

FORD FOUNDATION WEST AFRICA: 65 YEARS

The Ford Foundation Office of West Africa celebrates 65 years of partnership, tracing its history from the 1960s independence era through periods of military rule to the modern democratic age. By supporting local visionaries, academic institutions, and grassroots organizations, the Foundation has catalyzed progress in human rights, gender equality, and natural resource justice. Today, the regional office centers its mission on building durable civil society institutions and shifting cultural norms to ensure human dignity remains at the heart of all social progress.

Transcript begins.

[An illustrative collage unfolds with newsprint and archival photos celebrating 1960s independence across multiple African nations.]

DIKE CHUKWUMERIJE: So the 1960s was the coming to fruition of decades of struggle. You had the Black Star rising in Ghana, the Teranga Lions roaring from Senegal, and here in Nigeria, the biggest Black nation on earth, also gaining its independence.

[Text on screen: "Ford Foundation West Africa" with the number "65" in textile pattern.]

[ChiChi Aniagolu-Okoye, Ford Foundation Regional Director, Office of West Africa. Lagos, Nigeria. An African woman with long braided hair and glasses; wearing a light jacket sitting in an office.]

CHICHI ANIAGOLU-OKOYE: The Ford Foundation actually opened an office in 1960s in West Africa. That's why we are celebrating 65 years. What we do is work with people, institutions, with ideas that ensure that the world is a much better place for everyone to live in.

[Chief Olusegun Obasanjo. President of Nigeria, 1999 to 2007, Lagos, Nigeria. An elderly African man wearing a blue traditional cap and kaftan; sitting in a modern living room.]

CHIEF OLUSEGUN OBASANJO: Ford Foundation touched life in those 65 years and continues to touch life.

[Photos appear of Darren Walker, an African American man and former Ford Foundation President greeting people. A banner reads 'Welcome to the President of Ford Foundation'.]

CHICHI ANIAGOLU-OKOYE: And the things that we have supported have all intercepted with the history of the time.

[Dike Chukwumerije, Founder of the Dike Chukwumerije Center, Abuja, Nigeria. An African man with short hair and glasses; wearing a white t-shirt featuring a graphic of a clenched fist sitting in a museum.]

DIKE CHUKWUMERIJE: And so there was a lot of expectation, a lot of worry of what this new African giant was going to do on the global stage.

[An illustrative collage unfolds. University buildings and the IITA sign rise from the landscape.

Text on screen: "A New Dawn, 1960's"]

[Kevin Ejiofor. Former Acting Director, Federal Radio Corporation, Enugu, Nigeria. An elderly African man with white hair and a grey kaftan sitting in a large conference hall.]

KEVIN EJIOFOR: There was a palpable sense of freedom. Nothing is impossible, anything could happen. Anybody could become anything.

[Archival photos of the Nigerian Independence movement.]

[Vershima Orvell-Dio. Assistant Director, National Library of Nigeria, Abuja, Nigeria. A bearded African man in a brown traditional kaftan sitting in a conference room.]

VERSHIMA ORVELL-DIO: The President General of Nigeria, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe had interest to establish a national library. The Ford Foundation now sent Dr. Carl White. They were also sponsoring the training of Nigerians. Someday we will be able to harmonize all this and see various aspects Nigerians contributed to the greatness of this country.

[Archival photos of The Library Board Inauguration in 1976. Vershima pages through a large old book. The page reads "National Library Act of 1964"]

CHICHI ANIAGOLU-OKOYE: At that time, the idea was to build human resource, that will help propel the new nations that were emerging.

[Susan Berresford. Ford Foundation President, 1996 to 2007, New York, USA. An older white American woman with short hair and glasses; sitting in a living room.]

SUSAN BERRESFORD: So it was a very government-focused approach and also a university approach. We supported educational institutions, particularly universities in Africa.

[Archival footage of the University of Ibadan in the 1960s.]

[Professor Kayode Adebawale. Vice Chancellor, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria. An African man with a shaved head and glasses wearing a dark suit sitting in an office.]

PROFESSOR KAYODE ADEBOWALE: The University of Ibadan started in 1948. T. Adeoye Lambo was actually the Vice-Chancellor when Ford Foundation came to the University. He said, "Perhaps the most iconic and transformative outcome of this partnership is the establishment of the Institute of African Studies."

[Professor Sola Olorunyomi. Director of Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan. Ibadan, Nigeria. An older African man with a gray afro and a beard wearing a blue collared shirt sitting in an office.]

PROFESSOR SOLA OLORUNYOMI: With the support of the Ford Foundation, it was possible to get top resources and faculty to do quality research.

PROFESSOR KAYODE ADEBOWALE: The strong foundation of the Institute of African Studies has enabled them to give birth to so many departments and even faculties, and the Institute of African Studies is still there.

[Recent aerial footage of the university campus.]

[Adhiambo Odaga. Ford Foundation Representative, West Africa, 2001 to 2012. Lagos, Nigeria. An African woman with long braids in a patterned yellow dress sitting in dark theatre.]

ADHIAMBO ODAGA: The biggest grant Ford had made at the time was for the establishment of IITA.

[A bronze plaque reads 'International Institute of Tropical Agriculture, Dedicated 1970'.]

[Dr. Tahirou Adboulaye. Deputy Director, IITA. Ibadan, Nigeria. An African man with a gray beard and glasses wearing a beige traditional shirt sitting in an office.]

DR. TAHIROU ADBOULAYE: You have to go back to the idea of the Green Revolution that helped solve the problem of hunger and malnutrition in India.

[Archival colour footage shows farmers holding up large cassava roots next to signs comparing local practice to improved practice crops.]

DR. TAHIROU ADBOULAYE: Our vision is really to continue to sustain food security and nutrition security on the continent. But all of that to the goal of reduction of poverty. As of today, we have offices in 21 different countries across the continent.

[In a modern lab, scientists can be seen working with samples and conducting tests.]

CHIEF OLUSEGUN OBASANJO: That is a permanent feature of Ford Foundation, not only in Africa, but all tropical areas of the world.

[Onscreen images tear to reveal a gritty collage of civilians in conflict with the military.]

[Text on screen: "Cracks in the Foundation, 1970s".]

DIKE CHUKWUMERIJE: Within a few years of independence, many African countries began to suffer reversals. In a country like Nigeria, we had our dark night in 1966. Nigeria had its first coup, and that coup set off a horrendous series of events culminating in a civil war. Things like this represented a crack in our foundation.

[Archival images of soldiers with weapons, large military vehicles, and clear wartime destruction and ruins.]

CHICHI ANIAGOLU-OKOYE: The Ford Foundation's support after the war was in rebuilding the country, rebuilding the institutions.

DIKE CHUKWUMERIJE: An important institution like the University of Nigeria so that students whose education had been interrupted by three years of war could immediately go back to school.

[Archival photos of construction workers building and plastering new walls and infrastructure.]

DIKE CHUKWUMERIJE: You find the imprint of Ford Foundation there in a critical place in Nigeria's history with a delicate task of trying to reconcile and heal.

[An illustrative collage unfolds showing stormclouds, military vehicles, General Obasanjo in military uniform and Professor Yemi Osinbajo featured in a newspaper article.]

[Text on screen: "Through the Storm, 1980s".]

DIKE CHUKWUMERIJE: The 80s saw this collapse in public infrastructure and a corresponding rise in significant human rights abuses.

[Magette Kebe, Ford Foundation Grants Administrator, Office of Dakar, 1984–1996. Dakar, Senegal. An elderly African woman with glasses wearing a patterned light orange dress and headscarf sitting in a living room.]

MAGETTE KEBE (speaking French): We had two representatives: Franklin Thomas and Susan Berresford.

SUSAN BERRESFORD: And when Franklin Thomas became president, he discontinued a lot of the work focused on governments and pivoted to building civil society and nonprofit organizations.

[A black and white portrait of Franklin Thomas, an African American man with glasses. Newspaper headline reads "Streamlining the Ford Foundation".]

DIKE CHUKWUMERIJE: And so you had an organization like Ford Foundation invest in rural development, investing in communal organizations.

MAGETTE KEBE (speaking French): The Foundation contributed to leaders in the fields of research and organization in rural communities.

[Magette pages through old Ford Foundation documents.]

[Professor Bolanle Awe. Co-Founder, Women's Research and Documentation Centre, Ibadan, Nigeria. An elderly African woman with glasses wearing a patterned orange dress and headscarf sitting in a living room.]

PROFESSOR BOLANLE AWE: Ford Foundation has made a lot of tremendous contribution in encouraging women to move forward, giving them scholarships so that they could go and develop their knowledge in women's studies.

[Signage at the office for WORDOC, Women's Research and Documentation Centre.]

[Hands adjust the dials on a vintage reel-to-reel tape recorder.]

DIKE CHUKWUMERIJE: It is very important to have our memories preserved in archives. If you do not know where you're coming from, you will not know how to get to where you're going.

[Judith Opoku Boateng, Archivist, University of Ghana, Accra, Ghana. An African woman with long dreads and a patterned yellow dress sits between rows of bookshelves.]

JUDITH OPOKU BOATENG: This archive was founded as a sound archive by J.H. Kwabena Nketia. The aim was to support research and creative engagement. It's about preserving—I call it the knowledge of our ancestors—and then making this knowledge accessible to current and future generations. Ford Foundation's contribution to this has enabled us to connect our own history to the rest of the world and then in Africa.

[The red-roofed buildings of the J.H. Kwabena Nketia Archives.]

[An illustrative collage unfolds showing images of a polling station and protesters holding signs.

Text on screen: "Seeds of Renewal, 1990s".]

DIKE CHUKWUMERIJE: By the '90s, the chickens had come home to roost. Nigeria was characterized by the struggle for democracy, the fight against the military.

CHICHI ANIAGOLU-OKOYE: So the idea was: how do you support these countries to return to democracy?

[Professor Yemi Osinbajo, Vice President of Nigeria, 2015–2023, Lagos, Nigeria. An African man in a black traditional cap and kaftan sitting in a living room.]

PROFESSOR YEMI OSINBAJO: We wanted a situation where we could call out corruption. It attracted both good and, I suppose, bad attention, because obviously the military government at the time was extremely sensitive to any kind of attempt to question the government.

[Foluso Idumu, Director, Justice Research Institute, Lagos, Nigeria. An African woman with long braids and glasses wearing a green patterned dress sitting in an office.]

FOLUSO IDUMU: Military rule had also weakened the ethical institutions in place then. People did not trust the government, did not trust the system.

PROFESSOR YEMI OSINBAJO: All of this time, from 1995 to this point, we could not get Integrity registered. Our objectives clashed with the government at the time. One of the things that we found commendable is that the Ford Foundation recognized the work we were doing and decided to give us a grant nevertheless. The grant was actually written in my name.

CHIEF OLUSEGUN OBASANJO: Most of the people that were trained and educated by Ford Foundation came back and they played a very significant role in government, in politics.

CHICHI ANIAGOLU-OKOYE: So one of our fellows, the former Secretary General of the United Nations, which is Kofi Annan, and many people like that... people who have ended up becoming captains of industry, luminaries.

CHIEF OLUSEGUN OBASANJO: I was the first African from Africa to be on the board of trustees.

SUSAN BERRESFORD: I think the Foundation was very lucky to have General Obasanjo as a trustee. And then he was put in jail. And for the period he was jailed, we sent him the Ford Foundation trustee books for every board meeting. We wanted people to know we haven't forgotten him because he's in jail.

[A reconstruction of a sparse prison cell with a single bed and wooden desk. A plaque reads: "Reconstruction of Cell 333, Yola Prison, where Obasanjo was held."]

CHIEF OLUSEGUN OBASANJO: They were also very active in campaigning for my release from prison. They didn't tell me that they had been paying my honorarium. They just said, "Well, check up in your bank." And I found that I have a quantum of money that helped me in rehabilitating my children while I was in prison.

[An illustrative collage features a young smiling Chief Obasanjo. Headlines read: "It's a new dawn over Nigeria."]

[Text on screen: "Towards a New Horizon, 2000s".]

DIKE CHUKWUMERIJE: The 2000s is a roller coaster ride. It was like taking the cover off a pressure cooker. There was a lot of dialogue and conversations that had been suppressed through the military years that had to happen.

[Archival footage of Chief Obasanjo waving to crowds and standing next to South African President Nelson Mandela.]

CHICHI ANIAGOLU-OKOYE: It was a beautiful time. It meant that the country had to start rebuilding democratic institutions as well.

PROFESSOR YEMI OSINBAJO: We had to overhaul our administration of justice system—from remuneration to discipline, to appointment of judges, to make cases simply go faster. And Ford was a very active supporter of the work that we were doing at the time.

CHICHI ANIAGOLU-OKOYE: Focusing on those things that really transform society. That's really at the heart of the work that the Ford Foundation does. If you look at, for instance, the work on reproductive health.

[Archival photos show protesters holding signs about HIV-AIDS prevention.]

[Dr. Esiet Uwemedimo Uko. Co-Founder and Director, Action Health Incorporated, Lagos, Nigeria. An African man with a shaved head wearing a grey kaftan sitting in a large conference room.]

DR. ESIET UWEMEDIMO UKO: There was no way Nigeria would have responded to the HIV and AIDS crisis if it did not respond to the issues of adolescent and young people's sexuality. So the question was: how do we reach young people?

[Adenike Esiet, Executive Director, Action Health Incorporated, Lagos, Nigeria. An African woman with short grey hair and glasses; wearing a blue patterned dress sitting in a large conference room.]

ADENIKE ESIET: The decision from the beginning would be that there would be this curriculum that would be integrated into like subject matter. Ford was there when we had to begin the implementation, coming from a place of silence to a place of policy action. And implementation was the greatest success.

[Ngozi Iwere, Founder and Director, Community Life Project, Lagos, Nigeria. An African woman with short curly hair and glasses wearing a dark blue t-shirt sitting in an informal breakout room.]

NGOZI IWERE: We had a model of engaging grassroots communities, artisan groups, and various cultural associations that are outside mainstream communication channels. We had the first HIV/AIDS education at an open shed, a mechanic workshop, and Ford wanted to support us to scale this model, to replicate it elsewhere.

[Archival photos show African men in a mechanic workshop and a large group of African women in a community center watching a program on a television.]

[An illustrative collage unfolds showing Gorée Island, a boat on the water, and a wind turbine.

Text on screen: "New Horizons, 2010s".]

DIKE CHUKWUMERIJE: The 2010s are obviously characterized by a rise in technology. This has provided a lot of opportunities for young Nigerians, giving them the platforms and the capacity to make their voices heard.

DIKE CHUKWUMERIJE: And this has had a revolutionary impact on culture and on development in Nigeria.

[Dabesaki Mac-Ikemenjima, Ford Foundation Senior Program Officer, Office of West Africa, 2016-2025, Lagos, Nigeria. An African man with a shaved head and a short gray beard wearing a beige traditional kaftan sitting in a living room.]

DABESAKI MAC-IKEMENJIMA: Youth opportunity work definitely had a clear strategy around youth leadership development, position young people to take leading roles in civil society and in politics.

[Cynthia Mbamalu, Director of Programs, YIAGA Africa, Abuja, Nigeria. A young African woman wearing red-framed glasses and large red tassel earrings sitting in an office.]

CYNTHIA MBAMALU: I remember we had this mantra when we speak the government would shake because I felt that as a young person I had the power to get the government to do what we wanted.

[Cynthia stands in front of a large screen, gesturing towards a slide about "Building a Community of Youth Change Leaders."]

[Andrew Mamedu, Country Director, ActionAid Nigeria, Abuja, Nigeria. An African man with a neatly trimmed beard and glasses; wearing a black traditional kaftan sitting in an office.]

ANDREW MAMEDU: INEC did not have a logistic management framework. Ford Foundation was happy to come on board and we all partnered, worked with INEC and we worked with every relevant stakeholder you might think of within the election delivery.

[Several African men in blue and yellow mechanic uniforms work on a car engine outdoors.]

[An older man gestures as he speaks to the group of young mechanics.]

[A close-up shows a patch on a mechanic's uniform that reads "Nigerian Automobile Technicians Association."]

NGOZI IWERE: Ford knew that we were in a position to mobilize the grassroots communities across the length and breadth of this country. Through the works supported by Ford we created the Reclaim Naija platform, real-time incident reporting and to troubleshoot these incidents while elections were still going on. The election culture transformed completely. It became very inclusive.

[A montage of archival photographs illustrates the grassroots mobilization of the **Reclaim Naija** platform.]

[The offices for the Media Foundation for West Africa.]

[Sulemana Braimah, Executive Director, Media Foundation for West Africa, Accra, Ghana. An African man with a shaved head wearing a white traditional kaftan sitting in an office.]

SULEMANA BRAIMAH: In Ghana, for example, the heavy lifting that was required at the beginning was supported by Ford, bringing the electoral commission and media together to better understand the electoral processes and report on them accurately. The elections came to pass. There was a change in government. Transition was peaceful.

DIKE CHUKWUMERIJE: West Africa is an extremely rich space in terms of cultural expression and art. Exploring our creativity and our cultural expressions help us to tap into those roots.

[A young African man and woman record and edit audio in a professional studio.]

[Darren Walker, Ford Foundation President, 2013-2025, New York, USA. An African American man with a shaved head and tortoise-shell glasses; wearing a blue suit sitting in a modern office building.]

DARREN WALKER: There is no doubt that creativity and free expression are critical and essential to West Africa's future.

[Paul Nwulu, Ford Foundation Senior Program Officer, Office of West Africa, 2012-2020, Lagos, Nigeria. An African man with a shaved head, grey beard and glasses wearing a dark collared shirt sitting in a conference room.]

PAUL NWULU: The global media space had always had this narrative about Africa. Everything negative was applied to Africa. One of the best ways to tackle this is to empower Africans to be the one controlling the African narrative.

[A film clapperboard reads "Bling Lagosians 2".]

[A film set with two African women acting in a scene.]

[Bolanle Austen-Peters. Founder and Director, Terra Kulture, Lagos, Nigeria. An African woman with long, light braids; wearing a blue and orange dress sitting in a garden.]

BOLANLE AUSTEN-PETERS: As a person, I believe in art that has impact. Most times you often hear about negative stories about Nigeria. How about us doing a beautiful story about how Ebola was tamed in Nigeria? Ford Foundation trusted us. They gave us a grant towards the movie called 93 Days. Today we have over nine musicals and we have seven movies to our credit.

[Clips from the movie "93 Days" showing doctors and patients during the Ebola outbreak.]

[An aerial view of the Nigerian city of Enugu under a hazy sky.]

KEVIN EJIOFOR: Life in my city means look around you, you are an artist, interrogate what you see. We are positioning art for social development. Ford Foundation came. What we did was to create opportunity for them, a platform for them to show their skills. The word is empowerment. Some of our people have now become well known worldwide working from Nigeria.

[A young African artist wearing a black suit walks through an art gallery that features his own threaded artworks on the walls.]

[Old, sepia-toned photographs of the arid landscape of Mali.]

[A large wooden door on the stone facade of the al-Wangari Manuscript Library.]

ADHIAMBO ODAGA: We had an amazing opportunity to invest in conserving the written heritage of Africa by focusing on work in Mali to preserve the African manuscripts. You know Timbuktu was attacked, and we were like, "Oh my god what's going to happen to the libraries?" They hid all the manuscripts under the sand.

[Dozens of old locked suitcases and crates that contain the manuscripts.]

ADHIAMBO ODAGA: They were very proactive. Our big question was how are you going to move so many manuscripts out of Timbuktu? And they said, "Don't worry we're going to float them down the river." And that's how they evacuated them and keep them out of harm's way.

[A rectangular doorway at the end of a short dark passage opens to a bright view of the ocean and a rocky shore.]

[Eloi Coly, Chief Curator, Maison des Esclaves, Dakar, Senegal. An African man with a shaved head and glasses; wearing a blue-traditional kaftan sitting in an office.]

ELOI COLY (speaking French): Gorée obviously bears the scars, notably of slavery, but also the scars of colonization. One cannot come to Gorée and after visiting the House of Slaves, leave without being deeply moved. The only reparation that matters is the preservation of their memory, after recognition by some and others of the role they played during that period.

[A close-up on a weathered stone wall shows a white plaque with text: "Door of No Return."]

[A historical painting depicts a bustling port scene with numerous ships in the bay.]

[The pink-hued House of Slaves on Gorée Island, with its distinctive red-tiled roofs and multiple courtyards.]

[Kaba Laye, Assistant to the Chief Curator, Maison des Esclaves, Dakar, Senegal. An African man with a shaved head and a short beard; wearing a white traditional kaftan sitting in an office.]

KABA LAYE (speaking French): It is to succeed in making this space a space of peace, of dialogue, but above all of reconciliation between peoples. Because it is a history, not only of Africans, but it is the history of the world.

ELOI COLY (speaking French): The Ford Foundation supported us a first time which allowed us not only to stabilize the House of Slaves, which was in an advanced state of disrepair.

KABA LAYE (speaking French): but to put in place a protective seawall to counter, at least partially, the advance of the sea.

ELOI COLY (speaking French): So that all may go together towards forgiveness and the reconciliation of forgiveness.

[The Memorial Goree du Castel, a tall white perforated canonical monument.]

[Gory Island as seen from above, surrounded by a vast ocean.]

CHICHI ANIAGOLU-OKOYE: I think another legacy of the foundation is the structure that we are in.

[The Ford Foundation West Africa office in Lagos, Nigeria, a low rise building with a flat roof.]

[Joy Ehinor-Esezobor, Ford Foundation Program Manager, Office of West Africa, Lagos, Nigeria. An African woman with short braids; wearing a dark blouse sitting in a communal office space.]

JOY EHINOR-ESEZOBOR: This office is one of the very few offices owned by the foundation across the world. The plan is for us to have a convening space similar to what we have in New York, which is a social justice centre for our partners to come and have conversation, to have convening.

CHICHI ANIAGOLU-OKOYE: It's an office space, but it's also a monument to civil society and the fight for the human dignity.

[An illustrative collage unfolds, black-and-white archival images of African women carrying baskets on their heads and the vast African landscape.

Text on screen: "Looking Ahead".]

DARREN WALKER: It will be African-led philanthropy who advances achievement and social progress in the region long term. And so we're investing in collectives and collaborations among African philanthropists. BUILD is an initiative that aims to strengthen organizations to be durable, sustainable and resilient.

[A group of African professionals are seated around a conference table.]

[A clear glass award. "National Land Conference, 2022, Trust Africa."]

[Nana Afadzinu, Executive Director, West Africa Civil Society Institute, Accra, Ghana. An African woman with long braids wearing an orange and black patterned dress sitting in an office.]

NANA AFADZINU: The BUILD grant is important in particular because we needed to give support to institutions to support their core function and to strengthen organizations.

[Oumar Ndiaye. Ford Foundation Program Officer, Office of West Africa, Lagos, Nigeria. A young African man with glasses wearing a traditional cap and white kaftan sitting in an office.]

OUMAR NDIAYE: Intersectionality is looking at the issue of social justice beyond the single thematic issue. So you talk about the disability, you talk about the gender issue, climate justice, the natural resources management. Intersectionality enables to really address all those in once, even across the government. It's really about how working across the issue in the sustainable and comprehensive way.

[Officials and representatives are seen having a meeting.]

[A woman in military-style uniform with a black beret gestures while speaking to a group of four people in front of a wall featuring the Cleen Foundation logo.]

[Amb. Yusuf Tuggar OON, Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs, Nigeria, Abuja, Nigeria. An African man with a short grey beard wearing a traditional black cap and white robe sitting in a living room.]

AMB. YUSUF TUGGAR OON: They have to partner with state governments, they have to partner with local government and of course also federal governments.

[Clement O. Oladele, Deputy Corps Marshal, Federal Road Safety Corps, Abuja, Nigeria. An African man in a beige military-style uniform with a maroon beret and numerous medals sitting in an office.]

CLEMENT O. OLADELE: It is very important that both the private and government organizations, they need to continue to do collaborations. Some of our paramedics, apart from the basic training that they had, they never had opportunity of going for advanced training on rescue operations. This training took place because Ford Foundation facilitated it. We now notice 37% increase in the number of people that were rescued alive.

[Three paramedics are seen helping a patient in an ambulance.]

[A close-up of a tablet screen shows the Ford Foundation website. The headline reads, "Working with visionaries on the front lines of social change worldwide."]

CHICHI ANIAGOLU-OKOYE: The Ford Foundation has nine areas of work and in West Africa we are focusing on two of those areas, and for us it is looking at natural resource and climate justice and ending gender-based violence under our gender, racial and ethnic justice program.

[Izeduwa Derox-Briggs, Ford Foundation Program Officer, Office of West Africa, Lagos, Nigeria. An African woman with reddish-brown braids and glasses; wearing a vibrant patterned blouse sitting in an office.]

IZEDUWA DEROX-BRIGGS: Ford has taken a decision to deal with preventing gender-based violence rather than wait for violence to occur.

[Reverend Father George Ehusani, Executive Director, Lux Terra Leadership Foundation, Abuja, Nigeria. An older African man with gray hair and glasses; wearing a white clerical collar sitting in a large communal hall.]

REVEREND FATHER GEORGE EBUSANI: We have numerous issues in our society. We have cultural dimensions, we have customs and practices that violate the dignity of women and girls.

REVEREND FATHER GEORGE EBUSANI: We have widowhood rights and rituals that are harmful. Denial of rights of female children, for example. Denial of inheritance by wives and so on and so forth.

[A studio setting with microphones and lighting equipment. A large screen shows the title of a podcast "Breaking the Silence."]

[Professor Joy Ngozi Ezeilo (SAN, OON), Founder and Executive Director, Women's Aid Collective, Enugu, Nigeria. An African woman with dark braids and glasses; wearing a purple and yellow patterned dress sitting in a conference room.]

PROFESSOR JOY NGOZI EZEILO SAN, OON: With Ford Foundation in the Southeast we have been able to engage with all the important stakeholders, including government, including at the rural level, including community based organizations to ensure that we prevent gender-based violence, to ensure that we advance gender equality, that we end all forms of discrimination.

[A group of women are seated outside in a circle under the shade of a large tree.]

[Dr. Stanley Ilechukwu, Executive Director, Southern Sahara Social Development Organization, Enugu, Nigeria. An African man with a shaved head and a short beard; wearing a grey traditional kaftan sitting in an office.]

DR. STANLEY ILECHUKWU: Our plan was to build women's agency, enable them to negotiate the power dynamics of their space and now push for what they want.

PROFESSOR JOY NGOZI EZEILO SAN, OON: We've had important decisions coming from some of these traditional rulers changing their bylaws that are protective of women now and even including women in their cabinet, which we didn't have before.

[Archival photos show a group of women in traditional clothes coming together in discussion.]

[Anthonia Anike, Women's Representative, Igwe's Cabinet, Enugu, Nigeria. An African woman with short dark hair and glasses; wearing a black and yellow blouse sitting outdoors.]

ANTHONIA ANIKE: Now it is important for a woman to be one of them. So this one is not a woman, go solve your own, man, go solve your own, everybody will join hands together and make sure they settle the matter.

PROFESSOR JOY NGOZI EZEILO SAN, OON: Because people, even becoming chiefs in this part of the world is not easy. Today I can say I'm a chief and we have many women chiefs today and we have also these women chiefs sitting in cabinet.

[Judith Ann-Walker, Project Coordinator, The Development Research and Projects Centre, Abuja, Nigeria. An older African woman with glasses wearing a blue-and-white patterned headscarf and dress sitting in an office.]

JUDITH ANN-WALKER: We work as a very unique piece working with Muslim opinion leaders.

[Mohammed Yazid Aliyu, Traditional Title Holder, Barayan Zazzau District Head of Kabula, Abuja, Nigeria. An African man with a light turban and face covering; wearing a white and gold formal robe sitting in a living room.]

MOHAMMED YAZID ALIYU: People are kidnapped, especially the most vulnerable, and be used as an avenue of extortion by the bandits. It is an unmeasurable impact to our society.

[A close-up shows hands holding a green booklet titled "The Islamic Position on the Prevention of Gender-Based Violence."]

[Hauwa Kulu Abdullahi, Public Relations Officer, Federation of Muslim Women's Associations in Nigeria, Abuja, Nigeria. An older African woman wearing a light beige hijab sitting in a conference room.]

HAUWA KULU ABDULLAHI: Even a woman that was already married with children and kidnapped, when they got there, they got them married to the bandits and even bear children. When they are rescued home, being integrated into their families, they do face some victimization among their own relations.

JUDITH ANN-WALKER: We are still very focused on the issue of prevention of stigmatization, which according to UN Women is another form or a double form of gender-based violence. Ford Foundation's support, we worked to develop a formative guide for all traditional and religious leaders to be able to be guided and have the basic principles of how to integrate survivors back into communities.

MOHAMMED YAZID ALIYU: And the traditional rulers have been doing their very best trying to avert the issue of stigmatization.

HAUWA KULU ABDULLAHI: Men beat their wives mercilessly. Even if she goes home, the parents will ask her to go home and "xërap la," that is just be patient. That is how we also manage our lives like that.

IZEDUWA DEREK-BRIGGS: For us to be able to deal with shifting norms, we cannot do it without these people who hold that influence. We work with religious leaders to try and change their approach and their mindset to violence.

REVEREND FATHER GEORGE EBUSANI: All religious leaders exercise a lot of influence on the behavior of people in the society.

[Saudatu Mahdi, Secretary General, Women's Rights Advancement and Protection Alternative, Abuja, Nigeria. An African woman with a patterned yellow headscarf and dress sitting in a large conference room.]

SAUDATU MAHDI: We were able through the years to open up the space and build bridges between advocates and leaders of culture and faith.

[A close-up of a sign with text that reads "No sexual harassment."]

REVEREND FATHER GEORGE EBUSANI: Prevention is better than cure in all this. It is better to prevent rape than to try to help a rape victim. It is better to prevent wife battering than to try to help a battered person. If we put hands together, if traditional rulers are involved, if religious leaders are involved, then there will be a new culture.

[A large wall mural displays the words "CULTURE OF SILENCE" and "DATA TO ACTION."]

[Omowumi Ogunrotimi, Founder and Executive Director, Gender Mobile Initiative, Abuja, Nigeria. An African woman with short braids; wearing a white lace top sitting in an office.]

OMOWUMI OGUNROTIMI: Victims and survivors are always scared to report because there is usually a backlash. We set out with a simple but bold idea to leverage technology, to promote safe reporting and access to emergency response services. We came across the Ford Foundation and they were the first major funder who invested in our vision.

[A close-up of the gender mobile app showing a report case button.]

IZEDUWA DEREK-BRIGGS: I'm sure you can hear the passion in my voice. I'm so excited because I know that change can happen. I'm so excited that Ford's strategy is looking at prevention, make the space safe in the community, in the schools, in the churches, so that girls are protected.

[Emmanuel Kuyole, Ford Foundation Program Officer, Office of West Africa, Lagos, Nigeria. An African man with a shaved head and glasses; wearing a gray traditional kaftan sitting in an office.]

EMMANUEL KUYOLE: West Africa has enormous natural resources, fossil fuels, minerals and forests, and other resources.

[Benjamin Boakye, Executive Director, Africa Center for Energy Policy, Accra, Ghana. An African man with a shaved head and short beard; wearing a blue traditional kaftan sitting in an office.]

BENJAMIN BOAKYE: And yet we have people in abject poverty, not actually translating into socioeconomic development of the people.

[A thick, polluted haze as women work between the debris and smoke.]

[Chibeze Ezekiel, Executive Coordinator, Strategic Youth Network for Development, Accra, Ghana. A young African man with a shaved head and glasses; wearing a green t-shirt sitting in a communal office space.]

CHIBEZE EZEKIEL: Within the African continent, our development is largely driven by the extraction and the use of our natural resources.

[Daryl Bosu, Deputy National Director, A Rocha Ghana, Accra, Ghana. An African man with a shaved head; wearing a light brown shirt sitting in a corporate lounge.]

DARYL BOSU: We have need for more renewable energy and with this need for electric vehicles there's been the need for the extraction of more minerals.

[Workers in hard hats and safety vests are lifted by a crane onto a yellow oil platform.]

[Amara Nwankpa, Director General, Shehu Musa Yar'Adua Foundation, Abuja, Nigeria. An African man with glasses and a short beard; wearing a light-colored shirt sitting in an office.]

AMARA NWANKPA: In Nigeria, we are an oil-producing country, and that history of extraction has resulted in so many injustices, not just to the environment but the people in that environment.

[An aerial view reveals extensive deforestation and open pit mining operations in a lush green valley.]

DARYL BOSU: A lot of our forest reserves now have become the subject for mining. We have even seen some systematic changes in our regulations that is even opening up our forests more and more for mining activities.

[Demba Seydi, Director of Programs, Citoyens Actifs pour la Justice Sociale, Dakar, Senegal. An African man with a shaved head and a short beard, wearing a dark suit sitting in a conference room.]

DEMBA SEYDI (speaking French): We are in a context in Senegal where the exploitation of natural resources is increasingly expanding and has particular impacts both on the economy, on the lives of communities, on their culture, and on rights in particular.

[Men are riding two-wheeled horse-carts on a sandy beach.]

[The bare feet of a young boy swinging on a rope fixed between two fishing boats on the sand.]

[Ndèye Yacine Dieng, President, Association pour la valorisation de l'environnement et les côtes/*President, Association for the Enhancement of the Environment and Coastlines*], Dakar, Senegal. An older african woman wearing a blue dress sitting on the front steps of a small house near the beach.]

NDÈYE YACINE DIENG (speaking French): We no longer have habitable land or arable land, everything is taken by the polluting industries that are located where we are.

EMMANUEL KUYOLE: The focus of the foundation has really been to support communities, but also to ensure that the transition process is just.

[Emmanuel Seck, Executive Director, ENDA Energie, Dakar, Senegal. An African man with a shaved head and glasses; wearing a gray traditional kaftan sitting in a conference room.]

EMMANUEL SECK (speaking French): It is important to emphasize that the issue of climate change is not only an environmental issue, even more a political issue, but it is a geopolitical question because it questions the trajectory of nations.

[Several young men and boys on the beach filled with brightly painted fishing boats.]

CHIBEZE EZEKIEL: Young people tend to want to suffer. They don't benefit from even the resources that come from this extraction. And number two, they even get displaced in terms of where they live and even their source of livelihood. But support from Ford Foundation has given a lot of encouragement to young people to continue engaging for them to understand the issues clearly and more importantly, to co-create the kind of future that you are all aspiring for.

[A Senegalese man stands on a bank surrounded by debris as he points towards a large factory in the distance.]

[Workers wearing safety equipment operate the baling press machine.]

AMARA NWANKPA: Climate action isn't only just about cost and burdens, but there are also opportunities as well and how do you ensure that these communities are not left behind in the new value chains that are being developed as a result of our national and global response to climate?

[A conservation ranger leads Daryl Bosu and another man through densely forested terrain.]

DARYL BOSU: So what we set out to do through Ford Foundation was to mobilize communities, help them to appreciate the need and their rights for when mining is happening, what they can do, what they cannot do.

BENJAMIN BOAKYE: We contributed quite significantly to the development of national policy on solid minerals. We engaged the stakeholders, we engaged communities. We had opportunity to engage companies on their corporate social responsibility actions.

[The office door for Africa Center for Energy Policy opens up. Benjamin is seated in a boardroom engaging in a meeting with a colleague.]

EMMANUEL KUYOLE: So those are the kinds of things that the foundation have been working on to ensure that those of us who are alive today don't just consume everything today, but we manage it in a more responsible way.

[Workers wearing safety gear prepare recycled plastic for baling and stacking.]

DIKE CHUKWUMERIJE: In 65 years, Ford Foundation has ridden that rollercoaster intentionally and gingerly in a restive but promising region, a region with deep potential.

[A montage of aerial views featuring Gory Island, the Balmain Library Clock Tower at University of Ghana and the University of Ibadan.]

AMB. YUSUF TUGGAR OON: What this sort of partnership with Ford Foundation has done is to strengthen Nigeria's democratic institutions. We should be giving ourselves a pat on the back, as well as giving Ford Foundation a pat on the back because of the collaborative efforts that have brought us to where we are today.

[Dr. Ebrima Sall. Executive Director, Trust Africa, Dakar, Senegal. An older African man with a shaved head; wearing a yellow traditional kaftan sitting in a large conference room.]

DR. EBRIMA SALL: You don't manufacture the identity of a community from people from outside. Ford comes and says: "I have resources to support your initiative; serve you, serve your people, serve the African continent in the ways you want it to serve the African continent."

[People in different outdoor settings and locations are seen sitting together in groups.]

PROFESSOR YEMI OSINBAJO: It's important that a donor does not come in with an agenda and I think that's one of the most important things about the Ford Foundation and the grants that they give. There's that ability to remain focused and to follow through, to be there when you're starting, to be there when you're ending.

DARREN WALKER: It has been our joy, our pride, our great honour to work and serve the people of West Africa.

[A montage of portraits featuring Magette Kebe, Bolanle Awe, Uwemodimo and Adenike Esiet, Darryl Bosu, and Hauwa Abdoulahi.]

CHICHI ANIAGOLU-OKOYE: We're excited that we have 65 years of work. I think it's also a time for sober reflections that the things that we want to address, the changes we want to see, are not anywhere near the horizon.

[The gentle tide of the Atlantic Ocean rolling onto a sandy beach at dusk.]

SULEMANA BRAIMAH: West Africa is among the regions that are in deep recession when it comes to democratic governance.

[A montage of people working together, laughing and talking.]

CYNTHIA MBAMALU: So now we need more champions of freedom, champions of democracy and human rights and Ford has to be a major partner in that fight.

NGOZI IWERE: I think Ford recognizes that ultimately it is the human being that is at the center of it. The human being is the justification, the reason why we do everything we do.

[Bold text appears: "Over \$500 million in 2,726 grants to 1,098 grantees".]

[The Ford Foundation West Africa 65th-anniversary logo.]

[A black-and-white portrait of an African man with a shaved head wearing a grey suit.
Text on screen: "In Memory Of Innocent Chukwuma, Ford Foundation Regional Director West Africa, 2013-2021".]

End of transcript.