



**The Brookings Institution  
Africa Growth Initiative  
Foresight Africa Podcast**

**“Lessons from Lagos state in addressing youth unemployment”  
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*Host:*

Aloysius Uche Ordu  
Director, Africa Growth Initiative  
Senior Fellow, Global Economy and Development  
The Brookings Institution

*Guest:*

Tejumola Abisoye  
Executive Secretary  
Lagos State Employment Trust Fund

*Episode Summary:*

In this episode of Foresight Africa, Tejumola Abisoye talks about the Lagos State Government’s youth initiative and its role in tackling the youth employment problem. She also highlights youth initiatives in other states and the importance of investing in MSMEs in rebuilding the economy.

**ORDU:** From the promise of new technologies to the growing population of innovative youths poised to shape the continent's future, Africa is full of dynamism and optimism worth celebrating. Hi, I'm Aloysius Uche Ordu, director of the Africa Growth Initiative at the Brookings Institution and host of Foresight Africa.

Since 2011, the Africa Growth Initiative has published a high-level report on the trends likely to shape events in the continent in the year ahead. Entitled "Foresight Africa," this flagship publication brings attention to policy actions designed to address the development challenges facing the continent. With this broadcast, we aim to engage the authors of the report, policymakers, business leaders, academics, and Africa's youths.

Today, I am indeed delighted to be joined by Tejumola Abisoye. Teju is the executive secretary of the Lagos State Employment Trust Fund, which tackles unemployment, particularly among the youths of Lagos. Lagos is home to over 20 million people. It is much larger than New York and London. By the year 2100, Lagos will be the world's largest city, with a population far exceeding 85 million people. In today's podcast, we will discuss youth employment. Data shows that 70 percent of Africans are under the age of 30 years. Working with the youth places Teju at the epicenter of one of Africa's megatrends, the rapidly growing population of young people. Teju, welcome to Foresight Africa podcast.

**ABISOYE:** Thank you very much. It's a pleasure to be here.

**ORDU:** Teju, let me start by asking you about your personal story. How did you get to this stage in your career?

**ABISOYE:** Interestingly, I trained as a lawyer, but I always knew I wanted to be more involved with social and economic development right from the last day of school. So I asked my lecturer and I said, Look what is the best thing to do? She said, Well, why don't you just try finance and see how that goes? And of course, I then went into venture capital and financial advisory for about seven years, transitioned into working with non-governmental organizations as an administrator, and got involved in the federal government project, basically taking the background into my venture capital foray.

And I saw that everybody wanted to work with the big firms, and nobody was really focused on the micro, small, and medium enterprises. The federal government project of YouWin gave me that opportunity to then work with the small businesses, the micro, medium, and small businesses, and this was such an eye opener into how much work needed to go in this space.

I worked with that program for about three years where we supported over 4,000 businesses—micro, small, and medium enterprises. Also with the primary aim for diversifying the economy and also creating jobs. So I started working in the public service first from a private sector background as an independent, but now got the opportunity to work with the Lagos state government as a public servant, as part of the pioneer team that started the Lagos State Employment Trust Fund. When the primary executive secretary left, then I was appointed the executive secretary. So that's how I found myself fully as a public servant working with youth unemployment in Lagos state.

**ORDU:** That's quite a journey from law in combination with finance, venture capital, supporting medium and micro scale enterprises, and now a public servant in Nigeria and indeed at one of Africa's largest cities. You were also, if I recall, selected as one of the 2021 cohort of the Amujae leaders of the Ellen Johnson Sirleaf Presidential Center for Women. Can you tell us about that mission and the goal of the Amujae Initiative and how you got selected in the first place to this high profile leadership role?

**ABISOYE:** Well, thank you so much, Aloysius, for that question, this is one of the best things that happened to me, one of the things I'm really proud of. The mission of the center is really around developing more women for public leadership in Africa, and the Center is deliberate about this by providing capacity development, coaching, mentoring, access to networks that can make this happen, and then support systems. We support each other as sisters emotionally, professionally, advice. It's such an ecosystem with all the coaches and the mentors that is deliberately investing in younger women to be able to serve in the public space.

I was selected in 2020 when my mentor, one of my mentors, sent me the application and said, Look, you have to go for this. If you're going to be serious about public service, you're going to need this kind of system. So I applied and I was very glad when I was selected with such a rigorous process, by the way. We filled application forms, we did interviews, but it was worth it because the value add to your professional life or your professional career in the public service is really, really good. It's worth it. It's worth anybody going through the rigors of getting on to that program. You get support for research, you get support for almost anything that you need for your public life.

**ORDU:** Very good, in fact, the founder of the Amujae Initiative, Madam Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, earlier this year wrote a brilliant framing essay you may have seen in "Foresight Africa," and I recall vividly that one of the points she highlights is not to underestimate the role of mentoring as far as gender empowerment and women in leadership is concerned. That's presumably part of the reason why she set up the Amujae Initiative as such.

Let's now turn to the question of youths, one of the megatrends facing Africa today, as you know very well. Most estimates, as I mentioned at the outset, suggest that over 70 percent of Africans are under the age of 30. Now, Lagos, of course, is a city full of young people, many of them unemployed. As executive secretary of the Lagos State Employment Trust Fund, how are you going about the problem of youth unemployment in Lagos?

**ABISOYE:** So a bit about data, as of today, Q4 2020 unemployment in Lagos State was about 37.14. It was made worse by COVID pandemic, which everybody cannot deny. It affected across the whole continent, the world at large. We've been deliberate about how we support youth unemployment, and first for us is how to make sure that we're supporting and building micro, small, and medium enterprises to create jobs. How do we enable them? Because data shows us that over 86 percent of the jobs are actually created by the micro, small, and medium enterprises.

So we're deliberate about providing support to them by access to affordable finance. For us, that's critical because in an economy like Nigeria, we're looking at commercial capital at over 20 percent. But we're able to provide that at a single digit to these businesses, recognizing that what we really want them to do is invest in that business so that they can grow, expand, and they can employ more people. We also want them to start their businesses. So rather than looking for a job, why don't you become an employer of labor? And we enable that first by making sure they get the right skills, capacity development, and then they have access to funding to start that business.

The tech ecosystem, we're deliberate also about this because we see that the three major things that affects the tech ecosystem in Lagos has been access to infrastructure—broadband, office space—access to talent, and then access to investors, the venture capital. We connect them to this, we make sure that we work with the tech startups people, innovators with ideas so that we can see them grow that idea to create jobs. Exponentially, technology has shown us that it can create jobs much faster than traditional businesses.

So for us, it is really about MSME support and making sure people get the right skills to start their business. And when you start that business with LSETF, we also provide that support for incubation, mentoring, and continuous capacity development. We want to see as many of these startups succeed as much as possible

**ORDU:** On the capacity development aspect, in particular, if I may probe a little bit on that. What does that entail exactly? What does the state government offer these small and medium scale enterprises and the youths?

**ABISOYE:** For us, there are different ways we do it. The first one where we work with the industries that have skills gaps, where we say, what are the gaps that you're not able to fill? Where can the government come and support you to make sure that you get those people into jobs? We then train specifically for this. So across the construction industry, health care, we do this in garment, fashion, in creative sector—sectors where people are saying, We have jobs, we're not finding the right people to fill them. In partnership with some of our development agencies, the UNDP, the USADF—the United States African Development Foundation, the German Development Agency as well—in partnership with all these people, we provide access to these grants for people to take up these trainings. That for us is first.

The second one is also for people who are starting up businesses, people can access skills to run their business, entrepreneurship, bookkeeping, human management, all those kind of skills we provided through masterclasses. But more importantly, we also provide advisory services for the small businesses. We have a lot of partners that offer this, sometimes pro bono. Sometimes the government pays for this. But the idea is to be deliberate about providing this support and capacity development best for individuals as well for companies to grow.

**ORDU:** Among the funders, are there any Nigerian entities as such who are also funding the initiative in Lagos?

**ABISOYE:** What I'll say is that maybe they're not giving us the funds, but they are providing support to us in kind. So we will have people like FATE Foundation who are very big on entrepreneurship. They are partners, critical partners, in this. We have people like Construction Kaisa who may not add funds but provide internship opportunities where they pay the beneficiaries. We have a lot of partners, Nigerian partners as well, actually, when I think about it. We have a lot of commercial banks, HIS, this is tower companies that even they fund those trainings directly because it's also particular to their own sector in the industry, and they want to make sure these skills are always there in the market. So we do have some local funders as well.

**ORDU:** So what lessons have you learned thus far from Lagos that can be replicated in other states or other African countries?

**ABISOYE:** In 2020, we hosted something called Showcasing Leading Practices for Job Creation across Africa. And was based on our learnings and reviews with different initiatives across Africa. Let me mention Harambee in South Africa, and then let me mention Generation who works largely in Kenya, but across the world, their acronym is You Employed. We've also learned from an Ethiopian initiative where they provided access to finance for people to go to job interviews. Because when you think about it, if somebody has been jobless, they don't have the funding to attend job interviews.

But this has very interesting lessons for us at LSETF to Nigeria as a whole. We have DOE Jobs; we have Plasmida—this is from another state; we have Kaduna KADSTEP. And there's been a lot of lessons over the couple of years that we've been working. One of the critical lessons is the need for

strategic partnerships. Don't try to do it alone, find people that want to achieve the same objectives and see how you can key into that and see how you can build because you can scale and do larger things.

For us, again, the second thing was when we started we were extremely agnostic in terms of sectors and in terms of how we provided our funding. While we learned to be more focused on the job creating sectors, we found education was one very strategic. Of course, agriculture remains one of the most strategic sectors. However, it's also the most risky one, and we soon find that out.

We've also then learned how to support agriculture in a very socially relevant manner. This has all been part of our learnings. How do we stay sustainable, than providing 100 percent subsidy? So can there be a social structure that can fund all the programs, fund the loans, but in a very sustainable manner? Because we started off as a subsidy, to be honest, but we're now more strategic about our approach to that and we're creating more sustainability.

But we continue to provide our learning through this platform where we are hosting, where we have this summit, where we discuss this interstate, and participation from across Africa just so that people can share their own learnings and everybody can adopt that.

I think one strategic way we've also been doing this is with the GIZ where they do a peer-learning structure and they've had \_\_\_\_\_ to facilitate that for a lot of the other agencies across Nigeria. Last week we finished one with five states, Niger State, with Jos Plateau State, with Edo State, Lagos, and then we had even had SMEDAN, the umbrella body for SMEs. And they call it a peer-learning platform. But the idea is to always share ideas and make sure that we're making improvements on all our programs and implementation.

**ORDU:** So presumably this initiative, everything you do at the end of every fiscal year there are audited reports etcetera that are online that's accessible and transparent, right?

**ABISOYE:** Extremely important to us. So one of the things we learned as well is that governance, having proper governance, improves credibility for you as an agency of government, and that accountability and transparency is critical. And it's one of our core values. So every year, first we audit our accounts and we publish publicly. We also audit our impact, and the current one is being carried out by J-PAL, I don't know if you know Jamal Abdul Latif Initiative system out of MIT, they're currently evaluating our impact. And also evaluating our learning so that we can actually also export back to other jurisdictions around recovery, lending to micro institutions. These are very critical about the work we're doing because we feel like, look, we must be able to export this across Africa so that we can provide the solutions to everybody. Yes, we're very big on accountability and transparency. I can't emphasize that enough again because we are a government institution.

**ORDU:** So let's turn now to an area of Lagos that never ceases to amaze me anytime I pass through—Yaba, Yaba Lagos, which has emerged as one of Africa's largest technology hubs. Could you give our listeners a sense of the dynamism of Yaba and the role that the youths play in bringing that about?

**ABISOYE:** In Yaba sits what we call the university, a federal university, Unilag, and also the Technology University, so we call it Yaba Tech. So because of this, we have a lot of youthful population having access to that area. Building on this, the private sector started building a lot of what we call innovation hubs in that area because it could attract very quickly the students, attract very quickly young people in schools, to come and have access to what you would call peer learning, access to the infrastructure, office spaces to build the innovative ideas.

And based on that, a lot of tech companies that you hear about today that are coming out of Yaba—I think notably Konga, Andela, all started from Yaba. So the government became more deliberate and decided, You know what? We have to build this into a system. We have to create a structure around what is coming out of Yaba. Today it is known as Yabacon. Some people will say Yabacon Valley, trying to call it Silicon Valley. But again, it actually grew by young people taking the initiative to build what they wanted to see. And the government then became deliberate about supporting it. So today, the government has acquired a large parcel of land where they're putting together something called KITE—knowledge, infrastructure, technology, education. And the idea is that every technology company that wants to be resident in Lagos, there would be a campus where you can locate your business with a lot of government incentives so that young people have more access. The government is laying over five kilometers of fiber optic cable so that every school, every area in Lagos, continues this trend of making sure Lagos stays the technology capital. And of course, you recently heard about Flutterwave and the valuation with their raising the series D funding. So there's a lot of interesting things coming out of Yaba, and the government is very deliberate about supporting that ecosystem to develop.

**ORDU:** So, Andela, you mentioned, and Flutterwave, these are some of the unicorns coming out of Nigeria recently. You're hoping to incubate more in this new campus that is deliberately filled with offsite infrastructure, energy, electric power, water, fiber optics. That's the idea, right?

**ABISOYE:** Everything. Everything to make it to stay relevant. But for now, we continue to partner across the different hubs, innovation hubs across Lagos. The government comes in and provides supports to the businesses that need that access because the campus has not taken off yet. The government has acquired the land for where the campus is going to be located. In the meantime, all the private sector hubs in that location, we partner with them as much as we can to provide the support they need to continue to grow that ecosystem.

**ORDU:** That's incredible. We often hear, Teju, that the global demand for talented tech youths far outstrips supply. And many U.S. tech firms, for example, are filling the void by recruiting largely from India and the East European countries. What is stopping Africa's youths from competing effectively in the exploding labor market for tech talent across the world?

**ABISOYE:** This is one of the things we at LSETF are built to solve, actually. So we're constantly engaging and what we found out very quickly is that, yes, indeed, a lot of young people that have had access to developing or building those skills are working remotely for foreign companies. In fact, I was the opportunity to have a discussion with the CEO, who he said to me, look, his biggest developers work for two companies, one in the U.S. and the second one with him. Because of the time difference, they're able to work those two jobs, and he's not stopping them because he can't afford to pay them if he keeps them by himself.

But in having this conversation, what we found out was a lot of young people complain about not having access to the kind of funds to do the training. If you remember what Andela did, Andela offered them like a fellowship where they were learning, and at the same time, they're able to earn while they do all these projects, whether remotely, sometimes inside companies. Well, we at LSETF, we've now come in and we're going in partnerships with people who do this training. And we are able to offer students a very subsidized student loan program where they can go ahead and do this training. And of course, we hope that by the time you start working, you are able to repay your student loan.

In some cases, they're able to get grants for their talent development. It's really, when we know that look, in this case, a job is not necessarily guaranteed, but these skills, he can go as an entrepreneur and we hope you give it back and you pay it forward later on if you are given that opportunity. Or

we provide these to students, to young people, through what we call our talent development program purely as a student loan sometimes. We are hoping to create more skills in the ecosystem and for them to be able to get jobs across borders.

**ORDU:** Presumably some of these youths were actually, if you like, dropped out of school, they're talented but they dropped out of school. How do you handle that?

**ABISOYE:** So what we found and one of the research that the Ministry of Education did and found out was—the research was based in Lagos—a lot of the attrition for young people was actually economic. And how do we solve for that? And that is important in all our programs. We believe that people need to learn and at the same time earn. Before it was simply called apprenticeships, we've found different names for it today. And people will tell you that the Ibo apprenticeship system remains one of the most studied across the world as one of the most valuable processes for getting people into employment.

So we do believe that people have to be able to learn and in that process begin to earn, because if you delay the earning for too long, there are too many pressures, some of them don't know how they're going to feel it. So we continue to engage the private sector about this apprenticeship systems because you never needed a university degree to work in the bank, but you learned and you grew through the ranks. As you grew in the ranks you took exams, took more professional programs. Can we bring those systems back into the work culture in Africa for a lot of young people? Whether they go in as apprentices, whether they have only a secondary school leaving certificate, can they get back into that system and begin to work and earn money so they can take care of a lot of their responsibilities so they stay the course?

And I think it also adds a lot of value to even the organizations, because then you build in what you want them to learn from scratch although they are having to retrain after that. So I think there's a lot of value in those kind of systems. And whether it's tech skills, whether it's normal banking, whether it's with fashion, in whatever area, we need to look back at apprenticeships and begin to see how we inculcate that as part of our culture.

**ORDU:** Let me now turn, Teju, to the issue of public policy, the role of the government, if we had a couple of youths with us on this broadcast today and among them government officials as well, what in your view would you think the youths would mention to the government officials are their top priorities for success in the ecosystem you are developing?

**ABISOYE:** I would say first of all inclusion. We need to be more inclusive with the young people. We need to give them a space. We need to give them the table. We need them to be involved as we take decisions for young people. This is very critical because they're the ones that know where the shoe is exactly pinching them. They're the ones that have those interactions amongst themselves. Can we make sure they're more included? Can we tell them to demand for more inclusion? They themselves are already asking for it. I'm sure you saw in Nigeria, for example, Not Too Young to Run movement. This kind of things are very critical that we bring the young people in.

The second thing is access to information. And what they mean by this is they want some place, whether it's digital, whether it's physical, where they can get any information about meeting their aspirations. So in the U.K., you have what you call UCAS, where you can get information about universities, information about whether you can go to university on a scholarship, the courses that are available, the courses that have scholarships, what you can get. Access to information for them to meet the aspirations. They are yearning for this. Because again, these are the kind of things that will lead to a lot of young people meeting their aspirations. They really need this access to

information and they need inclusion as much as possible. We cannot silence them and make decisions about them at the same time.

**ORDU:** In what way would your answer differ if we had the youths but this time with the private sector leaders in conversation? Would their answer be different in any way?

**ABISOYE:** When we engage them, the first thing I hear when they want to talk to private sector leaders are access to opportunities, access to finance, because a lot of commercial banks know how to lend to big companies. And that's the truth. We are trying with LSETF to demonstrate that it's possible to lend to young aspiring entrepreneurs. There can be different structures to do that. It may not be credit, it could be access to the infrastructure you mentioned. It could be access to power. Access to everything that enables this aspiration. When do we get to the point when Africans will wake up, have a dream, and know that, look, I have the enabling environment. I know the agency to go to because I have this dream, I have this idea, I want to see whether it will work or not. Well, we have to be able to provide that because if we do, we will reduce a lot of the insecurities. We will reduce people joining terrorism, fraud, we will reduce a lot of the issues that we see tied to all these other issues we are experiencing in Africa. And we will improve the education because when people have economic livelihood, a lot of things are added on: better education, better health, a lot of things added on when economic livelihoods are gotten right.

**ORDU:** From the outcomes you're observing in the youths you deal with, are there any significant differences in outcomes between the young men and young women that come through your program?

**ABISOYE:** Yes. So let me tell you, one of our quick learnings was women paid back their loans faster and without saying much we found more credibility with our women than the men. A woman would not want to take more than she needs when you offer her the credit and they would pay it back. A man would take more than he needs and you would chase him to get it back when he's doing bad.

And then again, in terms of impact. So we found more layers of impact with the women. So, you normally say to you, if you empower women you're empowering the whole community. That's exactly what we found with our program. So we found out the women were more impactful with job creation, thinking of everybody, not just herself. And this was in the last large group of our beneficiaries sampled.

So it obviously made us then create an independent program that was focused and targeted at women. People said it was because I was a woman and then I became the executive secretary. I don't think so. I think it was just the reality. The numbers were telling us what the truth was, and we saw it as let's be deliberate about supporting the women entrepreneurs, because they're the ones who won't come out, they're the ones that would just, you know what, I just need, just give me hundred thousand naira. I say to them, you know, if I give you five hundred thousand naira, you can expand the scope of this business and you can generate a lot more revenue. And the moment you give them the sense to see it, they catch on to it and, my, they have proven us right. They are creating industry. In fact, one of our beneficiaries has raised over three million dollars after. Another one has raised, if I recall, 300,000 euros after. And they are all female-run businesses. We have another one that is now exporting. So we have so many of these success stories from our female beneficiaries. We have a few from the male, but obviously, yeah, because we're deliberate and focused again we have stories from a lot of our female beneficiaries.



**ORDU:** How did the COVID pandemic affect the Lagos State Youth Employment Initiative and what's been done to address the challenges arising from the pandemic?

**ABISOYE:** The first thing we realized very quickly, by the end of the first quarter of 2020, was that we needed to sustain jobs. So the first thing we did was to pause all loans. So we communicated with all beneficiaries and made them know that, look, until the lockdown was over you don't need to pay your loans. Just worry about keeping your business afloat. Then the reality, of course, that you needed to sustain jobs. You need to make sure people don't shut down their businesses, because there's no safety net policy in Nigeria or Africa like that. So we needed to make sure people didn't lose their jobs.

But immediately the COVID lockdown was over, we launched what we call the Lagos Economic Acceleration Program. And this was particularly created to address sectors that had been negatively impacted. Of course, first and primarily it was hospitality and the tourism industry. Schools had shut down, and a lot of them had let teachers go home because people were not paying school fees for children that were in school. So the Lagos Economic Acceleration Program was set up for the education sector, for the tourism sector, and of course, again, for our beneficiaries that needed immediately working capital, anybody or business that could prove that they had been negatively impacted by COVID we immediately opened that program for MSMEs across Lagos.

The second one again that we are implementing for MSMEs is the World Bank Cares program. It's now called the Federal Government CARES, which is COVID Action Recovery Economic Stimulus program. Although initiated by the World Bank, the idea is for businesses that had loans and they are not able to pay back to get a credit grant to help them offset that credit to the commercial bank. The second one was operations grant, businesses that could not pay the loans that could not pay staff, they had access to those grants for up to six months and also to adopt technology. Because one thing was very clear: Businesses that were already technology-enabled suffered less than the businesses that were just traditional, needed-to-be-in-person programs, in-person services.

That program is still running, by the way, people now can adopt a lot more technology. We're also making it now clear how much technology can create some things while also promoting the idea that instead of just services, you can add products because we've seen what COVID pandemic can do to you. So how do you make sure that you're not just the hair salon? You also have products you can sell if anything happens and you cannot have in-person services.

For the grassroots bottom of the pyramid, we're saying adopt technology, adopt the digital. This is a permanent solution. This is how you sell on your phone. A phone is much more than "Hello, good afternoon," but it is a computer, it's an asset, it's a money-making tool, and we have to show you how. And we are deliberate about doing that, especially at the grassroots now to make sure people understand what they can benefit from the digital. All of this is a result of COVID. It's been lessons learned from the shock, but I think people are better prepared for pandemics after the COVID.

**ORDU:** So to the broader macro environment, how would you rate a country like Nigeria as a Nigeria in terms of its economic recovery post-pandemic?

**ABISOYE:** I think we're improving. You know. We all look at the forecast from the different agencies at the World Bank, the IMF. For Nigeria, for example, with the statistics by Nigerians show that we're growing by about 3.9 percent since 2020. I don't think it's going to be rapid, it's not going to happen so quickly, but I think we will see year-on-year growth if we stay committed to it and we continue to build on lessons learned, we will do better, definitely do better. And the economy will grow, do better, and be more resilient going forward.

We saw what happened with oil. So diversification is so critical for a country like Nigeria now. Other sectors are very critical. We have to build them. We have to be deliberate about social spending to ensure that we're encouraging innovation because COVID changed a lot and there's a lot of innovation going on. We must plug into that as a country and we must support that development of all the innovation that is going on. We must spend socially. We would have to solve a lot of challenges, not by debt, not by credit, but social funding for those kind of things. For me again is about if you want to take advantage of AfCFTA, we have to invest in people to be able to take advantage of AfCFTA. We have to invest in companies. We have to invest in the right skills. We have to do a lot of things to make sure we can take advantage of what AfCFTA offers as a country.

**ORDU:** Teju has referred to AfCFTA a couple of times, that is the African Continental Free Trade Area, which covers basically 1.3 billion Africans and 55 countries, ranging from the southern fringes of the Mediterranean Sea to the Cape of Good Hope in Cape Town, South Africa here where I'm speaking from. Beyond Nigeria, Teju, what would you consider to be the most important urgent factors to speed up Africa's recovery post-pandemic?

**ABISOYE:** Primarily technology, technology, technology. We have to embrace it. We have to let our whole systems embrace digital. We have to find a way to make it happen. There are a lot of setbacks when you think about it from education, when you think about it from infrastructure, power, what you've mentioned, the world we've talked about. But we have to be deliberate as governments to say, Look, we have to leapfrog and it can only happen with technology. So what is it going to take us to adopt a lot of technology in our systems? The sciences, research. We have to invest in research. We can't wait for all the inventions to come out of other places.

I love what Flutterwave is doing, and a lot of companies across Africa now are showing us that we can build from Africa. So how much more can we encourage that to happen? How much more can we make sure that a lot of these innovations are coming out of Africa, we're supporting you with promoting it in Africa, and we're not creating barriers towards trading with each other.

So second, there must be a lot of collaboration, a lot of collaboration. We must not see ourselves as competition. But we must build an economic super bloc as Africa. But that can only happen when we're all collaborating with each other and making sure we're building the Africa we want to see as one bloc, as a unit.

Then, of course, I think I've said this and I just want to emphasize again, it's about more social investment in all those things we want to see in our young people. The youth don't have the money. We can probably name a number of families that can afford for their children to experiment. But then the government can see it as a responsibility to really invest in the young people, to develop it.

Because at the end of the day, what Africa has today, one of the greatest resources we have, are the people, the young people. We have the youngest continent across the world. What are we going to do with our resources? We must make it happen. Let's not even talk about all natural resources Africa carries, where we know today that across the world, without some resources from Africa, we are not going to have anything going on or production. So how do we harness what we have, the human resource and the mineral resources and build on that more positively so that we can get the best out of it, of this. So yes, there's a lot to be done, and I think we can speed up recovery if we embrace technology, we create the right collaborative environment, and we invest in our young people.

**ORDU:** That reminds me of the evident solidarity we see today continentally at a time when the world has really polarized into the rich and vaccinated on account of COVID and the poor and unvaccinated, this sort of solidarity that is very, very apparent among African states. And what you're saying, basically, which I subscribe to, is that we need to we need to deepen that solidarity, we need to be more collaborative, we need to act in concert, and harness the natural resources of the continent. And of course, one of the greatest, greatest such latent assets of the continent are youths, which is precisely where you're at the epicenter of Africa's youths as exemplified by the great city of Lagos.

So today, the growing population of young people remains a megatrend to watch in Africa. How to capitalize on the youth dividend is among the greatest challenges keeping policymakers awake at night. Today, we heard from Teju, a youthful CEO herself, how Lagos is tackling the problem of youth unemployment. There's a lot of lessons for other growing cities across the African continent and beyond. Teju, on behalf of the Africa Growth Initiative at Brookings, thank you very much.

**ABISOYE:** It has been a pleasure having this conversation, Aloysius. Thank you very much.

**ORDU:** I'm Aloysius Uche Ordu, this has been Foresight Africa. To learn more about what you heard today, find this episode online at Brookings dot edu slash Foresight Africa podcast. Each episode will be listed on its own web page, and there will be links to the content discussed in the episode.

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Thank you very much.