and a restaurant. Featuring a bar, the property is located within 46 km of Kakamega Forest Station.

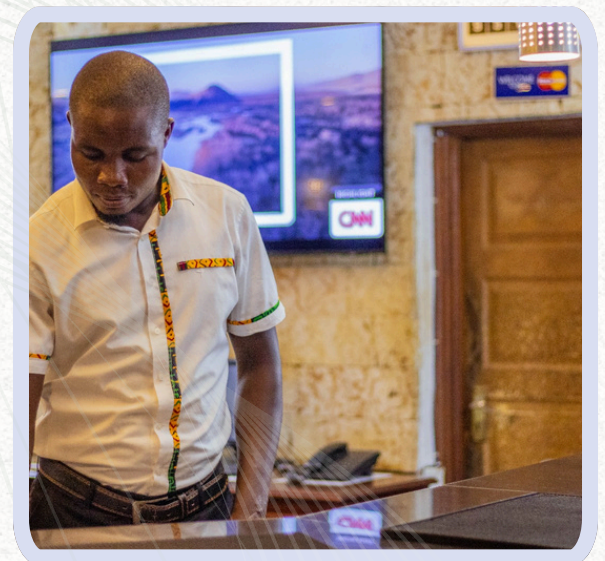
The accommodation provides a 24-hour front desk, airport transfers, room service and free Wi-Fi throughout the property. At the hotel rooms come with air conditioning, a desk, a flat-screen TV, a private bathroom, bed linen, towels and a balcony with a garden view.

The rooms will provide guests with a wardrobe and a kettle.

Breakfast is available each morning, and includes buffet, à la carte and continental options.

Ndere Island National Park is 47 km from Desert Rose Resort Kisumu, while Maseno University is 25 km from the property. The nearest airport is Kisumu International Airport, 10 km from the accommodation.

Some of the nearby tourist attractions include, Lwanda Magere- Kano- Kisumu, Kit Mikayi- Shrine/Cave) Kisumu, Equator Line- Maseno-Museum Luo cultural centre, Impala Park/ Sanctuary- Kisumu, kakamega Forest- Bird watching, nature walk, primate watching-kakamega, Abindu shrine-Kisumu, Jaramogi historical site Mausoleum-Bondo and Nabongo cultural centre-Mumias.



GENDER GAPS

The UN Women's 'Why Women Earn Less?' report, published last year, reveals that women earn 21% less than men in the East and Southern Africa region. This income disparity, known as the 'Gender Pay Gap' reinforces traditional notions of male superiority but also hinders the overall economic growth of countries, perpetuating poverty.

Economists estimate that in Sub-Saharan Africa, the gender pay gap could be impeding GDP growth by up to 0.9%, compared to faster-growing Asian economies. Some studies suggest that this gap is costing the world economy a collective \$7 trillion. According to The World Bank, "Gender biases and inequalities, placing women in low-wage occupations, differences in jobs and hours worked, and women's disproportionate care-giving responsibilities contribute to the gender wage gap."

Adding to these challenges is the worldwide taboo surrounding discussions about money. As European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen rightfully put it: "There is not a single argument why - for the same type of work - a woman should get paid less than a man. Not a single argument, not a single one."

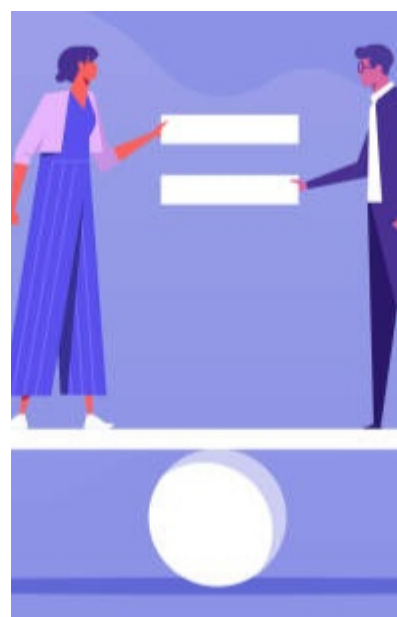
So, how can we reduce this gap?

Some of the gap is explained by what is called 'Sectoral segregation'; as mentioned in the quote above, women occupy positions in sectors where pay is generally lower (education, social work, care-giving, etc.) and struggle to access certain higher paid positions in the finance or technology sectors. Affirmative action is actively pursued in Africa and beyond, encouraging girls to pursue studies in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and maths), with the goal of fostering gender equality in higher-paid, male-dominated fields.

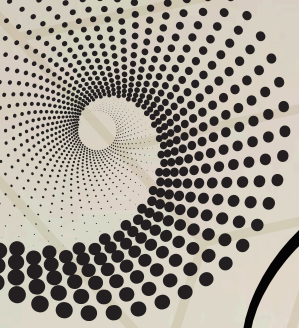
Shifting towards a more equal share of family responsibilities would favour working women, though cultural norms continue to make this a challenging endeavor. Meanwhile, greater transparency, needed to correct the gap, is slowly being implemented, as private sector companies are urged to analyse and report gender pay gaps.

Increasing awareness is crucial to altering these tendencies. In France, annual campaigns are launched to underscore the concerning reality that, due to the wage gap, women essentially work for free from November 6th until the end of the year.

Another significant aspect is that women are reported to be 'less likely' to ask for a raise or a promotion. As women, it's crucial to recognise our worth, learning to pose uncomfortable questions and advocate for what we rightfully deserve despite societal expectations. Closing this gap would have a significant impact on not only gender equality but societal growth and well being worldwide.



Article by Daisy



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**BE THE
DIFFERENCE!**

WHEN THERE'S NO LIGHT, BE THE LIGHT. WHEN THERE'S NO PATH, BE THE PATH, AND WHEN THERE'S NO HOPE, GIVE HOPE.

ALEXANDRA JEAN-JOSEPH

TALENTED AFRO-CARRIBEAN DANCER



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Claire Joline