

Lagos Business School, Ford Foundation Inaugurate Innocent Chukwuma Social Impact Chair and Fellowship

Lagos Business School (LBS) and Ford Foundation inaugurated the Innocent Chukwuma Social Impact Chair and Fellowship (ICSICF), introducing the first youth fellows cohort and unveiling the book cover of the upcoming biography of Innocent Chukwuma. Inaugurated on Friday, May 13, 2022, this initiative, which is in memory of the late Innocent Chukwuma, is being delivered by the LBS Sustainability Centre and funded by the Ford Foundation.

Innocent Chukwuma was a civil society leader and the immediate past Regional Director of the Ford Foundation Office for West Africa, where he led the Foundation's social justice work in the region for eight years. Throughout his career, Innocent Chukwuma was committed to the fight for human rights and this took expression in different forms, including his work to establish a law enforcement system that dignified people and included them in the policing of their communities, with a strong emphasis on criminal justice reforms. In addition to his human rights work, Innocent Chukwuma was committed to strengthening civil society, a part of which was focused on leadership transition and succession planning. Towards the end of his term at the Ford Foundation, Innocent devoted his time to building the field of impact investing in Nigeria.

Delivering an emotional message about her husband, the Late Chukwuma's wife, Josephine Effah-Chukwuma, a Gender & Development Specialist and Women's Rights Advocate, stated that *"Innocent died three days before he was to leave for the UK to go and stay for three [to] four months to work on his autobiography. He had already commenced work; he had done his outline, he had given it a working title, but life comes."* Innocent was always finding solutions to life's wicked problems, she said. Thanking the Ford Foundation and Lagos Business School, she encouraged the fellows to be resolute in ensuring that they too achieve their goals, and to produce many more "Innocent Chukwumas." According to her, Innocent was a restless man who was perpetually brimming with ideas that impacted society positively and eager to follow through to see them accomplished.

The initiative is funded by a \$1 million grant administered in an endowment for perpetual funding of the Chair and Fellowship activities. Mr. Innocent Chukwuma was particularly passionate about the need to support the next generation of leaders, especially in Nigeria. The ICSICF is therefore designed to facilitate the emergence and development of the next generation of visionary, dedicated, and result-driven social impact and justice leaders in Nigeria. These young leaders will, in the long run, catalyse systems and sectoral transitions in Nigeria through their social change initiatives in communities and locations of impact, social enterprises, non-profit organisations, research, and influence on policy.

In his remarks, Prof. Chris Ogbachie, Dean of the Lagos Business School, stated that *"LBS is committed to delivering an all-rounded programme. The collaboration is in strategic alignment with LBS's mission to develop responsible leaders for Africa." Innocent stood for humility, wisdom, vision, service; we are celebrating somebody who believed in all these and who believed in a better Nigeria".* Speaking at the inauguration event, Dr ChiChi Aniagolu-Okoye, Regional Director of the Ford Foundation Office for West Africa, said that *"the impact of Innocent Chukwuma at the Ford Foundation is enormous and, just like Innocent, we believe that empowering youth is an investment worth undertaking for the future of society"*. She continued, *"Innocent taught us that by working together, we can achieve a lot. The Foundation regards it as a privilege to celebrate Innocent's life."*

The ICSI Chair is also leading the publication of the biography of Innocent Chukwuma titled "Possibilities Unlimited". The book's cover was unveiled at the inauguration, and an excerpt of the biography was read by the author, Professor Nduka Otiono. Ten youth fellows in the first cohort were also introduced and will benefit from bespoke training, mentorship and sub-grants over the next six months. The fellows are young people who are passionate about social impact. The youth fellows represent a diversity of impact areas from both for-profit and non-profit sectors and geographical spread. Their areas of focus include; justice, STEM education, technology, rural education, research, entrepreneurial skills development, and recycling.

About the Ford Foundation

The Ford Foundation is an independent, nonprofit grant-making organization. For more than 80 years it has worked with courageous people on the frontlines of social change worldwide, guided by its mission to strengthen democratic values, reduce poverty and injustice, promote international cooperation, and advance human achievement. With headquarters in New York, the foundation has offices in Latin America, Africa, the Middle East, and Asia.

About the Lagos Business School

Lagos Business School (LBS) is the graduate business school of Pan-Atlantic University and was founded on inspiration from the teachings of St Josemaria Escrivá, the founder of Opus Dei. LBS offers academic programmes, executive programmes, function specific seminars and custom programmes (customized to company specific needs) in management. Its offerings have been accredited globally and ranked among the best in Africa. Besides the quality bar set at world standards, LBS programmes also stand out because of the emphasis on business ethics and service to the community. The Lagos Business School Sustainability Centre is the first of its kind in Nigeria, the Centre is designed to refocus the relationship between organisations and their stakeholders by ensuring a consistent development of responsible business leaders, working with organisations on becoming positive change agents that incorporate sustainable practices in their operations, develop innovative products and services that transform their communities, protecting the environment while at the same time generating economic value.