



WomenCorporateDirectors
A Foundation Inspiring Visionary Boards Worldwide

Member Profile

An Interview with Yimika Adeboye, Member, WCD Nigeria and Managing Director, Cadbury Nigeria PLC, Cluster Director, Mondelēz International Inc. West Africa

By Judy Macdonald



Q1. You were recently named the first female Managing Director of Cadbury Nigeria PLC- Congratulations! What are your goals for the company and how will diversity play a role in the overall corporate strategy?

Cadbury Nigeria is a member of the

Mondelēz International (MDLZ) family of companies. Our company embarked on a number of change initiatives led by our group CEO/Chairman, Dirk Van De Put and the MDLZ leadership team.

We are a snacking company with a consumer-centric mindset. We understand that the way our consumers live their lives is changing the way they eat. Our focus as a leadership team in West Africa is to transform the concept of snacking in this region.

We will do this by offering the right snack for the right moment and made the right way.

We will continue to grow our portfolio particularly as we recognize that our consumers have many options. With the Cadbury legacy and MDLZ size, we stand on a strong foundation – a combination of legacy and an impressive portfolio of iconic brands. We will continue to leverage on this.

On diversity, I work for a company that I am proud to say has a strong focus on this subject. In June 2019, we held our annual Virtual D & I Conference and had strong and healthy conversations around D & I.

While we continue to focus on meritocracy, we will do so, mindful of the importance of gender equality. I know I have all the support I need to ensure that women rise throughout our organization, ensuring that doors are open and glass ceilings are shattered.

Q2. Your background is in economics and finance and you spent time at Cadbury as finance director before ascending to your current role. How have those skills helped you to be a better board member?

As a finance professional, one has the privilege of having a full view of the business. One can choose to focus on only the financial aspect of the business or become a well-rounded business partner, handholding every function of the business to ensure that they get the right support at all times, so that they can succeed in what they do to deliver corporate objectives. I chose to be a trusted business partner to every function and in doing so ensure that we capture the essence of our one organization. This is what I have always taken to the boardroom. My Finance background has always been an enabler but never my main focus as a board member.

Q3. Philanthropic work seems to be one of your many passions. How are you using your voice to serve others?

I am fortunate to be born into a family where philanthropic work is the norm.

*I currently serve on the board of the **Timothy Adeola Odutola Foundation (TAOF)** a family owned philanthropic foundation set up for providing educational, industrial and technological development of Nigerian youths who are unable to gain access to higher education.*

TAOF currently has a vocational center in Ijebu-Ode, Ogun state of Nigeria. We are also working with relevant regulators to start a higher education institution that will focus on hands-on vocational experience. We recognize that every individual is endowed with talents that may need to be nurtured in a completely different environment than what is offered in a traditional tertiary education set up.

Close to my heart is also the passion to support women and my work in this area is in two brackets:

*-The underprivileged women through the work we do at the **YEO Foundation**. The focus here is on nurturing, empowering and mentoring.*

*-The Women in Leadership Series (**WiLS**). Through this forum, we showcase leading women who have been successful in their chosen fields/professions and ask them to share their career stories and experience. Their commitment is to mentor other women through several channels including talks, conferences, workshops and similar initiatives. The*

core message here is that women are talented and must not compromise themselves in a bid to achieve career growth.

Q4. Can you describe your leadership principles?

*“The role of leaders is not to get other people to follow them but to empower others to lead.” Bill George (*True North, Discover Your Authentic Leadership*)*

Q5. What are your biggest challenges as a board member and corporate leader?

I am fortunate to sit on a few boards and each has a good balance in terms of skills, experience, and diversity of focus.

My biggest challenge is really not as a board member but as a corporate leader operating in a region where ease of doing business is clearly not a priority for the governments in our region. There are multiple barriers and issues that makes this region simply a tough one to operate in.

Q6. Female representation on corporate boards is relatively low globally. What do you think it will take to reach parity? Are legislated quotas the answer?

I am aware that in some legislation, entities get recognition for promoting the gender agenda. I do not support legislation as it will be subject to abuse and will remove meritocracy. The focus should be on rewarding and acknowledging entities who promote this agenda so that when a woman performs well, there must be nothing stopping her from being rewarded in the same manner as her male counterpart.

Q7. What are the key skills that boards are seeking today?

I believe diverse and relevant experience as well as exposure that is relevant to the business is key. It is also important to have integrity and good reputation.

Q8. Describe what you like to do for fun.

I like to travel (away from shops!) and exercise (running, speed walking, spinning, cycling).

Q9. Who are your biggest influences and what did they do to support your career progression?

I am unashamedly a Christian and I look first at the Bible for lessons on life matters. What I continue to learn from the Bible is invaluable. This, coupled with the support and encouragement from my biggest cheerleader, my husband, has had a priceless and indescribable impact on my life (including my career).

Q10. What is your advice for aspiring female board members?

Be focused, be diligent, do not take for granted, every opportunity you get to learn and develop yourself, and surround yourself with cheerleaders who will encourage and support you. Separate yourself very quickly from negative people.
